

An exploration of religio-cultural concepts of transgender identities in Ethiopian
Zionist churches in the Midlands, KZN.

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Transgender people experience incongruence between their gender identity and sex assigned at birth. In South Africa, the transgender population has remained an invisible population until the development of organisations such as Gender Dynamix, who are lobbying for the rights and the visibility of transgender and intersex people in Africa.

This study aimed to explore the religio-cultural concepts used to negotiate and engage transgender individuals located within the landscape of African Independent churches in the Midlands area, KwaZulu Natal. Part of this study was to explore the experiences of transgender people in the development of their gender identity. How the transgender identity is embodied in the Zion churches and how transgender individuals respond to an embodiment of their identity in these churches. The study focused mainly on the three key central themes that form an important part in the development of the transgender identity, the key themes are Naming, body, and cultural identity.

Feminist queer and transgender theorise were utilised in this study and the study used the phenomenological approach as it explored the lived experiences of transgender individuals. Findings highlighted that four of the transgender participants identified between the gender categories of feminine and masculine, which was different from their sex category assigned to them at birth. This challenged the essentialist view of understanding gender in relation to sex. Findings further suggested that the Zion churches lack a vocabulary and theories to engage transgender people. The identity of transgender people is often mistaken for gayness or lesbianism. Often the church adopted Zulu names such as *Inkonkoni/ Isitabane* to refer to transgender people. Further findings suggested that transgender people suffered from gender dysphoria because their anatomic bodies did not align with their lived gender identity. To align their bodies transgender individuals stuffed their bodies with objects.

Transgender participants illustrated that a dominant trend in their community was that there were accepted for who they are and their communities were aware of their identities from an early age. Therefore they did not experience any discrimination and culture was never used as a tool of discrimination against their lived gender identity.

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DEDICATION

To all the transgender individuals who agreed to participate in this study and those still fighting for their visibility in their homes, churches and in their communities.

To all transgender activists, researchers and lecturers teaching on sexualities, genders and gender identities, Aluta Continua comrades!

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CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

Transgender people are individuals who experience incongruence between their gender identity and sex assigned at birth (Gender Dynamix: 2016). Chris/tine McLachlan (2007) points out that the transgender group is marginalized and silenced in society and often seen as people who are mentally ill (McLachlan, C: 2007, pg.87). Reality is human sexuality and gender identities are part of human life and they determine who we are as human beings. Transgender individuals experience this incongruence in the development of their identity and as such this kind of incongruence influences the formulation of their identity, and how they relate and experience their bodies and relate to their spiritual world in relation to self and others (McLachlan, C: 2010, pg.1).

Transgender people have always been invisible such as that studies on LGBTIQ+ people mainly focused on gays and lesbians thus living behind transgenders and intersex often and bisexuals invisible. The homogenizing of homosexual studies often meant that transgender individuals were grouped in the experiences of lesbians and gays and the experiences of their bodies were and have often been narrated erroneously. Research on transgender people often revealed that transgender people experience church as an uncomfortable institution that is not welcoming of their identity (McLachlan, C: 2010, pg.75). This is mainly because gender has been understood as a binary construct that only revolve around the sense of being male or female. Often transgender people experience their bodies and their identity embodiment as diverse and complex hence they feel that they are not conforming to the norms and socially constructed forms of gender. As Johanna Bond (2016, pg. 67-68) illustrate

Gender norms enforce conformity to societal expectation of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. These societal norms of masculinities and femininity enforce heteronormativity by dictating that sexuality flows naturally from gender, which in turn flows naturally to sex assigned at birth. But many queer, gender, queer, feminists and Trans theorists have refuted these notions of these naturalized sex, gender, and sexuality.

Within the Christian church gender, sex and sexuality have always and mostly associated or negotiated in relation to procreation and anything that does not conform to such understanding is discriminated against or rejected. Being a transgender man coming from the

Zion church and having come out, my curiosity on the relationship one has with their gender identity and spiritual identity became increasingly un-ignorable. Embarking in the study of this nature I anticipated enquiring on the experiences of transgender people's embodiment of gender identity, transgender individuals located in the landscape of the African Independent/Indigenous church and they're coming out narratives. Transgender people have been an invisible population and not so much of audible population and often silent from the African faith communities (Jobson, G. et al.: 2012, pg. 161) (Van Klinken, A.: 2015, pg. 948). This study partly aims to contribute to transgender research to make transgender people visible and audible within the African faith communities.

As a transgender person coming from the Zion church, certain concepts were communicated to explain my gender identity and how my identity is tied up to the ancestral spiritual world. The communication of these concepts sparked the interest of how other Zion churches communicated the religio-cultural concepts and discuss transgender individuals. Literature speaking about these experiences was difficult to find. Hence the aim of this study is partly to make a contribution to the visibility of transgender people as they are beginning to emerge and to claim the visibility of their identity in African faith communities.

Though South Africa may seem to be leading the way by passing laws in its constitution that support Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning and Asexual (LGBTQIA) people's rights but the reality is; life is still tough and threatening for LGBTQIA people in South Africa. The rise of homophobic and transphobic attack on LGBTQIA is disturbing. Homophobia and transphobia threaten to silence the voices of LGBTQIA+ people. Scholars such as Adriaan Van Klinken (2011), Masiwa Gunda (2010) and Thabo Msibi (2011) have addressed how homophobia in Africa is addressed to be in conflict with cultural and religious values. Noting that the opposition and disapproval of same-sex relationships stem from prominent African leaders to African church leaders (Van Klinken, A.: 2011) (Gunda, M. R.:2010, pg. 20) (Msibi, T.:2011, pg. 54-55).

Thabo Msibi (2011) argues that "the effort to label same-sex desire as Un-African represent a façade that conceals neo-conservatism and a resurgence of patriarchy, coated in the constructs of religion, nationalism, and law." (Msibi, T.: 2011, pg. 55). Often LGBTQIA+ people in their identity challenge the dominant trends in our society of heteronormativity and prove that gender is fluid and thus challenge the conservatism and essentialist view that gender and sexuality are fixed. Such challenges are met with criticism and religion and

culture is often used by political leaders, church leaders and traditional leaders to declare homosexuality or same-sex relationships as Un-African, and Un-Biblical. Gunda Masiwa (2010) mentions that "Christians with the consent of politicians and traditional leaders have invoked the Bible in labelling homosexual practice as sin roundly condemned by the "Word of God," the Bible." (Gunda, M. R.: 2010, pg. 20).

Such political and religious dynamics of homophobia fuel hatred against LGBTIQ+ individuals in Africa. As argued above that even though South Africa might be leading the way in passing the laws supporting the LGBTIQ+ community, however, the high rate of crime committed against LGBTIQ+ cannot be ignored. A recent report on the high rate of hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ people, hate crimes such as corrective rape, which is mostly committed against the lesbian and transgender man on the belief that the perpetrator is showing the victim that they are not real men. Corrective rape refers to a stance when a woman is raped to cure her of lesbianism (Koraan, R. & Geduld, A.: 2015, pg.1931).

Though corrective rape has been documented as the crime mostly affecting lesbians, however, I would like to argue that even transgender men, transgender women, and gay man also suffer from this crime in general. Often at times, transgender experiences are narrated as that of gays or lesbian persons, mainly of the confusion pertaining to the difference of gender identity and sexual orientation. However, a name has been coined to refer to transgender experiences of prejudice and discrimination, transphobia. Transphobia like homophobia refers to an emotional disgust, prejudice, and discrimination against transgender people who do not conform to society's gender expectations (Hill, D & Willoughby, B.:2005, pg. 533). According to Nagoshi et al (2008) "Transgender experiences of prejudice and discrimination may be worse than those of LGB people. By addressing important, yet difficult to control aspects of transgender life, such as restroom use, health care, and the choice to change gender in official university document and the change of names in identity documents." (Nagoshi, L. et al.: 2008, pg. 522). Such prejudice can also be extended to religious institutions and work institutions and in general communal spaces in society.

Though this study does not claim to provide all the answers about the embodiment of transgender identity, however by conducting this study I seek to understand the religio-cultural concept of transgender people found in Ethiopian Zionist churches and how the church engages the lived experiences of transgender people in KwaZulu-Natal. Researchers have highlighted through research that in local communities there are cultural and traditional

terms that have been and are used to negotiate LGBTIQ+ sexualities in Africa. For example, Lesbian is known as *Inkonkoni / Ungqingili*.¹ Gay is known as *Isitabane/ isikhesane* (Msibi, T: 2013, pg.65). Bisexual has no name as yet but falls under the umbrella name of *Isitabane*, which normally refers to a homosexual. Transgender is best known as *Inkonkoni*. Intersex is referred to as *Uncukumbili*² (Mkasi, L: 2013, pg. 33) (Chamane, T: 2015). Queer and Asexual are a very recent concept and no known cultural names to refer to them. These terms are found amongst Zulu speaking people in South Africa³. This study seeks to make a contribution to the study of sexuality, and gender identities within the Ethiopian Zionist churches in KwaZulu Natal, as it may be noted that at the moment the literature on African Independent churches has not yet indicated/ addressed the urgency of discussing sexualities within these churches in South Africa.

1.1. Background to the research

In recent history, African Independent churches have been seen or presented as an African church that embraces African traditions and custodians of African culture as they were seen as preserving African ways of worship. The African independent churches scholars⁴ have presented lots of work and theologies found in the Zionist churches but I must admit that it is shocking to realize that there is little work done by African Independent churches scholars on issues of sexuality and sexual diversity within the African Independent churches. Being a transgender person and trying so hard to find ways and means of negotiating my gender identity in the church increased my interest to search for more literature on AICs and sexuality and transgender identities. Realizing this gap in literature sparked the interest to inquire more about how other transgender people in the Zion churches negotiate their identities. Hence the study is to explore the religio-cultural concepts of transgender identities

¹ *Inkonkoni/ Ungqingili and Isitabane/ Isikhesane* are Zulu derogatory name that was used in society to refer to people involved in same-sex relationships.

² *Uncukumbili* is the Zulu word that refers specifically to intersex individuals, which literally translate “the one with two private parts.”

³ Zulu speaking people are a nation that was founded by King Shaka Zulu in the early eighteen century and mostly they are found in the KwaZulu Natal region, however, some Zulu speaking people have moved around South Africa and Africa.

⁴ See Sundkler, B. & Steed, S. (2004) *A History of the church in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See Kealotswe, O. (2014). ‘The nature and character of the African Independent Churches (AICs) in the 21st century: Their theological and social agenda.’ *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. 40(2). See Sackey, B. M. 2006. *New Directions in Gender and Religion. The changing status of women in African Independent churches*. USA: Lexington books.

in Ethiopian Zionist churches using three central themes that embody the development of transgender identities, the themes are naming, body and cultural identity.

1.2. The motivation for the study

This study is born out of my personal experience. Growing up as a member of the Zionist church myself, I came out as a lesbian in 2005, when I came out the church attributed my sexuality to the spirit of my late brother who comes after me. Later in the years (2010), I discovered that I was not a lesbian but a transgender man, however, my sexuality was still linked to how I was possessed by the spirit of my late brother who was supposedly living through me, leading me to feel and dress like a man. This experience motivated me to want to examine deeply and critically how African Independent Churches, henceforth (AIC's) negotiate sexuality, especially the Zionist churches. Being a Zulu Christian transgender man myself, growing up in the Zionist church I have come to notice that issues of sex, sexualities, and gender are not discussed in public in the Zionist church unless the church believes that there is an element of spiritual possession.

The phenomenon of transgender is not easy to discuss and especially because culturally in the Zulu community, transgenderism is taken as another form of Intersex or homosexuality. However, the explanation of this phenomenon is different, hence I grouped intersex and transgender identity together in this study. I am using intersex in this study as an entry point because there is a direct Zulu name that is embedded in a culture which defines intersex, which is *Uncukumbili*. Again transgender and intersex share the same problematic pressure to be normalized to the gender/ sex binary. And the bodies of both intersex and transgender people present complex and dynamic and controversial gender constructions.

Within the African countries in the olden day's intersexed children were often hidden from the society because they were regarded as shame more like disabled children (Mkasi, L: 2013. pg.33) (Epprecht, M: 2008). This sort of behaviour promoted silence on issues concerning transgendered and intersexed individuals.

Transgender individuals in African Independent Churches represent a complex intersection of religion, sexuality, culture, and gender. As argued in the introduction section in Africa religion is linked to homophobia as religion is used to project same-sex desires experiences as Un-biblical and culture are linked to homophobia as culture is used to argue that same-sex experiences connote Western agenda of cultural imperialism, therefore same-sex or

homosexuality is Un-African. Both same-sex and homosexuality are mostly inclusive of transgender experiences and such expressions meant that religion and culture began to be used as tools to fuel homophobia. Hence African faith communities such as African Independent churches found it hard and challenging to engage and debate issues of sexuality and gender identity and to find the vocabulary to negotiate gendered bodies as transgender individuals in their churches. However, this study will showcase stories of transgender individuals embodied in these intersections of culture, religion, sexuality, and gender and showcase how the church engages and negotiates these intersections in the development of the transgender identity of transgender individuals.

1.3. Research design

In order to engage the complex intersection as described above, this study will be Empirical research, a Phenomenological study, located in Qualitative research paradigm. The study explored the lived experiences of transgender people. The study aimed to explore and describe transgender people's embodiment of their gender identity in the Zion churches in KwaZulu-Natal. The study focused on the three central themes, which form part in the construction of transgender identity, naming, body and cultural identity. As this study is a phenomenological approach Steven Taylor et al (2016) defines phenomenology as an "approach helps to capture how people construct their realities, attempts to see things from other people's point of view." (Taylor, S. et al: 2016, pg.12).

1.3.1. Sampling

I used snowball sampling to identify suitable candidates. For the study, I interviewed two key informants who are leaders from the Ethiopian Zion churches. I further interviewed 4 transgender individuals from KwaZulu-Natal using snowball sampling. Due to the sensitive nature of the study and some people feared being outed to danger or vulnerability in their local communities and church, I worked closely with the Gay and Lesbian Network and the Imvelo LGBTIQA+ organization in Estcourt to identify candidates. Though it was difficult to locate transgender individuals for the study however my position as a transgender person and a Zion member facilitated my access to fellow transgender people coming from the Zion church residing within the Midlands area KwaZulu-Natal. However, it proved to be difficult to locate intersex individuals in the Midlands area who are from the Zion church and thus the data collection and analysis only focused on transgender people.

1.4.1. Research instruments

I used the recording to record the interview session held with the interviewees. I also used the notebook to write all the emotions and facial expression expressed by the interviewee during the session. All participants signed an informed consent form, indicating that they understand that their participation in this study is voluntary.

1.4. Key research Question

How are the religio-cultural concepts of transgender identities negotiated in the Ethiopian Zionist Churches in the Midlands, KwaZulu-Natal?

1.5. Research sub-questions

1.6. The research sub-questions used to guide the study are:

- 1.6.1. What are the beliefs of the Ethiopian Zionist churches on transgender identities?
- 1.6.2. How do transgender people understand the religio-cultural beliefs in Ethiopian Zionist churches on transgender identities?
- 1.6.3. What are the prevailing religious and cultural responses of transgender people on the concepts of transgender identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches?

1.7. Objectives of the study

- 1.7.1. To explore the beliefs of the Ethiopian Zionist churches on transgender identities
- 1.7.2. To interrogate how transgender people understand the religio-cultural beliefs in the Ethiopian Zionist churches on transgender identities.
- 1.7.3. To inquire the prevailing religious and cultural responses of transgender people to the concepts on transgender identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches.

1.8. Limitations of the study

Transgender people find it hard to share their stories, and it becomes even more difficult when they have to share their experiences with their churches. The limitations of this study were the difficulty in finding transgender individuals who are open about their gender identity and are members of the Zionist churches. The other limitation was the focus of the

study, which only focused in the Midlands area in the KwaZulu-Natal and I must note that there are not much of transgender people who are open and who attend Zion churches, therefore the focus area limited the study. The relocating of other transgender people at the last minute, when the interview date was set became another factor limiting the study. As a result, one of the participants was interviewed telephonically due to the fact that she was not around KZN during the time of the interview.

1.9. Structure of the study

In the process of engaging the research questions, my argument developed in the following way and is subdivided into 7 chapters. In chapter 1 I map out the research design of this thesis and set out to explain in detail the research objectives and aims of this thesis. In chapter 2 I provide a broad literature landscape on historical studies about homosexuality, the influence of western studies on homosexuality to Africa and how African studies on homosexuality in Africa has evolved over the years. Further discusses literature on studies about homosexuality and African Christianity and briefly introduce studies on the Ethiopian Zionist churches and their literature on gender and sexuality and addresses the shift in academic research from the terminology of homosexuality to LGBTIQ+ acronym. Mainly focusing on transgender studies as this provides an understanding of how research has shifted from sexual inversions, to homosexuality, to same-sex relationships then LGBTIQ+. Chapter 3 I sketch out in details the theoretical landscape how the queer theory, queer theology, and transgender theory will be used as analysis tools of the information on the religio-cultural concepts of transgender identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches, KwaZulu Natal, using the three central key themes that informed the research protocol of the study, naming, body and cultural gender identity. In chapter 4 I outline in detail the research design of the study. The study is an empirical study, drawing from the phenomenological approach located in the qualitative paradigm. In Chapter 5 I present data from the field drawing from Nagoshi and Brzuzy's proposal of transgender theory framework embracing the embodiment that constitute the self-identity of transgender identity, focusing on the three key themes as they emerged from the theoretical framework, naming, body and cultural gender identity. Chapter 6 I engage and discuss the findings to offer Insights and show how this study challenges and provides new insights on the literature on African Independent churches, sex, sexuality and gender identity within the South African context. In chapter 7 I present a brief summary of the study and offer recommendations for future research.

1.10. Conclusion

Introduction of this study highlights the experience of transgender people as people who experience incongruence between their gender identity and sex assigned to them at birth. Such incongruence contributes to the formulation of one's transgender identity and how transgender individuals relate to the self, and others and their spiritual world. This section highlighted that transgender individual often is an invisible, silent and not much audible population in Africa and the homogenizing of LGBTIQ+ studies often focus on lesbian and gay experiences leaving out the transgender experiences leading to the invisibility of transgender individuals in research.

Literature portrays Africa as a homophobic country, though a country such as South Africa is leading African countries by passing laws that accommodate LGBTIQ+ people however sexual crimes and homophobic attacks are still happening to LGBTIQ+ people in South Africa. Research reveals that Homophobia and transphobia stem from top African leaders and church leaders who assert that homosexuality inclusive of transgender experiences is un-African and Un-Biblical. Notions of homophobia and transgender threaten to silence transgender and LGBTIQ+ people in African.

Transgender individuals as bodied individuals represent a complex and complicated intersection of culture, religion, sexuality, and gender. This study concern itself with Christian transgender individuals, residing within cultured communities, therefore the negotiation of their gender identity will embody the religious aspect of the formulation of their identity, the cultural embodiment, and the sexual aspect as part of the embodiment of their transgender identity. As Van Klinken (2015) notes that, "the observation that many African LGBTI are religious can only be a surprise and be considered a contradiction if religion is inherently homophobic and if the religious commitment is considered to be a matter of individual choice and as conflicting with sexual identity." (Van Klinken, A.: 2015, pg. 949). Therefore Van Klinken adopts the notion that both religion and sexuality are crucial aspects of personal identity and subjectivity (Van Klinken, A.:2015, pg. 949). As highlighted above, this study will showcase the stories of transgender individuals embodied in these intersectionality of religion, culture, sexuality, and gender. Before indulging on the serious business of this study, to understand better the context in which this study addressed I would like to map out in details the landscape of literature on homosexuality studies in from Europe

to Africa and the evolvement of studies on homosexuality to LGBTIQA+ studies and the gender and sexuality studies in Zion churches.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I mapped out the research design of this thesis and set out to explain in detail the research objectives and aims of this thesis. The first section of this chapter, I am discussing and engaging literature on historical studies about homosexuality in the European countries. The second section highlights the influence of western studies on homosexuality to Africa and how African studies on homosexuality in Africa has evolved over the years. The third section focuses on studies about homosexuality and African Christianity and briefly introduces studies on the Ethiopian Zionist churches and their literature on gender and sexuality. These sections form a vital intersection in exploring the research that has been done in the past and continues to be explored on the subject of sexuality. The fourth and last section addresses the shift in academic research from the terminology of homosexuality to LGBTIQIA+ acronym. Mainly focusing on Intersex and transgender studies as this provides an understanding of how research has shifted from sexual inversions, to homosexuality, to same-sex relationships then LGBTIQIA+. LGBTQIA is the umbrella acronym recently used to refer to queer individuals, which is inclusive of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning and asexual individuals.

The importance of addressing this academic shift is to show that subject of sexuality and gender identity have not always been an easy subject and it shows how has the church and society been dealing with issues of sexuality and gender identity. The literature will illustrate the trajectory of the study of gender, sexuality, and religion, from identity politics to gender fluidity and gender diversity to gender expressions.

2.1. Historical studies on homosexuality

Same-sex relationships or homosexuality are not a recent invention, over centuries scholars have argued that same-sex relationships have always been part of our lives, in this section, I look in details on how homosexuality or same-sex relationships evolved over centuries to recent times.

Studies on homosexuality date back to the late nineteen century, but extensive records about same-sex relations in ancient societies extend to ancient Greece, China, and Rome. These

records mostly address male same-sex relations, in part because literacy was often limited to men (Pickett, B.: 2009, pg. xxxvi) (Greenberg, D.: 1988, pg. 30) (Halperin, D.: 1990, pg. 20). Scholars have argued that “ancient days same-sex relations were not interpreted the same way as homosexual relationship, because in the ancient time these relationships were not concerned with identity but merely societal status and these forms of same-sex relations were highly structured and institutionalized.” (Pickett, B.: 2009, pg. xxxiii) (Halperin, D.: 1990, pg. 15). According to David Halperin, before 1892 there was no concept of homosexuality but only a concept of sexual inversion (Halperin, D.: 1990, pg.15). Byrne Fone, attest to this statement that classical Greek had no word for homosexuality nor any word equivalent to our homosexuality though a number of terms described those who engage, frequently or exclusively in homosexual behaviour. Fone illustrate that “ancient Greek same-sex relations/desire were encompassed within the philosophical concept of paiderastia, which implied a relationship that combined the roles of a teacher and student with those of lover and beloved, and it carried the expectation of sex between the two.” (Fone, B.: 2000, pg. 19). However Fone warns that this understanding of paiderastia should not be confused with paedophilia, this practice did not involve sexual use of children. When men persuade younger males those they persuade were theoretically ready for the chase, they had reached puberty (Fone, B.: 2000, pg. 19).

In the nineteenth century sexual preference for a person of one’s own sex was not clearly distinguished from other sorts of non-conformity to one’s culturally defined sex role. Sexual inversion did not denote the same conceptual phenomenon as homosexuality (Halperin, D.: 1990, pg. 15). David Greenberg, mentions that homosexual (transgenerational) relations have been studied thoroughly in New Guinea and in parts of Island Melanesia where in many cultures they are a part of boy's initiation rites and are thus fully institutionalized (Greenberg, D: 1988, pg. 28) (Pickett, B: 2009, pg. xxxiii).

Pickett states that “in ancient Greece, the gender of one's sex partner was less important than whether one was penetrating or penetrated. The nobility of character and physical beauty of one's partner were also seen as of great significance. He further states that there was arguably not an understanding of one having a sexual orientation unless the concept is broadened to include men who consistently and willingly took the passive role.” (Pickett, B.: 2009, pg. xxxii). Halperin argues that “concepts of homosexuality and heterosexuality are modern, western bourgeois productions; nothing resembling them can be found in the classical antiquity.” (Halperin, D.: 1990, pg. pg. 8). Though extensive work has been done on

homosexuality, one cannot help but note that studies on homosexuality often concentrated on male same-sex relations in ancient history.

In the development of studies on homosexuality, one may argue that scholarship mainly or mostly focused on gays and lesbians relationships, and did not concern issues of transgender, intersex and bisexual people, which is what this thesis is partly hoping to cover. Jeanne Prinsloo confirms this by pointing out that growing visibility of gay sexuality in the scholarly literature tends to foreground male homosexual practices while other non-heteronormative identities seldom feature (Prinsloo, J.: 2011, pg. 32). Pickett note in his study that it has become common to include transgender issues with lesbian and gays but for historical work on homosexuality this is not the case because transgenderism/transsexualism is recent (Pickett, B.: 2009, pg. xiii).

When scholars argue that transgenderism is the recent discourse, the question that one may ask is transgender really a recent discourse or it is the coining of the concept/term transgender that is recent. As the same argument may be made that lesbianism for the longest time did not gain so much exposure in research simply because it involved females, the group that has been disadvantaged in the past educationally and not gaining enough societal recognition as equal to men. Jeffrey Weeks points out that "historians have a point in suggesting that the development of a sexualized lesbian identity at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century was an imposition by sexologist designed precisely to split women from women, breaking ties of emotionality and affection which bonded all women together against men." (Weeks, J.: 2017, pg. 53).

Weeks makes an important point that today we speak of sexuality as never before, in the past who could speak of sex and the body was tightly regulated, churches, states, the medical professionals, poets and novelists (Weeks, J.: 2017, pg. 1). Weeks further note that "today everyone is an expert but as from the nineteen century sexuality became the focus of fierce ethical and moral debates between traditional moralists and progressive reformers; between the high priests of sexual restraint and the advocates of sexual freedom; between the defenders of male privilege and feminist who challenged it and between forces of moral regulation and upholders of traditional values. This marked a shift that sexual issues were no longer regarded as marginal to the mainstream of political life but however have moved closer to the centre of political concerns." (Weeks, J.: 2017, pg. 2-3). It is fair to assume that this kind of shift did not only happen in Europe but it was a global shift or move and Africa

too had some kind of moral and ethical debates on issues of sexuality, which is what the next section looks at in detail, African studies on homosexuality and or same-sex relationships.

2.2. African studies on homosexuality

Issues of same-sex sexuality and sexual diversity have become strongly contested and debated within the broader framework of African intellectual discourses, especially in religion and theology. In several South African communities and churches, homosexuality and sexual diversity have been labelled as Un-African and Unbiblical (Human rights Watch report: 2003) (Prinsloo, J.: 2011, pg. 33). For example in KwaZulu Natal, King Goodwill Zwelithini (who hold the highest position in KwaZulu-Natal as King of the Zulu people and a prominent member of the church) pronounced at the public gathering celebrating *Impi yaseSandlwane*⁵ that people in same-sex relationships “are rotten no matter who they are.” (Miya, S.: 2012, pg. 2). It is such cases that fuel hatred and sexual violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Intersex, queer and asexual persons, best known as LGBTQIA.

Scholars such as Masiwa Gunda (2010) and Adriaan Van Klinken (2015) asserts that in Africa as a whole the labelling of homosexuality and sexual diversity as Un-African and Un-Biblical is fuelled by the disapproval of African leaders who have political influence and church leaders who have a religious influence (Gunda, M.: 2010, pg. 20) (Van Klinken, A.:2015, pg. 128). Antonio (1997) and Gunda & Van Klinken confirm the stances of homophobia in Africa as they mention that in the African public spaces homosexuality is rejected in the name of tradition and culture (Antonio, E.: 1997, pg. 310) (Klinken, A. & Gunda, M.:2012, pg. 115). This kind of treatment does not allow LGBTQIA space to be open about their sexuality. This is even more difficult for members of the LGBTQIA community who are also Christian for they find themselves forced to find alternative spaces of worship, where they can be accepted and be open about who they are (Potgieter, C & Reygan, F.: 2011, pg. 60). It is part of this contestation and debate that I look briefly into the position of Africa and homosexuality or same-sex relationships.

As in other parts of the world, Africa also has a history of same-sex relationships, they also date back in the history of African tribes. The cultural norm saw courtship between an older man and young man normal, this was no exception in Africa. Tribes like the Tutsi, Hutu, and

⁵ Isandlwana, the battle that rocked Victorian Britain; at which the Zulus wiped out a substantial British force including the 1st Battalion

Nubi have numerous reports of same-sex relations and in South Africa, homosexual relations in the mining compounds were familiar to miners, company officials and missionaries alike. These were known as mine marriages (Pickett, B.: 2009, pg. 3) (Moodie, D. Ndatshe, V. & Sibuyi, B.: 1989, pg. 413). Punt points out that the influence of European and Christian values de-stabilized these same-sex behaviours in Africa and deprived it of its popularity that these were important sources of spiritual powers and religious education (Punt, J.: 2014, pg. 9). The deeper sense of gay community and movements in South Africa developed around 1970s. In 1994, more than two dozen gay and lesbian groups agreed to form the national coalition for gay and lesbian equality. This umbrella group ensured that South Africa's post-apartheid constitution included sexual orientation as a protected status in its bill of rights, along with such things as race and ethnicity. In 1995 this movement took a lead in a court case to have all of South Africa's anti-sodomy, unnatural acts and other anti-gay laws struck down as unconstitutional and won to convince the court hence the laws void. In 2006 the South African court further enact a same-sex marriage law (Pickett, B.: 2009, pg. 4). This brought a bit of a shift in the use of the term homosexuality to LGBTQIA to be inclusive of the other identities that may be gender non-conforming as this may not have been the case with the research on homosexuality which proved to focus mainly on lesbians and gays⁶.

Although in South Africa the constitution passed the law to include sexual orientation as a right, the same may not be shared in countries like Zimbabwe, Botswana, Uganda, and Tanzania where homosexual acts are punishable by life in prison. Hence this may be the case, further research indicate that within African scholarship research has been done on African same-sex relationships and African traditional healers, which has proved that traditional healers do practice same-sex relationships thus same-sex relationship is not foreign or Un-African as most African leaders have claimed it to be (Mkasi, L.: 2013.) (Stobie, C.: 2011), (Nkabinde, N.: 2008) (Morgan, R. & Reid, G.: 2003). Scholars such as Jeremy Punt have argued that pointing homosexuality as a Western disease and same-sex relationships as un-African is historically inaccurate (Punt, J.: 2014, pg. 10). Lindiwe Mkasi studied Sangomas and same-sex relationships at Inanda, Durban KwaZulu Natal and came to the conclusion that same-sex relationship was not Un-African but she points out that the Sangomas (who are in same-sex relationships) she interviewed are members of African Independent churches, hence I may argue that in the study they are discussing their orientation in relation to their work as

⁶ Debate on terminologies for LGBTQIA, please see section 2.4.

Sangomas as opposed to their religious affiliation with their churches (Mkasi, L: 2013, pg. 32).

According to Marc Epprecht same-sex relationships or what we term homosexual orientation or transgender identity was also not necessarily an offense but a respected attribute if caused by certain types of spirit possession and manifest in certain ways (Epprecht, M.: 2013, pg. 74). Therefore one may note and argue that issues of sexuality have been associated with spirit possession especially in Africa but not discussed in relation to church denominations such as the Zionist churches in South Africa. One may point out that there are silence and less academic research work on sexuality and sexual diversity or homosexuality and the Zionist churches, which this study hopes to address. Scholars such as John Kapya Kaoma (2016) and Edward Antonio (1997) stress that silence associated with issues of sexuality and sexual diversity in Africa is the major problem. This makes issues of sexuality in Africa enormously difficult to tackle, because traditionally except under ritually constrained circumstances, sex and sexuality are not publicly discussed. Thus the whole subject is encircled by a halo of secrecy and hedged around with innumerable taboos (Kaoma, J.: 2016) (Antonio, E.: 1997, pg. 296). Scholars have addressed this silence to the Victorian era, arguing that colonial administrators, settlers and missionaries silenced sexual discourse in Africa whereas African traditions allowed sexual discourses and celebrated sex during certain life events, but missionaries attached shame to it. This colonial silence is now celebrated as the authentic African traditional position on human sexuality (Kaoma, J.: 2016, pg.68).

The impact of colonialism in Africa is now celebrated as the authentic African culture, which makes one ask questions on the stand of the true African culture on issues of sexuality or if it's possible to know or learn how Africans tackled issues of sexuality before the colonialization period? It is difficult to talk about African people and not talk about culture, spirituality, and religion, for as Africans we do not separate these three as we believe that they form part of who we are and these three concepts complement each other in the life of individuals. The most African population is considered to be religious and mostly Christian. This means that it is important to further look into how the Christian church, which forms a big part of society has been dealing with sexuality with special interest on how the church has engaged with LGBTQIA people.

2.3. Studies on homosexuality and African Christianity

Members of the LGBTQIA community who are Christian find themselves forced to find alternative spaces of worship, where they can be accepted and be open about who they are. This is because the Christian church has become a hostile space that is not welcoming to members of the LGBTQIA community. I find it important in this section to look into homosexuality and African Christianity since this project concerns itself with the Christian community and members who are transgender and intersex. As noted above that it is difficult to talk of African people and ignore the fact that they are religious beings, so having said that I believe it is important to look in detail at how the church has negotiated sexuality and how it engaged, negotiated with LGBTQIA people.

I would like to start off by looking briefly into European Christianity and how it tackled issues of homosexuality or how the church engaged the LGBTQIA people and how the European church had an influence on African Church and African Christianity as a whole. In the history of Christian tradition, the response to homoeroticism has been entangled in the dual treatment of sexuality. The church had attempted to limit sex to procreation as its natural purpose, yet also idealized celibacy. According to Fone though fathers of the church could not agree upon the nature of Christ they were united in their detestation of homosexual acts. During the pre-Christian Roman era, no law had forbidden homosexual act. But by the fourth century the empire had become Christian and legal condemnation based on religious precept became possible (Fone, B.: 2000, pg. 19). Scholars note that in the eleventh century, the theologian Peter Damien coined the term sodomy, referring especially to his fellow clerics among whom in his view this sin was prevalent and virtually intractable. Only after the twelfth century that the Christian church began to persecute sodomites (Sands, K.: 2007) (Boswell, J.: 1980, 169).

According to Sands and Boswell, the persecution was a collaboration of religious and secular authorities. The protestant reformers insisted on procreative marriage and disapproved of Catholic celibacy, which they linked with homosexuality. With the eventual breakup of Christendom and the rise of democracies in Europe and the United States, doctrinal differences among Christians became less politically significant. But sexual deviance distinct from religious deviance became a matter of even more political concern. By the late nineteenth century, the sodomites – a type of moral corruption and contagion had been replaced in the West with the homosexual, construed then as a medical and later

psychological type. Factors leading to the persecution were beyond the biblical interpretation of sodomy, which licensed prostitution and burnt homosexuality (Sands, K.: 2007) (Boswell, J.: 1980, pg. 169). Sands states that “in Christian and post-Christian world, the struggle over gay rights depends in part over whether homosexuality is placed within the psychological typology or within the older religious- moral typology. The religious-moral typology is often associated with the view of the conservative Christians who simply see homosexuality as a voluntary sinful behaviour. Liberal Christians often associate with the involuntary psychological typology, and homosexuals as an identity group in need of civil rights protection.” (Sands, K.: 2007).

The division in the church on the issue of homosexuality or same-sex relationships did not only happen in Europe, but Africa was also no exception. According to the Guardian report, the United Methodist Church held a convention in Oregon, where more than 40% of members came from outside the United States, of those three quarters came from Africa. In November 2015 more than a dozen on African Methodist Bishops representing 5 million members set precedent by speaking out publicly against homosexuality (Zylstra: 2016). Simangaliso Kumalo (2011), argues that the Methodist church in South Africa (herewith MCSA) has been divided in its answer to same-sex relationships. The chairperson of the Ethics and worship church committee at the time, which guided the MCSA on the issue of homosexuality said that the MCSA church is a community of love, not rejection, however, the rejection of Ecclesia De Lange contradicted this statement (Kumalo, S.:2011, pg. 175). Though in the end, the Methodist church has accepted gay and lesbian people to its membership and ministry, however, it has not taken further steps to recognize same-sex unions (Kumalo, S.:2011, pg. 189).

Leaders of conservative Anglican churches have said they will stand for the truth as a critical global summit which has laid bare deep divisions within the worldwide Anglican Communion over homosexuality. The Anglican church from six African countries (Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo) want Welby (Archbishop of Canterbury) to impose sanctions on the Episcopal Church of America, which heightened the simmering conflict over homosexuality when it consecrated a gay priest, Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire in 2003 (<http://www.theguardian.com>).

Looking locally in South Africa the report submitted to KZNCC (KwaZulu Natal Christian Council of Churches) by Blazanor enterprises is a summary on the position of most South

African mainline churches, whom all agree and confess that it is sinful to actively discriminate and persecute homosexual people. This means these churches are against homophobia, however they present to be against same-sex marriages. The Anglican Church said it will not bless same-sex unions, although it would provide loving support and care. This is supported by the letter from the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, which states that the Anglican church of South Africa through its top deliberative and legislative body sees LGBTI people as welcomed members of the body of Christ (<http://www.enca.com>) Lutherans and Moravians based their position on Scripture they deplore same-sex marriages and encourages church workers and parishioners not to engage in such relationships.

The Dutch Reformed church is at the ongoing debate on the issue of homosexuality. Charlene Van der Walt (2018) and Melanie Judge (2018) writes that after years of internal pressure from gays, lesbians, transgender, bisexual and Intersex individuals who are members of the Dutch Reformed Church in 2015 the church took a remarkable and inclusive decision that opened space for queer ministers to be ordained in the Dutch Reformed Church and also the decision accommodated space for those who were not quite convinced, not ready to continue to explore the issue collectively. However, in 2016 the church denounced its statement of inclusion and reverted back to its conservative position pertaining to sexual diversity in the faith community (Van der Walt, C.: 2018) (Judge, M.: 2018). The Dutch Reformed Church currently has a court case in session before the Pretoria high court of South Africa about the retraction of its decision and scholars and gender activist are challenging the church's retraction as double unconstitutional and sentence is expected to be handed down in the course of the year (Van der Walt, C.: 2018, <http://www.news24.co.za> accessed 09 October 2018) (Melanie, J.: 2018, <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-10-09-00-queer-rights-battle-is-a-fight-for-the-right-to-religious-belief>. Accessed on the 09 October 18.).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints said that Mormon theology says that marriage between man and woman is ordained by God as a result the church does not endorse same-sex marriage. The Baptist church said homosexuality is incompatible with Biblical teaching because God's design of sexual intimacy places it within the context of marriage between one man and one woman. The Catholic Bishop opposed gay marriage on the bases that marriage is a faithful, exclusive and lifelong union between one man and one woman. The homosexual unions cannot be given the status of marriage, because they do not express full human complementary and because they are inherently not procreative. Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man

and woman. Throughout the scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed, therefore sexual acts outside of this circle are forbidden (<http://www.kzncc.org.za>).

One may not help but notice that these South African churches are not being open about whether they accept and endorse same-sex relationships but they strongly disapprove of homosexual unions and that they are not deserving of the name marriage, and the question that I would like to ask from this, does this mean the church is willing to accept individuals who are homosexual, not looking to be married? Or this simply states or shows that the church is not yet ready to engage itself in in-depth discussions on issues of sexuality and listen to people's experiences before hiding behind the scripture. The last question that comes to mind is, has the church not been using marriage and scripture as forms of hiding its homophobia? Instead of engaging in discussions about sexuality and sexual diversity. Kaoma points out, homophobia has many pastoral, theological and Missiological implications (Kaoma, J.: 2016, pg.17).

The famous statement usually used by Christians that God does not make mistakes, one is born either male or female fails to take into account that some people are born intersex. This as Kaoma illustrates “leads to many families living in the shadows of secrecy, fear, and rejection. In most cases, the Bible and the Quran have been repeatedly cited and used in African sexual politics. Kaoma further states that the church can play a critical role in empowering these families to accept sexual diversity as natural. Moreover, the church needs pastoral resources on sexual diversity to fully support and care for these families, which is impossible when it denies the diversity of human sexuality. Though this may be the case, Kaoma suggests that an appeal to traditional concepts is another unique and important contribution to the study of sexuality in Africa.” (Kaoma, J.: 2016, pg. 17 & 19).

The Zionist churches in Africa and in South Africa are best known to be custodians of culture and tradition, it would be of importance to see how they address issues of sexuality for their members and how they have in the past dealt with issues concerning sexuality and gender identity. I believe it is important in this next section that I explore briefly on who are the Ethiopian Zionist churches and how they have discussed issues of sexuality and sexual diversity. This study concern itself with transgender and intersex people who are members of the Ethiopian Zionist churches, so the background on this movement is crucial for this study.

2.3.1. Ethiopian Zionist churches and Gender and Sexuality

In the section above I briefly looked into how the Christian church dealt and engaged with homosexuality or same-sex relationships and it must be noted that throughout the section there is no literature mentioning the Zionist churches or the African Independent churches. Most scholars who write about African Independent Churches have dealt with different issues, from origins, theology, development, liturgy, symbols, gender inequality, and healing. In this section, I look into detail, who are the Ethiopian Zionist? How they were formed and how they have tackled issues of gender, sexuality and sexual diversity.

The Ethiopian Zionist churches form a large part of the group often called African Independent Churches (AICs). In Africa, the Ethiopian movement started in 1882 with the Tembu church being the first Ethiopian church in Africa, though it did not have the word Ethiopian in its church name it was an Ethiopian church. The movement grew as in 1904 a man called J. A. Brander founded the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion in Marabastan, Pretoria. According to Badra Lahouel Ethiopianism conveyed African's protest against all forms of racial discrimination as practiced by Europeans. Some Africans resented the action of prejudiced missionaries who stripped them of their identity, undermined their institutions, and imposed an alien religion upon them (Lahouel, B.: 1986, pg. 681). These were not the only causes, but also economic, and political pressures contributed to the emergency of Ethiopianism and strengthened it (Lahouel, B.: 1986). The Ethiopian churches are mostly known for having kept the Christian liturgy while worship in Zionist bodies included traditional healing ceremonies, beating of drums and dancing according to the rhythm of African songs (Lahouel, B.: 1986, pg. 681).

Ethiopian Zionist churches have become part of the literature on the origins, developments, liturgy, and healing as their contribution to the growth of African Indigenous Churches in Africa. Zionist literature extended to look into issues of gender mainly focusing on the role of women in the church (Sundkler, B.: 1968) (Oosthuizen, G.C.: 1989) (Mapuranga, T.: 2013) (Daniel, K.: 2010) and (Sackey, B.: 2005). Scholars were merely raising concerns that the AIC's have been a space where only one gender has got an upper hand. The most gender with an upper hand was male gender, these scholars argue may be due to the effect of androcentrism and patriarchy that dominate most religious traditions (Mapuranga, T.: 2010, pg.) (Daniel K.: 2010). Scholars argue that within the broader frame of the African Independent churches, women are marginalised yet and on the other hand they are the centre

of activities and thus very significant. While this has been the argument scholars such as Brigid Sackey (2005) and Ezra Chitando (2004) have argued drawing from African traditional male and female roles, AIC's have enhanced gender relations by making space for female leadership. As in African traditional religions, women functioned as mediums, diviners, prophetesses, medicine persons, herbalists, and priestesses, similarly to AIC's women participate as important figures such as founders of the churches, prophetesses, healers etc. (Sackey, B.: 2005) (Chitando, E.: 2004). According to Ohlmann, P, et al. (2016), AIC's advocate mutual respect, their take on gender roles is generally conservative (Ohlmann, P. et al.:2016, pg. 4).

Although the Zionist churches have continued to grow, they have been the subject of much historical investigation, in terms of their originality, development, theology and healing practices. One may also argue on that same line that even though the AIC's are founded by African leaders for African people, but their historical investigation was not originally from African people who would have given an inside perspective of these churches. Having drawn from different scholars on their historical investigation on AIC's (especially the Zionist churches) one may not help but note the gap in the literature, looking into gender and its broader effect and dynamics looking into issues of gender-based violence, power relations, and issues of sexuality. Arguably Zionism has definitely been the most important religious movement (and arguably the most important intellectual movement as well) in Southern Africa over the last century, this lack of attention is shocking. Though this literature shows extensive research has been done on AICs and gender issues, however, one may argue that it seems that scholars have only limited issues of gender in the Zion churches to women studies and left out the important studies on sexuality and gender identities as human sexuality and gender identities evolve in modern society. It would be important to see how Zion churches engage with such issues. The lack of literature means there is hardly an academic reference of work on Zionist churches and issues of sexuality and gender identities, which is what this study is trying to achieve. Before getting to the core business of this study it is of importance to look also into the academic shift on research work from the use of the term homosexuality to the use of the LGBTIQ+ acronym as the inclusive term for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, intersex, queer and asexual people.

2.4. From homosexuality to LGBTQIA identities and terminologies

Scholarship research on homosexuality has seen a shift in the usage of the term homosexuality to same-sex relationships but currently, research prefers using the acronym LGBTQIA, which is seen to be inclusive of all different sexual orientation and sexual identities that people seem to identify as, including those who are gender non-conforming. The different types of sexualities, also called sexual diversity which is represented in the acronym LGBTQIA are often covered under the umbrella term homosexuality (Wright: 2013). The recent course in the studies of LGBT has seen an addition of Intersex (I), Queer (Q), and Asexual (A) as these categories are also believed to share the similar experience shared by the other categories who form part of sexual minorities. L stands for lesbian, which means a female who is emotional, physically, sexually attracted to other females. G stands for Gay, this is predominantly referred to men, thus men whose sexual orientation is towards other men. B stands for Bisexual, which is a female/male person attracted to both sexes. T stands for Transgender/Transsexual, which is a female/ male person born with a gender identity that does not match sex assigned to them at birth. Q stands for queer, which is a transgender person who does not identify with gender binaries. I stands for Intersex, which is a person born with ambiguous genitals. A stands for asexual, which is a female/male person who has a partner but no desire for sex at all (Muller, A.: 2012, pg. 1), (<https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary.html><https://lgbtqia.ucdavis.edu/educated/glossary.html>). Though one may argue that the scholarship on homosexuality tended to focus more on L and G, which is Gays and Lesbians to a certain extent forgetting the BTI (Bisexual, transgender, and Intersex). In this project, I am using the transgender word not transsexual or transvestite as transgender or trans* is a preferred umbrella term because it includes individuals who may be seeking medical intervention and those that don't seek medical intervention but identify as transgender man/woman or transgender queer.

Though transgender and intersex form part of this broader community of LGBTQIA, however, the focus of this study is on transgender and intersex identities in the Zionist churches. Hence the literature below greatly focuses on transgender and intersex studies. Transgender is an umbrella identity that focuses on the embodied gender expressions, whereas on the other hand lesbianism, gayness (homosexuality) and bisexuality are more concern with sexual orientation, which expresses the relational dimension of a person's

sexual identity in relation to the gender to which the person is attracted to (Gender Dynamix: 2016) (Samelius, L & Wagberg, E.: 2005, pg. 11-12).

Therefore gender identity and sexual orientation are two different things. Gender identity is a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender. Sexual orientation expresses the relational dimension of a person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted to (heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual).

(<https://daleoleary.wordpress.com/2013/01/10/gender-theory>: accessed 08-08-2018). A lesbian woman, is born with the female body and identify with a female gender identity and her sexual attraction is on females, which makes her a lesbian; and a gay man is born with a male body and identify with a male gender identity and his sexual attraction is on males, which makes him gay. Transgender, on the other hand, is an umbrella identity of transgender people with different sexual orientation. This means a transgender woman, begins life with a male body but has a female gender identity may be a lesbian. Then a transgender man begins life with a female body but has male gender identity may be Gay. A transgender person may also be attracted to both sexes male and female, which may mean that transgender person is bisexual (Gender Dynamix: 2016) (Samelius, L & Wagberg, E.: 2005, pg. 11-12).

According to Mark Yarhouse and Trista Carrs the term transgender, transsexual, transman, transwoman, male-to-female (MTF), female-to-male (FTM), and so forth have been described to define them and to designate which term to according differing opinion. However the most appropriate term to use when discussing individuals who have various experiences of gender identity and its expression is transgender (Yarhouse, M and Carrs, T.: 2012, pg. 19). Transgender is an umbrella term for individuals whose identity and or gender expression does not reflect the societal gender norms associated with the sex assigned at birth. Transgender individuals may self-identify and express their gender in different ways, depending on the individual concerned (Gender Dynamix: 2016). Transgender people are people whose gender identity and or gender expression is different from the sex they were assigned at birth, regardless of their sexual orientation. So this means a transgender woman begins life with a male body but has a female gender identity; while a transgender man begins life with a female body, but has a male gender identity. But this is not the case for all transgender people, some identify with both male and female gender identity often referred to as Trans queer or gender non-conforming (Samelius, L & Wagberg, E.: 2005, pg. 11-12) (Muller, A: 2012).

According to Bornstein, K (1994) cited by Julie Nagoshi and Stephanie Brzuzy (2010) “transgenders typically express gender identities outside traditional heteronormative definitions, but may have little or no intention of having sex-affirming surgeries or hormone treatment.” (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg.432). This speaks to the fluidity of transgender identity and how transgender people understand their identity beyond the binaries, which is a social construct. Transsexualism is dependent on the change in the body from one gender identity to the other. A transsexual person is a transgender person who has done sex affirming surgery⁷, and transgenderism is beyond body change, for some transgender people do not seek medical intervention and can freely express their identity as neither male nor female. Nagoshi and Brzuzy (2010) state that “transgenders differ widely in their degree of belief in the fluidity of gender identity. Some accept such fluidity only to the extent that one can switch between two otherwise separate, essentialist, and pure gender categories, whereas others believe that an embodied gender identity is still highly malleable.” (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S: 2010, pg.432).

Horlacher make such an important point about the fluidity of transgender identity that, “Transgendered people challenge the social construct of gender binary and beyond, a transgender man may have been born with a female body but identify as male and still chose to be at the receiving end when doing sex, which is normally associated with feminine attributes. Then a transwoman may have been born with a male body but identify as female and be at the giving end when doing sex, which is male attributes (Horlacher, S.: 2016, pg. 2) Horlacher further stated that “There is also transgender queer individuals who are happy to move between male and female identities whenever they feel comfortable. This confirms that Transgender and intersex studies question not only traditional concepts and binaries, but also our very own modes of thinking. By doing so, they pose epistemological and bio-political questions that are ultimately about the categories and concepts we use, about the kinds of knowledge gender studies has produced and the limits to what it can produce.” (Horlacher, S.: 2016, pg. 2).

The fluidity of transgender identity undermines/ interrupts gender, which is traditionally assumed to be based on a binary. Connell 2002 as cited in Nagoshi & Brzuzy 2010 state that "from birth, humans are categorized as male or female on the basis of their external genitalia. Consistent with essentialism, those who were born male are supposed to act masculine and be

⁷ Sex affirming surgery is a recent name following which the name was formerly known as sex reassignment surgery.

sexually attracted to women, whereas those who were born female are supposed to act feminine and be sexually attracted to men. Society uses multiple methods of positive and negative reinforcement, including legal, religious, and cultural practices to enforce adherence to these gender roles.” (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 433). Nagoshi and Brzuzy state that “the experiences of transgender individuals those who do not conform to traditional gender identity binaries, raise compelling questions about nature of socially defined identities. The important question they ask does one's identity in a category, such as gender, require that this identity is fixed in a particular body?” (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 431). Hence scholars have developed a theory that speaks to the gender identity that would incorporate both a fluid self- embodiment and a self-construction of identity that would dynamically interact with this embodiment in the context of social expectations and lived experiences, the transgender theory (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 437).

This study also concerns itself with intersex identities, which in some parts of South Africa and Africa is taken as another form of transgenderism. In this study, intersexuality is used as an entry point to talk about transgenderism as it is a known and understood phenomenon in Africa. Intersexuality forms part of the identity that is currently challenging the modern sex/gender binary. Morland I (2014: 111) defines intersex as:

Sometimes individuals are born with genital, genetic, or hormonal characteristics that some people find confusing. From this phenomenon of ‘intersex,’ a range of claims and counterclaims have flowed regarding sexual difference, medicine, gender, and identity. Intersex is often popularly conflated with ambiguous genitalia—external sexual anatomy that cannot be easily described as entirely female or male. However, for clinicians, an Intersex diagnosis can refer also to attributes that are not apparent on the body’s surface, including XXY sex chromosomes or indifference to the hormones that produce effects connotative of masculinity. What such intersex diagnoses have in common is the medicalization of a failure to classify the body as one of two sexes. That such a failure would be problematic is not obvious, nor is its medicalization; nonetheless, medical treatment of Intersex is standard practice in the West ... Within the last decade, medical guidelines have shifted to recommend psychological support and disclosure by default ..., but the extent to which these guidelines have been put into practice remains disappointingly unclear.

According to Susannah Cornwall “intersex people’s bodies have often been understood as troubling, medically and socially concealed as a result.” (Cornwall, S.: 2015, pg. 1). Cornwall holds the view that most contemporary societies operate with a binary model of sex, assuming human beings are either male or female, and it is self-evident who is male and who is female. But significant minority people do not fit either category (Cornwall, S.: 2015, pg. 1). “If

intersex and transgender are less medically indicated fact rather than the product of a culturally constructed, interpreting and evaluating perception which also political, they bring about serious consequences for the socially accepted and legally dominant concepts of masculinity and femininity as well as for feminism and gender studies in general, given their neither masculine nor femininity can any longer be taken prior, as natural or as the strict province of men and women.” (Horlacher, S.: 2016. pg. 2).

According to Alkeline Van Lenning (2004: pg. 34)

As far as nature is concerned duality is real, but not necessary and to that extent intersexuality indeed shows a crack in the dualistic system. Post-modern opinion that being marginalised, excluded and disdained offers possibilities and enables criticism of the norms and values of the dominant culture. However, the intersexed body is not by definition a site for commentary and resistance. To what extent the intersexed body can be subversive depends not so much on the body but on the meaning attached to that body. The gender identity of the intersexed is important and only the intersexed who claim the third sex can be considered potentially subversive.

Myra Hird points out that “Intersexual’ experience of sex challenges both the medical community and feminist theory to the extent that both are predicated on the sex/binary to operate.” (Hird, M.: 2000, pg. 353).

Gender categories based on binary identities of being either male or female are posing unwanted discrimination for those who do not conform to these binaries. Society is discriminating against LGBTQIA people on the basis that who they are is not natural in the history of humankind. Castello points out that “Failing to conform to the ideology of binary sex/gender is stigmatised, and transgender and intersex communities are linked by their common struggle with this issue. Violating the sex/binary is taboo in Western societies and like all taboos, evokes shock, disgust and social shaming.” (Castello, C. G.: 2016, pg. 91).

The contestation of a feminist theorist to accept and include Male-to-Female transgenders in female-only spaces based on their body transformation from being born male is not justifiable for gender identity is a personal matter and as such Male-to-Female transgender people should be respected for who they are and be accepted for what they have always identified as. I see this as another way of shock reaction from feminist revealing how feminist theorist think of female identity only within the binary system. Feminist theorist fails to take into account the suffering Male-to-Female transgender people go through in their daily lives as they live in the wrong body. Sexism, mis-gendered, transphobia and other forms of

discrimination should provide valid grounds for a feminist theorist to understand and include male-to-female transgenders in female-only spaces.

I agree with Van Lenning that “even if we are able to abandon the sexed body, this does not mean that we are able to desert the binary as a central frame of reference. Each way of viewing or experiencing the body is necessarily mediated by language. With our entry into language, we are forced to cite existing norms.” (Van Lenning, A.: 2004, pg. 26). This is true for a transgender individual to know that they are trapped in the wrong body it is because of the existing knowledge of knowing how the female and male person are identified by society and in society. So the point of reference for Male-to-Female and Female-to-Male transgenders is binary. In other words, we cannot cite what we do not know, hence I strongly believe that transgender sex affirming surgery provides the transgender individual with the much internally recognised and needed natural state of the body, that one wrestles identifying with from birth.

2.5. Conclusion

As Weeks points out, it seems sexuality is evolving each time we discuss it, it becomes more and more difficult to understand it. Simply because it is a focus of powerful feelings (Weeks, J.: 2010, pg. 2). The tremendous shift discussed in this sections shows how sexuality shift from being a societal phenomenon that concern itself with status, power and just male sex. As scholars argued that in the previous centuries same-sex relationships had nothing to do with identity but rather these were institutionalised and societal power status embedded relationships. From the nineteen century, the shift becomes more of a radical movement seeing issues of sexual orientation come to play and later towards the end of nineteen-century sexuality proves to be fluid and involves issues of personal gender identity, where we see sexual identity being politicised. African states as well have been divided over the issue of homosexuality or same-sex relationships, and scholarship has proved that same-sex relationships are not foreign in Africa and maybe African states need to re-evaluate their culture and dig deeper to maybe suppressed truths of our cultures and not claim colonial imposed cultures upon Africa as the African true cultures. The most interesting part of this study is the noted silence of Zionist churches on issues of sexuality and it is this silence that I would like to explore further in this study. Silence may mean nothing but it may also mean

something, in this case, I would like to explore further why so much silence in Zionist churches when it comes to sexuality and sexual identities. Transgenderism as the phenomenon I would like to research further amongst the Zionist churches, as to what is their understanding of transgenderism and how they deal or engage with members of the church who are transgendered.

This literature review has assisted to understanding discussions that are applicable to understand the lived experiences and realities of LGBTQIA people in general and thus provide a guide into understanding the lived experiences and realities of intersex and transgender people in the Zionist church and how they negotiate their sexuality. In the next chapter, I will focus on the theoretical framework, which informs the argument of this research.

CHAPTER 3

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

The previous chapter concentrated on literature that detailed out research work that has thus far been done on LGBTQIA persons. In this section I am drawing from the tools of queer theory, queer theology and transgender theory conceptualizing the shift of these theories from feminist theory, to queer theory then the transgender theory analysing the information on the religio-cultural concepts of transgender identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches, Midlands-KZN. Drawing from a Latin American feminist liberation theologian using insight from queer theory, and her prime focus is on the body, particularly experienced by poor women. In her first book on queer theology, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (Altheas-Reid. M.: 2000). Altheas-Reid criticizes liberation theology and feminist theology for their lack of attention to the sexual body, especially the gender or sexually-variant body. She urges finding the divine through abandoning “the ideological order of the heterosexual pervasive normative.” (Altheas-Reid. M.: 2000). In her later book, *The Queer God* (2003), she examines the potential of the dialogue between the transgressive body and the sacred.

3.1. Queer theory

Nagoshi & Brzuzy point out that "Queer theory developed from feminist and the constructivist theories that posited that normative and deviant sexual behaviours and cognitions are social constructs." (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 434). Feminist theory addresses the cultural-historical context and biological premises of gender as well as the issues of sexism and the intersectionality of multiple forms of oppression. Feminist scholars have defined gender in numerous contexts, from an attribute to a type of social organization and as an ideology to sex roles, power differentials, and analytical categories (Hawkesworth, M: 2006). Much of the philosophical and political understanding of non-heteronormative gender identity and sexuality are derived from queer theory. "Queer theory is in many ways a challenge to feminist theory because the constructivist's approach was a rebellion against the essentialist ideas that developed in Western societies beginning in the late 19th century. Such essentialist ideas came to link gender roles, gender identity, and sexual orientation tightly within a binary, biologically based, heteronormative gender schema." (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy,

S.: 2010, pg. 434). In this section then I look into how queer theory have been understood and used to deconstruct gender binaries and how scholarship shifted from queer theory to queer theology and African queer theology and then shift to look comprehensively on transgender theory, which challenges both feminist and queer theory because it incorporates both a fluid self-embodiment and a self-construction of identity and dynamically interacts with this embodiment in the context of social expectations and lived experience (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 435).

Patrick Cheng provides us with three definitions on the term queer, which feeds into how he articulates what he understands about queer theology. I find his framework, much useful and I would like to employ it to explain the queer theory. Firstly, he defines queer as “an umbrella term which simply covers and or defines queer more like a synonym for acronym LGBTQIA. This is an inclusive term defining queer, gender diverse, sexual orientation, and gender non-conforming people. This has been used in most cases where people or researchers want to shorthand LGBTQIA people and they just refer to them as queer.” (Cheng, P.: 2011, pg. 3). According to Peters, the usage queer as an umbrella term reflects a collective identity, which must be distinguished from the personal identity of queer. According to ALGBTICAL organization in contemporary usage, some use queer as an inclusive, unifying socio-political, self-affirming umbrella term for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, intersexual, gender-non conforming or of any other non-heterosexual sexuality, sexual anatomy or gender identity (www.algbtical.org)

In the words of Heather Love “transgender like queer emerged as a term to capture a range of gendered embodiments, practices and community formations that cannot be accounted for by traditional binary.” (Love, H.: 2014, pg. 172-3). Transgender takes into account the body embodiment, power of naming, sexual orientation and surgical and hormonal treatment and all these cannot be accounted for by traditional binaries. As Warner showing from the work of Butler that she begins by critiquing the idea that one’s biological sex is real/actual, while one’s gender is culturally constructed. She points out that there is no reason to assume that this is so. How then do we know that there are two biological sexes upon which the cultural construction of gender is built, if all we have access to, are the constructs? Why do we seek out two sexes unless we already have in mind what we are looking for? Ideas of gender precede ideas of sex (Warner, D.: 2004, 322). The danger of understanding gender as only sex is that it may not be inclusive of intersex, transgendered and gender non-conforming people for they fall in between two sexes, they do not conform to ideas socially constructed

or limited between male and female or man and woman. According to Judith Butler (1993), "all sexual behaviours, sexual identities and all categories of normative and deviant sexualities are social constructs which create certain social meaning to those living by their sexualities." (Butler, J.: 1993, pg. 2).

Chase, Cheryl (2006) as cited in Horlacher argues that "current medical practice effectively abolishes the natural diversity of sexed body types and uses the sharp end of a scalpel to impose a culturally constructed male or female dichotomy. Because our culture has relinquished to medicine the authority to police the boundaries of male and female, intersexual people are left to recover as best they can; alone and silent from violent marginalization." Chase suggests that in order to get beyond this silence and marginalization we have to recognize that intersex, transgender, and sexual orientation activism are closely linked through a shared liberal emphasis on protecting personal ethical choice and the right to control one's own body (Horlacher, S.: 2016, pg. 9). Morland, I (2011) in Horlacher argues that "in the context of trans studies, both intersex and transsexuality raise the question of what kind of body one needs to have in order to claim membership in a gender and whether a person's sense of belonging to a gender is coloured by the experience of living in a body that has been touched by medical technology." (Horlacher, S.: 2016, pg. 9). If intersex and transgender communities are socially marginalized because they belie the core contemporary ideology that people are born with binary physical sex, and that this determines their binary gender, then we have to inquire into who profits from the rigid maintenance of this binary system (Horlacher, S.: 2016, pg. 9).

Secondly, Cheng defines queer as "transgressive action, which is reclaiming back the word queer from it being used as a derogatory word to instead embrace all that is transgressive or opposed to societal norms with respect to sexuality and gender." (Cheng, P.: 2011, pg. 5). Cheng argues that "LGBTQIA activist did not only reclaim the use of the derogatory name queer to become the empowering word for those who are non-heterosexual or those who do not conform to gender binaries, but further to that they re-claimed the symbols that represent queer people." (Cheng, P.: 2011, pg. 5). The ALGBTICAL organization states that the Nazis used the pink triangle to denote homosexuality in male concentration camp prisoners, but this pink triangle had since been reclaimed by LGBTQIA people as their proud symbol of queer. In this usage, it retains the historical connotation of outside the bounds of normal society and can be construed as breaking the rules for sex and gender (www.algbtical.org).

April Callis notes that "in the late 1980s and early 1990s queer was taken back by activists concerned with gender and sexual freedom and became a word that described a particular type of politics. During the same time period, queer also began to be used as an umbrella term under which all non-heteronormative individuals could reside." (Callis, A.: 2009, pg. 214).

Heather Love (2014) confirms Callis' statement that queer emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as an activist slogan that sought to capture the radical energies of struggles of sexual and gender freedom in the face of AIDS crisis. By reclaiming a homophobic slur as the name for a movement and soon after a field of study, queer activists and scholars indicated the significance of violence and stigma in the experience of gender and sexual outsiders. Heather further illustrates that queer has a political force in the context of struggles for gender and sexual freedom, because of its ability to convey the ongoing realities of stigma, violence, and exclusion (Love, H.: 2014, pg. 172). In the present day, queer is used by transgender individuals who refuse all the categories of sexual and gender identity. Queer in that sense is now claimed as an identity not only as sexual orientation, as might have been the case when queer was used for Gay and lesbian studies. Queer became an identity in its self, where individuals who understood their sexuality to be fluid. This, as Callis points out, meant that queer as an identity implied that not everybody is queer in the same way, a willingness to enable others to articulate their own particular queerness (Callis, A.: 2009, pg. 214).

Laurel Schneider (2000) mentions that historically the term queer was a signifier for men who desired sex with other men introduced in the early twentieth century in some opposition to the pathologizing medical term homosexual. Schneider (2000, pg. 207) further mentions that:

By mid-1980s, when the AIDS epidemic galvanized a more visible, vocal and demanding activism gay seemed too tamed and parlor bound for the defiance and desperation of the men who were dying and the lesbians who often were the only ones willing to care and fight for them. Queer fit the mod better because it seemed stronger and could be deployed in active opposition to its usage. In addition, gay had become associated mostly with men, and primarily with a logic of rights that relies for the most part on a modernist notion of identity: stable binary homosexuality in opposition to heterosexuality. As the 1980s closed the gay community had come out of the closet only to discover that it was composed not only of same-sex loving men and women, but of lesbians who rejected gay identifications, bisexuals, transvestites of all persuasion, and transgendered persons. Then the word queer was deployed to in order to encompass the

emerging diversity of sexual minorities both because it seems not to be historically attached to any one of them and because it implied defiance of the gay rights to fit in.

I agree with Schneider for the longest time growing up in South Africa the word queer was applied only referring to gay men and as time went by, the term queer applied to all persons who were in the same-sex relationship, which recent we have seen transgendered people identify as queer. This speaks to what Callis (2009) is referring to that the word has been used to refer LGBT people who are appreciating their difference in their queerness (Callis, A.: 2009, pg. 214).

Thirdly Cheng defines queer as “erasing boundaries, which is theory challenging and disrupting the traditional notions that sexuality and gender identity are simply questions of scientific fact or fixed binaries.” (Cheng, P.: 2011, pg. 6). Spargo explains queer theory as the collection of intellectual engagement with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire, in literature texts, films, music, images, analyses of the social and political power relations of sexuality, critiques of the gender system, and studies of transsexual and transgender identification (Spargo, T.: 1990, pg. 9). Spargo further states that within queer theory, the critique of naturalized binary gender classification has been extended in work on transsexuals and transgender (Spargo, T.: 1990, pg. 9).

It is important to note that queer theory does not only limit itself in deconstructing traditional heteronormative understanding of gender and sex but it has embraced itself with deconstructing homosexuality as a binary as well. Thus giving space to include all sexualities as modern age has shown that sexuality is fluid. Thus it would be unfair to only deconstruct heterosexual for homosexuality for the longest time has been taken to replace gay and lesbian and this raises a question as to what about the other identities BTIQA. As Callis illustrate that "to the queer theorist, heterosexuality and homosexuality are binary social constructs that old saliency only in certain historical moments, rather than descriptors of innate types. Thus rather than studying the homosexual or heterosexual individual, the queer theorist studies the webs of power and discourse that create and uphold the idea that such individuals exist, and that defining individuals be sexual objects choice is somehow natural." (Callis, A.: 2009, pg. 215.)

Schneider defines queer theory as not just for or about so-called homosexuals, but he further explains that "it is important to know why queer theory employs queer in its name, for understanding the basic presuppositions of the discourse as the term queer has come to denote

a hermeneutical position similar to other late twentieth century theories. Thus Schneider points out that in principal queer theory provides an intellectual framework for treating sexuality as a meaningful site of difference that could illuminate texts and traditions in helpful if sometimes unsettling ways.” (Schneider, L.: 2000, pg. 206).

Teresa De Laurites, explains the three crucial aspects of queer theory: “a refusal of heterosexuality as a benchmark for all sexual formations, an attentiveness to gender capability of interrogating the frequent assumption that lesbian and gay studies is a single, homogenous object and an insistence on the multiple ways in which race crucially shapes sexual subjectivity.” (De Laurites, T.: 1991.). This study seeks to explore the experience of intersex and transgender people on the religio-cultural concept and beliefs in the Ethiopian Zionist churches in Midlands, KZN, drawing from the tools of queer theory in the same way illustrated above. Warner mentions that queer researchers seek to speak about gender, sexuality, and desire in ways that problematize the referent. This is a move against projects that try to discover whether historical figures were or were not gay, or whether homosexuals are or are not pathological. Instead, it inspects the queerness of all people at all times (Warner D.: 2004, pg. 334).

Elizabeth Stuart points out that queer theory is not without critiques. "It has been accused of patriarchal terrorism boring its way into gender politics and erasing the hard-fought identities of women and gay men in the name of liberation. It has also tended towards nihilism, the only hope it can hold out is the hope of an unending, subversive performance of identity, an endless drag show." (Stuart, E.: 2003, pg. 103). In the words of Cathy J (2005) in Heather Love (2010), queer has been critiqued as a false universal, one that claims to address the situation of all marginal subjects but in fact, is focused on the concerns of gays and lesbians. But Love further notes that there is always an overlap in the intellectual formation of queer studies and transgender studies (Love, H.: 2010, pg. 174). According to Susan Stryker (2004, pg. 214),

While queer studies remain the most hospitable place to undertake transgender work, all too often queer remains a code word for "gay" or "lesbian", and all too often transgender phenomena are misapprehended through a lens that privileges sexual orientation and sexual identity as the primary means of differing from heteronormativity. Transgender studies sometimes claimed its place in the queer family and offered an in house critique, and sometimes it has angrily spurned its lineage and set out to make a home of its own following its own trajectory and potential to address emerging problems in the critical study of gender and sexuality, identity, embodiment, and desire in ways that gay, lesbian and queer

studies have not always successfully managed. This seems particularly true of the ways that transgender studies resonate with disability studies and intersex studies, two other critical enterprises that investigate atypical forms of embodiment and subjectivity that do not readily reduce to heteronormativity, yet that largely fall outside the analytic framework of sexual identity that dominates queer theory.

As this study concerns itself with issues of transgender experiences one would like to see and appreciate this overlap, which I will draw on in the transgender theory section in this chapter to analyse and to understand the extent to which the Zionist churches, practices, and rituals can dialogue with transgender people. Since the Zionist churches are known to be the custodians of culture and African tradition it is high essence to learn how they negotiate the transgender identities in their churches. In this study, Queer theory is analysing and deconstructing boundaries of sexual identity and sexual orientation. Thus challenging heteronormativity and moving inferior or minority sexualities to the forefront. Drawing from queer theory in this study I hope to bring new insights and understanding of the religio-cultural concept on transgender identities in the Zionist churches in the Midlands, KwaZulu-Natal. As this study looks into the experiences of transgender persons in relation to their church experiences, churches who practice certain theologies, it is important to briefly look into what queer theology has to offer to these individuals. How the narratives of transgender people are engaged or inform theology or vice versa. That is why in the section below I briefly look into queer theology and how religion and theology as the body of knowledge deconstruct normative and binary.

3.1.1. Queer theology

The intention of queer theology is to question what has always been considered normal in order to expose the voices of those who have been silenced, or disempowered by the fact that they are not considered normal. As pointed out by Althaus-Reid (2007), "Queer theology assist us in looking deeper into political and sexual queering of theology through understanding the regulation of sexuality in the name of divinity and order of affection." (Althaus-Reid, M.: 2007) The existence of intersex and transgender people challenges the traditional binary categorization of gender and sex as male and female

In the words of Elizabeth Stuart, "queer theology is not an identity-based theology, indeed it is an anti-identity based theology. It is not a natural development gay and lesbian theology but rather an unnatural development which emerges from the fissures within the gay and lesbian theology to which the repetitions within it draw attention." (Stuart, E.: 2003, pg.89).

Such kind of theology is to liberate everyone from the contemporary constructions of sexuality. As illustrated above in Cheng's definition of the term queer feeds into how he further defines his understanding of what queer theology is. He is defining queer theology in a sort of the same instance when he was defining the term queer. He firstly defines queer theology as "a study where LGBTQIA people are talking about God. Secondly, he illustrates queer theology as talking about God in a self-consciously transgressive manner, especially in terms of challenging societal norms about sexuality and gender. Thirdly he defines queer theology as talk about God that challenges and deconstructs the natural binary categories of sexual and gender identity." (Cheng, P.: 2011, pg. 9-10). Deeply looking into this study both queer theory and queer theology become critical tools to draw from looking into the lived experiences of intersex and transgender people on the beliefs and religio-cultural concepts in the Zionist churches on intersex and transgender identities.

According to Elizabeth Stuart "queer theology has developed a number of distinctive characteristics, firstly it rejects a metaphysics of substance gender and sexual identities are deconstructed and they are deconstructed through baptismal incorporation to the body of Christ. Secondly, queer theologians tend to argue that Christian theology was queer two thousand years ago before the queer theory was invented and this is particularly evident in the constructions of the body of Jesus and the Trinity. Thirdly most of the theology produces uses breakdown of the metanarratives to attempt to re-enchant the world. If sexuality is unstable so is all the reality and doctrines and stories which liberal theology might reject as irrational suddenly become believable again?" (Stuart, E.: 2003, pg.102).

Adriaan Van Klinken and Lilly Phiri point out that queer theology by presenting itself as a radical transition from earlier (identity-based) gay and lesbian theologies, has developed a normative notion of queerness. Not only is queerness conceptualized as something beyond essentialist notions of identity, but also as radically transgressive of any traditional boundaries, categories and normativity (Van Klinken, A & Phiri, L.: 2013, pg. 44). Queer theology becomes the body of knowledge, where queer theologians and religion theologians deconstruct even the Gay and lesbian theology, for it is not inclusive of gender non-conforming, pansexual, bisexual and other identities that may be by heterosexual people but not necessarily feeling included in the normative understanding of gender and sex. It is the theology that seeks to liberate all people from contemporary constructions of sexuality.

Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart note that "the body is symbolic in human culture, it is means by which the person and the community express themselves. And so the body matters, and so it is little wonder that a distinctive genre of theology known as body theology has developed. These theologians acknowledge that Christian theology has always been an embodied theology rooted in creation, incarnation, resurrection, and sacrament. Thus Christian theology has always applied both the analogy of being and the analogy of faith to the body. This means that the body then becomes both the site and recipient of revelation." (Isherwood, L. & Stuart, E.: 1998, pg. 10-11). Isherwood and Stuarts point out that nevertheless, the body has caused many problems for Christian theologians. The sad part they note is that the church reflects all the negative traits, patriarchal views of the body that our culture holds. The first people to challenge body theology were women and gays, they let their experiences speak against stereotypes. Both these groups came to understand that the way society viewed their bodies was the site of their oppression (Isherwood, L. & Stuart, E.: 1998, pg.11). This may be the same struggles that are shared by transgender people in the church. Bringing my experience coming out as a transgender man, the questions that were coming from church were questioning me about my feminine body. How is it possible that I am born female and I call myself a man and how are they supposed to address me? I would like to believe that the church is struggling in deconstructing what it has always believed to be the norm, the binary categories of gender and sex. Queer theology should be the theology that brings forth the experiences of the oppressed sexualities and genders to embrace the fullness of God in all human beings.

It is difficult to speak of African people and African theology and not speak of African traditional religions for as Mbiti points out, "African traditional religion is lived (not read), experienced (not meditated), it is integrated into the life of people: wherever they are, their religiosity, their religion is with them." (Mbiti, J.: 1990, 2012). Therefore African traditional religion cannot be isolated from people's holistic and everyday existence (Tamale, S.: 2014, pg. 152). Hence the section below looks into how queer theology engages African same-sex relationships, African tradition and culture, and LGBTQIA persons.

3.1.2. African Queer theology

Tamale asserts that African Traditional Religion (ATR) currently exercise considerable influence on the populations and the tendency is for a significant number of people to

practice them concurrently even if discreetly, with the Messianic religions. In other words, African traditional religion cannot be delinked from culture. (Tamale, S.: 2014, pg. 152). Therefore it is difficult for me to speak of Africa and not consider all these facts or sources of belief, which I believe shape and inform African worldview on sexuality. The nature of this study embraces African Christianity that appreciates African tradition and Zulu culture, hence the importance of this chapter looking at the broad sense of queer, queer theology and African queer theology. In this section, I will draw from a wide range of religion scholars not only on African Christian scholars to formulate how African queer theology may consist of. According to Stella Nyanzi, African queer narratives should transcend Marc Epprecht, Ruth Morgan, Warienga Saiska and the bold Africanists who generously contribute to the growth of knowledge about non-heteronormative sexual orientations and non-conforming gender identities (Nyanzi, S.: 2014, pg.61). Thus in this section, I would draw from some of these scholars to understand African queer theology and how this tool will be helpful to conceptualize this study on transgender and intersex identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches in the Midlands, KZN.

Sylvia Tamale points out "that the concept of sin (religious), taboo (cultural) and criminalization (legislation) play a crucial role in constructing sexuality and the manner in which African people experience it, ultimately exercising a regulatory and controlling role. Many sexual practices that were acceptable in pre-colonial, pre-Islamic and pre-Christian Africa were encoded with the distinctive tags of deviant, illegitimate and criminal through the process of proselytization and acculturation. African sexualities were reduced to a universalized, essentialised culture and integrated into a wider enlightened culture." (Tamale, S.: 2014, pg. 162). Tamale further acknowledges that "as Africans, how we do, experience sexuality is highly influenced by society and culture. How, with whom are we having sex and how we express, take pleasure, under what circumstances are all forms of learned behaviours communicated inter alia through the institutions of culture, religion, and law. It is through these institutions that sexuality is given meaning." (Tamale, S.: 2014, pg. 155).

It is because of the above-mentioned facts that I argue that African Queer theology should not only be limited to only Christian institutions but should spread in as far as engaging with institutions of culture and law as they bear heteronormative or patriarchal norms. Sifiso Khuzwayo (2011), mentions that the constitution and the Christian scriptures are not the only authoritative features in the lives of many South Africans, there is also a much undermined

and side-lined force field of culture (Khuzwayo, S.: 2011, pg. 35). This will mean drawing from African theological hermeneutics such as Inculturation as Gerald West, Charlene Van der Wat and John Kapya-Kaoma suggest that "to do African theology on sexuality we must draw on other established African forms of biblical and theological hermeneutics such as those found in the Inculturation, liberation, feminists/womanists, and post-colonial theologies. These theologies offer communal and systematic perspectives and sources of doing African queer theology. By drawing on African theologies that focus on social systems, queer African theology can begin to interrogate the systems that render LGBTQIA sexualities as abnormal and abhorrent, as un-African, demonic and evil thus robbing them of their humanity." (West, G. et al.: 2016, pg. 4).

While on culture maybe it is important to share how identity is understood within the African culture. Within the African community, a person's identity is made up of their character combined with their family and social roots. In other words what a person identified as an individual as is believed to be greatly influenced by his/her culture, belief, religion and teachings from her/his family. Ifeanyi Menkiti argues that "the African view of man (human being) denies that persons can be defined by focusing on the physical or psychological characteristic of the lone individual. Rather a person is defined by reference to the environing community." Menkiti cites John Mbiti illustrating this from his statement: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am." (Menkiti, I.: 1984, pg. 171).

According to Menkiti "in African view, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories. And this primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically, but also in regards to epistemic accessibility. It is rooted in an ongoing human community that the individual comes to see himself as a man, and it is by first knowing this community as a stubborn per during fact of the psychophysical world that the individual also comes to know himself as a durable, more or less permanent fact of this world." (Menkiti, I.: 1984, pg. 171-172). This implies that the self is attached to the surrounding community and the interaction one share with this community. David Valentine and Menkiti both note that not only biological set through which the individual is capable of identification by reference to a communal gene pool, but also the language which the individual speaks and which is no small factor in the constitution of the individuals mental dispositions and attitudes, belong to that specific group (Valentine, D.: 2014, pg. 103) (Menkiti, I.: 1984, pg. 171-172). If this is the African understanding of identity then the question one may ask is, How then does African culture deal with African queer individuals who do not have a socially speakable

identity? Also, it is important to note the power of language and terms that associate with identity. The relationship between language and identification tells the essentiality of language in identifying and understanding the self.

Transgenderism and intersexuality both embrace socially unspeakable identities within the African worldview. Taking from the Zulu traditions and culture children who are born with ambiguous genitals used to be hidden from the society, and they were often sent to a relative who lives far from where the child was born. This was done to avoid questions from society and avoiding the shame that would be part of the family as such children were regarded as a shame. Maybe the biggest question here is how African cultural traditions understanding of identity refuses society to openly engage with identities beyond binary? How transgender studies is providing this platform to society to be able to engage with socially unspeakable identities. Through these question I picture African queer theology engaging African Christianity, African culture, African traditional religion from its understanding of identity as the fixed binary that is a social construct, to biblical teachings that portray LGBTQIA persons as outcasts. To bring new kind of theology that is empowering and gives human fullness to members of the marginalized community. As West et al argue that "the old theology does not fit to the new site of struggle which is sexuality. For sexuality in all its God-given fullness to become the subject of the doing theology, marginalized sexual communities with their own particular experience must become the primary dialogue partners in the doing of theology. This does not mean that the long legacy of Christian theology is ignored but what it means is that this historically inherited theology must be interrogated for its usefulness for the new site of struggle." (West, et al.: 2016, pg. 1). African queer theology has to take into account all the different aspect that build up the identity of an African queer person into account and engage them to be a life given and life fulfilling for African queer who is Christian.

As I highlighted above that I will look at transgender theory as there is overlap in the intellectual formations of queer studies and transgender studies. In the next section, I briefly look into transgender theory and how this theory transcends feminist queer theory, queer theology, and African queer theology and appreciating its importance in this study as the study concerns itself with transgender and intersex identities.

3.1.2. Transgender theory

Love (2014) note that queer studies and transgender studies are linked not only in their shared critique of sexual and gender normativity but also in their resistance to disciplinary and

methodological norms (Love, H.: 2014, pg. 172). Transgender experience challenges heteronormative assumptions of the nature of gender, sexuality, and identity in ways that cannot be fully addressed by feminist and queer theorists. The transgender theory is the newly emerging theoretical orientation that encompassed the unique experiences of transgenders. Nagoshi and Brzuzy illustrate that "transgender theory encompasses and transcends feminist and queer theory explicitly incorporating ideas of the fluidly embodied, socially constructed and self-constructed aspects of social identity, along with the dynamic interaction and integration of these aspects of identity within the narratives of lived experiences." (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 431). A feminist theoretical approach to transgenderism that retains an essentialist view of gender would be problematic. (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, Pg. 435). Heyes 2003 quoted in Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S: 2010, points out "such an essentialist view would make one's body a proxy for identity, with female-to-male transgenders being betrayers of their oppressed identities, while male-to-female transgenders who had relinquished male privilege, still would not be considered "real" women. The social and psychological meaning of being able to modify one's body with regard to gender would also be problematized. Many male-to-female transsexuals are developing their own forms of feminist consciousness and expressing their own forms of politics by both refusing certain medical interventions and asserting their right to transform medical requirement" (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 435).

Nagoshi and Brzuzy (2010) articulate that "it seems queer and feminist scholars have fixed their eyes into the position of the body in the formation of gender identity of transgender and transsexual and intersex people." (Nagoshi, J. & Brzuzy, S.: 2010. pg. 436). Transgender identity formation takes into account a number of things, such as naming, which bring with it the issue of language how a transgender person prefers to be called, the right or correct pronouns to use, the voice (its deepness and highness), the body (for some the body is prison, for some it has to embrace characteristics of both sexes) and past experiences. All these aspects have to be taken into account to embody the self-identity of transgender persons. All these accounts are core points of transgender theory, appreciating the whole embodiment of transgender identity.

Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S (2010, pg. 436) mentions the three sources whereby an individual's identity within social categorization is understood,

First, there is an embodied aspect of the self that generates bodily experiences, some of them undoubtedly unconscious, that really are essential for informing one's

identity. Second, there is an explicitly self-constructed aspect of identity, one that derives meaning from narratives of lived experiences. Thirdly there is a socially constructed aspect of identity. This is a different kind of essentialism from what is derived from embodied experiences in that it is the society that reinforces a seemingly objective identity.

According to Nagoshi and Brzuzy's proposal, the transgender theory seems to empower the self from the lived experience, embracing all the embodiment that constitute the self-identity of transgender persons. And as they state that in this formulation, the autonomous self exists only in relation to and interactions with these embodied, self-constructed, and socially constructed aspects of identity. In turn, this autonomous self can be understood only in terms of the narrative of one's lived experiences that actively integrates these aspects of identity. (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 436).

Nagoshi and Brzuzy's further illustrate that this transgender theory idea of fluid, embodies and socially and self-constructed social identity can inform an understanding of intersectional oppressed identities. This approach to intersectional oppressed identities would consider the different embodied experiences and different social oppressions that are associated with having multiple social identities as well as the narratives of lived experiences through which individuals understand and negotiate these identities (Nagoshi, J & Brzuzy, S.: 2010, pg. 437).

3.1.3. Identifying key research themes in the formulation of the transgender identity.

This study concern itself with lived experiences of transgender people, and as such I would like to extract the three important themes, as I would like to believe that these three themes embrace the embodiment of transgender identities (body, the power of naming and cultural gender identity). The extracted three themes will formulate the key central themes in discussing and engaging the transgender experiences in this thesis. I will employ these three themes using Nagoshi & Brzuzy's (2010) framework that looks at the three sources of understanding an individual's identity within social categorization. These three themes embody transgender and intersex identities, so they should prevail in the lived experiences of transgender.

The first source as the embodied aspect of the self that generates bodily experiences, some of them undoubtedly unconscious, here my focus will be on the body as experienced by transgender people because this is essential for informing one's identity. I will also engage how society and church relate to the body of transgender people. It is not always easy to

separate the social journey of transgender people from that of their bodies. As in body theology, one may argue that transgendered people view their bodies as a site of their rejection. This is because the body politics challenge the so-called natural laws of gender binaries (Isherwood, L & Stuart, E.: 1998). Feminist liberation theology places experience at the heart of creation theology, not the experience of the ruling males but of the individual believer. Thus body theology emphasizes on experience (Isherwood, L & Stuart, E.: 1998).

Again looking into the term transgender it refers to people whose gender identity does not match sex assigned at birth. This automatically leads one to think of the body, when referring to transgender people because this basically means that the mind (sense of being) does not match what is in the body (sex assigned at birth), thus the first obvious site of struggle or rejection for transgender people is the body. One may then assume that the priority construction of gender identity would be the body. So often transgender people usually portray themselves as being trapped in the wrong body. Ulrica Engdahl explains the wrong body as a notion that consist of dichotomous explanation of the transgender experience as a state of "being in a wrong body," and that wrongness being understood as in relation to how the body is gendered; connoting that the body is wrongly gendered in relation to the self-identified gender identity (Engdahl, U.: 2014, pg. 267).

In my opinion, the wrong body notion is born out of the knowledge and understanding that one has grown up of how society understands to be male or female hence transgender people within the binary make reference to that knowledge and identify more with the opposite gender they were assigned at birth. Bearing in mind that it is not all transgender people who identify this way. As it may be noted that there are people who identify as transgender queer, which means a transgender person who identifies with both genders and their transgender non-conforming, who is a transgender person who does not identify with either gender. Transgender non-conforming and Transgender queer may/not strongly feel trapped in the wrong as compared to transgender people within the binaries.

For Transgender individuals the body struggle becomes more increasingly unbearable as one embarks on the hormone treatment. Robert in Liesl (2009) state, "I think a lot of us had that rhetoric earlier in or transition and then I used to think that the concept of genitals in the body just doesn't matter. But since I am on testosterone, it matters." (Liesl T.: 2009, pg. 218). Then Robert brings up another important point emphasizing that the relationships that family members have with Trans people cannot be separated from their bodies (Liesl T.: 2009, pg.

221). This also speaks to the important point of how society and the church engage with transgender people, their experiences and their bodies. Some transgender people are more accepted in their families after transitioning and others their families prefer them to remain as lesbians or gays (Liesl, T.: 2009, pg. 164).

The pressure of wanting to be accepted in the community as whom you self-identify as contributes to the pressure of wanting sex change surgery. The experience of being accepted in the community as the self-identifying gender is called passing. Scholars like Jay Prosser (1998) claim that some aspect of trans experiences are irreconcilable to queer, these aspects include the importance of flesh to self, the difference between sex and gender identity, the desire to pass really gendered in the world without trouble above all the particular experience of the body that cannot simply transcend the literal (Prosser, J.: 1998). Passing becomes very important for it determines how your family, community and your church relates to your body. Bringing personal experience I remember as I was negotiating my sexuality in my church I was constantly asked what about the fact that you were born feminine? Does that not mean anything to you? But on the other hand, you find some other members of the church coming to you to say no we understand because from since you were born you've always acted as male and therefore this is not new to us. I believe both the society and Christian church seem to have created their own ideologies around transgender identities and using their world views to explain it.

The second source is the explicitly self-constructed aspect of identity, one that derives meaning from narratives of lived experiences, where my focus will be on the power of naming or preferred pronouns and bring out how the society and church engage with the preferred names and pronouns that come out of the lived experiences of transgender people. This refers us to the importance of language, as Denise Ackermann points out that the role of language, symbol, and metaphor are of prime importance in the doing of feminist theology (Ackermann, D.: 1993, pg. 20). Gustafsson Senden, Emma, Back & Ana Lindqvist (2015), says "language is seen as an important tool for determining gender, if something is being perceived as feminine or masculine, where gender most often imposes a dichotomy." (Senden, G et al.: 2015, pg. 1). One may point out that language, symbols, and metaphors are important in the doing of all theology not only feminist. As Ackermann mentions that "women have learned about the power of naming as they struggle to have their experiences heard in a male-defined world. And that the more language and its use are examined, the more apparent it becomes that making meaning through language is no simple task. The fact

that meaning is made in a certain way has profound implications for how we see the world. This simply means that we cannot know reality apart from our own particular intellectual constructions of it and our thinking is formed by socially-conditioned linguistic rules and metaphors. Language or discourse thus actually construct reality as well as describes it.” (Ackermann, D.: 1993, pg. 20). Naming and language form a very important part in the construction of transgender identities.

Ackermann's point speaks volumes to the experience of transgender people, as the power of naming forms one of the important parts of the construction of transgender identity.

Transgender men (female-to-male) usually prefer pronouns he & him, then transgender women (male-to-female) usually prefer pronouns she & her, then we have gender queer who prefers pronoun they & them. These pronouns take back the power from how the society sees a transgender individual empower how one sees him/herself or themselves and how one presents him/herself or themselves in the public domain. Naming gives authority and power to the self-identifying individual to claim the identity without attributing to the social pressures of normative. Scholars have called for a need to introduce a set of gender-neutral pronouns in language, not just for gender expression and identity but also to avoid sexist or non-inclusive language (Senden et al.: 2015, pg. 2). According to Jessica MacNamara, Sarah Glann & Paul Durlak (2017) the English language is gendered, meaning that words are not valued neutral but situated in a pre-existing hierarchical system of symbolism and meaning that delegates individuals into social groups and organises language use accordingly (MacNamara, J. et al.: 2017). The hierarchical system has always acknowledged pronouns that adhere to gender binary and this as MacNamara illustrate for transgender people meant allowing themselves to be referred to like him or her. The sense of the self is as much a product of society as it is the individual (MacNamara, J. et al.: 2017, pg. 270).

In most case, the process of naming feels usually as the second coming out process for transgender people. It is a difficult process because they constantly have to remind people or even correct them on who they are and what is their preferred pronoun. Leo, who is a transgender man shared this as part of his story, "I decided to choose a gender-neutral name for myself because I had never made peace with my female name. It always felt like it didn't belong to me" Again Leo states that he was quite tolerant with people calling him with his previous female name, giving them time to adjust then he started to correct them, and many people wanted to know why he was doing all this (Leo: 2009, pg. 23). The name change seems to be an important aspect of the formulation of transgender identity. Though I may

point out that not all transgender people feel the need to change their names but most transgender people who transition feel the need to change their name to match the gender they identify as. Realising that naming forms greater part of the construction of transgender identities, it is vital for this study to investigate further how transgender and intersex people in Zionist churches engage this process in their lives and in the life of their churches.

The third source is the socially constructed aspect of identity. This is a different kind of essentialism from what is derived from embodied experiences in that it is the society that enforces a seemingly objective identity. Here I negotiate how society and church culturally construct and engage transgender identity. African people are cultural, religious and traditional people, one may not speak of and about African people and sexuality and ignore issues of culture that have an impact on ways in which people understand and speak about sex, sexuality and gender identities. So it is imperative to investigate and see how culture has made sense of transgender identities. In Africa as Epprecht points out, talks about sexuality and sexual diversity in Africa are treated as shame or taboo, or as one may know private talks (Epprecht, M.: 2013). It has become a norm to expect rejection when you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA community because LGBTQIA people have been labelled as Un-African. On the contrary to this, it seems to me that people who are custodians of culture like Sangomas in the Zulu culture are accommodated even when they identify as gender non-conforming people, some transgender people make reference of their identity to the ancestral spirit possession world view. Tebogo who is a sangoma and identify as the transgender man points out that his family and community started to accept him as a man because they could tell that perhaps his ancestors were living through him (Tebogo: 2009, pg. 121).

From a personal point, I could attest to this, when I came out that I was transgendered both my family and the church started negotiating my sexuality as being possessed by my late brother's spirit who represents himself through me. This kind of ideology gave a sense to me that maybe African people refer to a certain African world view to make sense of transgender identities, as bodies that are beyond human understanding and being controlled by spirits. We cannot shy away from the fact that culture is ever evolving and very diverse and Africa is the big continent, thus it would be unfair to generalise the South African context and present it as the general idea for the whole of Africa. In this section, my focus is mainly on the South African context.

Charl points out that “on the whole, South Africa itself is a very conventional, traditional, and religious country and this transgenderism does not sit well anywhere, not with any culture.” (Charl: 2009, pg. 225). I agree with Charl because even though we may argue that Zulu culture welcomes non-conforming transgender people on the basis that they are possessed by ancestral spirits, it is not every Zulu person or society that embraces this understanding of transgender identities. Within African countries issues of sexuality are not spoken of, society is sometimes forced to hide or compel their transgendered or intersex children because they believe to bring shame to the family (Epprecht, M.: 2013) (Kaoma, J.: 2016). Transgenderism and intersex for the longest time in parts of Africa have been associated with bad luck or sham. One burning question comes to mind though, what can culture and tradition offer to the embodiment of transgender bodies outside ancestral possession?

Seeing that these three themes form an important part in the construction of transgender identities, I am hoping to explore further on these three themes when interviewing participants in this study and present finding in chapter five of this project. This should provide an indication of how transgender people engage these themes in their individual, communal and church life.

3.2. Conclusion

This chapter explained the theoretical framework that informs the conceptualisation of this study. Describing how queer theory developed from feminist and the constructivist theories, that posited that normative and deviant sexual behaviours and cognitions are social constructs. Deconstructing gender binaries, heterosexuality as the only acceptable way of being. Then further detailed how queer theology assist in looking deeper into political and sexual queering of theology understanding that it is not gay and lesbian theology and understanding the regulation of sexuality in the name of divinity and order of affection (Altheas-Reid, M.: 2010). Drawing also from African queer theology how institutions of culture can be institution of sexual liberation in Africa where sexual talk can be engaged, stopping with transgender theory, which transcends feminist & queer theory for accounting the transgender experiences that challenge heteronormative assumptions of the nature of gender, sexuality, and identity in ways that cannot be fully addressed by feminist and queer theorists. These theories inform how I conceptualise the experiences of transgender and intersex people in the Zionist churches. In this section, I further extract the three central key

research themes that will formulate and inform the research protocol of this study. The first key research entails the embodied aspect of the self that generates bodily experiences and the key research theme identified to tease out this dimension in the transgender experiences of the body. The second theme pertains to the explicitly self-constructed aspect of identity, deriving meaning from the lived experiences and the key research theme focus will be on naming. The third research key theme is a concern with a socially constructed aspect of identity, the key focus will be on gender identity, as to how society constructs and negotiates gender identity. This study is an empirical study located in the qualitative paradigm, the next section gives broader details of the research design of this study and how it will be applied in this study.

CHAPTER 4

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0. Introduction

Chapter three outlined and discussed the theoretical frameworks of this study and from which the three central themes for further exploration has emerged. These three themes are naming, body and cultural identity. In this chapter and following from the previous chapter, I am outlining the detailed research design of the study. The study is an empirical study, drawing from the phenomenological approach located in the qualitative paradigm.

4.1. Research design

This is Empirical research, a Phenomenological study, located in Qualitative research paradigm; explored the lived experiences of transgender people on the religio-cultural concept and beliefs in the Ethiopian Zionist churches on transgender identities. As noted by Taylor et al (2016), the phenomenological approach helps to capture how people construct their realities, attempts to see things from other people's point of view (Taylor, S. et al.: 2016, pg. 12). John Creswell describes the phenomenological study as the study that describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, J.: 2007, pg. 57). According to Taylor, S et al (2016) central to the phenomenological perspective and hence qualitative research is understanding people from their own frames of reference and experiencing reality as they experience. Qualitative researchers empathize and identify with the people they study in order to understand how those people see things (Taylor, S. et al: 2016, pg. 8). This study is focusing on the lived experiences of intersex and transgender people on the religio-cultural concepts and beliefs in the Ethiopian Zionist churches in Midlands, KwaZulu-Natal on transgender identities, it concerns itself with personal nature that allows participants to share their realities and experiences as opposed to statistics. Hence I chose to locate this study in the qualitative paradigm as opposed to quantitative study.

4.1.1. Sampling

This study employed the snowball sampling technique that ensured that the identified participants be the best to co-produce the data that is required for analysis and theorisation of

the research question. According to Chaim Noy, snowball sampling is when a researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants (Noy, C.: 2008, pg. 330). According to Lawrence Neumann snowball sampling is a technique used to identify potential participants where one person refers one to the next especially in cases where there is/ may be difficulty in finding participants (Neumann, L.: 2007). I chose snowball sampling because I anticipated that it may be difficult to find potential candidates who will be willing to share their lived experiences, in the different parts of KwaZulu-Natal from Ethiopian Zionist churches, given the sensitivity of the subject/study. Hence I felt the need to work with these two organisations as a starting point. To select candidates that are going to be co-producers of data I will work with the Gay and Lesbian Network in Pietermaritzburg, which work with certain groups of transgender and LGBTQIA communities at large in the Pietermaritzburg area and around Midlands, KwaZulu-Natal. I will also work with the Imvelo Organisation from Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal which also works with transgender and LGBTQIA communities at large at the Estcourt area and around Midlands, KZN.

4.1.2. Selection Criteria

My selection criteria are motivated by personal experience, where at the age of 18 is when I began to question my sexual orientation after being mocked by my peers for not having a boyfriend. I am assuming that my experience may be shared by other transgender people from other Zionist churches. The sample comprised of two key informants, one Bishop and one senior deacon of the Zion churches. These two key informants of the churches provided answer and shared insights on beliefs and attitudes of the church on transgender identities. Further, the sample comprised of 4 Zulu transgender, who are public about their sexuality; who are and have been members of Ethiopian Zionist churches, for the past two years living in the Midlands KwaZulu-Natal. Transgender participants were interviewed to engage the key focus of the study, which pertains to the embodiment of transgender identity. Participants were between the ages of 18-40. Also understanding that at the age of 18 it is where most people begin to probe more about their sexuality and puberty. Participants have to be from the Midlands area, KZN. Participants were willing to participate in the study voluntarily and they signed the informed consent for interviews.

4.1.3. Location of study

This study was located in the Midlands area, KwaZulu-Natal. This allowed access to transgender people within the KwaZulu-Natal, Midlands region. According to Taylor the ideal research setting is one in which the researcher obtains easy access, establishes an immediate rapport with participants, and gathers data directly related to research interest (Taylor, S. et al.: 2016, pg. 32). The KwaZulu-Natal mostly accommodate Zulu speaking people and the Zulu community is known to be very much patriarchal both in its traditions, culture and Christian religion. With the rise and the visibility of the organisations advocating for LGBTIQ+ people in KwaZulu-Natal such as the Gay and Lesbian Network, this indicated that KwaZulu-Natal landscape was representing a diverse and complex landscape of sexual diversity and gender identities. Again the KwaZulu-Natal landscape represents both rural and urban areas, which represent a rich and unique cultural diversity. Hailing from one of the townships in KwaZulu-Natal myself conducting this study in KwaZulu-Natal facilitated easy access to participants and their residential or work stations. Conducting such a study in KwaZulu-Natal offered an opportunity to engage with participants from different Ethiopian Zionist church and avoid engaging with members from a single church as this study is not concerned with one specific church.

4.2. Positionality and reflexivity

I, as the researcher, identify as a transgender man. Since from the young age I have been a member of the Ethiopian Zionist church. The journey of discovering and understanding my own sexuality has not been easy. I was constantly faced with challenges from home, church and in school. I would say the puberty stage was the worse stage that ever happened in my life. This was the breakdown stage for me, where I had to face the reality of growing breasts and accommodating my periods as my body took a turn and matured in its female nature. One must note that the challenge was how to move on from the puberty stage going forward knowing that what I have and feel in my mind does not conform to my body. And growing up from the strict Christian home that is more embedded in cultural practice, the main thing for me was how I tell my story without being judged or being a shame in the family and in the church.

This was internalised struggle and challenge that I walked with my everyday life, attending church in a skirt or dress but knowing very well that I hate skirts and dresses. I had also witnessed a few instances, where I would hear members of the church and community speak negatively of LGBTI individuals in local communities.

But as I was growing up, I realized that trauma and pain of living a lie were weighing more on me than it is the case for members of the church and my community at large. In 2005 I came out as a lesbian, the church attributed my sexuality to the spirit of my late brother who comes after me.

Though I had come out as a lesbian this was not enough for me, and I was still carrying the void that the word lesbian did not exactly describe how I was feeling and did not necessarily define who I was. This meant further research on my part and I realized that I was not a lesbian but a transgender man; my sexuality was still linked to how I was possessed by the spirit of my late brother who was supposedly living through me, leading me to feel and dress like a man. Since then I have found peace and I am happy with my life, though I no longer attend church as regularly as I use to I know that my sexuality is known in the church. Though one may say that since the coming out time, there has been silence in the church on issues of sexuality and that forms part of the reason why I embarked on this study the silence or no record of written material on the issues of sexuality and the Zionist churches, for they form a majority Christian religion in Africa, especially in South Africa.

As this study is born out of personal experience, I as the researcher am aware of this attachment to the study and am conscious of my limitations and bias. I acknowledge that part I will bring up analysis from my own experiences and that of other participants as a source of data. In this study, I acknowledge myself as a source of data, as I may have to further explain certain concepts from English to Zulu as I project most of my participants to be Zulu speaking. I am cautious of my interconnectivity to the study, I will remain objective at all times as I conduct this study. I am conducting this study as a layperson, who holds no position in the church. I am also identifying as a transgender man, coming from the Zionist church myself which should create a level of comfortability for transgender people to trust and be open to sharing their experiences. Cohen, D & Crabtree, B define reflexivity as an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially to the effect of the researcher at every step of the research process (Cohen, D. & Crabtree, B.: 2006). In order to overcome any bias, I ensured that as the researcher, my views do not become evident to the participants in the research. I started the interview with a declaration that all views are equally welcome, and that none of the material will be shared. According to Daniel Warner, the first queer research methodology should be reflexively aware of the way it constitutes the object it investigates. Secondly, queer research methodology must qualitatively account for its object of

inquiry (Warner, D: 2014, pg. 334). This means qualitatively accounting for queer experiences as the actual people living these experiences because it speaks directly to the experience of the oppressed (Warner, D: 2014, pg. 334). According to Altheas-Reid queer theology, need to begin a reflection intimately linked to a God-talk on loving and pleasurable relationships. This is one of the most important challenges that queer theologies bring to theology in the twenty-first century. The challenge of theology where sexuality and loving relationships are not only important theological issues but experiences which un-shape totalitarian theology. (Altheas-Reid, M: 2003, pg.8). This is what this study aims to achieve, engaging the queer experience of the researcher with that of other transgender individuals who identify as Trans and are members of African independent churches. Where their experiences count in un-shaping the heterosexual theology found in churches. According to John Creswell, reliability can be enhanced when the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape. As I will be engaging with participants through interviews I will use the tape recorder to capture information and will use a notebook to scribe important notes, body language, facial expressions etc. (Creswell, J.: 2007, pg. 133)

4.3. Data Collection and Procedure

I used in-depth interviews that lasted between 30-60 minutes. The in-depth interviews helped to understand the lived experiences from the participant's point of view or perspective (Leedy, P & Ormord, J.: 2005). The interviews were semi-structured, to allow participants to express themselves freely and to engage in sharing their experiences. Semi-structured interviews consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or a response in more detail (Gill, P. et al.: 2008). The flexibility of this approach, particularly compared to structured interviews, it allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of as pertinent (Gill, P. et al.: 2008.).

The interviews were conducted in isiZulu and English; for the purposes of easy communication, analyzing data and because the study concerns itself with the religio-cultural concept which is embedded in the Zulu community. The research also ensured that all interview context wherein are conducive to allow participants to speak openly about their experiences how the religio-cultural concepts of Transgender in their churches hinders or

supports them to express their identities. After interviews, the respondents were offered the opportunity to review the transcripts to ensure that their views are not misrepresented.

4.3.1. Research Instruments

In the semi-structured interviews I used the interview schedule with open-ended questions allowing participants to expand on any information that co-produce rich data for the study. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the interviewees and later transcribed for analysis.

In the qualitative study, the purpose of the interviews is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and or motivations of individuals on specific matters. Interviews are believed to provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena that would be obtained from purely quantitative methods such as questionnaires. Interviews are also particularly appropriate for exploring sensitive topics, where participants may not want to talk about such issues in a group environment (Gill, P. et al.: 2008.). This study is sensitive in its nature, interviews form a perfect kind of research method to use for this study.

The interview schedule is structured to ask questions that are likely to yield as much information about the study phenomenon and also address the aims and objectives of the research.

4.3.2. Method of data analysis

Method of data analysis is the thematic analysis. The analysis is guided by themes that emerged from the research. Thematic analysis is suited to a wide range of research interests and theoretical perspectives and is useful as a basic method because firstly, it works with a wide range of research questions from those about people's experiences or understandings to those about the representation and construction of particular phenomenon in a particular context. Secondly, it can be used to analyze different types of data, from secondary sources such as media to transcripts of focus group or interviews. Thirdly it works with large or small data-sets; and lastly, it can be applied to produce data-driven or theory-driven analyses (Braun, V. & Clarke, V.: 2013, pg.80-81).

For this study, the researcher adopted the six phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2013) to identify and analyze the themes that emerged from the data. Braun, V & Clarke, V: 2013, pg. 89-100, mentions these phases as,

Phase one, familiarising yourself with data, and transcription of verbal data. In this phase, the researcher's task is to familiarise him/herself with the data collected from the field until the researcher is familiar with the data. Then the researcher has to transcribe the verbal data such as interviews into a written form in order to conduct the thematic analysis. Phase two, generating initial codes. In this researcher has to read and re-read the data and code important features of the data that appears important to the analyst. Phase three, searching for themes, the researcher then sorts different codes to formulate themes that emerge as a common theme. Phase four, reviewing themes, the researcher then has to review the emerging themes and refine how these theme co-relate, fit and if they form enough data to support the theme. Phase five, defining and naming themes, the researcher has to identify the essence of what each theme is about and what aspect of the data each captures. Phase six, producing the report and pinning down what the interpretive analysis actual entails. In this final stage, the researcher has to produce the report for final thematic analysis to write up a convincing presentation of data showing the validity of what is collected from the field or from the participants.

As indicated by Braun & Clarke (2006), "Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within the data." (Braun, V & Clarke, V: 2006, pg. 82). As mentioned in chapter three this study identified three central themes that formulate the embodiment of transgender identities as naming, body and cultural identity. These themes informed the research protocol of this study and subthemes that emerged from the data were identified and analysed. The sub-themes that emerged were: Firstly, naming emerged as the fundamental key theme in the formulation of self-identity in transgender identity. Secondly, the central theme is the body. Thirdly, the central theme is the cultural understanding of transgender identity.

4.4.Ethical considerations

Upon receipts of ethical clearance letter, all participants were provided with an information sheet that explained the nature of the study and purpose of the study. Pseudonyms were used in order to disguise/ protect the identities of participants and to strictly protect them from any discrimination or stigma that the research may invoke. According to Mugenda O. M & Mugenda, A. & Mugenda, G. 2003 refers to keeping secret by not identifying the ethnic or cultural background of respondents, refraining from referring to them by their names or divulging any other sensitive information about a participant. This enhances honesty towards the research subject by protecting participants from physical and psychological harm thereby ensuring that the researcher does not ask embarrassing questions which can disguise or even

shock the respondent (Mugenda, O. & Mugenda, A.G.: 2003). All participant signed an informed consent form as part of confirming voluntary participation including the right to withdraw their participation at any stage or time they feel to do so.

Participants were informed that the study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study any time they wish. Should participants feel that some of the questions might be distressing and participants might not wish to answer due to personal reason, no one is going to be coerced to answer them, yet in the case the participant needs to distress I have made arrangements with the manager of Gay and Lesbian network to provide counseling, and the participant will be responsible to pay for the service. The study also guaranteed full confidentiality during the interview and did not use the real names at any point. The interview were carried out in secluded and in a private venue where recoding of information remained confidential. Participants were given the freedom to choose the venue that they are comfortable to conduct interviews at. Participants were also informed that there is no financial benefit, but their participation in this study will be a contribution to the study on sexual identities and sexual diversity in Zionist churches in South Africa. There was also an allowance for participants to use the language that best helps them to express themselves better.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter presented the research paradigm and research design of this study. Illustrating the sampling strategy, data collection tools, data analysis, and data production. Due to sensitive nature of the study, which deals with experiences of transgender individuals on the beliefs and the religio-cultural concept of transgender identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches, Midlands-KwaZulu-Natal, ethical considerations, validity and reliability of the study are outlined. The next chapter outlines the field research on the three themes discussed above as important aspects in the construction of transgender identities: The body, naming, and cultural (societal) identity.

CHAPTER 5

5. PRESENTATION OF DATA

5.0.Introduction

In the previous chapter, I detailed the methodological tools that will be appropriated in the data analysis phase of this study. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, in this current chapter I am presenting data from the field drawing from Nagoshi and Brzuzy's (2010) proposal of transgender theory framework embracing the embodiment that constitutes the self-identity of transgender identity. Some common sub-themes and arguments emerged and significant common overlap between them will be grouped and discussed in this thesis under these three central themes.

Firstly, naming emerged as the fundamental key theme in the formulation of self-identity in transgender identity. The following questions were asked and informed my reflections on the theme of naming:

Briefly introduce yourself. How do you identify yourself, your gender identity?

How do you prefer to be called?

How important is it to you that people call you by the preferred gender name?

How have you been negotiating your preferred name in your church? What has been their response?

How have the people within your culture responded to your preferred name?

How do you interpret these responses and what is their meaning to you?

Can you briefly tell me what kind of challenges your church has had to deal with regarding issues of sexuality and sexual diversity?

What is your church's understanding of transgender and Intersex people?

How does your church engage with transgender and intersex people?

What concepts/quotes/ languages and beliefs found in your church to refer to Intersex and Transgender people?

From the discussion analysis conducted the following sub-themes and arguments emerged pertaining to the embrace of an embodiment that constitute the self-identity of transgender identity The first sub-theme pertains to the challenge of finding creative spaces for engaging the issue and the lack of vocabulary. I term this section. Gender Trouble? Sexuality and

sexual diversity, not an easy topic. The second sub-theme illustrates the dynamic perspective about the confusion between the gender identity and the sexual orientation as experienced by transgender people in society, in the church and amongst fellow gay and lesbian individuals. I term of this section: They discussed my sexuality as *Inkonkoni*, but they never asked me. The third sub-theme that emerged pertains to the importance of appropriating the preferred names by transgender individuals and the challenge of engaging elderly people to use the preferred names of transgender individuals, I term this section: Elderly people still use my dead name. The fourth sub-section pertains to the development of transgender identity and how the church addresses transgender identity and how it engages transgender people in the development of their identity in the faith community space. I term this section: "*In Christianity, we are all children of God.*" Why call me names in the house of God.

The second key theme that emerged was a body as subjective experience of transgender individuals pre-transitioning and during the process of transitioning. The following questions were asked to tease out this dimension:

What challenges have you had with your body in relation to your gender identity?

Please share how do you negotiate your gender identity and your body?

How has the church and community negotiated your body in relation to your identity?

Briefly share culturally how has the society made sense of your body in relation to your identity?

What does this mean to you?

How important is it to you that people (family, church and society) negotiate your body in relation to your self-identified gender? Why?

After the analysis of data, the following sub-theme emerged informing the understanding of the body in the formation of transgender identity. This sub-theme teases out the dimension of negotiating and understanding the transgender body pre-transition stage and during the transition period in relation to self and others. This section is termed "*I am a bread spoiled from the bakery, my body was a shame.*" This section teases out the anatomic body incongruence with the lived gender body as a cause of transgender individuals experience depression. I refer to this section as the body as a cause of depression. The last section teases

out the complexity of transgender identities not centralizing the body as a site of struggle or inquiry. I call this section *"I don't need to make up to be feminine. I love my body."*

The third key theme that emerged was cultural gender identity, which brings forth how the society enforces, engage and negotiate embodiment of transgender identity. The following questions were asked and informed my reflections on the theme of cultural gender identity:

What has been the cultural understanding of your gender identity?

What does this cultural understanding mean to you? How do you relate to it?

From the analysis of the discussion, the following sub-themes emerged. The first sub-theme illustrate the openness of society and becoming the safe space for transgender individuals and present the challenges of finding cultural, or traditional terms and explanations referring to transgender identity in society. I term this section: *"It was obvious when you grew up that you different."* The second sub-theme presents the challenges and contradiction highlighted between gender identity, culture, and tradition. I term this section. You are *Inkosana*: gender identity, tradition and culture meet.

The study used semi-structured interviews to avoid prejudice that may come with an understanding of transgender identity as an identity within the gender binary framework of male or female. The term transgender is an umbrella term that is used inclusively of gender queer, gender non-conforming and gender fluid persons. The study allowed these transgender individuals to use their own terms and languages to explain their gender identity as they deemed comfortable.

This section presents data of different subjective experiences of transgender individuals pre-transitioning, during the process of transitioning and their religious experiences and influences in the development of their transgender identity. Data was collected from two pastors, both of whom were male from different Ethiopian Zionist churches in the Midlands area, KwaZulu-Natal and four transgender individuals who clearly stated that they identify as transgender. Two of the participants are in the process of transitioning (taking hormone treatment), one is female to male (FTM) and the other is male to female (MTF) and two participants are pre-transition period (not yet taking hormone treatment), one is male to female (MTF) and the other is female to male (FTM). In the sections below I present data from the participants articulating their understanding of the embodiment of transgender

identity as informed by the three central themes, naming, body and cultural gender identity as mentioned above.

5.1.Naming

5.1.1 Gender Trouble? Sexuality and sexual diversity, not an easy topic.

The issue of sexual diversity is still a sensitive issue to discuss in general due to violence that LGBTIQ+ people face on grounds that they do not conform to the norm and that the subject of same-sex sexuality especially in Africa generally is a taboo. For example, as pointed out by Kaoma (2016) and Antonio (1997) “traditionally except under ritually constrained circumstances, sex and sexuality are not publicly discussed thus the whole subject is encircled by secrecy and hedged around with innumerable taboos.”(Kaoma, J.: 2016, pg. 56) (Antonio, E.: 1997, pg. 297).

From the discussion, it became evident that the Ethiopian Zionists churches are aware of the presence of transgender and intersex individuals in their respective churches.

Bishop Nxele #⁸: *Yes, we do have transgender and intersex people. The problem is they themselves do not come out in the open easily. So you find that most of the time we assume because of behaviour. They do not mostly come out to want to transition. 27 June 2018.*

Bishop Nxele #: *We do have people who are members of the LGBTIQ+ community and at the moment the church is still discussing the sexuality and gender identity issue as a critical issue that still needs to be discussed further in our upcoming meeting. 27 June 2018.*

Deacon Mkhize#: *My church is too big to not have such people. Eeeh! Even though I may not remember a person coming forward confessing to being transgender or intersex. There is a situation where you could see that this person may be transgender or intersex however I think the biggest mistake is when the person does not open up and just live their lives in a closet. 26 June 2018.*

Both Bishop Nxele and Deacon Mkhize acknowledge that they do have LGBTIQ+ people in their churches, however, they further emphasise that gender identity issues are still a critical issue. Though they both agree that in their respective churches they have *oNgqingili* (LGBTIQ+) however they express the need for LGBTIQ+ people to come out to the

⁸ # Not their real names, unless consent was given to use a real name.

church about their gender identity. The two ministers are showing difficulty faced by their respective churches to approach LGBTIQ+ people in their churches before they come out, which may illustrate the discourse that sexual subject is not publicly discussed and are frowned upon as taboo, thus becoming not subjects to talk about.

Deacon Mkhize #: *We have not had a topic or the discussion in the church about transgender and intersex people, and I must say it is not easy to talk about such topics when no one has mentioned it before or come forward to mention it. 26 June 2018.*

Both these ministers Nxele and Mkhize feel that the failure of these churches to engage topics that involve matters of sexuality is also partly because their churches have not done amendments to the church constitution, which is a very important document in the church to provide guidance on how to handle and deal with issues concerning church members, such as those who may prescribe to alternative gender identities.

Deacon Mkhize#: *The constitution is a problem because when they founded the church in 1904, a lot of things were not out in the open. So the church constitution was founded in the spirit of those olden days. That makes it really difficult to relate to issues that are affecting the church today. Because back then a lot of issues were suppressed, one cannot deny and say issues were not present back then but I can certainly say they were suppressed and not outspoken as they are today. People use to live their life back then and not speak openly about their lives. 26 June 2018*

Bishop Nxele #: *This came up as we were amending the church constitution. This issue is still in question in the church because we raised this issue as a question to say what the church says about oNgqingili because we see them in the church. 27 June 2018*

From the discussion Deacon, Mkhize is pointing out to the fact that their constitution was founded from the olden days when a lot of issued were still suppressed and not publicly spoken about. For both these participants, their churches have not had substantial engagement and dialogue with LGBTIQ+ people and they both attest that gender, sex, and sexuality are still sensitive topics to easily discuss in church. Though they agree that they do have people who identify as oNgqingili, however, they feel that LGBTIQ+ people need to come out and be open about their sexuality as their churches are still finding it hard to discuss such issues. Gender, sex, and sexuality in these churches seem to be not publicly discussed and are still regarded as uneasy topics to tackle.

5.1.2. They discuss my sexuality as *Inkonkoni* (gay/lesbian) but they never asked me.

LGBTIQA+ people are often referred to as *Izinkonkoni*, or *izitabane* which is a Zulu word deriving from an animal known as a wild beast or Gnu a species are traditionally known for occasional male-male sexual behaviour (Sigamoney, V. & Epprecht, M.: 2013, pg. 91). The word *Inkonkoni* can also mean hermaphrodite or freak of nature (Bhana, D: 2015). The word *Inkonkoni* is used interchangeably in our society with the word *Isitabane*, *Ungqingili*, and *Uncukumbili* which literally means a person interested in persons of the same sex. From the discussion, the participants felt that their gender identity is discussed as a gay and lesbian identity.

Sindi*⁹: *While people in your church talk about you, do they have assumptions, sayings, and terms they use to refer to you?*

Nhlakanipho#: *Yeah, they usually use the name Inkonkoni.* 19 July 2018

Nhlakanipho#: *Mmmmhhh! I think they discuss Inkonkoni as they usually call me, but I am assuming that they think I am Lesbian. I say this because I was once approached by the member of the church who said they no longer trust me around their girls because I am attracted to other women. So this means their girls are not safe around me, yet they trusted me as a woman with the safety of their girls.* 19 July 2018

Nhlakanipho#: *My situation led to the split in my branch because the pastor who is leading the branch that I attend to kind of felt the Arch Bishop was taking my side because we are related. In actual fact my pastor wanted me to be excommunicated or to be kicked out of the church because I am gay.* 19 July 2018

Philani #: *So when my parents arrived they actually mentioned to them that they see that ngiyisitabane (lesbian) but they needed to confirm with them first that they are aware of my life.* 23 August 2018

Mirender*: *I love Zion church with my whole life and I would never leave my church for anything. It was Good Friday when I went back to church then I asked the Arch Bishop to speak to him. I asked him if he was seeing anything different from me, mind you I was ready to be kicked out if I have to but I couldn't take it anymore to be dressed in male attire. I asked*

⁹ Sindi is the researcher. Mirender is one of the participants and she gave consent to use her real name as she feels that this project is a great contribution to scholarly work addressing challenges as experienced by transgender people in the church. Such projects highlight the realities of transgender people.

the Arch Bishop if I was different from any other females in the church and then he answered that no I was assigned male at birth so I cannot wear a skirt because you are gay. Then I told my Arch Bishop that no that is not true I am not gay but I am a transgender woman. 02

September 2018

Siphokazi#: *As you may well be aware that at the Zion church you never wear make-up, no nails and whatsoever so I guess they know me. It's just that sometimes I get a sense that they fail to separate gay from Trans and vice versa. 15 July 2018*

In response to my question regarding the assumptions and terms used in church to refer to the gender identity of the participants, I got the following response. All four participants shared that their gender identity was understood to be gay or lesbian. This is an interesting point because it shows how Gay and Lesbian have become prominent concepts in our society than anything else not fitting within heterosexuality fits under gay or lesbian sexuality. This brings forth the importance of language in the construction of human identities. From these interviews, language seems to play a vital role in how society understand LGBTIQ+ people and that language informs how people relate to your identity and how at times language brings up so much challenge when talking about gender identity and sexual orientation. From these interviews, one may point out that in the use of language/terminology there is no differentiation of what constitutes gender identity and sexual orientation. Both gender identity and sexual orientation are regarded as meaning one thing.

Siphokazi is bringing in a very dynamic perspective about the confusion of gender identity and sexual orientation. As she mentions that it is not only in random local societies that we experience this confusion but this sort of confusion occurs or exists amongst LGBTIQ+ people, and there is a need to educate people about the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation.

Siphokazi#: *I think in the local community we will teach until we die because I believe that the community will always have confusion between the two sexualities. I think even the LGBTIQ+ community is discriminating against each other as well so we cannot expect the community to be perfect. 15 July 2018*

Siphokazi felt that as transgender individuals they face discrimination from fellow gay and lesbian people. The terminology, gender identity, and sexual orientation seem to be used interchangeably in our society and in an erroneous manner. I am of the opinion that amongst the Zulu speaking communities Intersex is seen as another form of being transgendered as

being transgendered is seen as another form of being gay or lesbian hence the use of *Ungqingili, Isitabane, and Uncukumbili* to mean one thing when speaking of LGBTIQ+ people. This erroneous understanding of Transgender people as gay somehow makes it impossible for some transgender individuals to enjoy the rights of being free in their gender identity and in the way they wish to dress in church. Thus bringing forth the behavioural expressions that form the embodiment of transgender identity, informing the sense of self in relation to the inner gender identity. As Judith Butler in *gender trouble*, argues that gender is not fixed, stable, or incontrovertible, but inscribed and re-inscribed by cultural norms and expectation. Gender is performed. (Butler, J: 1990, pg. 24).

Siphokazi#: *But because they know that I was born a male they make me sit with males, which is very uncomfortable for me but I cannot challenge the pastor on this because he is my friend. In terms of uniform after all these three years in the church, I only bought my uniform two weeks ago. My church uniform was revealed to me in my dream as a female uniform but I cannot completely wear a female uniform rather I will sew a unisex kind of uniform because I do not want to create havoc.* 15 July 2018

Siphokazi#: *The structure of the church I think is problematic. So there are some people whom I see that they are of the same gender but they are not yet out of the closet because of the structure of the church. I can't say in these three years I will come in and change things. What they know is if you are born female then you should sit with females and if you are born male then you sit with males nothing beyond that.* 15 July 2018

Nhlakanipho#: *I was made to wear female's uniform.* 19 July 2018

Sindi*: *Was it imposed on you or you decided to use female just to avoid arguments?*

Nhlakanipho#: *Well I grew up wearing female's uniform, but there was a time where I wanted to change the uniform to males but I was told that will not happen. They said we know what you are but we cannot allow you to use the male's uniform because that will create a lot of talks. So yeah I use female uniform.* 19 July 2018

In response to the question about church uniform, both Siphokazi and Nhlakanipho recall that they are not afforded the opportunity or the freedom to express their sense of self and enjoy comfortable clothes and be referred to according to their preferred names because often they are referred to as lesbian or gay in their respective churches. Both Siphokazi and Nhlakanipho describe their church uniform as neither comfortable nor the kind of uniforms

they would like to wear. Both these participants are showing how human identity connotes the intersectionality of names, gender and clothing as behavioural patterns we cannot disregard when talking about the formation of gender identity. Hence these behavioural patterns influence how society identify or construct what entails male clothing, names, sex and sexuality, vice versa with female behavioural patterns.

However, Philani and Mirender are showing a different perception from their churches as they are allowed the freedom of wearing the uniform they are comfortable with and in line with their gender identity.

Philani#: *I was lucky because the time when they called my parents I had already come out even at home so this was no surprise to my Mom. I told them I will no longer wear a skirt because I used to wear a skirt before but at this point, I had reached the stage where I felt that I could no longer bear wearing a skirt. But my pastor and the committee members asked me to be patient with them in terms of the church uniform because there is a long procedure to follow which involves the Bishops and the other members of the church. So I was told that in the meantime I can use black trousers and a black coat as my uniform until they have communicated my story. I was still using that uniform until the past conference. The past conference we had a church synod in July 2018, as from 17:00- 19:00 the pastors and the committee decided to grant me man's tie, which I see that by the grace of God my situation is moving and I am comfortable in my church. 23 August 2018*

Mirender*: *The Arch Bishop asked what a transwoman is, then I explained to him what a transwoman is and I told him how uncomfortable I was with the male attire and how much they are taking my rights away of being free as a woman. The Arch Bishop then asked for a pastor, secretary, and deacon from each branch that was present in the Easter conference for a meeting. Then the meeting was held for about an hour and a half. I was ready though to accept whatever decision they were going to take from that meeting and I was ready even to be kicked out of the church. After the hour and half of talk, they called me about their decision, and they told me that they cannot judge me because they are not God, so they allow me to wear the church uniform that I feel comfortable wearing. But they had a condition that I should leave my dive life outside from church, no eyelashes, and no long nails. I am now a respected female in the church and I participate in every way I can. 02 September 2018*

After coming out, both Philani and Mirender were allowed to wear a uniform that is consistent with their gender identity. These participants made reference to how their gender

identity was confused for being gay or lesbian, how that contributed into how the church addressed them, as well as how this affected their dress code in the church in terms of uniform. This proved that gay and lesbian identities have become prominent concepts in our society, such that any other gender identity that does not fall within the framework of heterosexuality is regarded to fit into gay or lesbian identity. This shows that people are not very much familiar with the broader spectrum of sexuality as most people in the broader society continue to use terms such as gender identity and sexual orientation interchangeably.

From the narratives, language and terminology seem to come out strong on how they inform the articulation of gender identity, sexual orientation and behavioural expressions that form the transgender identity. The intersectionality of names, dressing and the coming out process are tied up to language as a common platform on how society engages and negotiates gender identity.

5.1.3. Elderly people still use the dead name. *“My preferred name completes me.”*

As mentioned in the chapter above in the transgender theory, naming becomes a crucial component that forms the construction of transgender identity and the participants revealed the importance of their preferred names as one of the most important parts in the formation of transgender identity because it completes and complements their identity. Transgender people especially those identifying within the gender binary, do not identify with the names assigned to them at birth. Though it may be said that not all transgender people feel the need to change their names, it can be acknowledged that it is not all transgender people that feel the need to change names assigned to them at birth.

Sindi*: *Do you have a preferred name?*

Nhlakanipho#: *I prefer the name Nhlakanipho#. 19 July 2018*

Sindi*: *Are you using your preferred name in your church and in your local community?*

Nhlakanipho#: *Yeah, in my community they know it and they use it. In the church I would say it is the youth that uses my preferred name not the old members of the church, though they know it they never use it. 19 July 2018*

Philani#: *My birth name is Ntombikhona Sibeko# and I prefer to be called by Philathule Derrick Sibeko#. I work as a security guard. 23 August 2018*

Mirender*: *I am Mirender Nxumalo, born and bred in KwaZulu Natal in a place best known as Kwa Sokhulu. I am 28 years of age, I am a transgender woman. I prefer people to call me Cee or Mirender* because I am a girl.* 02 September 2018

Sindi*: *Do you have a preferred name or you are happy with people calling you Siphokazi#.*

Siphokazi#: *No I am not happy at all but I have come to accept my birth name when some use it because of accepting the ancestral calling. I have lots of names that people use to refer to me but the one name I love the most is when people call me Gogo. It is at work where I get a break and happiness of being called the way I want.* 15 July 2018

Responding to the question about their preferred name all four participants consistently expressed themselves to have chosen their preferred names, which are different from the names assigned to them at birth. Siphokazi and Mirender identified as transgender women, born male but identifying as females. Nhlakanipho and Philani identified as transgender men, born female but identify as males. Siphokazi and Nhlakanipho are pre-transition transgender individuals and Mirender and Philani are on hormonal treatment. Participants further described the importance of their preferred name as it completes them in their lived gender identity.

Nhlakanipho#: *For me, it is very much important because this name is me. It defines me and for who I am. In such a way that when people call me by my birth name I sometimes do not respond because I can hardly relate to my birth name.* 19 July 2018

Sindi*: *How important is it for you that you reach a stage whereby all people call you by your preferred name?*

Philani#: *It is very much important to me because I feel that it completes my manhood. I would be very much happy if the name Ntombikhona# could die out and never exist to such a point that people do not even remember that name and I remain with Philani Daniel# as my official names. I have never related to Ntombikhona# in any ways.* 23 August 2018

Mirender*: *In my local community some of them still use my birth name Msizi*, it is a matter of making them understand better who you are. So I usually educate them about whom I identify as and I am much respected as a young woman in my community.* 02 September 2018

In response to the question of the importance of preferred names, I got the following response. Interestingly three participants felt that their names complete them and relate to who they are and they expressed that their preferred names form part of who they've always been in their entire lives. As Van der Schans mentions names are a way of connecting people; they are the first window in many ways to understanding a person (Van der Schans, A: 2015, pg. 6). However, they all note that in their respective churches and in their communities it is mostly old people who use their dead names (the name assigned at birth is regarded dead names in the transgender community once a person has chosen his/her/ their preferred names).

Siphokazi#: *My pronoun is she but I always accept old people when they call me he or when they use the name Siphokazi# because I understand that it is not because they are being rude but it's because they know me as male.* 15 July 2018

Mirender*: *In my local community some of them still use my birth name Msizi*, it is a matter of making them understand better who you are. So I usually educate them about whom I identify as and I am a very respected young woman in my community but I cannot lie there is always going to be those people who will always want to irritate you. I always educate people wherever I go because people have to start learning that Trans people are here to stay.* 02 September 2018

Sindi*: *If you say some, does this mean some have not used your preferred name?*

Philani#: *Yes, most of the people in the church use my nickname I first used when I came to church because as I might have mentioned I am not a very talking person so I created a nickname trying to explain what I am or who I am. I called myself uncle bread because when people used to ask me who I was I would say I am a bread that got spoiled from the bakery. So as we are made by God, then he is our bakery so if there is anything wrong with me then all the answers are with the bakery who is God. So most of the time they call me as Uncle Bread. Few of them call me by my surname and I would say most people who use my birth name are the pastors.* 23 August 2018

Sindi*: *You mention that in your church they know your preferred name but only the youth calls you by your preferred name, what about the old members, and why do you think they do not use your preferred name?*

Nhlakanipho#: *The old members never use my preferred name though they know it because whenever I am tasked to lead a certain session I always introduce myself as Nhlakanipho. I think the reason they do not want to use this name is that they have this belief that I want to change myself from how God created me.* 19 July 2018

The assignment of the new name, allows a transgender person to connect with the new persona they identify with as if it were naturally happening rather than being forced (Van der Schans, A: 2015, pg.3).

I agree with van der Schans as these narratives prove that the chosen preferred names of these participants connect with their gender identity. Our names are mostly attached to our gender as assigned to us at birth and they become part of our identities. Hence transgender people as they transition feel the need to change their names to match with their bodies, and sense of being (gender identity). From this data, one may note that names are associated with the sex of the person, which is a sense of being male or female. Where communities classify names according to sex assigned at birth hence we have boy names and girl names. This illustrates the fundamental connection from a person's sexual identity and provides a clear cut answer to the gender identity of a person.

This section focused on the results of the data analysis as informed by the central theme naming and the major key findings were *oNgqingili* (LGBTIQA+) people are present in the Ethiopian Zionist churches. However in these churches, no substantial engagement and dialogue with LGBTIQA+ have been made as ministers of these churches expressed that LGBTIQA+ people still need to come out, for these churches to be able to actively engage them. Hence the church is still finding it hard to discuss issues of gender, sex, and sexuality. The identity of transgender individuals was confused for gay or lesbian identities, which contributed to how the church negotiated their gender identity and this impacted on the dress code in the church when it comes to church uniform. Findings show that gay and lesbian identities have become prominent concepts in society, proving that people are not very much familiar or aware of the broader spectrum of sexuality, gender identity, and sexual orientation. This leads to a situation wherein these concepts are mostly taken to mean the same thing.

This highlighted the prominent role of language and terminology in terms of how it informs the way members of the community conceptualise and comprehend issues of gender identity, sexual orientation and behavioural expressions that form gender identities. These narratives

proved the importance of the intersectionality of names, dressing and the coming out process to be tied up in language expressions as a point of reference on how the society engages and negotiate gender identity. Preferred name forms the important component in the formation of transgender identity as participants commented on how the chosen preferred name completes their lived gender identity, destabilising the normal classification of names according to sex assigned at birth. The second key theme that emerged from the data pertains to transgender person's experience of their body as a subjective experience of transgender individuals pre-transitioning and during the process of transitioning.

5.1.4. *"In Christianity, we are all children of God."* Why call me names in the house of God.

Transgender individuals love God and they grow to love their churches as safe space of fellowship and worship and they somehow feel much connected worshipping God from their respective churches. Participants in this study grew up from spiritual homes and have a very strong spiritual background. As Christian transgender individuals church has a very important space in their lives as transgender people in the faith community and certainly how the church engages and address their identity shapes and influences how these transgender people present themselves and engage with the church. In this section, I will present the experiences of transgender individuals in the development of their identity on how the church engages and addressed their gender identity pre-transitioning and in the transition process.

Philani#: *I try by all means to involve myself in all church activities and be as helpful as I can be to both young and old people because I believe in the end it's not about who I am but it's about my serving the living God. So, in short, I can say I am very much happy in my church and I feel so much respected and I do not see myself leaving for any reason. 23*

August 2018

Mirender*: *After I discovered who I was, then I went back to my church because I love God so much. I love Zion church with my whole life and I would never leave my church for anything. It was Good Friday when I went back to church then I asked the Arch Bishop to speak to him. I asked him if he was seeing anything different from me, mind you I was ready to be kicked out if I have to but I couldn't take it anymore to be dressed in male attire. 02*

September 2018

Sindi*: *Do you feel free and open to worship in your church and gain a spiritual connection?*

Siphokazi#: *Yes I do because my spirit is at peace in the Zion church. I am able to also report on whatever visions/ warnings and dreams I receive from ancestors about the church. So yeah I do reach a point of spiritual connection. 15 July 2018*

All three participants expressed that they are happy in their respective churches and they love their churches so much and they do not see themselves leaving the church. The participant's love for God seems to be an important part of their lives and it is this love that keeps them serving in their respective churches. As Epprecht points out, "Many African LGBTI are proud, happily and deeply religious. This religiosity often strikes secular activists and scholars from the West as surprising, not least given how religious leaders are commonly at the forefront of whipping up homophobic hatred saying homosexuality is against African traditions or is Un-Islamic and unbiblical in the milder language." (Epprecht, M: 2013, pg. 66-67).

Though the three participants Mirender, Siphokazi, and Philani pointed out how they love their churches, Siphokazi and Nhlakanipho depicted a discourse of fear and un-comfortability in their respective churches due to the hetero-patriarchal structure of the church.

Nhlakanipho#: *Yeah, they usually use the name Inkonkoni. 19 July 2018*

Sindi*: *When they call you Inkonkoni, how does that make you feel?*

Nhlakanipho#: *It does not sit well with me, because I do not believe that church is a place whereby people call you names. My understanding of Christianity is that we are all children of God, so why should I be called names and why should I be treated differently to others. 19 July 2018*

Sindi*: *How has the talks and assumptions happening in your church affected the way you present yourself in the church?*

Nhlakanipho#: *It affected me negatively because for about 2 years I did not participate in any church activities. I did not attend church for about the same years because I kind of felt like giving up. But then I motivated myself to say I was not coming to these people but to*

God, and by understanding that I gradually became all right again and I picked myself up again and started to participate in church activities. 19 July 2018

Nhlakanipho#: *Yes, most of the time it is negative. I have never had a situation whereby this name is used positively. The fact that I am still in the church is not because there has been some kind of agreements that we have reached with the church where I would say I feel welcomed, but the main reason why I am still the member of the church is because I have this resistance in me that if I run away from this war then this means that the next generation will go through the same thing. 19 July 2018*

Siphokazi#: *I would hate to leave that church as I have been to many other churches. I want to engage with the youth of the church about sexuality because I believe the youth stand the most chance of understanding. Because I think I have a fear that I may be a victim of a hate crime as well in the church, I came to the church with the defense mechanism. 15 July 2018*

Nhlakanipho is feeling that the Christian church should not be the place where you are called names and treated differently from others because you share a different gender identity to others. He recalls that at his church they use the name *Inkonkoni* to refer to him and when they talk about him and mostly they use this term in a negative way. The use of such names made him leave the church for about 2 years and not be actively involved in any of the church activities. On the other hand, Siphokazi is pointing out that she has the fear of becoming a victim of hate crime in the church, so she goes to church with a defense mechanism to avoid such happening to her. This presents a different scenario whereby for other transgender people the church can be the safe space and for others the church can be a space where they can be victimized sexually.

Preaching forms a very central part of the church tradition or culture, and it is often used to as a platform to promote social justice, be a prophetic platform of the church, teach about social and gender issues but also preaching becomes the platform where homophobic, transphobic and interphobic remarks are uttered. From the discussions, I was surprised to learn from the participants that their churches have not used preaching as a form of promoting sexual or gender education. However they pointed out also that preaching from their churches does not condone or promote homophobic or transphobic remarks, where the bible is used as a tool to discriminate against any sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sindi*: *Does your church teach or preach on sexuality?*

Nhlakanipho#: *No, they do not. Not even in a negative way, they do not touch such subjects.*

19 July 2018

Sindi*: *Does your church teach or preach on sexuality?*

Siphokazi#: *They never teach or preach about Gomora and Sodoma. They do though preach about all the issues that are current like drugs, human trafficking and so on but they never refer to texts like Gomora and Sodoma.* 15 July 2018

Sindi*: *Does your church teach or preach on sexuality?*

Philani#: *No, I have not come across them preaching about sexuality but what I know is they do preach about life-threatening situations and things that are popular in the news happening around the world.* 23 August 2018

Sindi*: *Does your church teach or preach on issues of sexuality?* 02 September 2018

Mirender*: *What I have noticed with them in this 25years I have been with them is that there is preaching about sexual discrimination. They avoid using texts like that of Gomora and Sodoma, the Adam and Steve comment because I think they try by all means to make sure that I do not feel discriminated against as a member of the church.* 02 September 2018

All four participants expressed that their churches do not ever teach or preach about issues of sexuality. Nhlakanipho pointed out that in his church they do not touch sexuality subjects. Philani and Siphokazi mentioned that though their churches do not preach necessarily on issues of sexuality they do preach about any other life-threatening situations things that are popular in the daily news. However, Mirender expressed that in her church they do preach against sexual discrimination and they avoid using texts like that of Gomora and Sodoma, which have been used to discriminate against LGBTIQ+ people in general. Bishop Nxele, on the other hand, expressed that in his church they have rights to preach about anything and they somehow preach about a broader scale of discrimination that it is ungodly.

Bishop Nxele#: *We do have the right to preach about anything and at some point, we do preach about issues of discrimination whether be it race, gender, and sexuality. We preach that discrimination is not Godly.* 27 June 2018.

Bishop Nxele expressed that they have rights to preach about anything however any form of discrimination is regarded ungodly. Togarassei and Chitando point out that the bible plays a

major role in influencing attitudes towards a same-sex relationship in Africa in general (Togarassei and Chitando, E.: 2011, pg.111). From this discussion, participants have shared that their churches have not used the Bible nor the pulpit to discriminate against LGBTIQ+ people but preaching is mainly against all forms of discriminations. However, there is no teaching at all about sexuality in general. In my opinion, it seems issues of sexuality are still regarded as an off limit to the pulpit or church teachings.

The data results from this section show that transgender individuals find their communities to be safe spaces where they are most understood and welcomed to live their gender identity openly without fear of being discriminated against or be treated as outcasts. Though participants shared that there were cultural or traditional terms used to explain their gender identity however one of the participants shared that she was disowned and kicked out of her home because she was believed to be changing her gender identity from what it should be. Her father as a traditional man could not come into terms with his son, whom he regarded as an heir in the family changing to be a woman. Her father believed that she was possessed by demonic spirits and took her to a different traditional healer to be healed. Mirender pointed out that her grandmother was the one person who supported her because she believes that her grandmother knew that she was transgendered from birth. One of the participants who is a sangoma articulated that her ancestors address her according to her lived gender identity and she is happy with that. Her being a sangoma secured her a safe space in the church as a medium person in the church.

Three of the participants expressed that they are happy in their respective churches, and their love for God is what keeps them serving in their respective churches. It was disturbing though to hear two of the participants expressing feelings of fear and un-comfortability in their churches, where one participant mentioned even the fear of being sexually victimized in the church because of her gender identity. Nhlakanipho expressing the feeling of un-comfortability because at church they using derogatory names such as Inkonkoni to refer to him and when talking to and about him, which led to him leaving the church for 2 years. To my surprise participants illustrated that in their churches sexuality topics are off limits so to speak, however, they do teach and preach about forms of discrimination. There has been no use of the Bible to preach against LGBTIQ+ people in general. Mirender expressed that in her church they avoid using texts such as the text about Gomora and Sodoma, to avoid coming across as discriminative against her. The results highlight that the church has dynamic and complex engagements with transgender identities and how the transgender

identities are understood in these Zion churches. However, this data highlight the complexity of the transgender identity and the relationship it has with the anatomic body, lived gender body, naming and gender identity. In the following section, I will present the dimensions of the transgender bodies as they emerged from the data.

5.2. **Body**

Transgender individuals described their identity as being trapped in the wrong body. This is mostly found in transgender people who may wish to transition or who are already in the transitioning process. Though one may highlight that, not all transgender people feel that they are trapped in the wrong body. As it may be noted that the term transgender is an umbrella term that is inclusive of gender non-conforming people and gender queer individuals who may feel that they do not belong to either of the gender binaries. As discussed in the above chapter three on theory transgendered people view their bodies as a site of their rejection. This is because the body politics challenge the so-called natural laws of gender binaries

5.2.1. *“I am a bread that got spoiled from the bakery, my body was a shame.”*

Hormone treatment and body-affirming surgery (a medical process where a transgender individual seeks to surgery to align their body with their lived gender identity) become a necessity for transgender people seeking to transition from one gender to another. This is because most of these transgender people identifying within the gender binary (MTF and FTM) feel trapped in the wrong. Ulrica Engdahl describes the notion of the wrong body as "state in which gender body and gender identity do not match; hence a disparity between body and self is embodied in the narrative, entertaining dichotomous disjunctions such as the body and its expression, the body and its perception, the body and surrounding gender norms, and sex and gender, which implicitly places sex with genitalia and gender with its social expression." (Engdahl, U.: 2014. pg.268). From the narratives, participants seem to affirm Engdahl's theoretical reflection.

Sindi*: *As a transgender man, have you had any challenges with your body in relation to your identity?*

Philani#: *Before I started hormones I was not happy to see hips in my body, breasts and periods. After taking hormones I am beginning to see changes in my body and I am happy*

with these changes. My wish though one day is to remove breasts and be free of this binder I am using to flatten my chest. 23 August 2018

Mirender*: *At first it was not easy, my body was a shame to me. I was not comfortable because I was not as feminine as I wanted or hoped my body to be as a woman. I happened to go study counseling and I was employed as a peer educator and later on, was appointed as a counselor. From that moment I got exposed to a chance for being able to search more about my sexuality and I found out that the psychologist who might be helpful with transitioning was available in Pietermaritzburg. I was tired of having to stuff my chest with all sorts of things making fake breast because that is what I wanted to have. 02 September 2018*

In response to the question pertaining the challenges these participants have experienced relating their body to their gender, Mirender (MTF), Nhlakanipho (FTM) and Philani (FTM) shared that they have experienced difficulty identifying with their bodies. Their experience was of either being a male trapped in a female body or a female trapped in a male body. Both Mirender and Philani felt happy and relieved after starting hormone treatment, which proved to provide the changes that were desired by these individuals. These two participants also revealed that they have tried to bring alignment of their anatomical body and lived body, for example, “*stuffing their chest with all sort of things to create breasts*” and “*binding, to flatten their chest.*” This shows the desperation these transgender individuals went through in aligning their anatomic bodies to their gender identity. Though these two participants are expressing a bit of relief in the alignment of their gender identity and their body experiences however one participant expressed to experience depression because of transphobic comments towards him as a transgender man.

5.2.2. The body as a cause of depression

Transgender people as they experience that their gender identity does not match theirs often at times they experience depression because of the pressure of wanting to see the alignment of their gender identity to their bodies. Literature highlights that transgender individuals have indicated a high rate of suicidal attempts because of depression and medical and psychiatric illness. Estimates of the incident of major depression amongst transgender proved to be three times more than of the general population. (Mizock, L. & Mueser, K.: 2014, pg. 147). One participant indicated that he is experiencing depression because his anatomic body does not align with the lived gender identity. Here is how he expressed his feelings about his body.

Sindi*: *As a transgender man, have you had any challenges with your body in relation to your identity?*

Nhlakanipho#: *Yes, I would say even now I still have the problem with my body in relation to my identity. Even the way I dress, I would not wear tight clothes, because I would be offended when people compliment my body in a female sense and that made me a very emotional person. I started counseling sessions because I became depressed whenever such comments are made, I did not want my school work to suffer as well. The more people commented on my body in a female manner, the more I became depressed. 19 July 2018*

Nhlakanipho expressed that as a transgender person who has not yet transitioned, he still experiences depression. His anatomical body and people's negative feminine comments about his body makes him choose to not dress in tighter clothes as such comments and feminine body features make him depressed and anxious. Nhlakanipho illustrates that feminine comments towards him make him uncomfortable. One may note that such highlights stigma towards transgender, therefore such comments are known as transphobia as they make a transgender person feel bad and not masculine enough in their gendered body. Transphobia has been identified as one of the contributing factors affecting transgender people to reach the level of depression. Often transphobia is doubled in a life of the transgender individual as transgender people already suffer from internalised stigma caused by the incongruence of their body and their gender identity (Mizock, L. & Mueser, K.:2014, pg. 147).

Transgender individuals in South Africa and around the world in general, who may require access hormone treatment or do sex affirming surgery they are due to be assessed by a qualified psychologist to evaluate whether the individual is suffering gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is the condition of feeling one's emotional and psychological identity as male or female to be opposite to one's sex assigned at birth. Gender dysphoria is defined as a mental illness under world health organisation standards. However, it may be noted that recently the world health organisation has announced gender dysphoria is no longer a mental illness. Hausman argues that "de-pathologizing of gender dysphoria and the open availability of medical sex-change procedures have become the predictable elements for transgender demands." (Hausman, B.: 2001, pg. 470).

Though Nhlakanipho talks about feeling depressed, he notes how he has developed a coping mechanism by drawing motivation from fellow transgender individuals who have started the process of transitioning. This sort of resilience Mizock & Mueser (2014), refer to this resilient as an internal resource that enhances hoping (Mizock, L & Mueser, K.:2014, pg. 147).

Sindi*: *What is it you wish to see happening in your body as a transgender man?*

Nhlakanipho#: *First to get rid of these breasts, have a deeper voice, develop facial hair and see my body trim down losing all these fat in my hip and bums. 19 July 2018*

Sindi*: *Do you believe that getting all these will satisfy you to be in line with your inner identity?*

Nhlakanipho#: *definitely, because I know of other people who have already transitioned and that motivates me to keep going because I get that one day I will be there as well. 19 July 2018*

Though Nhlakanipho has not started the process of transitioning however he subsequently made reference to the fact that that he would love to transition one day. Associating with fellow transgender individuals who are already in the transitioning process gives him hope that one day he will get to the stage of transition.

5.2.3. I don't need to make up to be feminine, I love my body

Transgender participants in the above sections have provided us with a complex understanding of their bodies in relation to their gender identity. Interestingly in this section, Siphokazi, who identifies as a woman (MTF) and has not transitioned expressed different feelings about her body from the rest of the participants.

Siphokazi#: *I love my body. I was doing grade 9 my body started to change, and I am happy with how I look. I refuse to think that I need feminine make-up to make me feel and look feminine. I am comfortable in my looks and happy as I am, though I would like to transition at a later stage in my life when I have consulted with my ancestors and they agree for me to transition. 15 July 2018*

Siphokazi is illustrating how bodies of transgender people can de-stabilise the normative way of understanding our bodies as transgender people. In his male body, he sees himself, feminine enough not to be recognised as a woman that she identifies as. She is refusing the normalcy that transgender people have to transition or use hormone treatment to be content about their gender identity and their bodies. This kind of reaction speaks to the relationship between gender identity and the body. This further destabilises the heteronormative construct of gender binaries that male persons have to dress masculine and possess masculine identity vice versa. Siphokazi expressed that she did not need to conform to stereotypical understanding that to be a transgender woman, one must follow trends mostly known as feminine such as "*wearing make-up*" at all times and she is comfortable in her skin.

This section focused on the results of the data analysis as informed by the central research theme, namely, the body as the subjective experience of transgender individuals pre-transitioning and in the transition process and the major key findings were that three of the participants have expressed experiencing difficulties relating their gender identity to their bodies. Participants mentioned that they felt trapped in the wrong body and felt happy after starting the hormone treatment. This proved to provide them with the needed changes in their anatomic bodies to align with their gender identity. Two participants mentioned that in their lives they have tried to bring alignment of their anatomic bodies and their lived identity. For example, Mirender stuffed her chests with objects to create breasts and Philani is using a binder to flatten his chest.

However, one of the participants expressed that he is still experiencing depression and anxiety as his body is still not aligned to her gender identity. Transphobic people's comments towards his body have contributed to his depression. Such transphobic comments have made him change the way in which he dresses to avoid depression. Literature revealed that transphobia and internalised stigma contribute to depression suffered by transgender individuals. On the interesting note, Siphokazi shared a different view from the rest of the participants, that she loves her body though she has not yet transitioned and she sees herself feminine enough in her male body. She expressed that she did not need to conform to stereotypical norms of understanding transgender women have to follow feminine trends of being a woman such as wearing make-up at all times. She is refusing the normalcy treated around transgender people that they have to transition first before they are content about their bodies and their lived gender identity.

From the discussion, the third theme that emerged was the social and cultural understanding of gender identity, which brings forth how the society and the church enforce, engage and negotiate embodiment of transgender identity.

5.3. Cultural gender identity

One of the aims of this study was to explore how the society and the Zion churches as believed to be preservers of tradition and culture negotiated concepts of transgender and intersex identities. As argued in the theory chapter, African people are religious, cultural and traditional beings. So it becomes important to take into account their cultural, traditional and religious experiences especially when talking about issues of gender and sexuality. For in Africa life is communal, hence there is a Zulu saying that reads: "*Kuthatha isigodi sonke ukukhulisa ingane*" which literally translate as "It takes the whole village to raise a child." Our sense of being become informed by social, cultural and traditional beliefs surrounding us.

5.3.1. *"It was always obvious when you grow up that you are different."*

As mentioned above our gender identities are informed by social, cultural beliefs surrounding us. Therefore our gender identities become a social phenomenon that informs how we engage our society in general. It is common knowledge that most African people have rejected LGBTIQ+ people in the name of culture. Growing up we are socialised to follow certain trends as the norm, and these trends become part of us and we memorise them as a way of being within our social engagement. Bhana, Morrell, Hearn, and Molestane (2007) cited in Finn Reygan & Ashley Lynette (2014) points out that the "concept of culture is regularly employed to determine what is normal and acceptable, including in the area of sexuality. They argue that the oppressive notion of culture as static and untouchable needs to be disrupted so that people may construct and perform their sexualities with greater freedom." (Reygan, F. & Lynette, A.: 2014).

However, Epprecht makes a very interesting point that "society also had ways and means to explain why some people did not always easily fit the heterosexual marital ideals and norms. Whether that was because they refused to marry or they were caught in same-sexual practices, such people existed and were known to exist." (Epprecht, M.: 2008, pg. 9). The

same sentiments emerged from the participants as they shared that, their local communities were long aware of their different gender identity.

Mirender*: *Most people I associate with in my local community were long aware of Mirender and when I finally found hormones they were so happy for me. Some have actually been confirming that now this is what I have always been about. So I am happy and I do not have any problems with people in my local community they embrace my wholeness and my happiness as I am on hormones.* 02 September 2018

Philani#: *I have never explained myself to anyone in the community but what I have noticed of late is that now people in my local community are beginning to make comments like "well it was obvious when you were growing up" when I was growing up people in the community would say well you act like a boy. I never use to answer them because I knew even back then that I was not acting but I was a boy. So I would understand for them why they were saying I am acting because they knew that I was assigned female at birth.* 23 August 2018

Siphokazi#: *Currently most people are aware of my identity and they refer to me as Gogo, and I remember the other day I was having a conversation with a guy who is helping me at the moment fixing broken things at home. He said to me, "you always have money as if you have a husband" your home is so dignified, it's like you have a husband. So that made me realise that people do understand that I am a woman.* 15 July 2018

Sindi*: *Have you ever had challenges with your sexuality or gender identity in your local community?*

Nhlakanipho#: *No, none that I can remember because I believe my community understood from the youngest age playing around with boys and as I grow up they take me as one of the boys in the location.* 19 July 2018

In their response, Nhlakanipho, Mirender, and Philani mentioned that their communities knew from an early age that they were different. Mirender, Nhlakanipho, and Philani's experiences affirm Epprecht's reflection that society has ways and means to explain people not fitting the heterosexual sense of being (Epprecht, M.: 2008, pg. 9). Philani's experience has been that his community addressed his difference as acting to be a boy because the community knew his sex assigned at birth was female. Whereas Nhlakanipho and Mirender mention that in their local communities they have always been understood according to their lived gender. Mirender points out that her local community is even happy for her now that

she is on hormones. All participants expressed feelings of being safe in their local communities.

Though Siphokazi is mentioning that her community knows about her, she seems to have not been sure of that until she had an informal conversation with one of the local residents, who assured her that the community is aware of her gender identity, as a woman. All four participants expressed feelings of being accepted in their local communities.

Each society holds certain cultural and traditional beliefs and these beliefs, traditions, and cultures play a role in how society understands and engages gender, sex, and sexuality. From the discussion, participants shared their experiences on how society culturally discussed and negotiated their gender identity.

Sindi*: *Culturally how has your community discussed your sexuality?*

Nhlakanipho#: *I wouldn't say they have any cultural explanation of my sexuality because I have never had an encounter whereby local members talk to me in such a way. I would say I've always been open and free in my community with no questions being asked or cultural explanations are given to me. 19 July 2018*

Sindi*: *Have you not had a situation where people use culture and tradition to explain your gender identity.*

Philani#: *Unfortunately in my home they never used to be attached to ancestral ways of life. So they never use incense in any way. 23 August 2018*

In answering the interview question, pertaining to the cultural understanding of gender identity, two of the participants responded that from their experience they have not come across a situation where their gender identity is explained in cultural or traditional terms. Philani further stated that his family does not even believe or follow tradition or cultural practice such as the belief in ancestors.

5.3.2. You are an *Inkosana*: gender identity, tradition and culture meet

In the above sections, participants highlighted that the dominant perception among their community was of not experiencing violence and discrimination in the name of culture. They expressed that from an early age they have been known for their presentation of different gender identity and their communities has not made any negative attributes towards their lived gender identities. However, Mirender expressed that she was kicked out of her home,

and disowned by her own father when she came out as a transgender woman. She expressed that this was because her father is a man so fond of culture and tradition, situated in the rural areas of KwaZulu Natal.

Mirender*: *My father was very fond of culture and tradition and was a much-respected member in the community, more like a king. He had status so for him it was like he cannot have his son, eldest son turn into something else. You understand the status of having a son in the local community as a family it kind of earned your respect so I guess that is why he decided to kick me out. It wasn't easy I don't want to lie. I had to fight to be who I am. I was even kicked out from home because they believed that I was going to influence young children from home about this gender identity of mine. So I ended up staying from home to home with friends and relatives. Some would treat me as a nanny for their kids, so I had to bow to any situation I came across. I was ready to fight for my identity as a woman to a point that it did not bother me to move from house to house for shelter because my father told me he will only accept me back from his house once I return back into being male. My father moved me from Durban to my aunt at Umtuba because he believed that it was Durban life that changed me to be a transwoman. So they called traditional healers, they took me to different churches for healing prayers and tried all sort of African traditional herbalist and charismatic churches to cast out the demonic spirit they thought I had but nothing changed my dear. From Umtuba they moved me to Pongola but still, nothing changed and after that, my dad decided that I needed to leave his house because he cannot handle my situation. 02 September 2018*

Mirender describes her father as a man who was very fond of culture and tradition. As such he could not stand to see his son being “*turned into something else.*” Mirender mentioned that bearing a son as a first-born earned her father respect in the community hence she feels that is why he kicked him out. Coming from a polygamous family and being born as the eldest son, Mirender was what we call in the Zulu Language *Inkosana* meaning an heir to his father and family. Being *Inkosana* comes with lots of responsibilities, whereby you are expected to lead by example to your younger siblings, who are expected to look up to you for good behaviour, and respect. As the first child, you have a responsibility of carrying your family name by getting married and make as many children as you possibly can for your surname to be alive and not die.

When the father dies Inkosana has to carry out household duties as the head of the house. Burn incense and conduct all ceremonies that could have been conducted by the father of the house. Inkosana is elevated to the position of being the next in line should the father of the house dies or become unable to conduct such duties. Mirender identifying as a transgender woman, she is destabilising and disorienting all these cultural beliefs of being an heir because she was now transitioning to female. Mirender shared that her father said he was going to accept her back when she comes back as a male. However, her father believed that her gender identity was influenced by city life in Durban and that she was possessed by some demonic spirits and tried traditional means and ways to heal her. Mirender's situation is located within what Gunda refers to as gender prejudice (Gunda, M.: 2011, pg. 95).

However, Mirender brings up a very interesting dilemma as she expresses that through this difficult time she was surprised to find support from her grandmother, whom she describes as an old woman, from the deep rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal.

Mirender*: *What surprised me was the support I received from my granny. I always questioned myself what more does my granny know about sexuality because she is old and she grew up from the rural area, but anyways she was the one supporting me.* 02 September 2018

She points out that this kind of support from her grandmother surprised her, and left her with a question of what does her grandmother know about sexuality because she is old and hails from the rural area. Mirender further mentions that her grandmother was aware of her sexuality and she believes that she always knew that she was a transgender woman from childhood.

Mirender*: *My granny ever since growing she was aware of my sexuality and I like to believe that she always knew that I was Trans. She was very loving towards me as a child.* 02 September 2018

From this discussion, Mirender is highlighting that her grandmother always knew that she was Trans and she became the support system for her as her father was finding it difficult to accept Mirender as female.

5.3.3. Sangomahood as a safe space

Siphokazi shared a very different view from that of the other three participants. Siphokazi is a practicing sangoma and identifies as a transgender woman. In the Zulu communities and in Africa in general, Sangomas are known and appreciated as custodians of culture and African traditional religion and thus are respected members in local communities (Mkasi, L.: 2013, pg. 32). From the discussion, Siphokazi pointed out that her gender identity is not conflicting with her ancestral calling and that her ancestors address her as a woman.

Siphokazi# *Yes, they address me as a woman and whenever my ancestors show me a uniform/ attire that I have to wear it is always feminine.* 15 July 2018

Siphokazi mentions that there are no conflict or identity contradictions between her calling as a Sangoma and her gender identity. When she is consulting her ancestors they communicate to her as a woman and even her attires or uniforms as a sangoma are always feminine, hence she is referred to as Gogo (grandmother). Her work as a sangoma seem to be also providing her safe space in the church and she believes that is why the church is tolerant of her as well as in the community she is respected because of her work.

Siphokazi#: *Yes, I think the fact that I am a Sangoma is one of the things that provides me a space to be still a member of that church. I once had a vision that I shared with them and it became true so I would like to believe that as from there they started to tolerate me, but other than that I do not think they are as welcoming as they think they are.* 15 July 2018

Siphokazi's ancestral calling creates a space for her as a transgender woman to be tolerated in the church and be welcomed as a medium person to connect the church with ancestors that play a prominent role in the life of the church. However, Siphokazi did not share any feelings that her gender identity is influenced by ancestral spirits.

From the data three of the participants specified that their communities knew from an early age that their gender identity was different. Where two of the participants indicated that their communities from an early age understood them according to their lived gender identity and one participant indicated that his community thought he was acting like a boy because they knew his sex assigned at birth was female. Participants revealed that culturally or traditionally no terms or explanation was given to negotiate their lived gender identity.

Even though transgender participants may highlight that there have been no cultural and traditional terms that emerged to negotiate or engage their gender individuals. Mirender shared that she was kicked out of her home and disowned by her father because her father was a very cultural and a traditional man, hailing from the rural area of KwaZulu-Natal. Her father believed that she was possessed by demonic spirits and took her to different traditional herbalist and healers to heal her. Siphokazi articulated a very interesting experience as a sangoma that her gender identity was not in contradictory with her ancestral calling. She further pointed out that her ancestors when consulting address her as a female which is her lived gender identity and her position as a sangoma secured her a safe space in the church as she is welcomed as medium person to connect the church with ancestors that play a prominent role in the life of the church and in the community as well.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the result of data analysis and the subthemes that emerged from the field. It focused on how transgender identities are negotiated in the Zion church and how the Zion churches engage with transgender individuals. As Christian transgenders how their faith community influence or impact the development of their spiritual identity as people loving God. I presented how transgender individuals appropriate their preferred names and how society and church engage transgender individuals using their preferred names. It further looked into how these appropriated names embody the identity of the transgender individual both in the church and in the public domain. How transgender individuals relate to their bodies and how their bodies embody and dis-embody their identity. How communities negotiate transgender bodies as per lived gender identity. Illustrating how their identity is negotiated in the public domain, in the church, and in their homes. This section further presented how transgender participants have been engaged culturally to explain their identity and how their societal cultures influence the development of their identity. In the next chapter findings and themes are discussed and engaged with existing literature and other research.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS

6.0.Introduction

In chapter five I presented data from the field drawing from Nagoshi and Brzuzy's (2010) proposal of transgender theory framework embracing the embodiment that constitutes the self-identity of transgender identity. Sub-themes and arguments that were significant and emerged from the discussion were grouped and discussed under the three central themes. Firstly, naming emerged as the fundamental key theme in the formulation of self-identity in transgender identity and how the church engages transgender names as part of their identity. Secondly, the body as a subjective experience of transgender individuals pre-transitioning and during the process of transitioning. Thirdly, cultural gender identity, which brings forth how the society culturally engages and negotiate embodiment of transgender identity.

These three central themes informed the research protocol of the study to answer research questions and to fulfil the objectives of the study. In this chapter, I will offer insights and discuss the findings on the lived experiences of transgender people embedded in the landscape of African Independent churches in KwaZulu-Natal. Offering a nuanced discussion of how this study challenges and offers insights on the literature on African Independent churches, sex, sexuality and gender identity within the South African context.

Issues of sexuality and gender identity are tearing the churches apart today and they still fracture whole denominations (Walter, W.: 1999). It has been observed that for quite some time in Africa the church has been proclaiming to hold the gospel that justifies the poor and the marginalised. If the issue of sexual diversity is still hard to discuss then one may ask how can the church claim hold the gospel that is just especially for sexual minority individuals who do not have an open platform in church. West et al (2016) suggest that the church to start theological reflections on LGBTIQ+ Christians sexualities it has to start from lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ people, as liberation theology did. Marginalised sexual communities with their own particular experience must become the primary partners in the doing of theology (West, G. et al.: 2016, pg. 1). This is what this study is hoping to achieve, to start theological reflections from lived experiences of marginalised people.

There haven't been many studies done about African Independent churches and issues of gender and sexuality, which is what this study sought to contribute. In this next section, I am discussing the results as presented in the field by participants in the understanding of the embodiment of transgender identity as informed by these themes, naming, body and cultural identity as mentioned above. Firstly, I am going to engage the subtheme of naming. Under this section, the three following trends emerged, Gender Trouble? Sexuality and sexual diversity, not an easy topic. *They discuss my sexuality as Inkonkoni (Gay/Lesbian) but they never asked me. Elders always use my dead name, my preferred name completes me. In Christianity, we are all children of God. Why call me names in the house of God.* Secondly, I will engage the subtheme of the body. Under this section the following dimensions emerged, *I am bread spoiled at the bakery, my body was a shame.* The body as a cause of depression. *And I don't need to make up to be feminine. I love my body.* Thirdly, I will engage the subtheme of cultural identity. Under this section the following subthemes emerged, *it was always obvious that you are different.* You are an *Inkosana*: gender identity, tradition and culture meet. Sangomahood as a safe space.

6.1.Naming

6.1.1. Gender Trouble? Sexuality and sexual diversity, not an easy topic

Both Bishop Nxele and Deacon Mkhize admitted that in their respective churches they do have *oNgqingili* as members of the church. However, both of them acknowledged that discussion on sexuality and gender identities are still problematic or critical for their churches as this is a sensitive subject. Both pastor participants mentioned that it is difficult for their churches to discuss topics on LGBTIQ+ people when they do not come forward or come out. This confirms Kaoma (2016) and Antonio's (1997) reflections that "traditionally except under ritually constrained circumstances, sex, and sexuality are no publicly discussed thus the whole subject is encircled by secrecy and hedged around with innumerable taboos."

Though this may seem to be the context in the African continent in general and in the church as such, one may argue that maybe another cause of such difficulty in discussing sex, and sexual identities within the African Independent churches is their take on gender role, which is binary construction that informs heteronormativity. As mentioned by Ohlmann (2016) that, "AIC's advocate for mutual respect though their take on gender role is generally conservative, they promote peace and healthy family life often against gender-based violence.

Heterogeneity within these African Independent churches is still high." (Ohlmann: 2016, pg. 5). West et al. (2016) argue that "the church theologies in Africa are not neutral, but there are hetero-patriarchal and the church in Africa has to repent from using the experiences of heteropatriarchy as its primary dialogues partner." (West, G. et al.: 2016, pg. 2). However, this study reveals that there is an amount of visibility of LGBTIQ+ people who form part of the membership of the African Independent churches thus forcing these churches to negotiate sexuality and gender identities.

This study suggests that failure to engage and negotiate sex, sexuality and gender identity within these Zionist church does not only rely on one problem as participants further pointed out that neglecting to amend the constitution was one other cause that contributed to the failure for these churches to be able to engage or negotiate LGBTIQ+ identities. Not having drafted policies and documents guiding the church on how to approach and handle issues such as gender identity and sexuality come out as another fact holding back these churches to progress in their policy development and creation of open space for dialogue with *oNgqingili* in the church.

This study highlights that these Zion churches still have challenges of finding creative spaces for engaging the issue of sexuality and gender and also lack the vocabulary to engage and negotiate transgender identities. The study suggests this lack of vocabulary does not allow these churches to engage and openly negotiate sex, sexuality and gender identities. This suggests that these Zion churches are still operating within the hetero-patriarchal structure, therefore one may argue that such operations do not offer enough resources and theoretical frame for these churches to engage issues of sexuality and gender identity. Therefore the lived experiences of transgender people are theorised and engaged using the experiences of hetero-patriarchy. (West, G. et al.: 2016, pg. 2).

Tanya Van Wyk (2014: pg. 2) argues that:

Being church unfolds in space and time. In today's ecumenical world the Gospel has spread to the whole world, but the end has not dawned and diversity of people, domesticated in different spaces has caused more underlying tension. Utopianism is not the solution to the problem of postmodern church and does not address the dialectic between unity and diversity.

Seeing that these African Independent churches still use hetero-patriarchal I share Van Wyk's sentiments that African Independent churches have a task to learn that indeed being church unfolds with time and space and for these churches to engage to issues of postmodernity they

need to move out of the space of viewing the church as a perfect hetero-patriarchal institute and understand that the church is not there to accommodate only cis and hetero-patriarchal people only, but also queer people are members of the church and they are part of the church; therefore the church has to welcome us to unite in our diversity to provide space for inclusive theology.

6.1.2. “They discuss my sexuality as *Inkonkoni* (Gay/Lesbian) but they never asked me”

All transgender participants in this study revealed that their gender identity was understood as either being gay or lesbian. Both Nhlakanipho and Philani (FTM) mentioned that they were referred to as lesbians and thus their churches addressed them as *Ungqingili* and/ or *Isitabane*, which are prominent Zulu names referring to lesbian or gay. Within the isiZulu language, there is a variety of terms or names Nguni terms for intersex and people involved in same-sex relationships. As shown in chapter four, most participants shared that people mostly use the word *Inkonkoni/ Isitabane* to refer to Transgender people. The same word is used for gays and lesbian people. Intersex people are referred to as *Oncukumbili* (plural) *Uncukumbili* (singular). *Uncukumbili* (intersex person) as Mkasi (2013) points out are more widely tolerated within the Zulu community, because they are taken as natural beings (Mkasi, L.: 2013, pg. 32). McLean & Ngcobo(1995) and Nkoli(1993) mention that in townships and in black living spaces people who are known as desiring same-sex were known as *Isitabane* or *Ungqingili*, but mistakenly people frequently thought that this also meant that such individuals were hermaphrodites (McLean and Ngcobo: 1995, 168) (Nkoli: 1993).

On the other hand, Mirender and Siphokazi (MTF) revealed that they were referred to as gays and they were addressed and understood as such in their churches. This study confirms findings by the African Commission on human and people's right report (ACHAPR report: 2014, pg.5-6) that:

Diverse gender identities and gender expressions remain marginalised, invisible and oppressed in South Africa due to the continued dominance of cis-normative and heteronormative conceptions of gender. This results, among others, in the erroneous classification of many transgender women as “gay men” and transgender men as “lesbian women”.

This is one of the important points raised in this study as it proves that gay and lesbian identities have become prominent concepts and they are sort of used as an umbrella term now

in our society, where everything that does not fit heteronormativity is referred to or is fitted under the gay and lesbian identity or orientation. Zimmerman Kristin & Shuhaiber Linda (2013) points out that, "over the last decade there has been an increasing acceptance of gays and lesbians and transgender and transsexual individuals have been categorised in these groups. However, this kind of grouping failed to highlight the difference between gays and lesbians and transgender/ transsexual individuals." (Kristin, Z. & Linda, S.: 2013, pg. 40). This study suggests that there is a lack thereof of understanding from the societal point of view the complexity of transgender identity as opposed to sexual orientation. Gay and Lesbian have become containers of difference that anything not fitting within the hetero-patriarchy is thrown under the label of gay or lesbian. This highlights the gap that we are not able to deal with the nuances of gender difference and sexual orientation. The participant's experience showed that terminology, terms, and language when it comes to transgender identities do not differentiate what constitutes the gender identity and sexual orientation, and hence they are appreciated or regarded as meaning the same thing.

As this study highlights that in local communities people are failing to differentiate from what forms a sexual orientation and what forms ones gender identity. As argued by van der Schans (2015) one cannot ignore that, dress code, the way one walks, language and the choosing of name forms a great part of how people address you (Van der Schans: 2015, pg. 1). One may argue that taking into consideration the concept of behaviour, how one dresses, how one acts and present oneself in the community plays a very crucial role in how the society relates to transgender, gays, and lesbians. In most cases, it may be argued that transgender people dress more or less the same as a butch lesbian woman and it is from that angle that I argue that perceptions of how we dress, walk and talk become used as a conclusion that transgender is the same as being gay or lesbian.

Findings of this study suggest that this erroneous judgment of gender identity as sexual orientation is depriving other transgender individuals the rights of freedom in their respective churches as mentioned in chapter five. As some participants articulated that in their respective churches they are deprived the right to dress in the desired uniform and being addressed in their preferred nouns and gender identity. However part of the study revealed a different perspective for some transgender individuals who come out in their churches and were allowed the freedom to wear their preferred uniform that conforms to their lived gender identity. Chris/Christine McLachlan (2010) study revealed that transgender individuals reconnected with their spiritual identity after they have accepted their transgender identity

(McLachlan, C.: 2010, pg. 75). This was also evident in this study as all participants mentioned that they had to first find and accept themselves before they could come out to their respective churches and request a uniform that fits their lived gender identity.

One participant mentioned a very interesting and complex perspective in this study, revealed that transgender individuals at times experience discrimination from fellow LGB individuals because of the same confusion of failing to differentiate gender identity from sexual orientation, whereby people identifying as lesbian or gay people are not very much welcoming of transgender individuals. This simply means that there is still much a need for transgender advocacy work that needs to happen in our local communities and within the LGBTQA+ community. Siphokazi confirms Gender Dynamix (2016) and Galupo et al. (2014) reflections that "the gap exists in research where mostly gender studies especially LGBTIQ+ studies are always in comparison to heterosexuality and not addressing conflicting conceptualisation of gender identity and sexual orientation amongst LGBTIQ+ people. There is great diversity among LGBTIQ+ people with regards to how they identify and how they conceptualise their gender identity and sexual orientation." (Galupo, M. P, et al.: 2014, pg. 435). However, this study confirms Galupo et al (2014) findings in highlighting that research on the conceptualisation of gender identity and sexual orientation is very thin and more research is needed in this regard. I couldn't agree more with Kristin and Linda (2013) that once people are educated and enlightened more about the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, confusion, discrimination and rejection of transgender individuals can lessen or diminish. (Kristin, Z. & Linda, S.: 2013, pg. 42)

6.1.3. Elders always use my dead name, "*my preferred name completes me.*"

Appropriation of the preferred name is appearing to be not only a process that only transgender people have to go through but it is a process inclusive of people we relate to, communicate within our everyday lives such as family members, community members, church members, friends et cetera. The sense of self came out strongly from participants as they were illustrating the importance of being called by their preferred names and how much their preferred names relate to their gender identity. This is true for all individuals, names become us and it is how you are known in your local community, in the church and even at school or at Varsity, so naming plays a vital role in the transition process of transgender people. Pina-Cabral (2010) speaks of the "essence of "true name" which he explains as for example transgender individuals who are not called by a name they identify with. This notion

suggests that there is a name that fits the essence of who they truly are, often associated with this is a feeling of 'this is me'." (Pina-Cabral, J.: 2010, pg. 5).

Quite often names in our cultures are gendered, we mostly have boys and girls names and as Van der Schans (2015) states that "to have your name questioned, is to be questioned as a person." (Van der Schans, A: 2015, pg. 6). Hence transgendered individuals in this study felt their names assigned to them at birth do not match their lived gender identity. As mentioned in the section above they all have appropriated names they prefer to be used to refer to them. Findings in this study revealed that participants experienced feelings of being unhappy when people refer or use their dead names, the notion of the dead name refers to the name assigned to a transgender person at birth, which they do not identify with. Ryan Roschke (2018) refers to dead naming as the term that involves the practice of uttering or publishing the name that a Trans person used prior to transition. (Roschke, R.:2018 available from

<http://www.popsugar.com/news/What-Dead-naming-Transgender-person-43923268>

Two participants are in the process of transitioning and two have not yet transitioned however they all shared to have preferred names and find it very much important that their preferred names are used to call them. They felt that these preferred names complete them and their preferred names complement their lived gender identity.

Van der Schans argues that "Our names become sources of empowerment and they form a key part of how people treat and relate to you." (Van der Schans, A.: 2015, pg. 6).

Participants in this study shared the same sentiments. All of them expressed how their preferred names resonate with their lived gender identity and how the preferred name empowers one to live their gender identity freely and openly. One of the participants said his preferred name "*Liphelelisa ubudoda bami ngoba angisona isitabane*" which simply means "*My preferred name completes my manhood because I am not a lesbian.*" Van der Schans points out that, "The perfect fit of the name and lived gender allows a transgender individual to embody their identity and to present it to the public without fear of being ridiculed and humiliated." (Van der Schans, A.: 2015, 6).

Very interesting point that emerged from the data is that mostly it was elderly people who do not use their preferred names. As it seems most of the transgender individuals in this study still encounter problems with people who use their dead name to refer to them even though they have come out with their preferred names and have introduced their preferred names in public. Jane Pilcher (2017) argues that "sex and gendered forenames and surnames practices

suffer from a form what psychologists call functional fixedness, whereby the well-known function of object masks its other possible uses. In the case of personal names and their everyday familiarity makes it hard to move beyond a taken-for-granted understanding of their use and meaning within the gendered social world." (Pilcher, J.: 2017, pg. 812). This seems to be true in this case of transgender people as their names seem to be fixed to their sex assigned at birth and the difficulty they encounter when people continue to refer to them using their dead names.

Transgender experiences in this study suggest that though names seem to be fixed to the sex assigned at birth however, these individuals are presenting a sense of ownership to their new chosen names. Elderly people may not be using their preferred names, but that is not stopping these individuals to continue to introduce their names into the public spaces such as their churches, communities and in their homes. Nhlakanipho a transgender man has ceased from using the female name assigned to him at birth however he highlights that whenever he is presenting in the church he introduces himself as Nhlakanipho, which is his preferred name. Mirender points out in chapter five that some people in her local area still use the birth name however she takes it upon her to inform them of the preferred name she is using and use that space to educate the society about transgender identity.

One may argue that these transgender individuals though they may be experiencing the problem of elderly people using their birth names however they managed to create the coping mechanism of being patient with elderly people still using their dead names. Some expressed that they see this kind of reaction from the elderly people not as a form of disrespect but as failure to adapt to changes as it may be expected. This remains a challenge for most transgender people who are transitioning and have been part of society for the rest of their lives. Which is why some transgender people relocate as soon as they begin the process of transitioning to another area to allow themselves to live the gender identity they identify with.

This coping mechanism somehow becomes a form of resistance for these transgender individuals to survive. Resistant and resilience become tools of survival and the same can be said for participants in this study. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000) define Resistance as a "dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity". Resilience involves "two critical conditions: (1) exposure to significant threat or severe adversity and (2) the achievement of positive adaptation" to the experienced adversity despite threats to one's development (Luthar, C. et al.: 2000, pg. 534). This sort of resistance

provides the experience of how transgender people as embodied individuals respond to routinized naming traditions in relation to sex and gender at critical/ crisis points of naming in the life course and how they manage crises brought about by the breaching of normative expectations about the coincidence of names with sexed/ gendered bodies (Van der Schans, A.: 2015). This proved to be true for transgender participants in this study as some expressed in chapter five that they wish for their birth names to vanish and not be remembered at all as they transition and currently using their preferred names.

6.1.4. *"In Christianity, we are all children of God."* Why call me names in the house of God.

As mentioned in chapter two members of LGBTIQ+ community who are Christians find themselves forced to find alternative spaces of worship because they are discriminated against in their respective churches, which they regard as spiritual homes. In McLachlan's study findings proved that religious world has had an influence on the transition of transgender individuals, however, most transgender individuals did not experience the religious world as supportive but rather as not accepting, condemning and rejected from their family's religious world (McLachlan, C.: 2010, pg. 75). How churches negotiate and engage transgender people in the appropriation of their names and gender identity impacts on how transgender individuals present themselves in the church.

Few dynamic experiences emerged from participants in this study about the religious worlds and how religious world or faith communities address transgender people in the church. They all expressed much love for God and for their churches. Growing up in the spiritual home with a very strong spiritual background grounded these transgender individuals to feel a sense of belonging in these churches and their faith community, therefore their faith communities became part in the formulation of their identity within the faith community or the religious world. They express love for God as an important part of their spiritual identity. Philani, Nhlakanipho, and Mirender are active members of their churches. Mirender and Philani are accepted and welcomed in their church in their lived gender identity, however, Nhlakanipho though is an active member in the church; his activism is met with prejudice and discrimination as a transgender person.

As pointed out in the literature that across the African continent one of the arenas in which homophobia is played most vociferously is in religious discourse (Potgieter, C. & Reygan, F.: 2011, pg. 60). Nhlakanipho experienced his church to be un-acceptable of his gender identity as a transgender person, because they called him names, such as *Inkonkoni*. The use of the *Inkonkoni* name is in a negative way (derogatory) and such made him leave the church for 2 years. One may argue then here that the perception from this study highlights that Zulu cultural names such as *Ngqingili*, *Stabane*, *Nkonkoni*, and *Ncukumbili* may have been adopted to be used in a religious space to refer to transgender individuals within local communities and in the church. However, these names seem to be used interchangeably with no clear cut of what forms sexual orientation and what constitutes the gender identity. Though Nhlakanipho experienced his church to be un-accepting of his gender identity, he however after 2 years leaving the church went back because he felt he had to fight for the acceptance and visibility of transgender individuals in Zion churches for the next generation of transgender people.

Philani and Mirender had a different and positive experience as they both found acceptance from their churches. Transgender individuals in this study refused to find new ways or new spaces of worship to live their spiritual lives as was the case in McLachlan's findings (2010, pg. 76). Klinken and Phiri suggest that the ability to combine and possibly to reconcile religious faith and dissident sexuality might provide a stepping stone towards an African queer theology (Van Klinken, A. & Phiri, L.: 2015, pg. 37). They continue to point out that this is important because the discourse of queer theology on the one hand, so far is largely Western-centered, while the discourse of African theology, on the other hand, has hardly engaged with questions of sexual and gender diversity. This is true and can really provide the stepping stone towards creating an African queer theology.

As argued in the literature review chapter two, in most cases the Bible and the Quran have been repeatedly cited and used in African sexual politics. Hadebe (2010) study revealed that the reading of the Bible and same-sex relationships were compared with the Gomora and Sodoma story and that the condemnation of same-sex relationship retained hetero-patriarchal relationships (Hadebe, L.: 2010, pg. 63). To my surprise, transgender participants in this study pointed out that in their churches the Bible has not been used to promote or condone homophobia, transphobia or any other form of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people. Yet their preaching does not form part of sexual or gender education. Any subject that has to

do with sex, sexuality or gender is avoided in these churches. As interesting as it may seem that these churches are not using scripture to discriminate against transgender individuals, the question remains, why is that? In the above section this study suggested that within the African Independent churches issues of sexuality and gender identity are still hard topics to tackle, one may argue that maybe because these churches still find it hard to tackle issues of sexuality and gender identity and they resort to avoiding the subject at all.

David Cloutier & Luke Johnson (2017: pg. 20-21) argue that

Better theological consideration of human sexuality requires a more extensive framework, however, scripture is as a witness to God's activity in the world, and no matter scripture participates in divine revelation however it is wrong to proceed as though revelation is contained in it alone. If we believe that God lives and continues to touch us, then we must learn something about the grammar and syntax of real bodies. Nonetheless, symbols of scripture may not be ignored or dismissed. However human reason and experience should allow us to understand scripture in new ways, where sometimes we are led to that scripture's language is true but not adequate; in such cases, attention to experience can help us appreciate the transcendent value, but also the limitation of scripture for theology

Indeed the church could benefit greatly theologically if human sexuality and gender could be considered from people's experiences, which I believe can provide us with adequate understanding and integration of the Scripture. Kaoma points out that, "The church can play a critical role in empowering LGBTIQ+ families by accepting sexual diversity as natural. Moreover, the church needs pastoral resources on sexual diversity to fully support and care for these families, which is impossible when it denies the diversity of human sexuality." (Kaoma, J.: 2016, pg. 17-18). I find Kaoma argument very profound in building the church that is inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people and their lived experiences to inform a people's based theology.

Yarhouse and Carrs (2012) revealed that "a common experience of conflict amongst Christian transgender people and local community church or leaders of the church is often caused by the conservative belief derives from Genesis 1:26-36, believing that our creation as image bearers of God took the form of male and female, most Christians believe that sex is fundamentally dichotomous. Therefore if one experiences conflict between his/her gender identity and attends a traditional or a conservative church, the person may come in contact with sincere Christians who do not understand this experience and either intentionally or unintentionally create a church environment that is not welcoming." (Yarhouse, M & Carrs,

T.: 2012, pg. 26) from this study, Nhlakanipho's experience portrays the same reflections as presented in chapter five, where he feels that people from his church are refusing to acknowledge his gender identity because they believe that he is changing what God created him to be that is (female), as she was born female. The members of the church are using the derogatory name to call as a means of not understanding and accepting of his gender identity.

This study supports literature Yarhouse and Carrs that though some transgender individuals face difficulties from persons in the church that make it difficult for transgender persons to worship or participate in their congregational activities, the spiritual guidance and internal experiences of one's faith proves to be a positive influence in the life of the transgender persons (Yarhouse, & Carrs, T.: 2012, pg. 28). The spiritual guidance and one's faith play a role in how transgender individuals relate and feel about themselves and people around them including the relationship they have with their bodies, which is what I am going to engage in the next section. The dimensions of the body as they are experienced by transgender people.

6.2. Body

6.2.1. "I am a bread spoiled from the Bakery. My body was a shame"

Literature reveals that "Transgender people incorporate a number of different gender and body expressions, including but not limited to cross-dressing all the time, cross-dressing only some of the time, and undergoing gender reassignment surgeries such as breast augmentation, breast removal, and genital reconstruction surgery." (Melendez, et al.: 2006, pg. 21).

Participants in this study experienced that their anatomical bodies did not align with their lived gender bodies. Two of the participants in this study revealed that they at times stuffed their bodies with objects to align their anatomic body with their lived gender identity. This forms another development stage of transgender identity. Two participants expressed feelings of happiness after starting the transitioning process and the other two expressed wishes of transitioning in the near future. These participants revealed that they experienced themselves as male trapped in a female body or female trapped in a male's body. Literature Zucker & Cohen-Kittenis: 2008) and study by McLachlan (2010) suggests that transgender individuals centralise their body in their life experiences as they experience gender dysphoria, leading to cross gender living. (Zucker & Cohen-Kittenis: 2008) (McLachlan, C. 2010). Baker-Johnson

(2010) argues that "it is true that transgender individuals experience gender dysphoria at some point in their lives and it is a misconception to assume that all transgender people experience gender dysphoria, however transgender individuals who grew up in a culture that affirms transgender people likely did not and gender dysphoria lessened or disappeared as a person transition to their identified gender." (Johnson, B.: 2010). This study confirmed Baker-Johnson's findings as two of the participants shared that their transitioning process is somehow providing them with required and necessary changes in their bodies, which lessens the level of gender dysphoria.

6.2.2. The body as a cause of depression

From the study, Nhlakanipho expressed that he is feeling depressed as he has not yet embarked on the journey of transitioning. His anatomical body and the lived gender body are not congruent and that causes him anxiety and depression. The way in which people in general comment about his body fuels his depression. The negative way in which people pass comments to transgendered person fuels the amount of depression that transgender people experience. Such negative comments are known as the illustrations of transphobia. Hill (2002) defines transphobia as "the emotional disgust towards individuals who are not conforming to society's gender expectations." (Hill, D. & Willoughby, B.: 2005, pg. 533). Hill's definition of transphobia is consistent with the definition of homophobia, which is the hatred, disgust against people in same-sex relationships. One may argue that the trend seems to suggest that minority groups are experiencing more violence and verbal attacks because of their sexual preference and their lived gender identities.

Mirender and Philani though they highlighted that their dysphoria has lessened because they are now on hormone treatment however they expressed that general comments from people had an emotional effect on them as transgender individuals. Philani stated how painful it was when people made general feminine comments but even worse when its people closer to you, he states "*Most of the time it was people telling me how much I have a good standing, and that used to hurt me a lot. Sometimes you will find that a person is complementing you innocently but I will remain offended and it was worse if it came from a person closer to me.*" Philani (23 August 2018). This experience illustrates the effects transphobic comments in the lives of transgender people however one may note that it is not only negative comments that fuel depression and anxiety amongst transgendered people. The way in how people comment

about transgender men as females fuels depression as highlighted in Nhlakanipho and Philani's experience, vice versa with transgendered women. Such comments one may argue may bring into the face of transgender people the reality of the incongruence of the body and the gender identity they identify with thus causing high levels of depression.

Crystal Boza & Kathryn Perry (2014) argue that "the study of mental health among transgender persons is complicated by early research, which interpreted gender-variance and gender dysphoria to be representative of underlying pathology." (Boza, C. & Perry, K.:2014, pg. 35). Boza and Perry further highlight that, "though it has been highlighted in research that gender-related victimisation directly contributed to the depression and suicidal pressures among transgender people." However "transgender individuals suffer from systematic discrimination including inequalities and direct exclusions in areas of education, employment, housing, and health care." (Boza, C. & Perry, K.: 2014, pg. 37). Transgender individuals as transgressive gendered people face a number of stigma and discrimination. Systemic structures of operation are constructed in a way that adheres to heteronormative ways, therefore transgender identities as transgressive identities face discrimination in every sphere of their lives.

Gender dysphoria was classified as the mental illness by the World Health Organisation, the diagnostic label used was gender identity disorder. The classification of gender dysphoria as mental illness may have caused severe restrictions for African transgender people to access treatment as mental illness is met with prejudice and stigma in Africa. Pamela Collins (2001) in her study on sexuality and women with severe mental illness in South Africa highlights that mental illness is met with stigma and prejudice amongst South African people. She points out that one of the Social workers she interviewed about sexuality and mental illness said "Mental health and sexuality are two things that you don't talk about. We've come from the society where those are taboos. Things have been so controlled." (Collins, P.:2001, pg. 151). Charmaine Hugo et al. (200) confirms Collins observation that in Africa research has suggested that Africa does project people suffering from mental illness, however, there is still stigma and ignorance surrounding mental health issue.

Transgender people have been silent and often a marginalised group because at times there are perceived as people who are mentally ill. Such mentality and diagnosis one may argue that they may have contributed to the dire depression experiences of transgender people. It is

of great achievement that recently the World Health Organisation has announced that gender dysphoria is to be no longer diagnosed as a mental illness. The reason offered by the World Health Organisation for this announcement was that it is hoping to reduce the stigma against transgender individuals as they suffered the double stigma of being transgendered and also gender dysphoric. (Gander, K: 2018 accessible in http://www.newsweek.com/being-transgender-not-mental-illness-world-health-organisation-says-93869?fbclid=IwAR3J-nuK_e0AQCOBI524TKMCNfGOoWk519EtOd5DcrY-CZUDORgBNISN8).

6.2.3. *"I don't need to make up to feel feminine. I love my body."*

Often as people, we have conceptualised ideology of how feminine people should look like and how masculine people should look like. Such ideologies are derived from a heteronormative understanding of gender. From this study, Siphokazi presented a dynamic and complex conceptualisation of her body as a transgender individual identifying within the transgender binary (MTF). Siphokazi's experience presents a conceptualisation of transgender bodies as beyond the gender binary. Rejecting the gender performance norms of wearing make-up as a transgender woman to claim her femininity transcends both the general conceptualisation of how to be a transgendered woman and the heteronormative cultural expectation norms of femininity and masculinity. This kind of experience shows a shift in the understanding of transgender identities in South Africa as not only be conforming to gender binary and transitioning. Siphokazi's experience highlights a diverse and much complex conceptualisation of transgender bodies in the formulation of identity.

Not rushing to alter or align her body, and presenting herself in her male clothes showcases experiences of the fluidity of Siphokazi's gender identity. Such experiences challenge the essentialist view of gender, which Nagoshi & Brzuzy (2010) attribute to feminist theoretical approach posing as problematic when applied to conceptualise transgender identities (Nagoshi, J. & Brzuzy, S.:2010, pg. 45). Siphokazi's experience challenges the hegemonic gender dualism of biological determinism. Challenging the essentialist view that man is born masculine and therefore identify as a man (De Beauvoir, S.: 2010, pg. 267). This experience highlights the extent to which the transgender identity is fluid and not fixed.

Nagoshi & Brzuzy (2010) argue that "an essentialist view would make one's body a proxy for identity, with a female to male transgender individuals being betrayers of their oppressed

identity and male to female transgender individuals relinquished male privileges, however still not accepted as a real woman. Leading to social and psychological meaning of being able to modify one's body with regards to gender being also problematized." (Nagoshi, J. & Brzuzy, S.:2010, pg. 435). Siphokazi's experience suggests that other transgender people do not centralise their gender identity, therefore the body does not become a proxy for their gender identity. Tam Sanger (2008) is of the opinion that the widespread assumption that "trans people desire to alter their genitalia" is untrue, as not all Trans people want to alter their genitalia and a great diversity exists within the Trans community. (Sanger, T: 2008, pg. 79)

As Judith Butler argued that "gender is not fixed, stable, or incontrovertible, but inscribed and re-inscribed by cultural norms and expectation. Gender is performed." (Butler, J.: 1990). De Beauvoir, S: 2010 argues that our bodies as lived play a central role in the formation of our subjectivity, including the experience and expressions of our genders and sexualities and moreover gender and sexuality are necessary embodied and irreducible either to biological categories (male, female or intersex), or cultural constructs (masculinity or femininity) (De Beauvoir, S.: 2010, pg. 390). Susannah Cornwall points out that "bodies are not read innocently when it comes to sex any more than when it comes to race. Our theories and the way we read the bodies' point that we are already influenced by our beliefs and assumptions about what sex and race are and how they inhere in bodies." (Cornwall, S: 2015, pg. 5). Such arguments may only suggest that our gender identities are influenced by performances from societal and cultural norms (heteronormative binary constructions of gender) and lived through our bodies and as such our bodies are not innocently read without attaching these normal performances when we read transgressive bodies that present themselves to be beyond the heteronormative construction.

Siphokazi's experience illuminates ownership and control of self-identity embodied in the development of transgender identity. Such transgender experiences challenge and disorient heteronormativity as an identity that rejects gender performance norms through the conceptualisation of the body, through clothing and rejecting culturally and traditionally expectations of gender roles. As Melendez (2006), argues that "transgender identity categories continue to emerge, and their definitions are not as stable as researchers require them to be to confidently categorise individuals, acts, identities, and bodies for conventional health research." (Melendez, R, et al: 006. pg. 22). I agree with Melendez's et al reflections

that transgender identities continue to emerge and to evolve even in South Africa transgender individuals are beginning to open up to new views, insights, and understanding of being transgendered.

As argued in chapter five behavioural expressions forms the embodiment of transgender identity, which informs the sense of self in relation to the inner identity. This kind of experience shows that transgender bodies are understood not only in sexual terms but as a part of human life that can be celebrated. (McLachlan, C.: 2010). However the group that participated in this study identified as transgender individuals identifying within the transgender binary identity, participants are either MTF or FTM transgendered individuals. Thus in this study three of the participants still regarded the gender binary as very important (Ekins & King: 2001). They prefer to still conform to the strict boundaries of this gender binary (McLachlan, C.: 2010, pg. 66). The participants' lived experiences were that gender and sex dichotomies played important roles. This involved a transitioning from their natal sex to the gender that they felt they belonged to and who they really are. This suggests that for other transgender individuals the binary is a point of reference and therefore it cannot be ignored and thrown away.

6.3. Cultural gender identity

6.3.1. "It was always obvious when you grow up that you are different."

It is very important to highlight that culture is broad, complex, contextually and socially negotiated. Gabriel Idang (2015) highlights that the definitions of culture are as many as are the scholars who are interested in the phenomenon. However, he defines culture as that which "Entails a totality of traits and characters that are peculiar to a people to the extent that it marks them out from other peoples or societies. The peculiar traits include the people's language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing and it goes on to include people's social norms, taboos, and values." (Idang, G.: 2015, pg. 98). In this instance, Idang employs values as beliefs that are held about what is wrong and what is important in life (Idang, G.: 2015, pg. 98). Idang (2015) simply put culture as a shared pattern way of life shared by a particular group of people. Culture is passed on from generation and generations (Idang, G.: 2015, pg. 99). Aziza (2001) defines culture as "culture refers to the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a particular group of people. It includes everything that makes them distinct

from any other group of people, for instance, their greeting habits, dressing, social norms and taboos, food, songs and dance patterns, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, traditional occupations, religious as well as philosophical beliefs.” (Aziza: 2001, pg. 31).

These definitions share the same element of similarity through them, the singular characteristic of portraying and capturing culture as the entire or total shared pattern way of life shared by a particular group of people (Idang, G.:2015, pg. 99). This proves that every individual who grows up in society is likely to be infused with the culture of that society, be it knowingly or otherwise (Idang, G.:2015, pg. 99). Therefore it is important to note that transgender participants involved in this study are culturally and traditionally infused as they grew up in their communities. As they form part of the community certain symbols, rituals, patterns, languages, clothing and other forms of patterns are infused as part of their culture to formulate meanings of their gender identities.

This study portrayed that transgender participants grew up from these communities, from the youngest age of their lives and they have always portrayed their lived gender identity. Growing up from these communities these transgender individuals expressed that within these communities the trend displayed is that which showed to accept and to welcome their gender difference. Nhlakanipho reveals that his communities understood him as one of the boys in his local community from playing around with boys in the local area. As argued in the theory chapter that within the African communities the person's identity is made up of their character combined with their family and social roots. (Menkiti, I.:1984, pg. 171). What does then this mean? One may argue that it seems these transgender individuals are accepted as "children of the community," which in Zulu may mean "*Izingane zendawo*.” The community portrays trends of accepting these transgender people on the basis that they grew up in the community and they are one of the community.

All participants did not mention any form of a threat come from their communities, though Mirender highlights that in passing people sometimes out of rudeness they called her by his birth name which she does not use anymore. She highlights that though she is accepted in her local community however there will always be people who are there to annoy you just because they know that you are transgendered. As Vance (2011) cited in Black Jennifer (2014), illustrate that "there are many references to sexual orientation throughout history, but even with that being the case those who are involved in same-sex relationships are not always

accepted as equals by different cultures, and in any case, are discriminated against or punished." (Black, J.: 2014). Mirender's experience suggests that though some members of the community may show trends of acceptance of the lived gender identities of transgender individuals however there is always going to be that small group that passes homophobic or transphobic remarks because they know your gender identity. As argued in the theory chapter above, Charl pointed out that the transgenderism on the whole of South Africa does not sit well anywhere, not with any culture (Charl: 2009, pg. 225). Mirender's experience speaks to this argument as she highlights how other members in the community mock her knowingly of her gender identity.

6.3.2. You are *Inkosana*: gender identity, culture, and traditional masculinities meet.

In our communities, there are certain gender prejudice attitudes operating enforcing how gender roles are to be maintained (Gunda, M.: 2011, pg. 95). There is enforcement of gender roles and designations that become vital to the control of people. As Pharr points out that, "The enforcement of gender roles and designations is vital to the control of people, especially women, lesbians, gay men, transgendered, bisexual, questioning people, and ultimately everyone." (Pharr, S.: 1988, pg. 117). Antonio (1997) mentions that "In traditional societies matters of sex are never disembedded from culture." (Antonio, E.:1997, pg. 297). McLachlan (2010) study suggested that some transgender individuals experienced rejection and humiliation from their society, and church whilst others did not come across such experience (McLachlan, C.: 2010, pg. 67). This study partly agrees to McLachlan's findings though three participants did not mention to have experienced any form of rejection or humiliation from the society instead society was happy for them to have found hormonal treatment and experienced their society to be safe however Mirender, on the other hand, experienced rejection and humiliation from her home. One may argue that Mirender's experience of rejection from home may present us with what Rudwick refers to as rural and urban dichotomy (Rudwick, S.: 2008, pg. 163). Rudwick points out that rural and urban dichotomy is synonymous with modernity and culture (Rudwick, S.: 2008, pg. 163). Mirender's experiences is a good reflection of what Rudwick is referring to. The situated-ness of Mirender's family in the deep rural areas in KwaZulu Natal and Mirender living in Durban, a city accommodating different people from all different spheres of life thus embracing diverse cultures. This situated-ness brings up a complex of two different worlds urban and rural and expectations of how gender roles are to be maintained.

The Zulu community is known as a very patriarchal society (Magwaza, T.: 2001, pg.25). As presented in chapter five Mirender is a firstborn male child, Mirender's experience invokes certain anxieties about the *Inkosana* traditional practice and the gendered dynamics through which gender roles are expected to be maintained. Mirender's experience challenges, the hegemonic masculinities embedded in the Zulu traditional practice of being *Inkosana* and the status of being a man in the community. Mirender challenges the hegemonic masculinities embedded in this tradition that would have rendered Mirender as superior to women. As *Inkosana* the society and family expected him to lead the family name as an elder son. And he was to maintain power and authority as his father's son in the family. As Indlalifa he was expected to take over from his parents when they die and *Inkosana* becomes the one who burns incense on behalf of the family when the father dies, even if the mother is alive. *Inkosana* becomes elevated to a superior position than his mother (Langa, M: 2012, pg. 59). Mirender's experience destabilises the gender prejudices within the Zulu that enforced certain conformity to gender roles as a male born person.

Maria Van den Berg points out that, in most cultures, there is a predominant ideology that men should hold social power while women should occupy subordinate positions (Van den Berg, M.: 2011, pg. 387) (Gunda, M.: 2011, pg. 95). Mirender's experience as a transgender woman, (who was born male) destabilises, disorient and complicates and challenges these norms and traditions. The *Inkosana* tradition is a continuation of the controlled hegemonic masculinity that is a production of heteronormativity, informed by patriarchy. Mirender's experience complicates and challenges cultural stereotypes in the Zulu community that promote a binary gender system that theorise gender in relation to sex. You are born male, therefore, you are assumed that you are masculine and you are expected to act masculine. As Butler states that "When the constructed status of gender is theorized radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequences than man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one." (Butler, J.: 1993, pg. 7).

As presented in chapter five Mirender mentions that her father was a respected community man and held dignity in society more like a king. Mirender's experience identifying as a transgender woman, suggests that she is challenging and complicating her father's status in society as a respected and dignified family man in society. In the Zulu society status and gender roles are given and elders expect young people to conform. Hadebe's (2010) findings in his study point out that, the status of manhood within the Zulu culture is conferred by

having cattles, a wife, and children so that in turn a man is respected by his peers and the community at large. While on the basis of authority on which male power rests, a man must show values and norms of being able to control his household (Hadebe, L.: 2010, pg. 58) (Masuku, N.: 2015, pg. 132).

However, Mirender identifying as a woman while knowing that he was born male, comes across as someone disrespecting the given gender roles and thus not respecting the elder's wishes. Mirender expression, therefore, comes across as someone who is rebelling the family protocol and not obeying the family rules set out for him as a male born child in the household. One may argue that Mirender's experience of not adhering to male gender role and identity reflects on her father as a man failing to control his household. Within the Zulu community, there is a saying that says "a child is because the child's parents are." This means you are who you are because that is how you are raised and therefore you become a reflection of your parents. As Masuku points out "in the Zulu community parents socialise their children to observe specific cultural practices, so that when they grow old those mores become a part of them." (Masuku, N.: 2015, pg. 132). Such societal pressures and ideas about gender and sexuality put a lot of pressure and do not allow man and society to consider change be it traditional or cultural. Pharr (1988) writes that "Those who seek their rights, who seek inclusion, who seek to control their own lives instead of having their lives controlled are the people who fall outside the norm. They are defined in relation to the norm and are found lacking. They are *"the other."* If they want are not of the norm, they are seen as abnormal, deviant, inferior, marginalised and "not right." (Pharr, S.: 1988, pg. 58).

Through the ordeal of fighting for her recognition as a woman and being homeless Mirender found support from her grandmother who is an old woman from the rural areas, though this study did not concern itself with support system or family support for transgender people but I would like to believe that this forms a very important section in the lives of transgender people who are transitioning and it would be great to see more research being done focusing on the support systems (family, spouse, organisational and religious) for transgender individuals who are transitioning and those who are not transitioning. Mirender's gender expression disorient and complicates the norms by the real or imagined physical journey, of failing to reproduce the hetero-patriarchal norms as set out in the culture and tradition as *Inkosana*.

Though Mirender received support from her grandmother however one may note that Mirender points out that her grandmother must have known from an early age that Mirender was transgendered however she never shared anything with Mirender from the rich histories of culture to know of people identifying as Mirender. This leave me asking and wondering why couldn't Mirender grandmother share any knowledge with Mirender on transgender people has she had an idea of what Mirender was going through? As Richard Parker (2009), points out that "the strong emphasis we have placed on issues of culture and as a surrogate for culture, language and discourse may un-internationally have diverted our attention away from the importance of certain kinds of 'silence'." (Parker, R.: 2009, pg. 260). Though this study did not concern itself so much with the silences around issues of sex, sexuality and gender identity, however, this point may be worth exploring further to be able to share insights on African sexualities and gender identities.

6.3.3. Sangomahood as a safe space

Siphokazi as a transgender sangoma represented a complex which bring in the intersection of tradition and gender identity. She expressed that she fears being victimised in the church because her church has a patriarchal structure of leadership. However, her experience as a Sangoma transgender woman and as the discussion suggested that Sangomas in Zulu communities and in Africa generally are respected and welcomed as custodians of culture and preservers of African tradition, thus are required to adhere to this status. Siphokazi as a transgender sangoma had a very different experience from other participants as she felt that her position as a sangoma created her a safe space to be accepted and welcomed in the church and in her local community people call her Gogo, which is her preferred gender. Her name derives from the fact that she has female spirits and so she is called Gogo (granny). Her church's beliefs made it easier for her to be accepted in the church as a sangoma. Manganyi, J & Buitendag, J (2013) mentions that African Initiated churches accommodate African traditional religion and these members aim to be Christian without losing their African identity (Manganyi, J & Buitendag, J.: 2013, pg. 1). One may argue that it is such a belief that Siphokazi was accepted in her church without any discrimination. Part of the anticipation of this study was to find out if transgender identities in the Zion churches were negotiated in relation to ancestral spirit or the spirit of the dead, it was informative to learn from the participants that this was not how their transgender identity was understood and their

respective churches and communities accept them as people born with their lived gender identity.

LGBTIQA+ people in South Africa are faced with problems of violence, sexual assault, and corrective rape because society has labelled same-sex (inclusive of transgender individuals) or homosexuality in Un-African. However, Punt (2014), argues that such accusations are based on un-profound explanations and selective readings of the Bible (Punt, J.: 2014, pg. 10). Given these challenges faced by LGBTIQA+ people in South Africa, I anticipated that notions of culture, tradition, and religion would be challenging for participants in this study. However what seemed to be the trend from the participants was that they did not face any discrimination in the name of culture and tradition, but interesting enough some experienced discrimination from their churches.

From this study, there was no mention of traditional or cultural explanation or term to describe transgender identity from the societies, and transgender individuals had the freedom of living their transgender identity freely and happily with the support from their communities. Masuku (2015) points out that, "some people refuse to acknowledge and accept the existence of homosexuals and lesbians on the unfounded and untested grounds that this phenomenon never existed in pre-colonial Africa, and that it is, therefore, their given right to protect their culture at the expense of 'other' people. Which there is no documented proof to support these assertions. Masuku further states that maybe there only could be that these individuals are homophobic who are intolerant of others, hiding behind culture to justify their point of view." (Masuku, N.: 2015, pg. 135). Though Masuku is referring to homosexuals and lesbians, I believe the same can be said of transgender individuals.

Hence I agree with Bhana (2015) in that culture is indeed fluid and indeed open to modification (Bhana, D: 2015). Experiences of the three transgender individuals suggested that culture and tradition were not merely used to discriminate or humiliate these transgender individuals but instead they are supported in their journey of finding fulfilment in their lives. Though Mirender had a different experience however, in the end, her father and family finally found a way of negotiating her gender identity and now is a respected member in the family as a transgender woman.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter the discussion highlights that there is the number of transgender individuals attending Zion churches, however, these Zion churches believe that transgender individuals need to come out to the church to be recognised and be engaged properly. These churches show that they still lack enough knowledge and vocabulary in order to be able to engage transgender individuals in the church. The study highlights the difficulty and challenge these churches face in tackling issues of sexuality, and gender identity. The study highlights the hetero-patriarchal structures that exist in these churches hindering them to engage with sexual minority groups in their churches that are not conforming to heteronormativity. Though these church has shown a lack of vocabulary and still find issues of sexuality and gender identity hard to tackle, however, some transgender individuals highlighted positive responses from their churches. Transgender participants revealed their love for God and their sense of belonging in these churches, which enables them to stay in these churches and not find new spaces of worship. The discussion also highlights that transgender people in these Zion churches have been erroneously judged and called gays and lesbians. This is due to the confusion of not being able to distinguish between gender identity and sexual orientation. The same confusion transgender people face amongst fellow gays and lesbians.

The discussion reveals how the appropriation of preferred name and pronoun becomes an important feature in the development of the transgender identity. Appropriation of the preferred name provides transgender individuals with a sense of self, and it empowers transgender individuals to embody their identity openly and freely. However, it became visible that transgender people face a lot of people still struggling to call them by their preferred name. Therefore the appropriation of the preferred name becomes a long process that transgender people have to go through as they transition because names and pronouns form part of our identities.

This study reflects that transgender participants expressed that their anatomic body does not align with the lived gender and therefore feelings of anxiety came into play for three of the participants before they could transition. The discussion highlights that transgender individuals who experience dysphoria because of their bodies tried to stuff their bodies with the object to bring alignment between their gender identity and anatomic body. The body becomes the central focus for transgender people who want to pass as a transition. As

participants shared how their bodies was a shame to them before transitioning, however after transitioning the feelings changed because the desired body began to develop. However, discussion shows that not all transgendered people experienced dysphoria because of their bodies. Some transgender individuals though they identify within the transgender binary however they did not feel the need to alter their bodies.

The analysis of data revealed that no cultural reference was shared to explain the transgender identity. Perceptions from the participants highlighted that they did not be discriminated against in the name of culture, therefore they were happy in their local communities and they have always been known to be different from the earliest age. Transgender individuals expressed feelings of being accepted in their communities and it is in their communities where their preferred names are mostly used and appropriated. However, the discussion highlights that some transgender people face discrimination from their homes as was the case with Mirender.

Results showed that in the Zion churches where the participants are based the bible has not been used to discriminate against them. The use of the Bible is only for preaching the good news only. However, one participant shared how the church has been using derogatory name Inkonkoni to call her because they believe that he wants to change whom God created her to be. From this study, Transgender identities have shown the complexity of their identity with complex bodies. They destabilise, disorient cultural beliefs embedded in patriarchal norms. Transgender identity they proved to challenge the hetero-patriarchal structures in the African church and problematize these structures. Though in these study participants identified within the transgender binary, however, the study highlighted the body complexity that is emerging within that transgender binary. This study also revealed that though transgender identities destabilise and disorient the gender binary, however, it will remain our frame of reference within the transgender binary identities. In the next chapter, I provide a brief summary of the study and recommendations for future research, as I believe that this study needs to be explored further on a bigger sample as this research was a small exploration of what perception are there regarding the transgender identities in the Zion churches in KwaZulu Natal.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

7.0.Introduction

In chapter six I engaged and discussed the findings from the field to offer a nuanced discussion of how this study challenges and offers new insights on the literature on African Independent churches, sex, sexuality and gender identity within the South African context. In this section, I provide a brief summary of the study and recommendations for future research. The aim of the study was to interrogate the lived experiences of transgender people in the development and the embodiment of their lived gender identity in the Zion churches.

The research questions driving this study were first, what are the beliefs of the Ethiopian Zionist churches on transgender identities? Secondly, how do transgender people understand the religio-cultural beliefs in Ethiopian Zionist churches on transgender identities? And thirdly what are the prevailing religious and cultural responses of transgender people on the concepts of intersex and transgender identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches? In order to answer these questions, I conducted an empirical study with two key informants such as the bishop and the senior deacon from the Ethiopian Zionist churches and four transgender participants to share insights of the beliefs of the Ethiopian Zion churches on transgender identities in KwaZulu-Natal, and how transgender individuals responded to those beliefs found in Ethiopian Zionist churches. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants within a space that was conducive to them to openly share their experiences. However, one participant was interviewed telephonically as she was not around KwaZulu-Natal at the time agreed upon for an interview.

To answer the research questions driving this study I extracted the three key research themes drawn from Nagoshi & Brzuzy's proposal of the transgender theoretical framework as embracing the embodiment that constitutes the self-identity and societal embodiment of transgender identity. The three key research themes identified were first named as the fundamental key theme in the formulation of self-identity in transgender identity and how the church engages transgender names as part of their identity. The sub-themes that emerged from this key research theme were, Gender Trouble? Sexuality and sexual diversity, not an easy topic. *They discuss my sexuality as Inkonkoni (Gay/Lesbian) but they never asked me. Elders always use my dead name, my preferred name completes me. In Christianity, we are*

all children of God. Why call me names in the house of God. The first key research theme aimed to answer the first research questions, what are the beliefs of the Ethiopian Zionist churches on intersex and transgender identities?

The second theme was the body as subjective experience as the landscape of meaning of transgender individuals pre-transitioning and during the process of transitioning. The sub-themes that emerged were, *I am bread spoiled at the bakery, my body was a shame.* The body as a cause of depression. And *I don't need to make up to be feminine. I love my body.* The second research sub-theme aimed to answer the second research question, how do intersex and transgender people understand the religio-cultural beliefs in Ethiopian Zionist churches on transgender identities?

The third themes were cultural gender identity, which brings forth how the society culturally engages and negotiate embodiment of transgender identity. The sub-themes that emerged were, *it was always obvious that you are different. You are an Inkosana: gender identity, tradition and culture meet. Sangomahood as a safe space.* In this chapter, I provide a brief summary of the study illustrating how the research objectives of this study were met and answered. This third research key theme aimed to answer the third research question, what are the prevailing religious and cultural responses of intersex and transgender people on the concepts transgender identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches?

7.1.Naming

7.1.1. Gender Trouble? Sexuality and sexual diversity, not an easy topic

Key informants and participants in this study highlighted that sexuality and gender identities are still difficult issues and topics to discuss in the Ethiopian Zion churches. Literature suggested that Zion church leadership structures are highly hetero-patriarchal and such structures do not necessarily allow theological engagement with minority groups not conforming to heteronormativity. The study highlighted that the Zion churches were not ready to engage transgender individuals unless they come out or forward for the church to begin to acknowledge and engage them. Participants from the study concurred to these sentiments as they expressed in the discussion that they were the ones who came out in the

church challenging the church to acknowledge them and recognise them as members of the church in their lived gender identity.

However both key informants suggested that not updating the constitution of the church contributed to the challenge the church has to address issues of gender identity and sexuality. The study suggests that updating church document in accordance with time could have avoided such issues being avoided in the first place. The study suggests that Zion churches have a challenge of discussing sexuality and gender identities and they lack creative spaces to engage transgendered individuals. Hetero-patriarchal structures fail these churches to create theories that assist and allow them to engage and discuss transgendered people in the church.

As highlighted in the first chapter of this study that part of the motivation to conduct this study was the way in which the church responded to my gender identity. They communicated my identity as spirit possession identity. However this study highlighted that in some churches transgender people are accepted for who they are and in some churches they are not accepted. As churches that accommodate African Traditional Religion one may assume that these churches that accept their transgender people have their own religio-cultural worldviews that influences them to accept these transgender individuals. But then again for those transgender individual who are not accepted in their churches, one may highlight as the study has indicated that it maybe because of the hetero-patriarchal structures in the church that fail to create space for negotiation. This study was an exploration of the experiences of transgender people in the Zion churches and how Zion churches negotiate transgender identities. The study did not probe further on the ways in which the Zion churches respond to transgender persons however, a further research study on what are the religio-cultural worldviews that influence the way in which Ethiopian Zionist churches respond to transgender could shed a light on the silences and the slow and hostile movement around issues of sexuality, gender and sex in the Zion churches.

7.1.2. *“They discuss my sexuality as Inkonkoni (Gay/Lesbian) but they never asked me”*

Participants in this study highlighted that their churches understood them as *ONgqingili/Izinkonkoni/ izitabane*. These are Zulu names mostly used to refer to lesbian and gay individuals or any other person involved in the same-sex relationship. Participants shared that such reference is made to them often at times without being asked of how they understand

their gender identity. Churches assumed that these transgendered individuals were either gay or lesbian. Such labeling often led to the erroneous judgment of gender identity.

One participant illustrated that such labeling of their gender identity sometimes takes away the freedom of dressing in the desired church uniform. Literature suggested that the most common trend in research has been the homogenising of LGBTIQ studies, whereby studies will mostly focus on lesbian and gender sexualities thus not accounting the experiences of transgender individuals. Such homogenising has contributed to the confusion and erroneous conceptualisation of sexual orientation and gender identity. This study highlights that the conceptualisation of gender identity and sexual orientation are still a problem both in society and in the church. Though the study is not concerned with the conceptualisation of sexuality and gender identity however it suggests that this conceptualisation needs to be explored further as such conceptualisation is presumed to be present among LGBTIQA+ people as well. Such conceptualisation may fuel discrimination both in society and among LGBTIQA+ people.

However two participants in this study shared that they have had positive experiences after coming out their gender identity were understood and accepted in the church and they were allowed the chance to dress in the desired uniform, which aligned with their gender identity. These experiences highlight the different approaches and reactions in Zion churches.

7.1.3. "Elders always use my dead name, my preferred name completes me."

Transgender individuals stressed that the appropriation of the preferred name was important and preferred name completes them as transgendered individuals not identifying with the name assigned to them at birth. Literature concurred with the experiences shared by participants, that preferred names and forenames bring out the essence of 'this is me' feeling for transgender individuals who may wish to change their names and feel the strong sense of incongruence between their lived gender identity and their assigned sex at birth.

Pilcher (2017) argued that "names and their daily use makes it hard to move beyond a taken for granted understanding of their use and meaning within the gendered social world."

(Pilcher, J.:2017, pg.812). Participants in this study associated with Pilcher's argument in their experiences as they highlighted that elderly people did not use their preferred names though they knew the preferred name of the transgender individual however they continued to use their birth names. A name assigned at birth in the transgender world is known as the

dead name because it is the name assigned to the gender you do not relate to and therefore when you chose a new name the old name is regarded dead because it is believed that it dies with the old gender as you transition. The new name as the birth of the persona you've always been. However other participants stressed that they have appropriated their names even before they transition.

Literature mentioned that the appropriation of the preferred name that resonates with the lived gender identity offers transgender individuals with the sense of empowerment, ownership of their lived gender identity. Participants in this study highlighted that, as they stressed how their preferred names complete them and they continuously stressed that they use their preferred names to introduce themselves even in church platforms their preferred names are known as they make sure that people get to know their names. Though participants in this study emphasised the importance of their preferred names and highlighted that not everyone uses their preferred names, however they displayed a form of resilience and resistant that as literature points out, “provides with the experience on how transgender people as embodied individuals respond to routinized naming traditions in relation to sex and gender.”

7.1.4. “*In Christianity we are all children of God.*” Why call me names in the house of God.

Transgender individuals featured in this are Christian individuals and they stressed their love for God. They shared that they come from a spiritual background and spiritual homes and thus they do not see themselves leaving their churches. However, though these individuals highlighted their love for their churches one participant asserted that his church has negatively referred to him as *Ungqingili*. This word *Ungqingili* was often used to talk about him and this word was used in a negative manner. This is the Zulu word used often to discriminate against or to violate people who identify as LGBTIQ.

Nhlakanipho stress that such comments and discussions about him made him leave the church for about 2 years, however, he went back, because he believed that he had to stand for the next generation of transgendered individuals that might want to come out or join the church. Nhlakanipho further illustrated that he does not understand why transgendered

individuals should be called names in the house of God as he believed that in Christianity we are all children of God and therefore no one is supposed to be called names.

The dominant trend that this study highlighted was that these churches were not using the bible to bash or discriminate against transgender people. Common texts such as Gomora and Sodoma text were not even read in church. One participant felt that maybe such a reaction from her church may be because her church is trying to not discriminate against her as she had come out. However, even those who experienced the church to be not a welcoming space stressed that such texts were not used in church for preaching.

The study suggests that the dominant beliefs operating in the Zion churches are that sexuality and gender identity are not easy subjects to discuss therefore they are pushed to the back to be not actively engaged. The study further illustrated that transgender individuals are often identified or referred to as gays and lesbians and therefore the names such as *Isitabane and Inkonkoni* are employed to refer to transgender individuals in the church. However transgender people have claimed ownership of their preferred names and their gender identity in the church. Transgender individuals in this study have shown a great skill of resilience and resistance to being accounted as members of their childhood churches and have enforced the visibility of transgender individuals in the African Independent church.

7.2.Body

7.2.1. "I am a bread spoiled from the Bakery. My body was a shame"

Transgender individuals participating in this study expressed that they identify as either male trapped in a female body (FTM) or females trapped in a males body (MTF). They expressed the incongruence of their lived gender identity and their anatomic bodies. Two participants highlighted that they have started hormone treatment and as such major body alignments are beginning to show. Though they shared that before hormone treatment their bodies were a shame and they used to stuff their bodies with objects to align their bodies with their lived gender identity. These individuals identify with the transgender gender binary.

7.2.2. The body as a cause of depression

From this study transgender individual mentioned that they felt depressed in ways in which people comment about their bodies. Nhlakanipho and Philani both who are transgender men expressed that general feminine comments from people who knew about their gender identity fuelled the feelings of anxiety. Literature highlighted that negative and violent comments towards transgender individuals were referred to as transphobia and often transphobia is a feeling of disgust towards people who are transgendered and not conforming to societal norms of gender identity. Literature pointed out that transphobia more like homophobia is found to be prevalent amongst transgender individuals and transphobia contributed to the depression often experienced by transgender individuals because of their gender identity incongruence with their gender body. Literature highlighted that transphobia cannot be taken as the only cause for the high amount of depression experienced by transgendered individuals, but it should be noted that transgender individuals face depression in every sphere of their lives as transgressive identities.

This section pointed out that the World health organisation diagnosed gender dysphoria as a gender identity disorder, as was classified as a mental illness. Diagnosing gender dysphoria as mental illness may have been met with prejudice as often in Africa mental illness are stigmatised and frowned upon as taboo. As literature illustrated that within the African continent issues of mental health are still frowned upon as taboo or difficult issues to address and society still has prejudice and stigma towards mental health issues. However, the study revealed that the World Health organisation has refrained from diagnosing gender dysphoria as a mental illness because it hopes to minimize the stigma experienced by transgender individuals as they suffer the dual stigma of being transgendered and that of mental health.

7.2.3. "I don't need to make up to feel feminine"

In this section one of the participants illustrated how transgender identities push against the normalised gender identities. Siphokazi's (MTF) identifying as a transgender woman expressed that she did not need to make up to feel feminine and beautiful. Siphokazi represents the complexity of gender identity and her experiences challenge both the trending conceptualisation of transgender women and the heteronormative ideology of femininity. Siphokazi represents the new insight of gendered bodies within the transgender binary.

Siphokazi appearing in her male clothes, asserting that she does not need makeup she presented an identity that rejects the gender performance norm of how the feminine gender identity

is constructed based and how feminine individuals are supposed to look like. This kind of experience shows a shift in the understanding of transgender identities in South Africa as not only be conforming to gender binary and transitioning. Siphokazi's experience highlights a diverse and much complex conceptualisation of transgender bodies in the formulation of identity. Siphokazi's experience in this section presented with the experience that gender identities are fluid and not fixed to a certain body. Siphokazi expressed that she would like to transition one day however she presented that she was not depressed and pressed to rush this process. Siphokazi's experience highlighted that transgender identities even identifying with the Trans binary can be transgressive identities without hormone treatment and Siphokazi's experience highlighted that her body was not central to her lived gender identity.

This study suggests that transgender individuals understand their gender identity as transgressive identities and pushing against heteronormative constructions of gender. Gendered bodies as those that transcends both the heteronormative construct of gender and the conceptualisation of transgender women's identity. This section further illustrated how the incongruence of the body and the lived gender identity may become the cause of depression for transgendered individuals. These transgender individuals understood that their anatomic bodies needed to be aligned with their gender identity to avoid experiencing depression. Two transgender individuals who are on hormone treating expressed positive attitudes from the church members and their communities, which suggests that transgender individuals feel the alignment of their bodies with hormone treatment is somehow welcomed in the church as a progressive step to align their gender identity and their bodies.

7.3.Culture, sexuality and gender identity

7.3.1. "It was always obvious when you grow up that you are different."

Transgender individuals in this study expressed that from the communities they grew from their gender identity has always been met with acceptance. They presented that their communities knew about their gender identity from an early age. Participants shared that from their communities the trend was not discrimination but acceptance and welcoming of their gender identity. However, Mirender mentioned that though her community was happy and accepting of her gender identity however there was always people from the community who would pass on rude comments because they know your gender identity. Literature

pointed out that transgender did not sit well with any culture, and therefore individuals involved in same-sex or identifying outside of heteronormative norms are not always accepted as equals. Transgender in this study strongly expressed that they are accepted in their community in their lived gender identity.

7.3.2. You are *Inkosana*: gender identity, culture, and traditional masculinities meet

Antonio (1997) argued that issues of sex are not disembedded from culture." (Antonio, E.: 1997, pg. 297). Mirender mentioned that at first, her family believed that her lifestyle was influenced by life from the city as she was staying in Durban at the time when she openly showcased her gender identity. This highlighted the situated-ness of life as presented and engaged in two different areas. Rudwick (2008) refers to Mirender's experience as a rural and urban dichotomy as synonymous with modernity and culture (Rudwick, S: 2008, pg. 163). This highlights the different interpretation of gender identity from two different environments Mirender is situated in.

Mirender pointed out that she believes her father kicked her out of her home because her father is a Zulu traditional man, who believed and was so fond of culture and tradition. Mirender shared that her father said she may not return home until she identifies as male as it should be. Mirender is a transgender woman (was born male), she mentioned that she was the first born son in the family and therefore he was assumed an *Inkosana*.

Inkosana tradition is a Zulu tradition that forms the continuation of hegemonic masculinities found in most Zulu traditions and these masculinities are informed by heteronormativity. Literature mentioned gender prejudice operating in our communities, forcing conformity to heteronormative gender roles. Mirender's experience challenged these gender prejudice and destabilised these hegemonic masculinities as she identified as female though she was born male. She challenged and disoriented societal pressures, and expectation of how gender roles should be maintained.

7.3.3. Sangomahood as a safe space

Siphokazi identified as a sangoma and transgendered. She shared that her position as a sangoma provided her safe space at church as the medium person between the church and the ancestors. As well as in the community her position as a sangoma is respected. Being sangoma elevates her position in the church and in society to be a respected individual

because it is believed that she is possessed by an ancestral spirit. Siphokazi's church as a Zion church accommodates African traditional beliefs as system forming part of worship in church and they believe ancestors community messages directly concerning the church. It is such beliefs that accommodated her and ancestral calling space of acceptance in the church.

As argued in chapter five in the Zulu community, Sangomas are well-respected individuals who are believed to be custodians of culture and traditions. Such beliefs allowed Siphokazi to be elevated as a respected individual whom the society always regard as protected by ancestors. She indicated that she is using the name Gogo which is an ancestral name. In this study participants highlighted that they have never received any cultural explanation or traditional terms about transgender identity. Siphokazi indicated that her sexuality and gender identity are not causing any clash when communicating with ancestors however her ancestors address her as female. Siphokazi's experience seem to express that there is a level of welcoming to transgender people from the world of ancestors and she mentions that, that is because she is possessed mostly by female spirits and they are the ones in power and she has to listen to their directions. She believes that her ancestors are the ones providing and protecting her. Mkasi provided an indication how Sangoma people who identify within the LGBTIQ+ community tie up their sexuality to their gendered spirits (Mkasi, L.: 2013. Pg. 48).

The cultural perceptions and prevailing responses of transgender concepts on transgender identities in Zion churches and in the community are that communities are showing acceptance of transgendered individuals, on the basis that they know about them from the earliest age of their difference. Such acceptance minimize discrimination and other forms of violation. The study further highlights that gender prejudice exists in our communities however transgressive identities are also beginning to be visible and are continuous challenges these prejudices. Gendered bodies reveal to be transgressive beyond the social restricted boundaries of gender roles. Participants revealed that culture was not used to discriminate or violate their lived gender identity, therefore this study suggests that culture and tradition indicate to be fluid and not static, as we may have been led to believe in our communities. Sangomahood elevates the individual's identity into a position of being a respected person as a medium person between the dead and the living both in church and in society.

The study highlights that there is silent approval among the community on transgender people. As indicated in the previous chapter that within the African culture people are infused to a certain cultural practice of their community and this may be the case with these transgender people. Their communities are silent because from the early age they grow up displaying characteristics of the opposite gender than their assigned sex. However as an African, it has always been known that African culture and traditions promote life affirming spaces. One may argue that as these transgender individuals grow up in their local communities they are observed as individuals who are happy in their lived gender identity hence the community silently approves their identity. One may again assume here that maybe the identification within the gender binary of these transgender individuals is what makes the community accommodate them. Whereas lesbian and gays are understood in local communities as confused beings. Again here one may strongly suggest that further research study probing more on why is the community silently approving of transgender people as opposed to gay and lesbian individual needs to be conducted to provide answers to these questions.

7.4. Recommendations for future research

This research focused mainly on lived experiences of transgender using three central themes, name, body and cultural gender identity that embody the formulation of transgender identity in the Zion churches KwaZulu Natal. The sample concentrated on four transgender individuals, two on hormone treatment and two not yet on hormone treatment but will at a later stage transition. All participants were identifying within the trans-binary gender identity. To explore further on transgender identities the sample could include transgender non-conforming people, third-gendered and trans-queer individuals to provide broader insight into the lived experiences of transgender individuals in South Africa. The research could explore the experiences of transgender queer individuals in the African churches KwaZulu-Natal.

African independent churches have come across as institutions lacking the vocabulary and having a challenge is creating open space to engage and negotiate issues of gender, sexuality and gender identities. These churches have come across as churches still operating within the patriarchal notions, which prevents them to engage with sexual minority group members in the church. Therefore the understanding of gender, sexuality and gender identities of these

churches still needs to be evaluated further and be challenged. Further theological research on African faith Communities and sexuality and gender identities in South Africa needs to be explored further. This research may focus on sex, sexuality and sexual diversity in African Independent churches: the theoretical praxis of African Independent Churches.

Findings of this study highlighted that transitioning is not an easy task for the individuals involved and they find themselves facing discrimination whether at home or at church. Therefore structured support is always needed for transgender people. A broader study on family, church, spousal and institutional support for transgender people maybe contribution to the study of transgender individuals in South Africa. The research may focus on transgender queer people and emotional support: evaluating the structured support for transgender people.

Furthermore both in the church and in local communities and amongst LGBQA+ people the study highlights the high level of mis-conceptualisation of sexual orientation and gender identity. This proves to contribute and to create confusion and erroneous judgment between the gender identity (Transgender and Intersex) and sexual orientation (lesbian, Gay and Bisexual). Though the study suggests that educational programmes may lessen this confusion however the research study highlighting the impact of this confusion can shed some light on the implementation of such programmes.

7.5. Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of transgender people in Zion churches in KwaZulu Natal, using the three central key themes naming, body and cultural gender identity. This study highlighted the complexity of transgender lives and how the experiences of transgender people challenge the church and the local communities of their understanding of gender, sex and sexuality. The experiences of transgender individuals in the Zion churches showed that there is a lack of vocabulary to engage transgender members in the church. How the church adopted the local Zulu names to refer to transgender and intersex individuals such as *Inkonkoni*, *Stabane* or *Ngqingili*. These names have been used erroneously to refer to transgender as they are the same names used to refer to gays and lesbians. This highlighted that Zion churches in KwaZulu Natal saw transgender individuals as gays and lesbians. This

erroneous judgment of sexual orientation and gender identity, deprived some transgender individuals an opportunity to dress into the desired uniform and they were not allowed the appropriation of their preferred names. Nevertheless, some transgender individuals were accepted and not deprived of their rights of identity in their churches.

The study revealed how the appropriation of the preferred name becomes a tool of empowerment, ownership in providing the sense of self for transgender people to be able to live and embody their gender identity freely and openly. The bodily lived experiences of transgender challenge the understanding of gender and sex. How gender is not always confirmed by sex you are given at birth, and how transgender identities always challenge the essentialist view of gender as biological determinism. That you are born male, therefore, you are masculine. This study highlighted how the lived gender identity of transgender people challenges the societal construction of gender and sex but how one relates to their gender identity to self and in relation to others in the development of their gender identity.

This study suggests that culture and African tradition have not been used to discriminate against transgender individuals however transgender identities have destabilised and disorientated some of the gendered traditions. This includes societal expectations of how gender roles should be maintained and conducted such as that of being *Inkosana* in Mirender's experience. As the aim of the study was partly to explore how culture offered terms and explanation on transgender identity, the study highlighted that there was no cultural explanation or terms given to explain transgender identities however communal living prevailed as a sense of belonging for transgender individuals amongst their local communities. As mentioned in the chapter above that within the Zulu community there is a belief that "*Kuthatha isigodi sonke ukukhulisa ingane*" which translate as "*it takes the whole village to raise a child*" the idiom born out of the belief that living should be that which encompasses or promotes life and communal living. Living that encompasses and promotes life will allow transgendered individuals also to flourish in their gender identity without fear of facing prejudice and discrimination. Such an environment will allow space to negotiate our identities with the positive hope of being heard, visible and audible.

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Appendix 1: Information Sheet

Date.....

Good morning and how are you? My name is Sindisiwe Sithole; my student identification number is 202521638. I am a Masters student at the university of KwaZulu-Natal at the school of Religion, Philosophy and Classics in Pietermaritzburg campus, South Africa. I am conducting a study under the supervision of Prof. Charlene Van Der Walt. You are being invited to consider participating in the study that aims to explore the experiences of Intersex and transgender people on how the religio-cultural concepts of Intersex and Transgender in their churches hinders or supports them to express their identities. The main aim of the research is to explore what are the beliefs of the Zionist churches on intersex and transgender identities, to understand what are the prevailing religious and cultural responses of intersex and transgender people to the concepts on Intersex and transgender identities in the Zionist churches, to understand how intersex and transgender people negotiate their identity/sexuality in Zionist churches and to understand how intersex and transgender people understand the religio-cultural beliefs in the Zionist churches. About 3 Intersex and 3 transgender people are participating in this research and if you choose to participate in this research; the interview will take 30 to 60 minutes of your time and interview questions are in-depth structured with audio recording with the consent of the participants. After date has been recorded each respondent will receive a confidential hard copy for review.

I would also like you to know that participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study any time you wish. I also want to highlight that some of the question might be distressing and you might not wish to answer due to personal reason, no one is going to be coerced to answer them, yet in the case you need to distress. I make arrangements with the manager of Gay and Lesbian network for to provide counselling, and you will be responsible to pay for the service. The study will also guarantee you full confidentiality during the interview and will not use your real names at any point. The interview will be carried out in secluded and in a private venue where decoding of information will remain confidential. Although there is no any financial benefit, your participation in this study will better help in the production of knowledge helpful to improve women's health in South Africa.

In the case where you want to raise your concern you can contact us on the following, my details, my supervisor and Research Ethics Administration are provided bellow:

Sindisiwe Sithole/ Prof. Charlene Van Der Walt
Administration

Research Ethics and

School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics
Campus

Research Office, Westville

University Of KwaZulu-Natal

Govan Mbeki Building,

Private Bag X01, Scottsville, 3201
4000

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Cell: +27732523051 or 0332605340
2604609

Tel: 27 31 2604769 - Fax: 27 31

Email: Sitholes4@ukzn.ac.za or VanderWaltC@ukzn.ac.za Email: BREC@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 2: The consent form

I (Name)..... (Surname)..... hereby consent to participate in the following study conducted by Sindisiwe Sithole (Masters Student at UKZN) as an interviewee.

Title of the study: **An exploration of religio-cultural concepts of Intersex and transgender identities in Zionist churches in the midlands, KZN.**

I understand and confirm that I accept the following conditions for my participation as an interviewee:

1. I am aware that participation in the research is voluntary. As a participant I am aware that I have the right to withdraw from the research if I feel discomfort or for whatever reason at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.
2. I have been assured of confidentiality - that my identity will not be revealed while the study is being conducted and when the study is published. Anonymous names will be used in place of my actual name.
3. I am aware and accept that the researcher will use an audio recording device
4. I accept the fact that the interview will be done in IsiZulu and English and may last up to +-30 to 60 minutes
5. If I have questions about the study or about being a participant, I know I can contact the researcher by email (Sitholes4@ukzn.ac.za)_or telephonically (0732523051). I am aware that I can also seek further clarity from the project supervisor Professor Charlene Van Der Walt at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the school of Religion, Philosophy and Classics on the following contact details: Email VanderWaltC@ukzn.ac.za ; Office line: 033 2605559
6. The research seeks to make a contribution into the study of sexuality within the Zionist churches in the midlands KwaZulu Natal.

Signed on this (Date) day of (Month) 2018 in
..... (Place)

Signature of participant.....

Signature of researcher.....

Appendix 3: Personal Statement

My name is Sindisiwe Sithole. I am a member of the Holy Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion, in Ladysmith. Growing up from this church instilled some interest in understanding their theology and their practices. Hence in my Honours project I was researching the understanding of healing as merely healing not curing in the African Independent Churches. This was sparked by the way in which my church has continued to use traditional methods of healing despite scientific criticism from media and other forums naming this form of healing as dangerous, since the development of the pandemic virus HIV and AIDS. The personal struggle with my sexuality as a transman, made me to look for space in the church to discuss my sexuality or maybe find alternative ways of communicating the struggle I am going through. I learned that sexuality was not part of the vocabulary that was spoken of frequently in my church. The little room that I was given to discuss my sexuality was through spirit possession. The church and its members understood me to be possessed by my late brother's spirit, which explained why I was referred to as man. It is this context that pushed me to want to further investigate the phenomenon of sexuality in the Zionist churches.

Doing my Masters in the Religion, Gender and Health in the school of Religion, Philosophy and Classics in Pietermaritzburg campus, gives me an opportunity and also motivation to conduct research on the religio-cultural concepts of Intersex and Transgender people in Midlands KwaZulu- Natal. Personally I do not have any objections to the personal expression that participants will share on their experiences. I will have no influence or whatsoever to the study from beginning to end. The study focuses specifically is on the religio-cultural concept of Intersex and Transgender operating in Zionist churches and how these concepts supports or hinders Intersex and Transgender people to express their sexuality in church. The main aim of the research is to explore what are the beliefs of the Zionist churches on intersex and transgender identities, to understand what are the prevailing religious and cultural responses of intersex and transgender people to the concepts of Intersex and transgender identities in Zionist churches, to understand how intersex and transgender people negotiate their identity/sexuality in Zionist churches and to understand how intersex and transgender people understand the religio-cultural beliefs in the Zionist churches.

Appendix 4: Informed Consent

I,.....understand the contents of the information letter for the above study and I also understand the purpose of the study, and I consent to participate in the study. I give the researcher the permission to be interviewed about my personal experiences on how the religious and cultural concepts of Intersex and Transgender people supports or hinders them to express their identity for research purposes. I am aware that the research will use audio recording to gather data during the interview, but my name/s and place of residence will be kept strictly anonymous, and all the materials used in the study will be treated with confidentiality.

Signed.....Date.....

Participant

I give my permission to be audio recorded during the study.

Signed.....Date.....

I do not give my permission to the researcher to used audio recorder during the study.

Signed.....Date.....

Researcher

Signed.....Date.....

Appendix 5: In-depth questions for the interviews for the research

Objective 1: Key Informants (Bishops and Pastors of Zionist churches)

To explore what are the beliefs of the Ethiopian Zionist churches on intersex and transgender identities.

1. Tell me about yourself and your role in the church?
2. Can you briefly tell me what kind of challenges your church have had to deal with regarding issues of sexuality and sexual diversity?
3. What is your church's understanding of transgender and Intersex people?
4. What terms /sayings and generally held assumptions used in your church to refer to transgender and Intersex people?
5. How these terms /sayings and generally held assumptions have these been used by your church?
6. How does your church engage with transgender and intersex people?

Objective 2: (Trans and Intersex participants)

To interrogate how intersex and transgender people understand the religio-cultural beliefs in the Ethiopian Zionist churches on intersex and transgender identities. **(Naming)**

1. Tell me a bit about yourself.
2. How do you identify yourself, your gender identity?
3. What is your preferred gender name?
4. How important is it to you that people call you by the preferred gender name?
 - 4.1. Briefly share the importance of self-identified name.
5. How have you been negotiating your preferred name in your church? What has been their response?
6. How has the people within your culture responded to your preferred name?
7. How do you interpret these responses and what is their meaning to you?
8. Can you briefly tell me what kind of challenges your church have had to deal with regarding issues of sexuality and sexual diversity?
9. Briefly share what is your understanding of transgender or Intersex?
10. What terms /sayings and generally held assumptions are found in your church to refer to Intersex and Transgender people?
11. How do you understand these terms /sayings and generally held assumptions and what is their meaning to you?
12. How do these terms /sayings and generally held assumptions influence the way you present yourself in church?

Objective 3: (Trans and Intersex participants)

To enquire what are the prevailing religious and cultural responses of intersex and transgender people to the concepts on Intersex and transgender identities in the Ethiopian Zionist churches. **(Body experience + Cultural identity)**

1. Please share how has the people make sense of you? Explain your embodiment as transgender person in your church and in local community.
2. Is it important to you that people (family, church and society) negotiate your body in relation to your self-identified gender? Why or why not?
3. Culturally how has the society made sense of your body in relation to your identity?
 - 3.1. What does this mean to you?

4. What has been the cultural understanding of your gender identity?
5. What does this cultural understanding mean to you? How do you relate to it?