

Critical Discourse Analysis as Queer Linguistics: Religious pro- and anti-LGBT equality framing and counterframing in two letters to the editor in the *City Press*

Lauren D. Mongie

Department of General Linguistics, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
E-mail: laurenm@sun.ac.za

Abstract

This article is situated at the intersection of the applied linguistic fields of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Collective Action Framing (CAF) and a sociolinguistic field recently referred to as “Queer Linguistics” (QL). Drawing on a qualitative method of analysis, the article investigates the discursive (re)production of religiously-motivated arguments in favour of and against LGBT equality in two letters to the editor in the *City Press* newspaper. The paper aims to illustrate the ways in which religiously-framed pro- and anti-LGBT-equality arguments are discursively constructed in public discourses, and to demonstrate the methodological overlap between CDA and QL, and between CDA and CAF.

The article’s findings reveal that both the pro- and anti-LGBT-equality letters frame their religious arguments in ways that echo that which is predicted in the literature by making strategic use of lexical items, modifiers, implicature, presupposition, rhetorical devices, and attributive strategies; and that these discursive devices enable the realisation of the core framing tasks that are necessary for social mobilisation to varying extents. Further, the findings indicate that the anti-LGBT-equality letter is more explicit in its ideological positioning and framing tasks, and that it draws significantly more on disclaimers than the pro-LGBT-equality letter. Lastly, the discourse that is present in the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing tasks of the pro-LGBT-equality letter attempts to reframe and counterframe anti-LGBT-equality arguments by providing an alternative perspective of same-sex attraction within the religion frame.

Keywords: LGBT, homophobia, Critical Discourse Analysis, framing, Queer Linguistics

1. Introduction

In discourses of prejudice and stereotype, much attention is focused on how intolerance of minority groups and their practices, values, civil rights and so forth is articulated. In institutional discourse, powerful groups often defend the status quo by means of intolerant frames that position the less powerful group as inferior or ‘bad’ in some way. Far less researched within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Queer Linguistics (QL) are counterdiscourses that

proclaim and encourage tolerance of minority groups that are socially marginalised. Nevertheless, in opposition to religiously-framed discourses of intolerance, discourses of tolerance have developed which encourage inclusion rather than exclusion, and appreciation of difference rather than “othering” and disowning. An essential aspect of such discourses of tolerance entails a confrontation of the way in which intolerant arguments are framed, which often entails counterframing the argument by challenging the contents of arguments put forth by members of the out-group and providing alternative perspectives within the same frame.

Drawing on qualitative methods of analysis from the fields of CDA and CAF, the article investigates the discursive (re)production of religiously-motivated arguments in favour of and against LGBT equality in two letters to the editor in the *City Press* with the aim of answering the following research questions:

1. What are the discursive characteristics of religiously-framed pro- and anti-LGBT-equality arguments in letters to the editor in the *City Press*?
2. How are religious counterframes used to challenge homophobic and heteronormative ideologies in letters to the editor in the *City Press*?
3. How are the core framing tasks implemented in the religiously-framed pro- and anti-LGBT-equality arguments in letters to the editor in the *City Press*?

The purpose of answering these research questions is to illustrate the ways in which religiously-framed anti-LGBT-equality arguments and religiously counterframed pro-equality arguments are discursively constructed in public discourses and how these discursive constructions constitute the core framing tasks that are needed for social mobilisation, and to demonstrate the methodological overlap between CDA and QL, and between CDA and CAF.

2. Rationale

My focus on religious framing and counterframing is motivated by the fact that the most popular anti-LGBT equality frame in South African media centres on the argument that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian and in some cases also Muslim and/or Hindu values (Cilliers 2007:340). This frame, which Afshar (2006:71) labels the “homosexuality is wrong” frame, is typically based on the argument that God’s creation of one man and one woman demonstrates the fact that God did not create same-sex attraction, and that it is therefore not inherent and unnatural. This argument leads to the conclusion that individuals “choose to be gay” (Afshar 2006:72), and that they can therefore be “healed” from or “condemned” for their “wrong choice”. Such framing of same-sex attraction as a choice lessens the likelihood that adherents to this frame will accept LGBT rights as basic human rights that rest on natural features such as gender and race, and that as such are worthy of constitutional protection.

While a review of the available literature reveals a noteworthy absence of studies that examine the portrayal of same-sex attraction in the South African media, what has been written (cf. Reid and Dirsuweit 2002; Walter 2006; Wells and Polders 2006; Cilliers 2007; Nel and Judge 2008) suggests that the media has achieved little in countering homophobia in traditional contexts. As is the case with many powerless minority groups, media coverage of LGBT South Africans has largely been characterised by silence, sensationalism, and the perpetuation of stereotypes (Cilliers 2007:334). Despite the fact that LGBT rights have been written into South Africa’s Constitution for almost 20 years, the persistence of homophobic, stereotypical and minoritising

views in the face of dramatic political and constitutional reforms brings to light the need to problematise the extent to which a social movement such as the LGBT liberation movement in South Africa can ever be said to have achieved “success”.

This focus is further motivated by my own findings (Mongie 2015:15) that the religious frame is the most common way in which arguments against LGBT equality were framed in the corpus over a period of 26 years; that this frame was implemented with increasing frequency in the years following South Africa’s transition to democracy; and that this frame was by far the most contested, as 47% of the religion frames in that corpus were used to express attitudes against LGBT equality, while 39% were used to express attitudes in favour of LGBT equality. This finding highlights a feature of framing that is not discussed extensively in the literature, namely the fact that a single frame is often used extensively in arguments both in favour of and against a given phenomenon. My focus on religious framing is further motivated by the fact that a pervasive patriarchal Christian ethic that views same-sex sexual encounters as sinful and wrong compounds anti-LGBT sentiments, leading to homophobic reactions to LGBT equality to be seen by many as “upholding religious beliefs and therefore something to be proud of and actively encouraged” (Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher and Astbury 2003:6). Thus, despite having adopted one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, there remains a strong disconnect between the values enshrined in the Constitution and the attitudes expressed in daily discourse (Msibi 2012:518), particularly when the attitudes are influenced by religious considerations (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009:339). This is especially true in South African townships, where Christianity and heterosexuality are seen by many as “compulsory” elements of identity (Msibi 2012:527).

3. Theoretical framework

Both theoretically and methodologically, this study takes CDA as its primary theoretical framework. In doing so it follows the analytic methodology developed by van Dijk (1985) in his investigation of the relationships between discourse and identity construction, discourse and social reality, and discourse and power. Van Dijk’s (1985, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2007) analytical methodology draws on Goffman’s (1974 cited in Reese 2003:7) conceptualisation of ‘framing’, which refers to the process of “select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation”, in the sense that discursive strategies are viewed as realisations of mental models that vary from one individual to another. The selection of CDA as a form of QL is motivated by the political nature of South Africa’s LGBT liberation movement, and by the role of the mass media as an instrument of ideological socialisation. Surprisingly, a search of the available literature indicates that very few studies have been done in which a CDA approach has been applied to the analysis of homophobic and heteronormative media discourse, and that none have applied a CDA approach to the investigation of LGBT liberation discourse, nor to the framing of heteronormativity and homophobia. As mentioned above, this study locates itself in the field of QL as a result of its poststructuralist focus on the relationship between language and sexuality, and its critique of homophobic and heteronormative discourses. More specifically, the study adopts the Queer Linguistic view that homophobia and heteronormativity are discursively (re)constructed and challenged in media discourse through strategic framing processes (Motschenbacher 2011:152).

Although only a handful of QL studies (cf. Baker 2005, 2006, 2008 cited in Motschenbacher 2011:166) have made use of CDA theory and methodology, the shared interest in the discursive reconstruction of identity categories in dominant discourses makes the two highly compatible. This compatibility is evident in the shared influences of QL and CDA, which include Foucault (1978 cited in Motschenbacher 2011:154), Butler (1990, 1993 cited in Motschenbacher 2011:156), and Derrida (1976 cited in Motschenbacher 2011:157), all of whom draw attention to the role of public discourses in constructing particular versions of reality, and the constructed nature of identity categories such as gender and sexuality. Further, QL and CDA share the anti-essentialist view that discourses of sexuality are relevant to all members of society (Motschenbacher 2011:158), and an ethnographic approach in which researchers do not attempt to distance their research from their political motivations (Motschenbacher 2011:159), but rather make these motivations explicit. Another overlap between CDA and QL is visible in their methodological approaches, as both recognise the value of combining quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis, viewing dominant discourses as ones that leave “more linguistic traces” than others (Motschenbacher 2011:167). Given the compatibility of the critical agendas of CDA and QL, Motschenbacher (2011:166) expresses surprise at the lack of studies that take a CDA approach to QL, saying that “it is remarkable that critical discussions of heteronormativity have so far been neglected in [Critical Discourse Analytical] approaches”.

In addition to CDA as a form of QL, this article also draws upon theoretical concepts related to Collective Action Framing (CAF) from the field of Social Movement Theory. This is due to the extent to which social movements are constructed discursively, as well as the extent to which strategic discursive framing has been demonstrated to influence public opinion by selectively simplifying and filtering readers’ perceptions of the social issue under discussion, which has led it to be seen as a key resource with “emancipatory potential” (Klein, Byerly and McEachern 2009:334) that plays a critical role in determining the outcome of a social movement (Gamson 2004:233). Central to this approach is its recognition of the fact that social mobilisation counts as successful if it has achieved the discursive (re)production of consensus and mobilisation (Klandermans 1984 cited in Snow and Benford 1988:199). Theorists working with CAF outline three “core framing tasks” that ensure the attainment of these two goals, namely diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing, which together characterise a social movement’s collective action frame (Benford and Snow 2000:615). Diagnostic framing is the process by which a social movement introduces its “cause” to the public agenda. This typically involves the (re)production of an “injustice” component, which identifies “the victims of a given injustice” and the nature of their suffering (Benford and Snow 2000:615), as well as an “attributional” component, which identifies the individuals and/or institutions that are responsible for the injustice. The second core task of a social movement is that of prognostic framing, in which a solution to the injustice identified in the first task is proposed and a rationale for the proposed solutions is provided. The final core framing task of a social movement is that of motivational framing, in which the movement attempts to mobilise its constituents by persuading them that they can and should change social reality by enforcing the proposed solutions to the topicalised injustice (Snow and Benford 1988:202). Diagnostic and prognostic framing often involve counterframing of the diagnostic and prognostic frames put forward by oppositional social movements, which entails “attempts to rebut, undermine, or neutralise a person’s or group’s myths, versions of reality, or interpretive frameworks” (Benford and Snow 2000:626) by providing alternative perspectives within the same frame. The combination of CDA and CAF provides a way of linking various linguistic strategies that are present in

discourses in which sexuality is topicalised in news media texts to both productive and consumptive discursive processes (Pan and Kosicki 1993:55).

In addition to the frameworks discussed above, the article draws on Afshar's (2006:71) analysis of the "homosexuality is wrong" frame, which is typically based on the argument that God's creation of one man and one woman demonstrates the fact that God did not create same-sex attraction, and that it is therefore not inherent and unnatural. This argument leads to the conclusion that LGBT individuals "choose to be gay" (Afshar 2006:72), and that they can therefore be "healed" from or "condemned" for their "wrong choice". Such framing of same-sex attraction as a choice lessens the likelihood that adherents to this frame will accept LGBT rights as basic human rights that rest on natural features such as gender and race, and that as such are worthy of constitutional protection. A second popular variant of the "homosexuality is wrong" frame cites the argument that same-sex attraction is unnatural because it cannot lead to procreation. However, Dreyer (2006:164) reports that reliance on this argument has declined in recent years, as the use of birth control has limited the extent to which heterosexual sex leads to procreation. A third popular variant of the "homosexuality is wrong" frame is found in arguments that compare same-sex attraction to social taboos such as prostitution, bestiality, and incest. As is the case with both the creation and procreation arguments, this third argument is an example of negative frame bridging, as it positions traditional Christian values in opposition to LGBT rights, although an alternative perspective holds that these issues are not mutually exclusive (Afshar 2006:73).

4. Methodology

This article reports on a small selection of the qualitative findings of a doctoral study (Mongie 2013) of media texts from two South African newspapers that touch on religiously-framed arguments about the social (un)acceptability of LGBT identities and LGBT equality with the aim of examining the ways in which linguistic means are used in realising the core framing tasks discussed above. The data selected for this article consist of two letters to the editor that were written by reverends of two different religious organisations and published during the 2013 study's data collection period¹: one from 22 September 1996, which is used below to demonstrate the religiously-framed discursive realisation of anti-LGBT-equality arguments; and one from 18 July 1999, which is used below to demonstrate religiously-counterframed pro-LGBT-equality arguments. The period of time during which these letters were published is considered significant as it was marked by the democratisation of South Africa in 1994 following the end of apartheid, which provided a political opportunity structure amenable to LGBT mobilisation (Croucher 2002:329).

All publications in the corpus were considered for qualitative analysis and the selection was made based on a number of criteria, namely (i) the extent to which the publication makes use of religious frame(s), (ii) the extent to which this frame is well-implemented, (iii) the extent to which the publication incites social mobilisation, and (iv) the extent to which the publication makes use of what were identified as characterising features of religiously-framed arguments for and against LGBT liberation. The two letters that were selected for analysis below contain the largest number of phrases that constitute pro- and anti-LGBT framing tasks, respectively, and therefore illustrate many of the religious framing and counterframing strategies that are

discussed in the literature and were found throughout the corpus. The fact that both of the selected letters are attributed to reverends that are associated with religious organisations is also of significance in this study, as CAF theory predicts that the persuasiveness of a particular argument in determining values is linked to the perceived status, knowledge or expertise of its proponents (Snow and Benford 2000:620).

As both publications are letters published in the editorial pages rather than articles or opinion pieces, they contain more explicit framing strategies than the aforementioned text types, which are subjected to various forms of editing and censorship. Further, although letters published in the editorial pages have their own limitations, editorial pages are one of the “few dominant media spaces that allow for lengthy argumentation, presentation of evidence, and wide circulation” (Squires 2011:31), creating a “site of framing struggles” (Squires 2011:33) where “counter-discourses and reflexive moments emerge and challenge dominant frames” (Squires 2011:31).

Van Dijk’s (1985, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2007) examples of the textual elements that can be studied in order to identify the discursive (re)production of ideology are used to analyse the frames that are employed in the (re)production and challenging of homophobic and heteronormative ideologies in the corpus. These textual elements span a number of linguistic categories, including individual lexical items (van Dijk 1998:31); modified propositions (van Dijk 1998:32), which includes consideration of modifiers, transitivity, disclaimers, and necessity modalities; implicature (van Dijk 1995b:268); presupposition (van Dijk 1995b:273); cohesion (van Dijk 1998:36); and rhetorical devices (van Dijk 1995a:29).² Scollon’s (1997:384) analysis of attribution was added to this analytical toolbox, and the realisation of framing tasks (Benford and Snow 2000:615) is also examined in order to analyse the framing tasks and effects (Chong and Druckman 2007:104) of the textual elements described above.

5. Findings

The following section presents an analysis of the textual elements that are used to articulate religiously-framed anti-LGBT-equality arguments and pro-LGBT-equality counterframes in the two selected letters. As indicated earlier, these letters were selected for qualitative analysis because they contain many of the frames mentioned above.

5.1 Religious framing in an anti-LGBT-equality argument

The first publication selected for qualitative analysis is titled “Homosexuality is all in the individual’s mind” (cf. Appendix A), and contains several textual elements that frame anti-LGBT-equality arguments in terms of religion. The letter was published on 22 September 1996, and has been selected with a view to illustrating the implementation of a religiously-framed anti-LGBT-equality argument. By 1996, when the letter was published, LGBT rights lobbyists in South Africa had made significant progress, as reflected in the decision of the Constitutional Assembly to entrench LGBT rights in the final draft of the Constitution. The author of this letter is identified in the by-line as Reverend Lebamang Sebidi. In the opening paragraph, the author refers to the constitutional ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation, and initially appears to be presenting a balanced account of two opposing attitudes towards LGBT liberation.

² See Mongie (2013:136-144) for an extensive overview of these linguistic forms.

However, it soon becomes apparent that he aligns himself against the LGBT liberation movement.

Consideration of the letter's macropropositions reveals that intolerant attitudes are represented in 13 of the 17 paragraphs, and that several of the typical characteristics of arguments that frame anti-LGBT arguments in terms of religion in the corpus (Mongie 2013) are found in this letter. These arguments include passages and paraphrases from the Bible that condemn same-sex attraction (lines 20-22), which, as predicted by Afshar (2006:71 cited above), frame same-sex attraction as a sinful (line 13) and selfish (line 16) choice (line 15) that "God did not create" (line 41) rather than an innate disposition. Reference is made to God's creation of one man and one woman (line 14) and the physical compatibility of male and female bodies (line 39); as well as to claims that Christians should be guided by the Bible rather than the Constitution (line 7), that same-sex attraction can be "cured" (line 50), and that same-sex attraction is perverse (line 48) and pathological (line 42). Same-sex attraction is also compared to "psychopathologies" and social taboos (line 45) such as paedophilia (line 48), kleptomania and nymphomania (line 49). Not only are intolerant arguments presented first and afforded more space in this letter, they are also foregrounded in the text and marked as important.

Individual lexical items that are used to topicalise same-sex attraction include such terms as "sinful" (line 12), "abomination" (line 19), "sodomites" (line 20), "sin" (line 35), "aberration" (line 46), and "abnormal" (line 48). Analysis of the letter's macropropositions further shows that the letter's diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing tasks are largely based on religious arguments.

Diagnostic framing

Diagnostic framing is visible in (1), as this phrase explicitly "diagnoses" the social "problem" that the writer wishes to address, namely his opinion that same-sex attraction is "sinful". Within this proposition, the lexical item "sinful" constitutes the injustice component of the diagnostic frame as it identifies the nature of the proposed social problem, and the lexical item "homosexuality" constitutes the attribution component of the diagnostic frame as it identifies "homosexuals" as the perpetrators of the alleged injustice.

- (1) Homosexuality is sinful (line 13)

Prognostic framing

Prognostic framing is visible in (2)-(5), as (2) and (3) identify the actors that should, according to the writer, attempt to solve the problem diagnosed in (1), namely churches and "homosexuals", while (4) and (5) offer solutions to the problem diagnosed in (1), namely adopting the "hate the sin, not the sinner" approach by somehow condemning LGBT behaviour without condemning LGBT people, and giving LGBT people psychotherapy in order to "cure" them. These framing tasks are realised through an implication that also serves as a necessity modality in (2), as the use of the word "exempt" in this context implies that the Church is under some obligation to moralise same-sex attraction, thereby implying a necessity modality. This problematisation of same-sex attraction is also realised more explicitly in (3), where the use of the modal verb "should" functions as a necessity modality that presupposes that it is unacceptable for LGBT people to stay as they are. Further, these framing tasks are realised

through the distinction that is made between same-sex desire and same-sex sex, and through the emphasis on the “voluntary” nature of so-called “homosexual acts” in (4), which evokes the “hate the sin, not the sinner” frame. This is a form of apparent denial in which the writer attempts to minimise the harmful impact of homophobia by claiming that it does not entail the oppression, exclusion and victimisation of LGBT people, only their acts. Finally, the use of the lexical item “cured” in (5) presupposes that same-sex attraction is pathological while offering the “solution” of “psychotherapy”, which can be seen as an extension of the diagnostic framing task. This presupposition is spelt out explicitly in the motivational framing task in (15) below, in which the author states that same-sex attraction “is acquired, and therefore can be cured”.

- (2) this ban does not exempt churches from trying to clarify their understanding of the ethical intricacies concerning homosexuality (line 44)
- (3) What should homosexuals do, given that they are not responsible for this inclination? (line 40)
- (4) we must distinguish the inclination from the acts, which are often voluntary (lines 32-33)
- (5) it can be cured in psychotherapy (line 46)

Motivational framing

Motivational framing is found throughout the letter, as evidenced in (6) to (12) below, in which the author’s use of the Bible as an authorising voice compounds the expression of a religiously-framed anti-LGBT-equality ideology throughout the letter, defends arguments that deny LGBT rights, and constructs being gay as being immoral.

In lines (23) to (29), where a more tolerant attitude is introduced, no similar attribution or citation of authority is given. The use of direct Biblical quotes in (8) and (9) is intended to lend further credibility to the intolerant tone of the letter, as the religion frame is available, accessible and applicable to a large number of readers. This “Biblical” form of motivational framing is paired with arguments that emphasise the belief that “God did not create [same-sex attraction]” in (10). The truth of these claims is presupposed by the use of the phrase “all you have to do to realise” in (11), as it constructs the claim as one that is validated by the structure of “human genitalia”. For many South Africans, adherence to Christian principles is a central consideration in deciding on values; this is important in calculating the effect of Biblical citations as authority. Further, the identification of the author with the title “Reverend” and as the executive director of the Trust for Educational Advancement in South Africa enables the author’s religious and political credentials to lend further credibility to his preferred model, thereby increasing the resonance of the intolerant sentiments expressed in the letter.

- (6) It is a distortion of God’s creative intent (line 14)
- (7) Biblical texts just about clinch the argument against homosexuality (line 18)
- (8) “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman” (line 20)
- (9) “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites will inherit the Kingdom of God” (lines 21-22)
- (10) God did not create this inclination (line 41)
- (11) All you have to do to realise [that same-sex attraction is a “distortion of God’s creative intent] is to look at the physical structure of human genitalia (lines 14-15)

Motivational framing is further realised in (12) to (17) below, as the author constructs same-sex attraction as both a choice and a pathology. The modified phrase “wilfully embraced for selfish reasons” in (12) explicitly claims that LGBT people “choose to be gay”, which implies that they can simply “choose to be straight”, thereby forming part of the letter’s prognostic framing task. In addition to framing same-sex attraction as a “sinful choice”, the author’s comparison between “homosexuality” and “most pathologies” in (13) and the use of the lexical items “treatable” and “state” in (14) imply that same-sex attraction is a pathology, which provides a second source of motivation for the reader. Finally, the author explicitly imposes heteronormative standards in (16), and motivates them by referring to “nature” rather than religion in (17).

- (12) Homosexuality is wilfully embraced for selfish reasons (lines 15-16)
- (13) The homosexual inclination is... like most psychopathologies acquired during the process of nurture and birth (lines 41-42)
- (14) These states may be extremely difficult to treat - but they are treatable
- (15) It is acquired, and therefore can be cured (line 16)
- (16) The norm is obviously heterosexuality (line 37)
- (17) I am not speaking about sin, but about the standard of sexual acts which seems to be indicated by the physical nature of men and women (lines 38-39)

The analysis above illustrates the extent to which the core framing tasks are distributed throughout the text, as well as the extent to which the religious anti-LGBT-equality frame is realised on various discursive levels. The following section presents a similar analysis of a religiously-framed pro-LGBT-equality letter to the editor in order to demonstrate the discursive process of counterframing.

5.2 Religious counterframing in a pro-LGBT-equality argument

The second publication selected for qualitative analysis is a letter titled “Time for church to speak up for gays” (cf. Appendix B). The letter was published on 18 July 1999, and has been selected for analysis on the basis of its counterframing of religious intolerance, which is primarily articulated in terms of tolerant religious arguments. The author uses religious frames with the apparent intended effect of welcoming LGBT citizens into religious communities. The letter was published during a period that saw the decriminalisation of sodomy and court rulings that guaranteed equal pension benefits to citizens and immigration rights to all, regardless of sexual orientation. By 1999, when this letter was published, the social and political landscape in the country had changed considerably for LGBT citizens following the acceptance and implementation of the new Constitution.

Consideration of the macropropositional content of the letter reveals that the author, identified as Reverend Joe Mdhlela, frames his arguments for the acceptance of LGBT equality in terms of religious marginalisation, comparing the Church’s treatment of LGBT people to the treatment of black South Africans under Apartheid, and aligns himself with the LGBT liberation movement as he calls for tolerance and acceptance of same-sex attraction in South African churches. The macropropositional content further reveals that a number of the typical characteristics of arguments that frame pro-LGBT arguments in terms of religion in the corpus (Mongie 2013) are found in this letter, including arguments that men do not know the mind of God (lines 12-13); that Christians should be accepting of same-sex attraction (line 32) and

defend the LGBT community (line 32); that Christians should not discriminate against gay men and women (line 32); that God created all people in his own image (lines 45-46); and that Christians should not view their subjective opinions (line 49) as truth (line 51).

Individual lexical items that are used to topicalise the church's current attitude towards LGBT people include "homophobia" (line 4), "judgment" (line 5), "pontificate" (line 6), "marginalised" (line 16), "discrimination" (line 24), "condemn" (line 26), "pain" (line 31), "tyranny" (line 34), "injustice" (line 36), and "unchallenged" (line 40). Additionally, individual lexical items that are used to topicalise the proposed attitude towards LGBT people include "defend" (line 32) and "warm up" (line 32). Analysis of the letter's macropropositions further shows that the letter's diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing tasks are largely based on religious arguments.

Diagnostic framing

Diagnostic framing is visible in (18) and (19) below, as these phrases explicitly "diagnose" the social "problem" that the writer wishes to address, namely the Church's intolerance of same-sex attraction and its failure to defend the LGBT community. Unlike the letter analysed above, this author does not begin his letter with a diagnostic framing task that is comparable to the explicitly phased "homosexuality is sinful", as his use of the metaphor "household of the Lord" to refer to the Church and the omission of the agent in (18) softens this initial claim. Within this proposition, the lexical item "homophobia" constitutes the injustice component of the diagnostic frame, as it identifies the nature of the proposed social problem, while the attribution component is implied through the lexical items "in the household of the Lord", which indirectly identifies Christians or church-goers as the perpetrators of the topicalised injustice. Further, while the words "uncalled for" in (18) further soften this claim, they also presuppose that certain members of the Church are homophobic. The letter's diagnostic framing task is spelled out more explicitly in (19), as the naming of the "Church" as the agent constitutes the attributional component of the diagnostic task, and the naming of "fail[ing] to speak up for, and "condemning [them]" constitutes the injustice component of the diagnostic task. The contrast between "speaking up for the gay and lesbian community" and "condemning them as a sinning community not worthy of God's love" in (19) is emphasised by the verb phrase "preferring instead", which characterises the Church's condemnation of the LGBT community as a choice and a preference rather than a necessity. Finally, the attributional component of the letter's diagnostic framing task is implied in (20), in which the word "even" in the phrase "even priests in churches and parishes" implies that priests have a greater obligation than other individuals to defend gay rights and are thus responsible for their suffering. Also in (20), the metaphor "raise a finger in solidarity with the gay and lesbian community" constitutes the injustice component of the diagnostic framing task, as it is used strategically to draw attention to the small amount of effort that would be required of the Church, as well as to the fact that the Church is currently unwilling to make even that amount of effort.

- (18) homophobia in the household of the Lord [is] uncalled for (line 3)
- (19) the Church has failed to speak up for the gay and lesbian community, preferring instead to condemn them as a sinning community not worthy of God's love (line 27-28)
- (20) even the priests in churches and parishes are not prepared to raise a finger in solidarity with the gay and lesbian community (line 23-24)

Prognostic framing

The prognostic framing tasks are visible in (21)-(26) below, in which the use of the metaphors “we have no business” and “judgement seat” in (22) is intended to remind readers that “only God can judge” what is sinful and what is not. An example of a presupposed meaning can be found in (22), in which the words “must begin to warm up and be ready to defend the gay and lesbian community” presuppose that the Church has been cold towards the LGBT community, and that it has not come to this community’s defence. Further, the modal verb “must” in (22) makes it clear that the author’s proposed solution to the problem is that the Church “warm up”. The word “reminded” in the rhetorical question in (23) implies that the Church has forgotten that its purpose is to defend the needy, while the phrase “is it not perhaps time” marks the phrase “open your mouth, pronounce just sentences, and defend the needy” as an explicit suggestion. The letter’s prognostic framing task is further made explicit in (24), in which the metaphor “thrown out the window” and the necessity modality “really need to” emphasise the author’s view that there is no place for homophobic sentiments in the Church, and makes it clear that the author advocates “throw[ing] sanctified language and subjective opinions out of the window” as part of the solution to the social problem identified above. Lastly, the comparison between the treatment of non-white South Africans under apartheid and the Church’s treatment of LGBT individuals is implied by the words “the same” in the rhetorical question in (25), implying that it is hypocritical to ignore gay rights if one defends black rights, and that the priests who preached against apartheid should now preach against homophobia. The use of the words “black people living under apartheid tyranny” in (26) makes this comparison more explicit, and implies that the Church should put the marginalisation of the LGBT community on its agenda.

- (21) we have no business... to sit on the judgement seat and pontificate against gay and lesbian people (lines 5-6)
- (22) the Church must begin to warm up and be ready to defend the gay and lesbian community from the ridicule and pain this community endures (lines 32-33)
- (23) Is it not perhaps time that the Church was reminded of the days of Lemuel, King of Massa, who was taught by his mother to “open your mouth, pronounce just sentences, and defend the needy” (line 24-25)
- (24) Opinions that have for generations been layered in sanctified language are nothing more than subjective opinions that really need to be thrown out of the window (lines 51-53)
- (25) Is it not that even the same priests who preached long and angry sermons about the evils of apartheid and discrimination now speak tentatively, if at all, about gay and lesbian issues (line 25-27)
- (26) If the liberation movement... had not challenged and put apartheid on their agenda, it is possible that we would still have black people living under apartheid tyranny (lines 34-36)

Motivational framing

In addition to forming part of the letter’s prognostic framing tasks above, (25) and (26) also form part of the letter’s motivational framing tasks. The author’s comparison between apartheid and homophobia is high in mobilising potency, as the anti-apartheid frame is one that was highly resonant at the time. Further motivational framing tasks are visible in (27)-(31) below,

in which the author motivates his claim that Christians should change their attitudes towards same-sex attraction. These tasks are achieved through the use of the lexical items “as though” and “startling” in (27), as they imply that the speaker does not believe that one can know the mind of God. This implication persists in the disclaimer found in (28), in which the apparent concession “it might be that we see gay and lesbian people as behaving in an abominable and ungodly way” is negated by the use of the contrastive conjunction “but” and modified phrase “subjective view” thereafter. Characteristic of disclaimers, the first part of the proposition expresses a concession that is not reflected in the second half of the proposition or in the bulk of the text. Moreover, the position of the concession near the end of the letter marks it as less important and possibly irrelevant. It is clear that the author makes use of this apparent concession in an attempt to reduce the extent to which his opinions may be face-threatening to the reader, rather than in a genuine attempt to validate homophobic ideologies. The author’s emphasis on the subjectivity of homophobia is also evident in (29), in which the phrase “opinions have been passed on as facts” presupposes that homophobic beliefs are not based on fact, and the use of the modified phrase “the people God created in his own image” explicitly states that God created gays and lesbians and, by extension, same-sex attraction. The claim that homophobic beliefs do not have a factual basis is also made through the use of the lexical item “opinion” in (30), while the lexical items “mistake” and “deify” imply that holding on to homophobic opinions will have negative consequences for the reader.

- (27) there are those who speak as though they know the mind of God with startling clarity, they tell us what pleased God and what displeased God (line 10)
- (28) It might be that we see gay and lesbian people as behaving in an “abominable and ungodly” way. But that remains our subjective view about them (line 47-49)
- (29) opinions have been passed on as facts that have dangerously marginalised the people God created in his own image (line 41-42)
- (30) it would be a mistake to deify our opinions (line 55-56)

While the author of the letter is afforded credibility by his status as a reverend, he attributes large parts of the letter to Reverend Larry Maze, whom he describes as “wonderful” (line 8), “compassionate” (line 9), and “good” (line 18). Further, the author makes use of characterising verbs in his attribution of the quotations, including “preached” (line 10), “expressed sadness” (line 16) and “as the bishop correctly put it” (line 46). Finally, paragraphs 14 to 16 demonstrate a pattern identified by Scollon (1998) in which propositions following a direct quotation are ambiguously voiced, in the sense that it is unclear whether they are to be attributed to the quoted source or to the author of the letter. Such strategies lend credibility to propositions that may otherwise be rejected by the reader. Similarly to the analysis in section 5.1 above, the analysis presented here demonstrates the extent to which the core framing tasks are distributed throughout the text, as well as the extent to which the religiously-framed pro-LGBT-equality argument is realised on various discursive levels.

6. Discussion

The data analyses above illustrate many of the characteristics of the religiously-framed pro- and anti-LGBT-equality arguments that make up the corpus. Some of these characteristics include the use of Biblical terms such as “sinful” (22 September 1996 line 13), “immoral” (22 September 1996 line 21), “sodomite” (22 September 1996 line 21), “abomination” (22

September 1996 line 20) and “aberration” (22 September 1996 line 49) in religiously-framed anti-LGBT-equality arguments, and the use of more secular and political lexical items such as “marginalised” (18 July 1999 line 19), “solidarity” (18 July 1999 line 124), “discrimination” (18 July 1999 line 26), “community” (18 July 1999 line 24) and “agenda” (18 July 1999 line 35) in religiously-framed pro-LGBT-equality arguments. The difference between these groups of lexical items echoes a further identifiable characteristic of the religiously-framed pro- and anti-LGBT-equality arguments that make up the corpus, namely the fact that the latter are typically phrased in a way that expresses a higher degree of certainty than the former. This can be seen in the diagnostic framing tasks of the letters analysed above, in which the anti-LGBT-equality letter’s diagnostic task states that “homosexuality is sinful” (22 September 1996 line 13), while the pro-LGBT-equality letter’s diagnostic task merely states that “homophobia... is uncalled for” (18 July 1999 line 4), as there is a clear difference in the degree of certainty expressed by the lexical item “sinful” and the lexical items “uncalled for”.

The author of the pro-LGBT-equality letter comments on this difference in degree of certainty, explaining that some Christians “speak of certainty as the hallmark of faithful people” (18 July 1999 line 14), while others, including him, recognise the “ambiguities” (18 July 1999 line 15) of life. This difference in the expression of certainty is further visible in the two letters’ prognostic and diagnostic framing tasks, as the anti-LGBT-equality letter’s prognostic framing task offers a clear solution to the diagnosed “problem”, namely that same-sex attraction “can be cured in psychotherapy” (22 September 1996 line 46), while the pro-LGBT-equality letter’s prognostic framing task suggests that homophobic attitudes “be thrown out of the window” (18 July 1999 line 52-53) without offering tangible suggestions of how this may be accomplished. The motivational framing tasks demonstrate the same characteristics, as the anti-LGBT-equality letter’s motivational framing tasks consist of two Bible verses that are cited frequently in such arguments, namely “you shall not lie with a male as with a woman” (22 September 1996 line 20) and “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites will inherit the kingdom of God” (22 September 1996 line 21-22), as well as several other claims that same-sex attraction is “a distortion of God’s creative intent”. The anti-LGBT-equality letter claims further that same-sex attraction is a choice that is “wilfully embraced”, a “psychopathology”, and not “the norm” that is “indicated by the physical nature of men and women[’s bodies]”. In contrast, the pro-LGBT-equality letter’s motivational framing task merely consists of propositions that label religiously-motivated homophobia as “subjective views” (18 July 1999 line 53) and “opinions” (18 July 1999 line 52).

Interestingly, the anti-LGBT-equality letter (22 September 1996) contains significantly more disclaimers than the pro-LGBT-equality letter, including (31)-(36):

- (31) The constitution bans all discrimination against people, including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (line 5-6)
- (32) a homosexual orientation is not acquired, it is innate, a biological given (=10)
- (33) Nobody would choose to be a homosexual in the midst of such intolerance, animosity and inhumane isolation (line 26-27)
- (34) I have no reason to believe that genuine homosexuals have freely chosen their sexual orientation (line 30-31)
- (35) sexual orientation cannot be described as sinful or immoral (line 31-32)
- (36) Homosexuals ought to be treated with love and be given the full protection under the law (36-37)

These disclaimers are negated in various ways, including the use of the contrastive conjunction “but” in the sentences following (33) and (35), and the use of the contrastive conjunction “while” before the sentence in (36). In comparison, the pro-LGBT-equality letter (18 July 1999) contains only one:

- (37) It might be that we see gay and lesbian people as behaving in an abominable and ungodly way (line 47-49) (=28)

As is the case with the majority of the disclaimers discussed above, this disclaimer is negated by the use of the contrastive conjunction “but” in the sentence following the disclaimer in (37). It appears that the high degree of certainty expressed by the propositions in the anti-LGBT-equality letter enable or perhaps even require the author to make use of more disclaimers without jeopardising the letter’s mobilising potency.

The analyses also illustrate some of the ways in which popular media frames, such as the “homosexuality is wrong” frame, can be counterframed by challenging the claims put forth by members of the out-group and providing alternative perspectives within the same frame. Specific examples of such counterframing can be seen in extracts from the pro-LGBT-equality letter (18 July 1999) in (38)-(42) below, in which the Church’s homophobia is described as “uncalled for” in (38), as “subjective view[s]” in (39), and as “subjective opinions” in (40). Further examples of counterframing can be seen in (41), in which the expression of homophobic opinions is described as “pontificating”, and in (42), in which the author casts doubt on claims that Christians know God’s views on same-sex attraction by making use of the terms “as though” and “startling clarity”.

- (38) homophobia in the household of the Lord [is] uncalled for (line 3) (=18)
 (39) It might be that we see gay and lesbian people as behaving in an “abominable and ungodly” way. But that remains our subjective view about them (line 47-49) (=28)
 (40) Opinions that have for generations been layered in sanctified language are nothing more than subjective opinions that really need to be thrown out of the window (lines 51-53) (=24)
 (41) we have no business... to sit on the judgement seat and pontificate against gay and lesbian people (line 5-6) (=21)
 (42) there are those who speak as though they know the mind of God with startling clarity, they tell us what pleased God and what displeased God (line 10) (=27)

These examples make it clear that the core framing tasks that are necessary for social mobilisation are realised through various discursive processes, including easily identifiable processes such as the selection of polarising lexical items and modifiers, and less readily identifiable processes, such as the strategic use of implicature, presupposition, rhetorical devices and attribution. In addition to highlighting the extent to which a CDA analysis lends itself to a CAF analysis, the analyses presented above also draw attention to the ways in which CDA lends itself to QL, as it provides the analyst with a checklist of discursive strategies and framing tasks that can be examined in order to bring to light the (re)production of heteronormative and homophobic ideology that might not otherwise be identifiable to the Queer Linguist.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this article was to illustrate the ways in which religiously-framed pro- and anti-LGBT rights arguments are discursively framed, and to demonstrate the methodological overlap between CDA and QL and between CDA and CAF. In light of the findings discussed above, I propose that, used in combination, CDA, CAF and QL can enable the discourse analyst to examine discursive framing at both the productive and the consumptive levels. Such an approach can also provide LGBT individuals and allies wishing to make use of public discourse spaces to promote pro-LGBT-equality attitudes with (i) an overview of arguments commonly used in religious frames; (ii) an exposition of the three framing tasks that constitute the type of collective action frames that bring about social mobilisation; and (iii) an indication of the ways in which undesirable arguments can be counterframed discursively. Finally, this approach also highlights the extent to which respected members of the community can contribute to our conceptualisation of LGBT equality through participation in mass media discourses.

References

- Afshar, A. 2006. The anti-gay rights movement in the United States: The framing of religion. *Essex Human Rights Review* 3(1): 64-79.
- Adamczyk, A. and C. Pitt. 2009. Shaping attitudes about homosexuality: The role of religion and cultural context. *Social Science Research* 38: 338-351.
- Benford, R.D. and D.A. Snow. 2000. Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26: 611-639.
- Butler, A.H., A.H. Alpaslan, J. Strumpher and G. Astbury. 2003. Gay and lesbian youth experiences of homophobia in South African secondary education. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education* 1(2): 3-28.
- Chong, D. and J.N. Druckman. 2007. Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 103-126.
- Cilliers, C. 2007. Media and sexual orientation: The portrayal of gays and lesbians. In P.J. Fourie (ed.) *Media studies volume 2: Policy, management and media representation*. Cape Town: Juta and Co.
- Croucher, S. 2002. South Africa's democratisation and the politics of gay liberation. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28(2): 315-330.
- Dreyer, Y. 2006. Prejudice, homophobia and the Christian faith community. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 27(1): 155-173.
- Gamson, W.A. 2004. Bystanders, public opinion, and the media. In D.A. Snow, S.A. Soule and H. Kriesi (eds.) *The Blackwell companion to social movements*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

- Klein, A.G., C.M. Byerly and T.M. McEachern. 2009. Counterframing public dissent: An analysis of anti-war coverage in the U.S. media. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 26(4): 331-350.
- Mongie, L.D. 2013. *The discourse of liberation: The portrayal of the gay liberation movement in South African news media from 1982 to 2006*. Doctoral dissertation. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch.
- Mongie, L.D. 2015. The discourse of liberation: Frames used in characterising the gay liberation movement in two South African newspapers. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics PLUS* 46: 67-83.
- Motschenbacher, H. 2011. Taking queer linguistics further: Sociolinguistics and heteronormativity research. *International Journal of Sociology and Language* 212: 149-179.
- Msibi, T. 2012. "I'm used to it now": Experiences of homophobia among queer youth in South African township schools. *Gender and Education* 24(5): 515-533.
- Nel, J.A. and M. Judge. 2008. Exploring homophobic victimisation in Gauteng, South Africa: Issues, impacts and responses. *Acta Criminologica* 21(3): 19-36.
- Pan, Z. and G.M. Kosicki. 1993. Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political Communication* 10: 55-75.
- Reese, S.D. 2003. Framing public life: A bridging model for media research. In S.D. Reese, O.H. Gandy and A.E. Grant (eds.) *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Reid, G. and T. Dirsuweit. 2002. Understanding systemic violence: Homophobic attacks in Johannesburg and its surrounds. *Urban Forum* 13(3): 99-126.
- Scollon, R. 1997. Attribution and power in Hong Kong news discourse. *World Englishes* 16(3): 383-393.
- Scollon, R. 1998. *Mediated discourse as social interaction: A study in news discourse*. New York: Longman.
- Snow, D.A. and R.D. Benford. 1988. Ideology, frame resonance and participant mobilisation. *International Social Movement Research* 1: 197-217.
- Squires, C.R. 2011. Bursting the bubble: A case study of counter-framing in the editorial pages. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 28(1): 30-49.
- Van Dijk, T.A. 1985. Structures of news in the press. In T.A. Van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse and communication*. Berlin: De Gruyter,

- Van Dijk, T.A. 1991. The interdisciplinary study of news as discourse. In K. Bruhn-Jensen and N. Jankowski (eds.) *Handbook of qualitative methods in mass communication research*. London: Routledge.
- Van Dijk, T.A. 1993. Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society* 4(2): 249-283.
- Van Dijk, T.A. 1995a. Discourse analysis as ideology analysis. In C. Schaffner and A. Wenden (eds.) *Language and peace*. Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing.
- Van Dijk, T.A. 1995b. Discourse semantics and ideology. *Discourse and Society* 6(2): 243-289
- Van Dijk, T.A. 1998. Opinions and ideologies in the press. In A. Bell and P. Garret (eds.) *Approaches to media discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Van Dijk, T.A. 2001. Discourse, ideology and context. *Folia Linguistica* 35(1-2): 11-40.
- Van Dijk, T.A. 2003. Critical discourse analysis. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen and H.E. Hamilton (eds.) *The handbook of discourse analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (ed.) 2007. *Discourse studies*. London: Sage.
- Walter, N. 2006. *Out in the media? Knowledge, attitudes and practices of the media towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex issues and stories*. Johannesburg: Community Media for Development for Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa.
- Wells, H. and L. Polders. 2006. Anti-gay hate crimes in South Africa: Prevalence, reporting practices, and experiences of the police. *Agenda* 20(67): 20-28.

Appendix A

1 **Homosexuality is all in the individual's mind (22 September 1996)**

2 **HOMOSEXUALITY should be seen as a curable psychological state, says Rev**
 3 **LEBAMANG SEBIDI (below), executive director of the Trust for Educational**
 4 **Advancement in South Africa.**

5 The constitution bans all discrimination against people, including discrimination on the
 6 basis

6 of sexual orientation.

7 But this ban does not exempt churches from continually trying to clarify their
 8 understanding

8 of the ethical intricacies concerning homosexuality.

9 The abrasiveness with which President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwean supporters
 10 handle this question indicates the wild emotions the issue evokes.

11 When one listens carefully to the debate raging around this issue, one can discern two
 12 major

12 positions that can be labelled the Conservative Christian Stand and the Liberal Stand.

13 The Conservative Christian Stance is unambiguous: homosexuality is sinful for two
 14 reasons.

14 It is a distortion of God's creative intent and all you have to do to realise this is to look
 15 at the

15 physical structure of human genitalia. Secondly, homosexuality is wilfully embraced
 16 for

16 selfish reasons. It is not an innate tendency. It is acquired and can therefore be cured-
 17 especially through a spiritual conversion.

18 Biblical texts just about clinch the argument against homosexuality, say the
 19 Conservative

19 Christian Stance, quoting verses such as:

20 "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (Lev 18:22).

21 "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites (will inherit the
 22 kingdom

22 of God)" (1 Cor 6:9).

23 The Liberal Stance is also quite simple: a homosexual orientation is not acquired- it is
 24 innate,

24 a biological given about which nothing can be done. And if God is the creator of
 25 everything, that should include this sexual tendency.

26 Nobody would choose to be a homosexual in the midst of such intolerance, animosity
 27 and

27 inhumane isolation.

28 This stance appeals to society to let true homosexuals be as they are also normal human
 29 beings.

30 I have no reason to believe that genuine homosexuals have freely chosen their sexual
 31 orientation. And if this is true, their sexual orientation cannot be described as sinful or
 32 immoral. But we must distinguish the inclination from homosexual acts, which are often
 33 voluntary.

34 It is also a mistake to argue that society ought to regard homosexual acts as just as
 35 normal as

35 heterosexual acts.

36 While homosexuals ought to be treated with love and be given the full protection under
the
37 law, I do not accept that homosexual acts are normal. The norm is obviously
heterosexuality.
38 I am not speaking about sin, but about the standard of sexual acts which seems to be
indicated
39 by the physical nature of men and women.
40 What should homosexuals do, given that they are not responsible for this inclination?
41 God did not create this inclination. The homosexual inclination is not innate. It is more
like
42 most psychopathologies acquired during the process of nurture and growth. The
43 subconscious mind – the so-called unperceived source of our conscious feelings, desires
44 and actions – lies at the bottom of most of these perplexing inclinations. And society, in
many
45 subtle ways of socialisation-gives us these unconsciously acquired psychopathologies.
46 If homosexuality is acquired, it can be cured through psychotherapy. The homosexual
47 orientation is unlikely to be found in the genes, it is certainly in the mind.
48 Homosexuality falls in the same category as abnormal states of mind such as
paedophilia,
49 kleptomania, nymphomania, etc. Nobody rewards these psychological states or
aberrations as
50 normal or irreversible. These states may be extremely difficult to treat – but they are
treatable.

Appendix B1. **Time for the church to speak up for gays (18 July 1999)**2. **The Gospel Truth**3. **Rev. Mdheela**

4. I wrote last week that the homophobia in the household of the Lord was uncalled for, and that

5. we have no business as a Church, or as a religious movement for that matter, to sit on the

6. judgement seat and pontificate against gay and lesbian people. To so would be to deify our

7. opinions.

8. To close the subject, I felt it proper to share with you what I regard as a wonderful and compassionate ministry and sermon delivered by the Right Reverend Larry Maze at St Mark

10. Episcopal Church at Arkansas in the United States last September.

11. Taking a stand for the gay and lesbian people, the Bishop of Arkansas preached in part as

12. follows: “And yet, today there are those who speak as though they know the mind of God,

13. with startling clarity, they tell us what pleased God and what displeased God. They speak

14. of certainty as the hallmark of faithful people. Yet, some of us continue to experience

15. God as the one who chose to live in the midst of our tensions, in the midst of ambiguities, in

16. the midst of our life and yet always more than life. Always drawing us to truth

17. greater than the truth of a given moment.”

18. The good bishop went on to express sadness that it had been experienced that “the

19. marginalised people in any society are kept at the margins because of the opinions of the

20. majority of those in power.”

22. Is it not the case that the majority of our people, the heterosexuals or the so-called straight people, have this wonderful opinion about themselves as perfected people?

23. Is it not that even the priests in churches and parishes are not prepared to raise a finger in

24. solidarity with the gay and lesbian community because if they did they would be seen as

25. imperfect people? The same priests who preached long and angry sermons about the evils of

26. apartheid and discrimination now speak tentatively, if at all, about gay and lesbian issues.

27. In many ways the Church has failed to speak up for the gay and lesbian community,

28. preferring instead to condemn them as a sinning community not worthy of God’s love.

29. Is it not perhaps time that the Church was reminded of the days of Lemuel, King of Massa,

30. who was taught by his mother to “open your mouth, pronounce just sentences, and defend

31. the needy and the poor”.

32 In this context, I suggest the Church must begin to warm up and be ready to defend the
33 gay
34 and lesbian community from the ridicule and pain this community endures.
35 If the liberation movement and the progressive groups-both inside and outside the
36 country-
37 had not challenged and put apartheid on their agenda, it is possible that we would still
38 have
39 black people living under apartheid tyranny.
40 God gave us in this world stalwarts like Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Nelson Mandela, Albert
41 Luthuli, Desmond Tutu and Trevor Huddleston to challenge the iniquities of injustice
42 and
43 apartheid.
44 And what about the church?
45 And so the bishop goes on: “It occurs to me that the marginalised people in any society
46 are
47 kept at the margins because of the opinions of the majority of those in power- opinions
48 that
49 have been allowed to remain as unchallenged conclusions. But the opinion is not the
50 search- nor is it the truth.”
51 Opinions have been passed on as facts that have dangerously marginalised the people
52 God
53 created in his own image.
54 It might be that we see gay and lesbian people as behaving in an “abominable and
55 ungodly
56 way”.
57 But that largely remains our subjective view about them.
58 And as the bishop has correctly put it, gay and lesbian people are demanding that they
59 join
60 the search for truth and that all opinions “that have for generations been layered in
61 sanctified
62 language” are nothing but subjective opinions that really need to be thrown out of the
63 window as counting for nothing.
64 The search for truth goes on and at any given time it would be a mistake to deify our
65 opinions.