

**„Construction Sites“: Exploring Queer Identity and Sexuality at the
Intersections of Religion and Culture in Zambia**

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DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Graduate Programme in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

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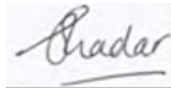
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A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be 'S. Nadar' written in a cursive style.

Signature

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother Mrs. Barbra M. Phiri and father Mr. Jackson H. Phiri. Mum, you have sacrificed so much for me to reach this far, you remain my pillar, friend and source of encouragement. Thank you is not enough, I can never repay you, may God bless you. To my late father who raised me to believe education is the most important thing I could ever attain for myself and insisted “even the Church no longer accepts academic failures”. In your absence, I say thank you to you and mum for raising a very determined last born child.

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ACRONYMS

A.D – Anno Domini

AIDS – Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome

ATRs – African Traditional Religions

GIDD – Gender in Development Division

HIV – Human Immuno Virus

LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex

MLM – Men who love other men

MSM – Men who have sex with other men

SIDA – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

WHO - World Health Organisation

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine how Queer Christians construct their identities and sexualities within the social contexts of religion and culture.

Framed within a qualitative and critical research paradigm, this study sought to interrogate the agency of gay Christians' formulation of their identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in the construction process. Data was produced from primary sources which utilized focus group discussions, individual interviews and observation of Queer Christians, focusing primarily on gay Christians, in urban Lusaka, Zambia. Findings show that religion and culture, acting independently or together, do inform how the study participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities. The participants constructed their identities and sexualities amidst ambiguities of regarding the Bible as infallible whilst holding biblical hermeneutics as fallible; belonging and not belonging within Zambian churches, and upholding personal piety over belonging to the institutional Church. To show the influence of global culture in the construction of gay identities and sexualities, participants identified with Christianity's motif of creation of humanity in God's image and not African Traditional Religions' aligning gay identities with the inhabitation of ancestral spirits. In the construction process, silence and discretion are evident, while ambiguities of constructing identities in masculine and feminine rites of passage were highlighted. In relation to gender and sexual roles, the study showed elements of homo-patriarchy exhibited through physical violence among some sexual partners, as well as ambiguities of identifying as male, female and woman.

This study makes four major arguments, first, that participants are agents in their –self-construct” of identities and sexualities. Second, the gender binary model is restrictive in understanding gay identities and sexualities. Third, the –coming-out” model is not suitable for study participants due to personal choice, security reasons and the veiled nature of sexuality discourses. Fourth, the concept of masculinities does not fully capture varieties of identities and sexualities among gay Christians in Zambia.

Key words: Self-construction, queer, gay, identity, sexuality, religion, culture, Zambia.

Contents

DECLARATION i

LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATION ii

DEDICATION iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi

ACRONYMS viii

ABSTRACT ix

Contents x

Chapter One: Introduction 1

 1.0. Introduction 1

 1.1. Background and Location of the Study 2

 1.2. Male Identities in the Zambian Heteronormative Context 6

 1.3. Motivation for Undertaking the Study 10

 1.4. Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study 12

 1.5. Theoretical and Methodological Underpinnings 13

 1.6. Data Production Methods 16

 1.7. Summary 20

 1.8. Outline of Chapters 20

Chapter Two: Conceptualization of Gay Men within Christianity and Culture 24

 2.0. Introduction 24

 2.1. Tracing Gay Identities and Sexualities Studies 25

 2.2. Christianity, Gay Identities and Sexualities 33

 2.3. Gender and Culture 44

 2.3.1. Public Image 49

 2.3.2. Male Initiation Rites of Passage 52

 2.3.3. Gay Identities and Sexualities and the Supernatural 56

 2.4. An Interface between Christianity and Culture in the Construction of Gay Identities and Sexualities 59

 2.5. Summary 61

Chapter Three: Theories 63

 3.0. Introduction 63

 3.1. Social Constructionism 64

3.1.1. Social Constructionism in Education	71
3.1.2. Social Constructionism in Social and Development Psychology	74
3.1.3. Social Constructionism in Religious Studies?	75
3.2. Knowledge Production as a Social Construct	76
3.2.1. Social Construction as Relational and Dialectic	76
3.3. Self-Verification Theory	80
3.3.1. Routine Self-Verification	84
3.3.2. Crisis Self-Verification	85
3.3.3. Self-Conception	85
3.3.4. Self-Verification through Selective Affiliation.....	86
3.4. Synchronizing the Use of Social Constructionism and Self-Verification Theories	87
3.5. Feminist Theory	88
3.6. Queer Theory	92
3.7. Synchronizing the Use of Feminist and Queer Theories	95
3.8. Appropriation of the Theories.....	95
3.9. Summary	95
Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology	97
4.0. Introduction.....	97
4.1. Qualitative and Critical Research Paradigms.....	97
4.2. Research Design.....	102
4.3. Sampling	104
4.4. Methods of Data Production	110
4.5. Reflexivity.....	113
4.6. Methods of Data Analysis.....	118
4.7. Reliability and Validity	120
4.8. Ethical Consideration.....	122
4.9. Summary	124
Chapter Five: Gay Christians and the Zambian Christian Context.....	126
5.0. Introduction.....	126
5.1. Incipient Theologies as Analytical Framework	127
5.2. Religious Perspectives of Gay Christians	129
5.2.1. Infallible Bible, Fallible Biblical Hermeneutics	129

5.2.2. Belonging and/or not Belonging	134
5.3. Parance: Self-identity and Social identity	138
5.3.1. Participants‘ Use of Personal Pronouns	147
5.3.2. Parance: Self-identity and Christian Identity	148
5.4. Performance	153
5.4.1. Dressing	158
5.4.2. Sexual and Gender Roles	161
5.5. Summary	167
Chapter Six: Theorization of Borderland Gender and Sexualities	169
6.0. Introduction.....	169
6.1. The Concept of Borderland Gender and Sexualities.....	169
6.2. Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics	172
6.3. Borderlands and Borderland Theory.....	175
6.4. Borderland Gender and Sexualities.....	180
6.5. Borderlands as Sites of Power	184
6.6. Borderlands as Sites of Structure and Surveillance	185
6.7. Borderlands as Sites of Resistance and Agency	188
6.8. Summary	192
Chapter Seven: Gay Christians and Zambian Culture	194
7.0. Introduction.....	194
7.1. Perspectives on Indigenous Worldviews	195
7.1.1. Ancestral Incarnates.....	196
7.1.2. Traditional Leaders as Custodians of —Cltural Public Opinion”	200
7.2. Parance within Zambian Culture	201
7.2.1. Daily Family Life.....	202
7.2.2. Adages, Dance and Songs.....	207
7.4. Performance – Gay Christians and Zambian Culture	211
7.4.1. Gender Roles.....	211
7.4.2. —Urestrictive” Male Traditional Rites of Passage	214
7.4.3. —Urestrictive” Female Traditional Rites of Passage.....	215
7.5. Homo-patriarchy	216
7.6. —Skf-definition” of Gay Christians.....	220

7.7. An Interface of Christianity and Culture from Participants’ Perspectives.....	221
7.8. Summary.....	222
Chapter Eight: Conclusion.....	224
8.0. Introduction.....	224
8.1. Summary of the Chapters.....	224
8.2. Study’s Contribution.....	227
8.2.1. Theoretical Contribution.....	227
8.2.2. Conceptual Contribution.....	230
8.2.3. Methodological Contribution.....	232
8.3. Possible Areas of Future Research.....	233
8.4. Conclusion.....	234
Reference List.....	235
Appendix One: Research Instrument: Focus Group Discussions with the Lusaka Central Group.....	252
Appendix One (a): Research Instrument: Focus Group Discussions for the Kanyama Group.....	253
Appendix One (b): Research Instrument: Questions for Individual interviews.....	254
Appendix Two: Ethical Clearance Letter.....	255
Appendix Three: Consent Letter and Form.....	256
Appendix Four: Gate-keeper’s Letter.....	258
Appendix Five: Audio Recording Authorization.....	259
Appendix Six: Turn-It-In Report.....	260
Appendix Seven: List of Study Participants.....	261

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0. Introduction

This study, located within a qualitative and critical research paradigm, explores the question: **how do gay Christians in urban Lusaka-Zambia “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and what is the role of religion and culture in this construction?** In this study, the concept of sexualities has been used interchangeably with the notion of “sexual beings”. I understand the term sexual being as meaning sexual behaviours and sexual attitudes which individuals subscribe to. Within the Zambian Christian and cultural contexts, being a person of same-sex orientation or queer, or gay is regarded as unchristian and an affront to some cultures. Thus, by bringing together terms such as queer, gay, Christian and Zambian culture, I seemingly bring together incompatible identities. It is this that the study aims to do, by interrogating the self-formulation of gay Christian identities and sexualities within religious and cultural construction sites.

While this study originally intended to explore only male gay identities, one of the opportunities which arose during the research process was the presence of participants who did not identify as such, but who were part of the existing support groups from which primary participants were drawn. Following careful consideration of the potential positive contribution which these participants presented, the study was broadened to include not just “gay identities” but “queer identities”, also. The study does, however, remain largely one focused on the construction of gay identities.

This chapter introduces the study by offering its background and location. Within the background and location, I discuss the personal, gender, cultural and religious contexts that inform this study. This is done to show my interest in this study, as well as show the study participants’ location and the location of my study. I also discuss male identities in the Zambian heteronormative context to show the religio-cultural location of my study participants. How this influences them is extensively discussed in chapters five and seven. Furthermore, I offer personal and academic motivations for this study. Building on my motivation, I discuss the problem statement and objectives. I address the ways in which religion and culture construct gay identities and sexualities and how such construction informs gay Christians’ self-formulation of identities and sexualities. I also highlight the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study by briefly discussing social

constructionism, self-verification, feminist and queer theories. I further present qualitative and critical research paradigms as methodological underpinnings for the study. This chapter also shows that data for this study was produced using focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and observation methods before proceeding to offer a summary of the chapter and the study's outline of chapters.

1.1. Background and Location of the Study

What has a heterosexual female clergy got to do with gay Christian men?

This question has been posed to me on several occasions by people who either did not understand why a female should study males, and gay males for that matter, or wanted to learn more about my passion, or merely tried to educate me on how “wrong” the whole homosexuality discourse is. Whichever the case, during this study, I too began raising the same question as part of introspection and affirmation of my passion for the study. What has a heterosexual female clergy got to do with gay Christian men? My answer remains: why shouldn't a heterosexual female clergy study gay Christian men when they are part of the human race and faith community? This study emanates from my curiosity to learn more about sexual minorities, especially gay men in Zambia. Growing up in heteronormative Zambia, I hardly paid attention to other forms of sexual expressions apart from heterosexuality, despite being a clergy who potentially pastored people with many types of sexual identities. Therefore, my inability to pay attention to some sections of my faith community and community at large may have unintentionally sidelined people that looked up to me for spiritual nourishment and affirmation as human beings. To further set the context of this study in relation to what it sought to explore, I will discuss the gender, cultural and religious background to give a synopsis of the location of the study participants. This will also serve to describe Zambia as the location of my study, thereby, situating it within the larger global context.

Gender

According to the Central Statistical Office of Zambia's gender statistics report, as of 2010 Zambia's population consisted of 6,454,647 males and 6,638,019 females (2012:1). It further stated that the number of female-headed households stood at 23 percent (Central Statistical Office 2012:1), rendering more females economically vulnerable. Butler regards gender as

being –culturally constructed” (1990:6), thus, being male or female depends on how society constructs it as such. However, the term gender and gender issues have been understood in the Zambian context as being synonymous with females. Females within Zambian society continue to experience gender disparities, prompting action by the Zambian government to mainstream gender. With the intention to,

main-stream gender in all its development strategies, the Government established the Gender in Development Division (GIDD) under the Cabinet Office, which is mandated to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the 2000 National Gender Policy in order to achieve gender responsive development (Central Statistical Office 2012:6).

Zambian society is characterized by disparities between males and females. However, internal gender disparities are hardly brought to the fore in discussions on differences between genders. Highlighting this limited understanding of gender and gender issues within Zambian society is imperative to this study as it shows how prominent the gender binary is within the study’s location.

Furthermore, evident to how gender issues are usually associated with the marginalization of females to the negation of other sections of Zambian society such as gay men is the report –Integrating Gender into the 5th National Development Plan” (n.d.:1) which notes that:

government is aware of the Gender imbalances in social, economic, cultural and political spheres, which have prevented females, who comprise 51% of the population, from contributing effectively to and benefiting from the development process.

This report brings to the fore how the Zambian government and society regard gender in relation to women, with the –empowerment of women being mainstreamed and participation in national decision-making the focus” (Integrating Gender into the 5th National Development Plan n.d.:1). Similarly, the SIDA Gender Country Report (2008:1) highlights gender disparities as a contributor to poverty among women, citing patriarchal and socio-economic structures as its drivers. Although the plight of women in Zambia is important, in this study, I recognize this specific limitation on analysis of gender issues within the context under interrogation. The SIDA Report (2008:13) captures issues of gay identities and sexualities as

legal and not necessarily as gender related. It notes that “since homosexuality is illegal in Zambia, little is known about HIV prevalence in the Zambian gay community” (SIDA 2008:30). Issues of homosexuality have been understood in relation to their legal and health implications, not necessarily as hinging on the gender and sexual identities of gay men. The following shows how, in many instances, the dominant discourse on gay identities and sexualities has been framed in terms of legal and health issues, with limited assessment on how gender is an integral issue for LGBTI persons in Zambia.

Cultural

Culture denotes “group ways of thinking and living based upon shared knowledge, consciousness, skills, values, expressive forms, social institutions, and behaviours that allow individuals to survive in the contexts within which they live” (Fisher and Anushko 2008:103). Culture is the way in which life is lived daily. In his book *Culture and Customs of Zambia*, Taylor traces the history of Zambia between 2,500 and 1,000 years ago in which Bantu-speaking populations migrated from the western African savannahs through to southern Africa, pushing out the indigenous Khoisan speakers (2006:11). However, most of the current ethnic groups in Zambia are recent migrants, “the Tonga and the Ila are believed to be among the longest resident peoples, arriving from the east in what is now Zambia’s Southern Province around a.d. 1200” (Taylor 2006:11) with recent entrants like the Lozis, Bembas, Ngonis, Luvaes, among others.

Zambia is made up of approximately “73 ethnolinguistic communities” (Taylor 2006:x), with the four largest ethnic groups, in order of numerical categorization, being Bemba in Northern and Luapula provinces of Zambia under paramount chief Chitimukulu; Nyanja-speakers of Eastern province under paramount chief Gawa Undi and Mpezeni; and Tonga people of Southern province and Lozi of Western province under king Litunga (Taylor 2006:6-11). In spite of the many ethnic groups,

intra-Zambian norms are shared as a result of the inculcation of a thoroughly national identity. Although this identity was initially imposed artificially through colonialism, a collective sense of so-called Zambianness was later forged out of necessity by President Kaunda and the postcolonial government (Taylor 2006:x).

To date, the “One Zambia, One Nation” slogan remains pivotal as a national unifier among Zambian ethnic groups. Owing to the large number of ethnic groups and languages, English is the country’s official language.

The SIDA Report (2008:39) notes that in spite of the majority of Zambian tribal groupings being matrilineal, the socialization process informs how culture assigns gender roles. Although the Zambian society can be regarded as being largely matrilineal in nature, issues of patriarchy permeate Zambian cultures through socialization. Culturally, many Zambian tribes socialize girls to become wives and care givers while boys are socialized to assume dominant roles of leadership and to become providers (SIDA 2008:39). Socialization informs patriarchy, therefore, it culturally assigns seemingly fixed gender and sexual roles to males and females. Based on this understanding, “traditionally, homosexuality is a taboo and is commonly described as a “non-African phenomenon”, with reference to African culture” (SIDA 2008:47).

Religious

Religion in this study is understood as people’s belief systems in relation to the divine or divinities. Zambia is religiously pluralistic with Christianity being the main religion. “Christianity now claims more than three-quarters of the population as adherents, even though many of the traditional beliefs survive (and may coexist with Christian beliefs)” (Taylor 2006:25). Christianity is usually practiced simultaneously with African Traditional Religions (ATRs). This observation of religious syncretism is also made by Kanyoro at a broader continental level noting that “the African Christian often walks with one foot in African religion and culture and another in the church and western culture. While the former is condemned as evil and traditional, the latter is passed for good and gospel” (2002:13). A further explanation of the relationship between Christianity and ATRs is offered in chapters two, five and seven.

The introduction of Christianity to Zambia is attributed to the Scottish missionary and explorer David Livingstone who visited Zambia in 1851 (Taylor 2006:xiv) and was followed by other missionaries from different mission churches. According to Cheyeka, Hinfelaar and Udelhoven “Christianity has been pluralistic in Zambia from the beginning, since it arrived in the context of severe competition among the different missionary churches” (2014:1041). The

introduction of Christianity to Zambia meant a change in the worldview of Northern Rhodesians (present day Zambians) who were once rooted in ATRs.

Christianity brought a different notion of religion, more formal and institutionalized...for many, spirituality—religion—therefore became something that was practiced at church. The missionaries created adherents, whereas in the past, religion was far more pervasive (Taylor 2006:26).

To show how influential Christianity has become in the Zambian context under the influence of Pentecostalism, in 1991, Zambia was declared a Christian Nation by a Pentecostal President Chiluba (Cheyeka, Hinfelaar and Udelhoven 2014:1042), a statement enshrined in the country's constitution. To further show how influential Christianity is in Zambia, in 2015, President Lungu declared 18th October as an official national day of prayer, dubbed as the National Day of Prayer, Fasting and Reconciliation.

The above discussion has shown the personal, gender, cultural and religious setting of this study. It has highlighted that gender and gender disparities are aligned with females, that although matrilineal, Zambian cultures are still influenced by patriarchy through socialization of boys and girls, and that Christianity is the major religion in Zambia, and thus informs discourses around gay identities and sexualities. The question the discussion raises is: what form of male identity is regarded as acceptable in the Zambian context? Following the above discussion, it is imperative to explore how male identities are forged in Zambia.

1.2. Male Identities in the Zambian Heteronormative Context

Zambian society, like many other African societies, associates being of the male gender with heterosexuality, a fact established by Osei-Hwedie (1998), Simpson (2005 and 2007) and Kaunda and Kaunda (2012). This means that heterosexual maleness is considered a norm, as heteronormativity remains the dominant framework used in the formulation of male identities and sexualities at societal level. The formation of male identities and sexualities as a homogenous entity barely leaves room for other forms of maleness to be part of the larger narrative of what it means to be male in Zambia. The promotion of grand narratives in terms of nationhood have been studied and critiqued as they tend to usurp other forms of nationhood. For instance, in reference to nationhood, generalized approaches and grand

narratives are critiqued by Chakrabarty in his book *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, noting that:

postmodern critiques of “grand narratives” have been used to question single narratives of the nation. Minority histories, one may say, in part express the struggle for inclusion and representation that are characteristic of liberal and representative democracies (2000:97).

Although Chakrabarty (2000) critiques grand narratives in relation to nationhood, in this study I borrow his argument and relate it to grand narratives within heteronormative Zambia on what it means to be a male. Maleness in Zambia is understood in relation to heterosexuality, thereby making the heterosexual narrative the grand narrative and the homosexual narrative an excluded narrative. It is these grand narratives about maleness in the Zambian context that this study sought to question by bringing to light other ways of being male, through highlighting gay identities and sexualities (chapters five, six and seven).

In his article “Learning Sex and Gender in Zambia: Masculinities and HIV/AIDS Risk,” Simpson (2007:173) empirically “explores childhood as well as adolescent sexual experiences Zambian men and their school contemporaries to demonstrate the significance of this experience for their later exposure to HIV/AIDS risk” (Simpson 2007:173). His findings show that:

many of the men’s sense of their manhood is something that has constantly to be achieved and reclaimed in the performance of masculinity in public and intimate spheres. In both spheres, masculinity may best be seen as a fragile entity, many of the seeds of which are planted in childhood and adolescence. Insecurity about being a ‘real’ man is most acutely felt within and produced by the peer group (Simpson 2007:173).

Maleness is regarded as a public and private performance reaffirmed through repetitive actions. Since being male is performed, it can also be perfected through constant enactment in relation to the expected ideal. Male identities are forged in childhood and adolescence stages with peer groups being the basis for measuring one’s maleness. In other words, peer groups are considered as the template for ideal maleness, and usually inability to measure up to the ideal of “real” maleness leads to public scorn. Within the Zambian society, for one to be

considered a “real” man, a boy has to, from childhood, engage in games of exploration of girls’ bodies in imitation of adult heterosexual behaviour (Simpson 2007:175). Implicitly, heteronormative maleness is learnt and reinforced in peer groups and through mimicry of heterosexual seniors. In this regard, masculine identities remain a social product whose correct performance is closely monitored by peers and society. Such policing could therefore explain why incidences of male sexual abuse and homosexuality in Zambia are spoken of using the “African gift of silence” (Simpson 2007:176). As a male, being sexually abused or engaging in homosexual activity raises questions about one’s maleness, hence such encounters are hardly discussed as many males strive to maintain a public heterosexual façade or the “real” man persona. Furthermore, since all males are socially expected to exhibit heteronormativity, married adult males experience maternal pressure to produce children even as much as parent-son sex discussions remain taboo (Simpson 2007:176). Although Simpson’s (2007) study regards pressure to produce children as maternal, in this study, I argue that the pressure is societal and not only maternal (chapters five and seven). In other words, the meaning of being a “real” man is controlled by society and not the individual males.

Within the Zambian society, apart from the Luvale, Lunda, Kaonde and Kachokwe people of North-Western provinces and the Chewa people of Eastern provinces, very few ethnic groupings have established platforms through which maleness is forged under institutionalized initiation rites of passage. However, the formulation of male identities and sexualities largely remains “unstructured” in that “sexual knowledge [is] generally assumed to come ‘naturally’ to boys” (Simpson 2007:176), unlike girls. This general lack of structured spaces for the formulation of male identities and sexualities is compensated for by younger males turning to older peers from whom they learn that both physical and sexual “strength” are the vital qualities to attain as a man (Simpson 2007:176). Physical strength is valued for its handiness in the protection of women in the home and community (Kaunda and Kaunda 2012:9). Sexual strength is connected to an understanding of masculinity tied to marriage (Kaunda and Kaunda 2012:9) in which adult males are expected to be sexually potent to produce children. The tying of maleness with physical and sexual strength has also been linked to the domination of females by males. This observation is also made by Osei-Hwedie who notes that “dominance by males is reinforced by Zambian cultural values and customs which stress the father and husband as ‘heads’ or power holders in the family, with women subservient to them, as well as gender role specialization” (1998:91). Maleness is forged

around dominance of females by males, male power and subscribing to specific and usually immutable gender roles.

Although sex and sexuality discussions hardly take place between father and son, many young Zambian men learn manliness from both their fathers and peers. They do this through mimicking their fathers and discussing sex and sexuality with their peers. The father is usually regarded –as a silent, emotionally distant figure—who set the measure for his son of what it meant to be a ‘real’ man, a position most boys strove earnestly to attain” (Simpson 2005:572). Maleness as performed by fathers is observed and later mimicked by their sons, thus, such observation and learning is a continuous process of formation of individual male identities.

Knowledge, identity and desire grew out of certain work on the body. In a father’s physical punishment, in the development of physical strength in work and training in sport, in the fighting skills needed to defend himself from other boys and in early sexual desire and experience, a boy’s body became fitted to a particular moral universe (Simpson 2005:571).

The formation of male identities and sexualities within heteronormative Zambian society is centred on male physical strength and issues of sexuality. Furthermore, following the effects of globalization, within contemporary Zambia, ideal males are viewed as “breadwinners”, the providers of food, clothes and “Western” household commodities” (Simpson 2005:572). In the same vein, the assigning of household gender roles remains essential in how maleness is framed. Simpson notes difference in chores for boys and girls in and around the household, as “the designation of chores revealed explicit ideas about gender appropriate tasks” (Simpson 2005:573).

The above discussion shows that maleness within the heteronormative Zambian context is formulated at familial and societal levels, with peers being the main sources of verbalized information about what it means to be a “real” man, while fathers are mimicked and their influence hardly verbalized. Physical, sexual strength and adherence to gender roles are important factors in separating “real” men from those who are not. This description has shown that apart from heterosexual maleness, other forms of maleness or identities are hardly discussed. Thus, gay identities and sexualities are a dormant subject and their practice cause for public scorn. Considering that maleness in Zambia is forged around heteronormativity, I

was drawn towards learning more on how Zambian males who do not fit the above stated notions of ideal maleness formulate who they are. How are their identities and sexualities forged within the heteronormative context? What role do they play in constructing their identities and sexualities? To what extent does heteronormativity inform who they are and how do they formulate their self-understanding? How do they negotiate, assimilate or reject the heteronormative context they are located in? With these questions in mind, I now discuss the motivation for this study.

1.3. Motivation for Undertaking the Study

Personal Motivation

Three personal reasons guided my choice to undertake this study: curiosity, activism and friendship. Growing up, I have always been curious about new things, new discoveries and new adventures and such curiosity accompanied me into academia. A proverb from unknown origins states that *curiosity killed the cat*; only in this case, it has led to learning new things. Growing up in Zambia where the subject of sexuality is hardly discussed, I initially did not take a keen interest in matters of sexuality, let alone in sexual minorities. I only came to learn and take seriously the heterosexual-homosexual distinctions upon entering academia and through learning about them in class. This dichotomy intrigued me as it showed how in some instances heterosexual and homosexual persons take very little time to learn more about each other's gender and sexual identities. Such limited information about each other's identities usually leads to prejudices towards each other. Out of curiosity, I chose to learn more about my study participants' identities and sexualities.

Being a gender and disability activist in my local community in Zambia, I realized that liberation is a holistic exercise. For instance, racial and gender liberation cannot be a complete exercise without liberation of sexual minorities, as all forms of marginalization are intertwined. Power and its abuse is at the centre of any form of subjugation. Guided by this belief, I joined the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community's struggles as an ally. LGBTI people remain marginalized in Zambia and have continued to struggle for their rights to be legally recognized and socially included. In as much as the struggle continues, it gave me impetus to pursue this area of focus since activism and academia go hand in hand, especially in studies where issues of power and marginalization

abound. I decided to merge activism with this academic quest to enable me to study an area I am genuinely passionate about.

My participation in activism has enabled me to create friendships with some members of the LGBTI community in Zambia. The friendship has mainly been based on shared interest in LGBTI liberation. By undertaking this study, I wanted to learn more about my friends and colleagues, bring their experiences to the fore and also in some way share in their experiences so as to enrich my own experiences as a heterosexual person.

Academic Motivation

This study is further motivated by my Masters study entitled “*Born this way – A Gendered Perspective on the Intersectionality between Same-Sex Orientation and the Imago Dei: A Case of Christian men who Love Other Men in Lusaka-Zambia*” (2013) where I explored how gay Christian men portrayed within public-health discourse as “men who have sex with other men” (MSM) understand their sexual orientation and being created in God’s image. While my study positioned the men within the category “MSM”, the men self-identified differently, choosing to refer to themselves as MLM (men who love other men). Herein a gap from my Masters study was identified on how gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role that religion and culture play in this construction.

My theological motivation for undertaking this study relates to the general assumption held among conservative Christians that gay men are “unholy” or not religious owing to their “deviant” identities and sexualities. From my Masters research, I produced incipient theologies from my study participants which indicated that Christian gay men are greatly influenced by religion, especially Christianity in their day to day lives, thus, are able to theologize based on how they experience life and God, thereby maintaining piety in their own right. Considering that some members of the LGBTI community remain members of the Zambian Christian community shows that in one way or another, religion does influence their identities and their self-understanding. This has motivated me to once more draw out incipient theologies from the sexual margins of the Zambian society by interrogating how my study participants “self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of religion and culture therein.

Additionally, I noted a gap in the research on gay identities and sexualities in Africa in general and Zambia in particular. Most of the work done in this area has been done by Western scholars such as Rocke (1996), Lang (2002), Crompton (2003) and van Klinken (2012, 2013a and 2014) and even those studies facilitated by African scholars such as Boonzaier and De La Rey (2003), Hunter (2005), Jewkes and Morrell (2010) focus on heterosexual identities and sexualities and not gay identities and sexualities. Within the discipline of religious studies, studies on sexual minorities have been conducted by Gunda (2010 and 2013), Shoko (2010), Togarasei and Chitando (2011) and Kaoma (2014). However, there remains enough room for further interrogation of how gay Christians formulate their identities and sexualities and the influence of religion and culture on such formulation. Hence the need for research in this area.

Following the discussion above which shows that gay identities and sexualities within the Zambian context remain under-researched, that gay Christians construct self-understanding in ways that need academic interrogation and documentation, and that they form part of the marginalized, the question remains, what then is the connection between gay Christians, religion and culture in Zambia? To answer this question, I proceed to offer the problem statement that informs this study, as well as objectives that this study aims to accomplish.

1.4. Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study

The problem my study addresses is the ways in which religion and culture construct gay identities and sexualities which in turn influence how gay Christians forge their identities and sexualities. Additionally, I wish to examine how gay Christians negotiate, assimilate or reject religious and cultural constructs about their identities and sexualities. Thus, the research question this study raises is: How do gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and what is the role of religion and culture in the construction process? Based on the research question, this study’s main objective is to explore how gay Christians in Lusaka-Zambia –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings, and the role of religion and culture in the construction. This main objective was divided into four objectives: first, to establish the role of religion in the constructions of identities and sexualities of gay Christians. Second, to interrogate the role of culture in the constructions of identities and sexualities of gay Christians. Third, to show how gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities. Last, to investigate why gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities in the way that they do.

Considering the above stated research problem and research question, and in order to meet the objectives of the study on the formulation of gay Christian identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture, I needed to bring together theoretical frameworks from the disciplines of social-psychology and gender. Therefore, this study was theoretically framed within social constructionism, self-verification, feminist and queer theories, and methodologically located within a qualitative and critical research paradigms.

1.5. Theoretical and Methodological Underpinnings

A comprehensive discussion on the theories, research design and methods used in this study is offered in chapters three and four respectively. Below, I give a brief description of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings in this study. This study employed social-psychological theories of social constructionism and self-verification, and feminist and queer gender theories to interrogate self-formulation of identities and sexualities by gay Christians. In order to understand issues of identity formation among my study participants, I used social-psychological theories, while the formulation of sexual and gender identities among study participants were interrogated using gender theories.

Social-psychological Theories: Social Constructionism and Self-verification

Social constructionism questions ways in which worldviews, knowledge and selves are constructed, pointing out how the construction of these is never an unbiased process (Burr 2015:2). It highlights discourse as cardinal in how individuals construct themselves, and as such, construction of self takes place within and outside discourse which is largely framed by what is regarded as common knowledge in a given social context (Cellero 2003:118). The focus within social constructionism is on the social context as a site of construction of self through social relations and that knowledge about self is formed through dialect. The self is not an unbiased social construct, thus, using social constructionist theory, the idea of commonplace knowledge about self and identity are critiqued. This study chose religion and culture as social contexts in which gay Christians formulate their identities and themselves as sexual beings, as these two construction sites offer social relations and social platforms where discourse about self is forged. The two construction sites also have their own understanding of who a male is and how a male should behave. For this reason, social construction was used to help interrogate how study participants related to religious and cultural understandings of maleness.

Social constructionism was used with self-verification theory because the self is not a passive object acted upon by the social context but a subject and agent who participates in the formulation of who they are as persons. In other words, there is interaction between the individual and their social context. Self-verification theory proposes that individuals have self-understanding for which they seek verification from other people, hence they engage in creating contexts in which self-views are upheld (Thatcher and Zhu 2006:1077, Stets and Harrod 2004:155-156). Individuals are active in the construction of their identities and also in creating environments that provide positive feedback on how they view themselves. By being in the company of those who validate one as an individual, the individual engages in routine verification (Swann 1983:46). When self-views are challenged, the individual questions their own identity hence undergoes crisis verification (Swann 1983:47). These two theories helped me investigate identities as constructed within social contexts of religion and culture but also in relation to the self as an agent not passively acted upon by their social contexts.

Gender Theories: Feminist and Queer

This study was also theoretically framed within feminist and queer theories which helped in interrogating the sexual and gender identities of the study participants. Feminist theory interrogates women's experiences, what shapes them and cultural meanings of being a woman (Jackson and Jones 1998:1). Feminist theory highlights the marginalization of women by men, bringing issues of power based on gender and sexual roles to the fore. This theory also challenges gender disparities it attributes to patriarchy (Goss 1996:23, Rakoczy 2004:10) and androcentrism (Rakoczy 2004:11). Feminist theory attributes the marginalization of women to unearned societal privilege by men and the notion that men are more superior to women because they are men. Because it emphasises challenging gender roles as the cause of women's marginalization, this theory was useful as it allowed for gender roles to be critiqued from the perspective of the study participants.

Queer theory was another gender theory that framed this study. Queer theory refutes the taken-for-granted gender and sexual categorizations which inform what is considered as normal and natural in social, political and religious contexts (Schneider and Roncolato 2012:1). Queer theory deconstructs normative fixed approaches towards gender and sexuality (Isherwood and Althaus-Reid 2004:3-5). It allows for questioning how and who constructs knowledge about gender and sexualities and the powers inherent in such construction. It

insists that gender and sexual identities are constructs of discourse (Lowe 2009:52). Feminist and queer theories helped me interrogate gender and sexual roles as fluid entities.

Methodological Underpinnings

This study is located within the qualitative and critical research paradigms.

Qualitative research is an approach which places the researcher close to reality, studies reality from the inside, employs the use of open data production methods, a flexible research design, captures the world in action, uses naturalistic methods, engages in continuous data analysis and chooses methods before and during the study (Sarantakos 2005:46).

It is an approach characterized by “the correct choice of appropriate methods and theories; the recognition and analysis of different perspectives; the researchers’ reflections on their research as part of the process of the knowledge production; and the variety of approaches and methods” (Flick 2002:4). It also focuses on language as a vital element in understanding the social world (Bryman 2008:18-19). Qualitative research was an appropriate approach for this study as it helped me interrogate how the study participants constructed their identities and sexualities within their own contexts and spaces. It was useful as the research instruments used during data production remained flexible in accordance with the participants’ understanding of given questions. I conducted seven focus group discussions with eighteen study participants in Lusaka central and Kanyama. Discussions on how they “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, and the role religion and culture play in the process, were held. I also conducted in-depth interviews with six study participants in further probing the same question. I observed how the study participants behaved, dressed and related to each other. The qualitative research paradigm enabled me to use a variety of methods and approaches to this study. This paradigm enabled me to analyse data during and after the data production stage. This approach also allowed me to present my positionality and how it influenced this study, an essential component of the data.

A critical research paradigm regards research to be a tool for social change, the pursuit of justice, and source of emancipation of oppressed groups in society (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2009:28-29). Based on this, research no longer remains an academic exercise but leads to social transformation, subsequently leading to the emancipation of the oppressed. Its focus

is on how the research process is a democratic, collaborative, participative, empowering and franchising activity for the participants (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2009:27-45). Cardinal in critical research is that the study participant takes centre stage; participation in the study is voluntary and the study contributes to the emancipation of the oppressed in society. This paradigm was useful for this study as it allowed me to consult the study participants through the gatekeeper, on the research process. During the data production process, the study participants ‘owned’ the discussions as my role remained facilitative. Using this paradigm, I hope that my study, in highlighting the plights of gay men in Zambia, contributes toward their emancipation.

The above discussion has highlighted the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study by briefly presenting social constructionism, self-verification, feminist and queer theories as lenses used in interrogating the self-formulation of gay Christians’ identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in this process. Additionally, the qualitative and critical research paradigms were presented as methodologies undergirding this study. Following this, below I present how data for this study was produced with the study participants.

1.6. Data Production Methods

For this study’s objectives to be met, I conducted empirical research using focus group discussions, individual in-depth interviews and observation methods.

Research Site and Procedures for Gaining Access

This study was conducted in urban Lusaka in Zambia. This research site was chosen because it is where I have access to the LGBTI community, having conducted other previous studies with them. I also chose Lusaka because I am familiar with it, hence it was manageable if I needed to find alternative meeting places for the discussions. Lusaka was also chosen for its cosmopolitan urban cultures and its relevance to the research question. Further, I had a gatekeeper in Lusaka who was willing to arrange the focus group discussions and allow for initial contact with the participants. Access to the research site and the study participants was through a gatekeeper who was consulted throughout the construction of this study. We met twice before conducting the empirical study and immediately before commencing the data production.

Research Instruments

I employed three research instruments for data production, namely, focus group discussions and interviews, also known as “verbal data” (Flick 2002:73), and observation termed as “visual data” (Flick 2002:133). Below is brief discussion on all three instruments.

Focus Group Discussions

I conducted seven focus group discussions with eighteen study participants located in Lusaka central and Kanyama Township. The participants were selected using non-probability sampling which facilitated purposive and snowballing selection methods. This study initially intended to focus on gay Christians only but upon reaching the research site, two transgender men, one transgender woman and one lesbian volunteered to participate in the study. Their views have been incorporated insofar as they elucidate the views of the intended study participants. Their presence did not seem to affect gay men, mainly because all the group members knew each other before the study began as they meet in many LGBTI spaces and fora, and belong to the same LGBTI organisations in Zambia. The two groups of participants were already in existence before I went to the research site, thus, focus group discussions were appropriate for the production of data from more than one person in one session. I met first with the Lusaka central group and conducted five focus group discussions with these participants. The first discussion focused on the question: how does religion contribute to the way you understand yourself as a man? The second group discussion centred on the question: how does your religion influence how you view your sexuality? The third discussion focused on the question: in which ways does culture influence your understanding of yourself as a man? The fourth discussion looked at the question: how does culture influence how you view your sexuality? The fifth discussion was a summary and asked: following our four discussions we have had, is there anything you would like to clarify and add? After completing discussions with the first group of study participants, using snowballing, I was referred to Kanyama study participants with whom I had two focus group discussions. I raised two questions with the study participants: what roles do religion and culture play in how you construct your masculinities and sexualities? And how do you understand yourself as a man and why do you understand yourself in the way that you do? Going deeper with the major questions asked during the focus group discussions, I raised probing questions to allow for elucidation and clarity of views of the participants.

Permission to audio-record the discussions and take notes during the discussions was sought. The study's intentions were discussed with the participants before asking them to sign consent forms. Each discussion was intended to last for sixty minutes but the participants expressed interest to carry on after sixty minutes. Bemba, English and Nyanja were used as modes of communication. The fact that data for this study was produced using three languages meant that I had to loosely interpret meanings of Bemba and Nyanja words into English. I tried as much as possible to give accurate English interpretation according to my own understanding and knowledge of the two local Zambian languages, thus, my interpretation could be subject to critique since I am not a professional linguist.

In-depth Individual Interviews

In-depth individual interviews were conducted with six study participants. The interviews allowed me to gather individual biographies of the participants. The participants volunteered by writing down their mobile numbers next to their pseudonyms as indication of willingness to participate. The interviews were scheduled according to the availability of the study participants. The interviews were conducted following prepared questions which were adjustable. The questions asked were: how do you understand yourself as a religious man? What factors have helped shape how you understand yourself? How has religion shaped how you understand yourself as a religious man? How has culture shaped how you understand yourself as a man? What are some of the practices, adages and terms used in religion and culture that you find useful in how you understand yourself as a man? What are some the practices, adages and terms used in religion and culture which you do not find useful in how you understand yourself as a man? Is there anything you would like to clarify or add?

The languages used during the interviews were Bemba, English and Nyanja. Permission was sought from each participant to audio-record and take notes during the interview. Before each interview, I offered each participant a consent form to sign and they all refused to sign stating how they had consented to being part of the study during the focus group discussions. Implicitly, in spite of written informed consent being an ethical research requirement, this particular experience shows that in some cases where trust and rapport has been established between the researcher and the researched, it can be forfeited upon the study participant's request, especially when multi-methods of research are employed. Additionally, the refusal to sign the consent forms during individual interviews also shows possibilities of how binding the initial signed consent form is, as well as, the validity of verbal consent in research. In this

regard, in as much as written consent from participants is an important academic exercise, practically it does not apply to all situations as the will of the participants supersedes the written research rules.

Observation

I also employed observation methods to produce data. Here I noted the participants' mannerisms, dressing and interpersonal relations. This is a useful method within the qualitative paradigm as it shows that "besides the competencies of speaking and listening which are used in interviews, observing is another everyday skill which is methodologically systematized and applied in qualitative research" (Flick 2002:135). The observation method is systematic as it entails specific observable insights on specific occurrences during the study. As a non-participant observer, I took note of how the study participants behaved, expressed themselves through dressing, and relations they maintained during the study.

Reliability and Validity

In order to ensure reliability in social research, when asking people for information, the researcher has to ask participants only about things the participants know about and things relevant to them; further, clarity in the questions must be ensured (Babbie and Mutton 2001:121). In order to ensure that the study produced data relevant to the research question, I identified study participants who had information relevant to the focus of this study and had interest in participating in the discussions. This was adequately achieved; all the focus group discussions and interviews lasted longer than the designated time as participants expressed willingness to go on with discussions.

Sometimes it is appropriate to make the same measurement more than once...it is always good to make more than one measurement of any subtle or complex social concept...use measures that have proven their reliability in previous research (Babbie and Mutton 2001:121-122).

Reliability is also attained when more than one research method is employed for data production. This study used triangulation through the use of focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and observation methods. Identity was also regarded as a social and individual construct, thus, offering two levels of identity formulation.

Validity “refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meanings of the concept under consideration” (Babbie and Mutton 2001:122). In order to attain validity in this study, I ensured that questions raised during data production related to the study’s objectives. I also captured the discussions and interpreted them as closely as possible with the meanings attached to them by the study participants. After the data was transcribed, I identified themes from the transcribed data and organised findings according to the identified themes.

1.7. Summary

In this chapter, I have offered a general overview of this study which interrogates how gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in this construction. The chapter introduced the study, offered the background and location of the study, highlighting the personal, gender, cultural and religious setting of Zambia and the study. I then proceeded to discuss maleness in the Zambian heteronormative context. I also offered personal and academic motivation for undertaking the study before discussing the problem statement and objectives. Additionally I briefly discussed theoretical and methodological underpinnings of this study as well as data production methods.

1.8. Outline of Chapters

The study comprises the following eight chapters:

In chapter one, I introduce my study by looking at the personal, gender, cultural and religious setting of Zambia and the study. The setting shows that the study is located in a context where the gender binary model applies - disparities within genders are highlighted across genders and not within genders - within religion and culture that uphold heteronormativity. I further discuss how maleness in heteronormative Zambia is framed around fathers, peers and societal expectations. I proceeded to show the motivation for this study which is based on personal and academic reasons. I decided to undertake this study as an activist and also as a way of learning more about the LGBTI community. Academically, this study was undertaken to extend discussions on the formulation of identities and sexualities from the perspective of gay Christians. The study emanated from the research problem of how religion and cultures construct gay identities and sexualities, which then informs gay Christians’ self-understanding. Social constructionism, self-verification, feminist and queer theories were the four overarching lenses for this qualitative and critical research. Being an empirical study,

data was produced using focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and observation methods. A summary and chapter outline sum up this chapter as a way of charting the general terrain of the study.

The second chapter reviews literature on how gay identities and sexualities are constructed in the Zambian Christian and cultural context. I show how the concept of masculinity has frequently been used in masculinity studies and how such a framework poses limitations in exploring other forms of identities and sexualities exhibited by gay men. Therefore, I question the masculine/feminine binary. As a background to studies of sexualities, I show that the history of sexualities is based on experience, has evolved due to HIV and AIDS, and has given rise to queer studies. In this chapter, I discuss the merger of ‘Pentecostal nationalism’ in Zambian Christianity and public politics which emphasizes the maintenance of gender roles. The literature review shows that the Bible and biblical hermeneutics take centre-stage in constructing discourses on homosexuality. It has shown that homosexuality is viewed in terms of the practice of same-sex activities and homosexual identity. I also discuss how culture constructs gay identities and sexualities, showing gender categorization is non-existent in some global cultures, the public display of gay identities and sexualities is frowned upon, and being gay is regarded as a caricature and youthful play. The chapter also highlights how the male initiation rites of passages are sometimes liminal spaces that facilitate the formulation of same-sex sexualities and identities. Additionally, in some cultures, gay identities and sexualities are allowed on account that they serve spiritual purposes for the benefit of the community. Bringing together the discussion in this chapter, I present an interface of religion and culture as construction sites in which gay identities and sexualities are forged.

In chapter three, I discuss the theoretical perspectives that informed this study, namely, social constructionism, self-verification, feminist and queer theories. Social constructionism and self-verification theories propose that identities and sexualities are formed in social contexts that verify views people hold about themselves. Discourse is the conduit through which identities are formed. Feminist and queer theories enabled me to understand and explain issues of gender and sexual identities among my study participants. In this chapter, I also discuss how religion and culture have models of what it means to be a male, and assign gender and sexual roles.

Chapter four gives a detailed account of the research design and methodology employed in this study. In this chapter, I discuss the qualitative and critical research paradigm in which this study lies. I present focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and observation methods as modes of data production for this study. These three research methods were helpful for triangulation purposes. The sample for this study is discussed, showing that although the intended study participants were gay Christians only, two transgender men, one transgender woman and one lesbian joined the study. In this chapter, I reflexively engage with how my personal position informed this study and possibly the interaction with study participants and data production.

Chapter five discusses how study participants formulate their identities and sexualities and the role of the Zambian Christian context in this process. This chapter is informed by research findings among gay Christians in urban Lusaka, Zambia, which used focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and observation as modes of data production. The chapter shows how gay Christians self-understand their identities in ambiguous contexts of regarding the Bible as infallible while viewing biblical hermeneutics as fallible and belonging and not belonging in some churches in Zambia. The chapter also briefly discusses incipient theologies of crucifixion and creation. It presents how study participants self-understand through parlance on self-identity, social identity and Christian identity, thereby, negotiating these three identities. Study participants' identities and sexualities were exhibited through performance like dressing, mannerism, position identities, sexual roles and gender roles.

In chapter six, I discuss the concept of borderland gender and sexualities as the analytical framework employed in data analysis and presentation in chapter seven. Using African feminist cultural hermeneutics as a framework, I argue that the concept of borderland gender and sexualities facilitates the (re)creation and (re)formulation of identities and sexualities outside the normative binary. I use the concept of borderland metaphorically to interrogate ambiguities, dual and hybrid identities and sexualities exhibited by my study participants. I also show how borderlands are sites of power, structure and surveillance, as well as resistance and agency.

Chapter seven thematically presents and analyses fieldwork research findings on how gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of culture in this construction using the concept of borderland gender and sexualities. I discuss how some cultures associate gay identities and sexualities with being –possessed” by ancestral spirits,

although study participants opted to aligning their identities and sexualities with the Christian understanding of humans being created in the image of God. The chapter also shows that within some families, gay identities and sexualities are hardly verbalized. Furthermore, within the Zambian cultural context, adages, songs, dance, male and female initiation rites of passages are avenues through which study participants construct who they are. Additionally, I discuss how sexual and gender roles are enacted in the daily lives of study participants which sometimes leads to intimate partner violence.

Chapter eight offers a general conclusion, the study's contributions, questions for future research and recommendations. The chapter brings together ideas and arguments from preceding chapters. Salient in this chapter is that gay Christians are subjects involved in the formulation of their identities and themselves as sexual beings. The chapter shows that within the Zambian context, Christianity and culture are essential construction sites for the formulation of gay Christian identities and sexualities.

Chapter Two: Conceptualization of Gay Men within Christianity and Culture

2.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to theorize how gay identities and sexualities are constructed by Christianity and culture within the existing literature. I selectively engaged with literature from religion, gender and cultural scholars that specifically attends to issues of gay identities and sexualities, as well as sexualities in general. In the section where I focus on the conceptualization of gay men within Christianity, I do so under the following themes: Christianity and public politics, masculinity politics and the Bible, the *Imago Dei* and African queer theology, and Men who Love other Men and identities. These themes arose from a preliminary literature survey in which I assessed the terrain around the focus of this study.

I identified recurring themes in literature on how Christianity and culture construct gay identities and sexualities, and arranged and discussed the literature according to the identified themes. In their investigation “Using thematic analysis in psychology”, Braun and Clarke argue that:

thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore it can be used within different theoretical frameworks (although not all), and can be used to do different things within them. Thematic analysis can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society (2006:82).

Thematic analysis is not random; Aronson (1994:1-3) outlines four steps involved: “collection of the data, identification of all data that relate to the already classified patterns, combination and cataloguing related patterns into sub-themes, and building a valid argument for choosing the themes”. I read and identified different themes in literature and settled for those that were related to the construction of gay identities and sexualities in Zambia, thereby building arguments based on the identified themes.

Culture was specifically discussed, drawing on examples from some given global cultures that have been researched by scholars. Literature in this chapter has been analysed following four overarching themes: history of gay identities and sexualities studies, Christianity's construction of gay identities and sexualities, culture's construction of gay identities and sexualities, and the interface of Christianity and culture on the construction of gay identities and sexualities.

2.1. Tracing Gay Identities and Sexualities Studies

In this study the term gay is used to loosely describe men who are sexually attracted to men and men who self-described as being attracted to other men. This avoids complexities of describing men who have sex with other men, heterosexual men who secretly have sex with men, and bisexual men as gay. Sexuality was understood in line with the World Health Organisation's (2006:5) definition, denoting that it comprises of "sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction". This particular definition was adopted mainly because it is comprehensive as it does not restrict sexuality to sex and reproduction only but covers issues of "gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, pleasure, eroticism and intimacy" (WHO 2006:5).

Studies on Gay Identities

Studies on gay identities have theoretically been framed within discourses on masculinities (Linneman 2000, Nardi 2000, Rodriguez and Quellte 2000a, Connell 2005). For instance, writing from a sports studies perspective, Anderson uses the concept of masculinities to show improvements in acceptability of gay men within the arena of sports and goes on to suggest the "necessity of developing new ways of theorizing the changing dynamics between masculinities, sexualities, and physical cultures in the next decade" (2011:565). Cheng (2015) applies the concept of masculinities to establish that "Asian gay men are regarded as sexually undesirable in white American gay communities and at the same time regarded as dangerous by the straight Asian American community". He uses experiences of Asian gay men for "an atoning purpose by decolonizing the racism and homophobia of contemporary Christian theologies" (2011:540). Although gay masculinities have been theorized from different contexts, Anderson (2011) and Cheng (2011) both depict how widely used the theory of masculinities is in gay men's studies. These are only some among the many examples in which gay people's identities are linked with masculinities to the negation of other forms of

identities. My study suggests that gay men can potentially adopt masculinities and femininities, as well as unsystematic or systematic hybridization of masculinities and femininities, creating gender ambiguities which are the very state of being (chapter six). This shows an array of gay identities and sexualities which in an essentialist manner may be categorized outside the definition of masculinity. I chose to study gay identities and sexualities realizing the fluidity, flexibility and confluences of gay identities and sexualities; hence, studying them using the masculine/feminine binary is limiting in scope. Considering that masculinities has been used to theorize gay men, there is need to trace the study of masculinities and gay identities in order to lay the ground for this chapter.

Studies of gay identities and sexualities were for a long time mainly a Western enterprise, but have gradually gained prominence globally. They can be traced as far back as the 1880s, but this study captures contemporary scholarship on gay identities mainly because of limited access to dated works on the subject of interrogation and also because a historical account is not the thrust of this study. In her work on “Masculinities and Globalization”, Connell (1998) traces the current research on masculinities in general and implicitly gay masculinities to the impact of women’s liberation movements on men, as interest in men’s gender, male sex role, power, institutionalized patriarchy and gay theoretical work among others, were born in the 1970s and early 1980s. The initial studies sought to understand men’s gender, sex role, male dominance and power through patriarchal societal structures in general. She discusses trajectories within masculinities studies, concluding that although there are shifts in studying masculinities from local studies to comparative studies, there is a need “to study the global arena itself, both as a venue for the social construction of masculinities and as a powerful force in local gender dynamics” (1998:19). Connell’s (1998) suggestion portrays the global arena as a space and site for the construction of masculinities and is influential in determining local gender dynamics. In contemporary societies, the social venue for the construction of masculinities or identities is no longer localized owing to the effects of globalization. The suggestion that the globe is the venue for the construction of masculinities is insightful in this study because in as much as the study participants in this study are located in Zambia, effects of globalization are eminent in the cosmopolitan urban/city cultures of Lusaka. Although masculinities were initially understood as one homogenous entity, over time some studies branched off to research masculinities in their pluralities “to recognise that men’s experience is not identical with human experience, so it is also important to appreciate that the experiences of all men are not the same” (Boyd, Longwood and Muesse 1996:xv). The

emphasis that men have different experiences is important as it does not streamline masculinities to one homogenous masculinity which in turn overshadows other masculinities. In a similar manner, this study recognizes pluralities in gay masculinities owing to differences in experiences but uses the term identities to show that study participants identified themselves within and outside the masculinities frameworks. Therefore, I have used the term identities and not necessarily masculinities to capture all frameworks within which study participants construct who they are. In this regard, the term identities as used in this study counters the gender binary as the only framework through which males and females understand who they are and therefore, should fit and be categorised as such. In her work –Social Psychology Identities” Howards observes that

the concept of identity carries the full weight of the need for a sense of who one is, together with an often overwhelming pace of change in surrounding social contexts – changes in the groups and networks in which people and their identities are embedded and in the societal structures and practices in which those networks are themselves embedded (2000:367-368).

Identities deal with who people perceive themselves to be, in relation to the social contexts they are located in and practices therein. I utilize the notion of multiplicities of masculinities as I show that the study participants forge their identities outside, in-between and even conflate masculinities/femininities.

In trying to develop a theorized life-history method for researching gender, Connell (1992) uses life histories from an Australian gay community. She explains that multiplicities in masculinities studies and gay masculinities arose out of studies that showed discrepancies in men across cultures, history, homosexual and heterosexual masculinities, ethnicity and age divides. Although Connell (1992) associates discrepancies in masculinities to cultures, history, ethnicity and age, Person links variances with nurture, nature and cultures, asserting that –we know that in addition to nature and nurture, the culture in which we live plays an important role not only in our sexual practices but also in the way we conceptualize gender” (2009:1). The two scholars both capture one important dimension which is vital to this study; the place of culture in the construction of masculinities. In this study, I interrogated how Zambian culture constructs gay identities and sexualities and how such construction informs Zambian gay Christian’s self-conception. There are diversities in how gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings, resulting from the influence of

religion and culture, historical settings, ethnicity and age. To stress the pluralities in gay identities, Nardi adds that:

gay men exhibit a multiplicity of ways of ~~doing~~ masculinity that can best be described by the plural form masculinities. Some enact the strongest of masculine stereotypes through body building and sexual prowess, whereas others express a less dominant form through spirituality or female impersonation (2000:1).

Gay identities are multiple due to differences in how gay men perform their identities. From Nardi's assertions, gay identities are performed, therefore concurring with Butler's (1990:25) idea that gender identity is always a performance. I share the sentiments of Nardi (2000:1) and Butler (1990:25) that masculinities need to be understood in their pluralities and as daily enactments. I push the argument further, for masculinities to be understood as identities, to embrace other forms of being male. This is so that masculinities and femininities in the strict sense are not considered as binaries where all people fit, but instead create spaces for identities that may not necessarily fit into these two categories or may bring these categories together and enact them simultaneously. In other words, gay identities and sexualities are daily enactments subject to constant re-shaping by individual gay men, thereby, making such identities mutable. Additionally, each gay man exhibits his own unique identities and sexualities, therefore, pluralities in masculinities, which, as already stated, has been termed identities in this study.

Even within heterosexual ~~masculinity~~ lie pockets of various kinds of masculinities with different levels of power. These Connell classifies as ~~hegemonic~~, subordinate, complacent and marginalized" (2005:76-86). Connell (2005:76-81) notes that there is an interplay between gender, race and class, and explains the relationship between the categorizations. She relates hegemonic masculinities to cultural dominance in society supported by patriarchy. She also notes that ~~within~~ the overall framework there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men" (Connell 2005:78). Since men wield different levels of power in society, there are men who dominate other men and women. Although not all men wield power and practice hegemonic masculinity, some men within the complacent masculinity bracket ~~benefit~~ from hegemony, enjoy patriarchal dividends and generally gain from women's subordination" (Connell 2005:79). Furthermore, she explains that hegemony, subordinate and complacent masculinities reflect internal gender order, and that:

hegemony, domination/subordination and complicity on the one hand, marginalization/authorization on the other – provide a framework in which we analyse specific masculinities...terms such as ‘_hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘_marginalized masculinities’ name not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships. Any theory of masculinity worth having must give an account of this process of change (Connell 2005:81).

Based on this assertion, it can still be argued that there are overlaps of masculinities as boundaries blur. In many instances, gay identities are regarded as marginalized masculinities, an assertion largely dependent on gay people’s social location, economic status, education level, and age, among other factors. Understanding gay identities in the broader sense allows for exploration of many forms of being gay without necessarily limiting gay men to masculinities. Some gay men exhibit more masculine stereotypes; some may perform their identities in more feminine ways, while others may adopt elements of both masculinities and femininities, synchronizing them to forge identities that tally with their gender identities. Furthermore, in my interrogation of gay identities and sexualities, I avoided operating within the masculinity/femininity binary and questioned the very existence of the binary. I argue that the concept of the gender binary is transcended in this study as some gay Christian identities may lie between this socially constructed binary, and may fall outside the binary or conflate the binary.

Studies on Gay Sexualities

In his book *Making Sexual History*, Weeks (2000:11) theorizes the history of sexuality, premised on his efforts to remake history of sexuality and the understanding that the world of sexuality is not a result of nature, history or society. But “we are the makers of sexual history, in our everyday lives, in our life experiments, in the tangle between desire, responsibility, contingency and opportunity” (Weeks 2000:vii). For Weeks (2000), the history of sexuality is not located in periods in time and society but in daily experiences of sexualities. Based on this understanding, history of sexuality is neither biological nor fixed, but changes according to people’s experiences of desire, responsibility, contingency and opportunity. This description of the history of sexuality is one of instability and a history whose beginning cannot easily be located due to shifts in experiences therein. It then raises questions on whether or not it is possible to discuss a history of sexuality since it is ever evolving. Weeks

qualifies his assertions by attributing changes in the history of sexuality to self-proclaimed sexual dissidents, the ~~new~~ feminist and lesbian and gay scholarship in politically charged interventions, recovering lost or ignored history or experience, and inventing or reinventing the ideas of women's history, lesbian and gay history" (2000:1), alongside scholarly works. He points out that ~~sexuality~~ emerged as a subject for serious study at the end of the nineteenth century, signalled most clearly by the development of a separate discipline devoted to it: sexology, the would-be science of desire" (Weeks 2000:4). To once more emphasize daily experiences that influence changes in the history of sexuality, he notes evolutions in the history of sexuality before and during the HIV and AIDS pandemic, to the contemporary era in which HIV and AIDS is a chronic but manageable illness. Although Weeks (2000) opts not to tie the history of sexuality to historical periods in the strictest sense, Garton (2004:3-4) does exactly that by offering a history of sexuality, linking the emergence of the history of sexualities to the history of ideas, the Victorians age, the rise of social interactionist sociology and social history. The history of sexuality is closely connected to activism by feminists and gay rights movements. Garton (2004) goes on to discuss other aspects of sexuality such as the normalization of sexuality, sexual revolution and sexual dissidence.

Foucault's (1978) work uses the Victorian age as a starting point for discussing sex and sexuality and repressions that arise thereof, which he defines in terms of power. ~~Power~~ is what dictates the binary within sex, that is, licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden" (Foucault 1978:83). For Foucault,

if sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he [sic] upsets established law; he [sic] somehow anticipates the coming freedom (1978:6).

Within the Victorian age, sex was regarded as a subject not to be discussed but an act to be performed, thus, Foucault links discussions on sex to personal liberation. The assertions on discourse and power resonates with the Zambian context in which open discussions on sex remain a taboo. Since the power to determine licit and illicit sex, permitted and forbidden sexualities, is largely informed by the heteronormative, gay sexualities and sex are generally categorized as impermissible and illicit. However, the connection between the discussion of

sex and liberation does not apply to the situation of gay Christians in Zambia as such discussions are likely to lead to arrests and public scorn. In a similar manner as Foucault (1978), Halperin's (1990) book *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: and Other Essays on Greek Love* brings up the sex/power connection. Influenced by social constructionism, Halperin (1990) provides a historical account of Greco-Roman same-sex sexuality in which such acts were permissible and a stamp of power. Foucault (1978) approaches power in terms of permissibility and impermissibility of sexualities while Halperin (1990) uses the concept of power in relation to position identities within same-sex practices in the Greco-Roman context. In other words, the former highlights power at a social level while the latter attends to power at a personal and intimate level. This study takes up both notions of power because on the one hand gay Christians "self-construct" their identities and sexualities in predominantly heteronormative contexts that are powerful informers of discourse. On the other hand, they experience power within sexual and gender identities and roles in their sexual relationships (chapter five and seven).

Literature within Africa has also traced the history of sexualities on the continent. In the historical review "Sexuality, Africa, History", Epprecht starts by observing how "prior to the 1980s, historians of Africa rarely paid attention to sexuality" (2009:1258). He proceeds to show how the advent of HIV and AIDS saw a rise in empirical case studies, with much of the HIV and AIDS work stressing the long-term impact "of colonialism, racism and male migrant labour to explain regional differences" (Epprecht 2009:1258). In another of his articles, "The Making of 'African Sexuality': Early Sources, Current Debates", Epprecht critiques scholarship on HIV and AIDS and sexualities in Africa, pointing out that "this attention pointedly did not challenge key elements in the African sexuality stereotypes" (2013:63). Discussing the history of sexualities in Africa needs to take into consideration how the HIV and AIDS discourse brought into the limelight issues of sex and sexualities, yet there remains room for challenging stereotypes about sexualities in Africa as brutal and overly sexual. The observation made by Epprecht (2009) on the multi-dimensional layers of the history of sexualities in Africa is paramount. I however observe that missing in Epprecht's (2009) history of sexualities in Africa is the contribution of African feminists who discuss gender in relation to sexualities (Fanusie 1992, Mbuy Beya 1992 and Phiri and Nadar 2009). In recent times, African feminists (Kanyoro 2002 and Phiri and Nadar 2009) have greatly contributed to shaping the history of sexualities in Africa by mostly bringing to the fore debates on patriarchy and subjugation of women by men. Although Epprecht problematizes the way

African sexualities are portrayed globally and the lack of “comparative and national histories of HIV and AIDS”(2009:1258), he notes that “same-sex sexuality is still largely overlooked in these, even in texts aimed directly at sexual healthcare professionals” (Epprecht 2009:1258). Currently, there is scarcity in comprehensive literature on gay identities and sexualities from the African perspective. Nevertheless, globally, studies on gay identities and sexualities have undergone some significant changes as noted by Green:

In recent years, in the wake of queer theory, the study of sexuality has undergone what some would call a paradigm shift... queer theory exerts a formidable influence on the study of sexuality nonetheless, reshaping the language, concepts and theoretical concerns of contemporary academic production (2002:31).

Queer theory has been useful in deconstructing sexualities and offering subversive ways in which sexualities can be studied and understood. It has offered deconstructionist approaches towards understanding of sexualities. In Africa, gay identities and sexualities are relatively under-researched mainly due to a general reproach towards sexual minorities, discomfort arising from discourses on sex and sexualities and reluctance by local funders to invest in research on sexual minorities. The popular school of thought claims that gay identities and sexualities are a western importation, a new wave of colonialism, imperialism and cultural domination, while more progressive scholars identify the “Africanness” of these identities and sexualities (Reddy 2001, Louw, 2001, Epprecht, 2004 and 2006, Kaoma 2009 and 2013, Msibi 2011, Nyanzi 2013 and 2014, Gunda, 2015, Shoko 2010, Chitando and van Klinken 2016, van Klinken and Chitando 2016). In Zambia, scholarly work on gay identities and sexualities is in its infancy with few scholars taking any keen interest in researching this area. However, there are emerging studies on gay identities and sexualities from van Klinken (2011, 2013 and 2015), Phiri and West (2013 and 2014), van Klinken and Phiri (2015), Muwina (2016) and Phiri (2016).

The above literature review has shown that gay identities have mainly been theorized using masculinities due to differences in how men experience themselves as men. Furthermore, multiplicities in masculinities is a result of differences in daily enactments of maleness that men engage in (Butler 1990 and 2003, Nardi 2000, Valocchi 2005). These masculinities are forged on the global arena due to the effects of globalization but the place of culture in such constructions remains cardinal. Theorization of men has largely been undertaken using the masculinities framework. However, I question the masculine/feminine binary, hence, opting

to use the term “~~identities~~” instead. This is because gay identities and sexualities offer a conflation, an in-between and outside presentation of identities and sexualities. Additionally, this study acknowledges the place of culture and religion in the construction of gay identities and sexualities.

The literature review also shows that the history of sexualities is located in both daily experiences and periods in history. The importance of discourse and performance of sexualities are tied with power (Foucault 1978 and Halperin 1990), another concept vital for this study which deals with identities and sexualities largely considered as going against the religious and cultural grain. I have argued that within the Zambian context, heterosexuality is the dominant sexuality which in turn determines the acceptability and unacceptability of gay identities and sexualities. Furthermore, power underlies sexual relationships that gay Christians engage in (chapters five and seven). The history of sexualities further shows how discourse has evolved due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

Having traced gay identities and sexualities studies, I will now sketch the construction of gay identities and sexualities by discussing themes raised by scholars writing from the Zambian Christian perspectives. Once more, it must be stated that within Africa, and Zambia in particular, studies on gay identities and sexualities from religious perspectives are still in their infancy, hence, the limitation of this literature review. I elucidate more on identified themes by drawing on insights of other scholars from other contexts. The following themes were salient in literature around the construction of gay or homosexual men’s identities and sexualities within literature from the Zambian context in interaction with other scholars: Christianity and public politics, Christianity, masculinity politics and the Bible, Christianity, the *Imago Dei* and African queer theology, and Men who Love other Men and identities.

2.2. Christianity, Gay Identities and Sexualities

From the inception, I acknowledge that the very term gay is hardly used by traditional Christianity and ATRs; neither is the word homosexual – which is barely over a hundred years old as pointed out by Halperin (1990:15). Being a fairly new term, homosexuality has not been widely used by religions; except in the contemporary era. Traditional Christianity and ATRs have understood gay identities and sexualities as same-sex activities and have approached them as such. I use gay identities and sexualities, bearing in mind the etymological complications it presents in religious and cultural discourses. Using this

conceptual clearing as my stepping stone to engage in thematic analysis of literature, I now turn to Christianity and public politics as the first theme.

Christianity and Public Politics

In his work “Christianity, Homosexuality and Public Politics in Zambia”, Muwina (2016) brings together Christianity, politics and homosexuality in Zambia. Writing from an ethics, social and political philosophy perspective, Muwina (2016:86) theorizes homosexuality using “the 1991 declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation by second republican president Frederick Chiluba, which resulted in the sacralisation of politics and the politicisation of religion”. The mixture of politics and religion, specifically Christianity in Zambia, is very influential in public political discourse on homosexuality. “If there’s one thing Christian teachings share with secular society, it’s the emphasis placed on the necessity of (heterosexual) coupledness and marriage” (Webster 1996:275). Emphasis on heterosexuality is an agenda to foster procreation and, indirectly, economic stability of the nation. Thus, “to get to this end, gender roles are considered indispensable” (Gunda 2010:165). In both Christianity and public politics, gender roles are regarded as crucial in maintaining order and stability of religious, economic and political institutions.

The suggestion that discourses on homosexuality within Zambia are to a large degree informed by Christianity is also made by van Klinken (2013:519-520), who establishes Christianity’s influence on public religion in relation to gay rights in Zambia. Additionally, the mixture of Christianity and public politics informs social beliefs and attitudes on homosexuality which is regarded as a social and moral issue (Muwina 2016:86) in public religion. “The public role of Christianity in Zambia has serious social consequences for homosexuals and human rights activists who dare to challenge state-sanctioned homophobia” (Muwina 2016:86). Although Muwina (2016) does not explicitly explain what he means by the term “Christianity”, from his writing, it can be deciphered that he refers to traditional Christianity. This remains his reference point in discourses on homosexuality. According to Muwina “homophobia in Zambia is state-sanctioned. The elevation of Christianity as a state religion means that laws against homosexuals can be justified in the name of Christianity, thereby preventing serious debate and reform” (2016:90). The role of Christianity in influencing laws, public religion and social attitudes cannot be over-emphasized, depicting how the legal, political and religious merge in the construction of homosexuality and discussions around it. The convergence of Christianity, politics and homosexuality discourse

is not restricted to the national terrain but is transferred to international politics; for instance –where Ban Ki Moon represents a secular human rights discourse, the response [from the Zambian general community] to his call is shaped in deeply religious discourse” (van Klinken 2013:531).

In his article –Homosexuality, Politics and Pentecostal Nationalism in Zambia”, van Klinken (2014) shares similar sentiments with Muwina (2016) on the merger between Christianity and politics on homosexuality. Most of the studies on Christianity and homosexuality in Zambia have been conducted by van Klinken, an academic in the area of religions and public life in Africa. In this article, he discusses –the role of religion in shaping nationalist ideologies that seek to regulate homosexuality” (2014:259). The nationalist ideologies within Zambia are reflected in the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation - which further influences the legal and general national attitudes towards homosexuality. He focuses on:

Pentecostal Christianity in Zambia, where the constitutional declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation has given rise to a form of ‘Pentecostal nationalism’ in which homosexuality is considered a threat to the purity of the nation and is associated with the Devil (van Klinken 2014:259).

There seemingly no longer exists a clear dichotomy between religion and notions of nationhood when it comes to homosexuality. Preservation of nation is attached to religiously being against homosexual ‘impurity’. –Inspired by Pentecostal political ideologies, this is even considered to be a cosmic battle, with the Devil using Western and international institutions to impose homosexuality and gay rights on Africa” (2014:268). The discourse on homosexuality in Zambia is embroiled in issues of Western imperialism, religion, eschatological alignments, among others, hence, –the defence of Zambia’s purity, then, becomes both a nationalist duty and a religious obligation” (2014:269). This therefore explains the general social attitudes towards homosexuality in Zambia.

Writing from a sociological background, Sherkat *et al* (2011), in the article –Religion, Politics, and support for same-sex marriage in the United States 1988-2008”, interrogate how religious as well as political influence support same-sex marriage in the United States of America. Through examination of literature on both religion and politics in relation to homosexuality, they conclude that:

the intersection between religion and politics in the contemporary United States has often been viewed from the perspective that political and religious organizations forge coalition[s] to serve the needs of institutional actors...while there is certainly some truth to this view, the manipulation of cultural values by both religious groups and political parties can have independent influences on individuals' policy preferences (2011:178).

This sociological discussion suggests that although religion and public politics may come together at broader institutional levels to determine the discourse on homosexuality, such positions may not have a direct influence on the position of individual Christians on their policy preferences regarding homosexuality.

The literature review above has established that Christianity and public politics within Zambia come together to inform public religion on homosexuality. Salient also is that gender roles are emphasized in Christianity and public politics in a bid to promote procreation and create and maintain structure. Within Zambia, Pentecostalism shapes the national ideology and legal framework on homosexuality, leading to a semblance of 'Pentecostal nationalism'. This does not hold true for the United States of America context in which personal policy preference supersedes ideologies that emanate from the Christianity and public politics merger. The studies have rightly established the role of Christianity in the construction of homosexuality, a subject of interest in my study. However, a gap is noted in that the literature attends only to Christianity and not Zambian culture in the construction of homosexuality. The concept of cultural values is glossed over, thus, my study attempts to offer an in-depth interrogation of cultures based on the study participants' experiences.

Christianity, Masculinity Politics and the Bible

Van Klinken's (2011) article "The Homosexual as the Antithesis of 'Biblical Manhood'? Heteronormativity and Masculinity Politics in Zambian Pentecostal Sermons", arises out of an empirical analysis of a series of sermons entitled *Fatherhood in the 21st Century*, highlights homosexuality as countering ideal masculinity. The sermons were not specifically intended to address homosexuality but male sexuality, HIV and AIDS, and sexual violence, among others. Van Klinken (2011) identifies three themes that emerged from the *Fatherhood in the 21st Century* sermons preached by Bishop Joshua H.K. Banda, the senior pastor of Northmead Assembly of God in Lusaka, in relation to homosexuality; homosexuality and the

distortion of fatherhood, homosexual as counter-image, and biblical manhood as a heteronormative ideal. Van Klinken theorizes how homosexuality is constructed using discourse in sermons which are influenced by biblical and cultural heterosexual ideologies. The masculinity politics presented uphold heterosexual masculinities over homosexual masculinities. Van Klinken's (2011:133-139) observations about the politics of masculinities presented by Bishop Joshua H.K. Banda can be summed up in this way: same-sex relationships are only understood in relation to sex. According to van Klinken:

Banda's reference to two men "doing it the wrong way" might be an allusion to anal sexual intercourse, but his argument about same-sex relationships that are purely defined by sex is broader...Banda's argument is simplistic because he ignores the basic conceptual distinction between sex as "sexual orientation" and sex as "sexual activity" (van Klinken 2011:133).

Drawing inference from this argument, in many instances same-sex relationships within Zambia are mainly restricted to the act of sex, rendering such discussions limited in nature. Furthermore, Banda's sermons indicate that woman and man are assigned different roles according to creation, assigning gender roles according to biological sex, hence, his objection to same-sex relationships.

According to Banda, man and woman have received distinct roles in God's order of creation. This divine order is offended in homosexual relationships because, in Banda's opinion, one of the partners will perform the role and behaviour incongruent with the person's biological sex role (van Klinken 2011:136).

The sermons depict stereotypical understanding of same-sex relationships in which "one of the partners takes up a male role, and the other a female, as well as assuming corresponding gender behaviour. According to Banda, "clearly, the homosexual, who mixes up the divinely ordained gender roles", (van Klinken 2011:139) is presented here as a counter-image of "biblical manhood" (van Klinken 2011:137). Another aspect this article brings to the fore is that gender difference is aligned with the complementarity of a man and a woman in marriage. "For Banda, the notion of gender difference means that only a man and a woman can complement each other in marriage and become "one body"" (van Klinken 2011:139). This reinforces "hegemonic masculinity rather than transforming it" (van Klinken 2011:139) and "this is particularly problematic in the HIV era" (van Klinken 2011:139).

Van Klinken (2011) uses a unique approach of interrogating the construction of homosexuality within the wider framework of masculinities employed in the analysed sermons. The sermons arise out of biblical and cultural ideologies undergirded by heterosexuality. Implicitly, homosexual discourse remains framed within heterosexism. The conceptualization of fatherhood, the ideal masculine image and biblical manhood is informed by what van Klinken terms gender ideology,

based on a literal reading of the Genesis 2 creation story, with Adam and Eve being considered as models of “biblical manhood” and “biblical womanhood”. This gives rise to an essentialist (and heteronormative) perception of gender, with men and women being believed to be fundamentally different but complementary (2011:9).

The gender complementarity model in homosexual discourses in Zambia cannot be overemphasized as it is a stepping stone for maintaining the moral Christian ethic. Alison, embracing the Foucauldian school of thought, observes that homosexual discourses stemming from heterosexual viewpoints is shrouded in power: “traditionally, Christian sexual ethics have been formed by those in power in the churches on behalf of everyone else” (1997:278). Although van Klinken (2011) does not name what drives the heterosexual ideologies that shape discourse on homosexuality, Webster (1996) gives it a name: power, which I add can also be referred to as authority. Van Klinken’s (2011) work is useful for this study because he shows that homosexuality is understood mainly from the perspective of the practice of same-sex, primarily because the very notion of homosexual or gay being an identity is hardly recognized in Zambia. Furthermore, homosexual men are regarded as abrogating gender roles by assuming feminine roles, styling their relationships along heterosexual dynamics, thus, countering “biblical manhood”. This then is the basis for rendering gay identities and sexualities illegal in Zambia. In this discussion, Christianity, the law and cultures are brought together in the construction of gay identities and sexualities.

Although van Klinken (2011:138-139) briefly points to the use of the Bible, especially the creation stories, in theorizing homosexuality in Zambian Christianity, Gunda (2011), a Zimbabwean theologian, explicitly deals with how the Bible is used to promote “gender prejudice against same-sex relationships in Zimbabwe” (2011:96). In his article “Gender Prejudice in the use of the Biblical Texts against Same-Sex Relationships in Zimbabwe”, Gunda (2011) relates issues of same-sex relationships with gender prejudice. He notes that:

the most crucial contribution of the Bible to the entrenchment of gender prejudice against same-sex relationships in Zimbabwe has been its deployment as an instrument that confuses sex and gender (2011:96).

The popular position on same-sex relationships within Zimbabwean Christianity resonates with the Zambian Christian context, pointing to the conflation of sex and gender in biblical interpretation. Such conflation results in the promotion of “gender difference aligned with the complementarity of a man and a woman in marriage” (van Klinken 2011:139). Gunda, like van Klinken (2011), concludes that:

the creation narratives have provided society with a basis for prejudice since they have been interpreted to suggest that God created men and women, suggesting that male and female are synonymous with man and woman (2011:93).

The creation narratives as found in Christianity have been pivotal in influencing the traditional Christian position on same-sex relationships mainly because variations in sex are regarded as paramount for the purposes of creation. Gunda’s (2011) views on the place of the Bible within Christianity, and the selective application of biblical texts in relation to same-sex relationships, are also shared by Locke (2010). Locke (2010:127) observes that in spite of the Bible being influential in informing traditional Christianity’s position on homosexuality, only a few passages appear to address issues of homosexuality, citing the Sodom account Genesis 19:1-11, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10.

The above studies show how homosexuality is theorized within literature from the Zambian Christian perspective, highlighting how such construction is mainly undertaken from heterosexual perspectives which in turn influence religious approaches towards the aforementioned. They also show that the understanding of homosexuality within traditional Christianity is confined to the practice of same-sex sexuality and not homosexuality as identity. The studies reflect how some heterosexuals approach homosexuality, placing less emphasis on homosexual men’s self-understanding. My study therefore took an emic perspective by focusing on how gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities.

The insider’s perception of reality is instrumental to understanding and accurately describing situations and behaviors... [it] compels the recognition and acceptance

of multiple realities. Documenting multiple perspectives of reality in a given study is crucial to an understanding of why people think and act in the different ways they do (Fetterman 1998:476).

My study is emic because it relied on the experiences and views of the study participants for data production. It is also emic because it shows multiple ways in which study participants construct their identities and themselves as sexual beings based on different ways in which gay Christians understand themselves. This study also sought to understand incipient theologies of study participants in their self-understanding and the role of Christianity in the process. It addresses a gap in literature on the voices of gay Christians on their identities and sexualities, how they negotiate theorization and practice around their identities and sexualities within *Zambian Christianity*. An overview of the literature on gay men's self-understanding in relation to Christianity is offered below.

Christianity, the Imago Dei and African Queer Theology

In our article “Same-Sex Orientation and the *Imago Dei*: A Focus on ‘Men Who Love Other Men’ in Lusaka, Zambia”, Gerald West and I (Phiri and West 2013) capture the experiences of gay men by bringing together same-sex orientation and the Christian understanding of human identity through the image of God, from a theological perspective. We highlight how the institutional churches in Zambia construct same-sex orientation which we tie to western cultural and economic imperialism, and offer this as an explanation of why homosexuality remains illegal in the country (Phiri and West 2013:55-57). One of the ways in which homosexuality is discursively presented is through an anti-colonial and anti-imperialism rhetoric, with both Christianity and politics taking the same position. Nevertheless, in our theorization of homosexuality from the perspectives of Men who Love Other Men, we highlight the doctrine of *Imago Dei* as helpful in understanding homosexual identity within the broader *Imago Dei* doctrine on human identity. Among the themes we identify in the way Men who Love other Men understand self and the *Imago Dei* are: born this way; Christian men who love other men; and “wonderfully and fearfully made in the image of God” (Phiri and West 2013:65-67). Our study participants indicated how their sexual orientation is “beyond human control and choice... [and] attributed to God's desire for an individual...” (Phiri and West 2013:65). Additionally, our study participants emphasised they preferred being referred to as men who love other men and not as men who have sex with other men, insisting that “same-sex relationships are not only about sexual acts but entail care for each

other” (Phiri and West 2013:68). Furthermore, the study participants insisted that they are created in the image of God on account that “they are lovers of humanity in general and other men in particular just like God” (Phiri and West 2013:70). These three themes can be regarded as a reclaiming of homosexual identities using the doctrine of the *Imago Dei* which has been exclusivist when used by traditional Christianity.

Building on the study by Gerald West and I (2013), I extended this thinking in an article with van Klinken, “In the Image of God’: Reconstructing and Developing a Grassroots African Queer Theology from Urban Zambia”, where we suggested a homosexual understanding of the image of God as a starting point for grassroots African queer theology. We proposed that the current homosexual discourse in Zambia is a result of the merger of politics, law, colonialism and public space, coupled with “highly spiritualized discourses” (van Klinken and Phiri 2015:10). We brought together the dialogue of gay Christian men’s self-understanding of the image of God – gay Christian men’s incipient theologies, African theology and queer theology – to propose a grassroots African queer theology. We do this by using “religious faith and ‘dissident’ sexuality [as] a stepping stone towards an African queer theology” (van Klinken and Phiri 2015:2). Faith and queer sexuality which are normatively regarded as opposites are brought into dialogue in the formulation of a grassroots African queer theology. Additionally, we discuss the theology of love as one important ingredient in the construction of grassroots African queer theology, as God is regarded as love and beyond gender (van Klinken and Phiri 2015:13). We start off by using the *Imago Dei* as a lens for the construction of a grassroots African Queer Theology. We further suggest that the communitarian approaches towards the *Imago Dei* exhibited by gay Christian men closely resonate with the concept of *Ubuntu* found in African philosophy, hence, *Ubuntu* can as well be a stepping stone towards developing a grassroots “African queer theology of the image of God” (van Klinken and Phiri 2015:14).

The above studies show the place of gay Christian men in theologizing about their identities and sexualities. The theology of love (Cheng 2011) remains cardinal in how the *Imago Dei* and self are understood by gay Christians. Vital is that the studies bring into dialogue Christianity and gay Christian men in order to capture incipient theologies that inform indigenized African queer theology. These studies are very useful for my study since they are located in Zambia and also highlight gay Christians as starting points of departure. However, they are undertaken from an already established Christian doctrine – the *Imago Dei* – which I

consider restrictive as gay identities and sexualities are complex. The notion of gay identities is explored below.

Men who Love Other Men and Identities

In the article “The Intersection between Same-Sex Orientation and the *Imago Dei* among ‘Christian Men who Love other Men’ in Lusaka-Zambia”, West and I (2013) theorize traditional Christian positions on the *imago Dei*, same-sex orientation, as well as insights from Christian Men who Love other Men. Our study focusses on creation, hence, addresses the fundamental problem of Christian identity – how are human beings related to God? (2013:30). Arguably, this question is essential to gay Christians especially when their identities are questioned by traditional Christianity using the creation accounts. In an attempt to self-understand, Christian Men who Love Other Men offer a shift from the description offered in public health discourse to adopting the theological framework of love and also creating a balance between communitarian and subject approaches towards the image of God and human sexuality (Phiri and West 2013:29). In the creation of identities, the subjective and communitarian approaches are reconciled in a bid to construct individual identities in relation to the doctrine on the image of God.

We proceed to capture religio-cultural, gender and national identities (Phiri and West 2013:32-33) as fundamental to Christian Men who Love other Men. We link these layers of identity and proceed to queer human sexuality and God (2013:35) by interrogating heteronormativity in the understanding of sexuality and God, thus, allowing for inclusive sexualities and God. In a similar manner, van Klinken, in his article “Queer Love in a ‘Christian Nation’: Zambian Gay Men Negotiating Sexual and Religious Identities”, “explores the negotiation of sexual and religious identity by critically addressing the “surprise” some scholars have expressed about the general religiosity of LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex) people in Africa” (2015:947). Since traditional Christianity, especially in Africa, is regarded as being against the practice of homosexuality, the fact that some LGBTI people are religious remains of interest. Van Klinken attends to this “surprise” by stressing how LGBTI people engage in “resisting discourses of demonization, humanize themselves by adopting the universal category of love in both their loving relationships and in relation to God’s love, thus, claiming their space as full citizens of Zambia as a “Christian nation”” (2015:947). Within Zambian Christianity, LGBTI people are agents who engage with discourses that dehumanize them on account of their sexual identity

by affirming their relationships and relation with God – with love as the foundation. He notes that –some aspects of Pentecostalism appear to contribute to “queer empowerment” (van Klinken 2015:947). Adding –that the religiosity of African LGBTIs critically interrogates Euro-American secular models of LGBTI liberation” (van Klinken 2015:947). Since some trajectories of Pentecostalism demonize LGBTI identities, they provide an avenue for LGBTI people to self-empower by offering counter-narratives. However, –LGBTI people’s religiosity is an individual choice, [rendering both] religion and sexuality crucial aspects of personal identity and subjectivity” (van Klinken 2015:949).

In some instances, LGBTI people still choose to maintain their religiosity which has a symbiotic relationship with their sexual identities. Furthermore, both West and I (2013) and van Klinken note agency in how gay men opt to term themselves as Men who Love other Men; –this rephrasing move corrects popular discourses that sexualize homosexual identities. It is also a claim towards the universal” (van Klinken 2015:950). Additionally, homosexuality is considered by Men who Love other Men as an inborn trait, a creation of God, therefore;

both the basic belief that as a human being they are created in the image of God, and that their sexuality is not something they chose but found themselves with, deeply shapes their understanding of the self and provides a basis on which they can reconcile their sexual and religious identities (van Klinken 2015:952).

The above discussions show that the identities of Men who Love other Men are both subjective and communitarian, and that the doctrine of the *Imago Dei* is pivotal in establishing individual identities. The studies have also shown that religious and sexual identity of sexual minorities are closely connected and subjective, even as much as their gender, religio-cultural and national identities remain foundational in their identities. Furthermore, Men who Love other Men are agents both in their religiosity, as well as terming their identities differently from public discourse terminologies. These studies are useful not only because they reflect the Zambian context but because they interrogate negotiation of sexual, gender, national and religio-cultural identities. However, they do not engage in in-depth analysis of the social contexts in which these identities are constructed. My study interrogates the very processes of social construction of gender and sexual identities and how gay Christians negotiate these constructions, to –self-construct” and self-verify.

This study identified religions – Christianity - and culture – ATRs – as vital avenues which construct gay Christian identities and sexualities. At the same time, the two act as social construction sites in which gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities. Having shown theorization of gay identities and sexualities within Christianity, I now go on to discuss culture as another construction site, in spite of limited literature from the Zambian context.

2.3. Gender and Culture

The ways in which culture constructs and understands gender influence how gay identities and sexualities are constructed. Culture is a –group ways of thinking and living based upon shared knowledge, consciousness, skills, values, expressive forms, social institutions, and behaviours that allow individuals to survive in the contexts within which they live” (Fisher and Anushko 2008:103). Culture is therefore a communal, group and individual activity. In her argument on how femininity is a construction of civilization and not essentialism, gender theorist Simone de Beauvoir points out that:

one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; its civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine (1972:295).

This is done to emphasize that gender is learnt in social and cultural contexts. Building on this, Butler adds that:

gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex...when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one (1990:6).

The argument suggests that gender is fluid, although the culturally constructed gender roles remain fixed such that persons of a given gender are expected to adhere to them. However, gay men such as the *kathoey* of Thailand, *xanith* of Arabian Peninsula, or the *hijras* of India hardly conform to gender categorizations embedded in their culture. Gilmore stresses that:

very few societies recognize a third, sexually intermediary category, such as the Cheyenne *bardache*, the Omani *xanith*, and the Tahitian *mahu*...but even in these rare cases of androgynous genders, the individual must make a life choice of identity and abide by prescribed rules of sexual comportment (1993:163).

In a similar manner, of the *hijras* Nanda points out how they are a third gender whose

role is so deeply rooted in Indian culture that it can accommodate a wide variety of temperaments, personalities, sexual needs, gender identities, cross-gender behaviours, and levels of commitment without losing its cultural meaning (1993:175).

The *hijras* do not neatly fit into gender categorization, thus highlight limitations in understanding gender identity within the binary framework. Although the culture discussed above gives allowance for the fluidity of gender, such is not common practice in Zambia, except among two tribes, namely the Tonga of Southern province as discussed by Colson (2006), and the Ila people Central province discussed by Conner (2003). Their acceptability even among these two tribes of Zambia was and is on two conditions: first, they were to be practiced away from one's home, that is, on the mines where there was scarcity of women, a similar idea expressed by Epprecht (2004) on mine same-sex activities in South Africa. Second, that they have religio-cultural significance and not mere identities and sexualities to be practiced by individual choice.

Gender cannot easily be separated from sexuality and the binary discussed above has been used to determine issues of sexual complementarity in many cultures. For example, in his investigation on same-sex sexualities, Fry points out three sexuality systems in Brazil:

system A comprising two identities: man (male, masculine and active) and gay (male, passive and generally feminine); system B comprises three identities: man (male, active, masculine and prefers women), the *-savvy*" [*estendido*] (male, passive, masculine or feminine who prefers men), and the woman (female, passive, masculine or feminine who prefers men); system C also comprises three identities: active homosexual (*-bofes*," prostitutes), passive homosexual (gay) and *-gillette*" (bisexual: active and passive, can also have sex with women) (1982:[1]).

Gender in Brazilian cultures is not based on one's sex but on sexual behaviour and status representation. Green (1999) adds that this supposedly traditional approach towards sexuality does not operate along the gender binary perspective of sexuality. Men who are called gay men in Brazilian culture are those who are sexually penetrated, while those who penetrate are not regarded as gay. Penetration and being the active partner in a same-sex relationship is associated with power and masculinity, while being penetrated as a passive partner is associated with femininity and "powerlessness."

In her investigation, Lago (1999) offers a description of how Brazilian cultures construct sexualities and identities, showing that homosexuals who assume female mannerisms, as well as take on lower status of ordinary women do enjoy notoriety, are generally tolerated in social relations and media. Cardoso adds that "open homosexuals can maintain a higher status by becoming housekeepers, beauticians, hairdressers, seamstresses, social columnists etc." (2009:463). Professions designated for openly gay men are mainly those that are viewed as feminine. Openly gay men in Brazilian culture are generally expected to take on feminine professions as part of the societal stratification. These two scholars offer an understanding of internal categorization of gay identities and sexualities in Brazilian culture as understandings of gender outside the binary and issues of status that come with gay identities and sexualities. In spite of this being the case in Brazil, in Zambia, gay identities and sexualities are understood as non-existent, thus, any public display of such is frowned upon, while the practice of homosexuality is punishable by law. Brazilian culture is more gay friendly and may have in turn have influenced Brazilian law (1988), which is not the case in Zambia, where all men are expected to be heterosexual and have offspring. Cultural discourses about homosexuality are embedded with elements of power, especially on which gender identities are culturally tolerated.

Cultural constructs of gender are embedded with power. Brettell and Sargent observe that some of the evolutionary theories have hypothesized that "men are physically stronger than women and this gives them superiority" (1993:2). Similar arguments can be drawn in understanding cultural constructions of gay identities and sexualities, especially in cultures that regard gay men as effeminate. For example, Gutmann (1996 and 2003) and Miranda (1997) both observe that in Latin culture, characteristics such as activity, strength and dominance are regarded as male while passivity, weakness and submission are viewed as female. A passive gay man therefore is regarded as weak and exhibiting female attributes,

subsequently assuming traditional feminine roles. Costa, Peroni, Bandera and Nardi contend that “Brazilians attribute more feminine characteristics to homosexual men” (2013:907). The authors highlight widely held stereotypes that gay men are effeminate and weak. Gay men who are perceived to be feminine and passive partners in a gay sexual relationship are the only ones who are more likely to bear the brunt of being homosexual and not the active gay man. In Zambian culture, although gay identities and sexualities are hardly acceptable, there is no distinction of active and passive gay men, as all men who are sexually attracted to other men are called gay. In fact, based on my findings in this study, Zambian culture and communities do not differentiate gay identities and sexualities from other sexual minorities, as transgendered men and women are all lumped into the gay category. This may be due to limited information on and homophobia against sexual diversities, as well as invisibility of gay men, therefore, all alternative sexualities are gay.

In a similar manner, some cultures in Africa did not operate within the gender binary until after the colonial era, while others still accommodate transgenderal same-sex sexuality. In order not to romanticize pre-colonial Africa, the studies below attest to the presence and accommodation of same-sex identities and sexualities. In his investigation on homosexuality in Africa and ensuing debates, Msibi in his article “The Lies We Have Been Told: On (Homo) Sexuality in Africa” notes that “African societies have never historically had a ‘gay’ identity or a pathologized ‘homosexual’ category; however, same-sex sexual attraction and expression were known to occur...” (2011: 54). It is for this reason that terms such as gay and homosexual are problematic for some African societies because such sexual categorization is largely a Western phenomenon. McLean and Ngcobo (1995) observe that among the terms used in South African culture to describe gay men are *isitabane* or *ungqingili* – mainly derogatory - although some people mistakenly think this also means such individuals are hermaphrodites. Muthien notes that:

in South Africa Nguni speakers have long (erroneously) referred to homosexuals as *stabane* or ‘hermaphrodite’ (intersexed). The original inhabitants of Southern Africa, the Khoisan, were *not* heteronormative, and genders and sexualities were seen as fluid and dynamic, rather than as static binaries (2007:323).

This study still holds that the sexual binary and sexual categorization is “un-African” since such a binary and categorization were introduced and emphasized by colonialists with the help of missionaries. The lack of a binary and categorization in indigenous African

communities is also observed by Muthien (2007) in the article “Queering Borders”, noting how the Khoisan people regarded gender and sexualities as unfixed entities, thus, being of same-sex orientation or not was inconsequential to them. This then justifies the misconception in the same-sex terminology as intersex among Nguni speaking people as such a worldview is foreign.

Sexual categorization, the sexual binary, the terms gay and homosexual are mainly regarded as western imports while same-sex identities and sexualities have existed within some indigenous African cultures. These observations are useful for this study in which I also note how problematic it is for me to use the term “gay” in relation my study participants as the term gay is Western. However, I have loosely used it in the populist sense. Although there are on-going debates on origins of homosexuality, terminologies, and the “un-Africanness” of homosexuality, among others, is it possible to shift focus from these cyclical debates to bring to light experiences of gay men and other sexual minorities as members of African communities and part of cultures? It is these experiential realities that are paramount in this study as it does not make issues of origins and terminologies its end, but means to bring to light experiences of gay Christians in their “self-construction” of their identities and sexualities. The literature discussed in this section shows that gender remains a fluid cultural and social construct unlike gender roles, and some gay men in some cultures do not subscribe to gender categorization and gender roles. Nanda terms this a “third gender” (1993:173) which challenges the gender binary model. Within some cultures in Zambia, same-sex sexualities were historically allowed when away from home, and currently gay identities and sexualities are tolerated for their religio-cultural significance and not as identities and sexualities which only serve the individual. Furthermore, in some global cultures, only the passive gay man is deemed gay while the active partner is not termed a gay, highlighting issues of power, gender roles and heterosexual-relationship model. However, within some African cultures’ sexual categorizations, the terms “gay and homosexual” are viewed as new introductions following the colonial era and missionary influence. Based on this, some African cultures do not regard being gay or homosexual as an identity but relate to same-sex practices which are assigned local names. This then justifies the lumping of all sexual minorities into one category – gay. The discussion in this section gives a rich account of how culture constructs gay identities and sexualities in light of gender. However, there is a notable gap in the literature: the idea of how gay men “self-construct” in light of cultural constructs of gender is not explored. This gap is of interest to my study, raising questions such as: how

do gay Christians regard themselves as gendered persons? Do they recognize the gender binary? How do they relate to the gender binary? How do they negotiate the gender binary? Is the gender binary a “fit-all” model?

2.3.1. Public Image

Public image plays a significant role in how culture constructs gay identities and sexualities. Robinson defines public image as “an impression that people in general have of someone’s character, behaviours, etc.” (1999:673). Culture constructs gay identities and sexualities based on the public image that gay men present which may be in line or not with cultural expectations of how men should dress, behave and the roles they should assume. According to Cardoso, within Brazilian culture, gay identities and sexualities are largely accepted on account that they remain a public caricature: “the cultural sense allows any kind of joke about homosexuality, but becomes an issue when it is talked about seriously” (2009:464). As long as they do not reflect as serious forms of identities and sexualities, gay sexualities are viewed as caricatures. This is because the public expectation of every man is that he should not allow himself to be “effeminized” by another man through sexual penetration. For example, Klein (1999) writing about Brazilian culture notes that *bofes* maintain a heterosexual male façade but have sexual intercourse with other men, are paid for it and assume masculine sexual role. This façade is mainly because identities in Brazilian cultures are publicly performed and being regarded as a gay man who is penetrated, for the *bofes*, may lead to loss of communal respect, status and standing. Another group called *entensido* is classified by both Dynes (1995) and Whitman (1995) as “savvy, masculine male homosexuals, middle or upper class and are perceived as dubious camouflaged persons”. These do inspire more public respect and social caution since they demonstrate that homosexuality can be a seriously sexual and emotional option, rather than a simple caricature or joke. Phua adds that “in a way, the manly image a man has to maintain in public is more critical than what actually happens behind closed doors” (2010: 587). Brandis (1981) and Lancaster (1992) agree with this, stating that an active gay man “is considered in all various local idioms, to be a ‘man’: indeed, in some countries, penetrating another male and then bragging about it is one way in which men demonstrate their masculinity to others”. Based on these arguments, Brazilian culture expects the performance and maintenance of one’s masculine identity in public, as only then can one be regarded as a real man. It is for this reason that Dynes (1995) and Whitman (1995) both note that *viado*, who are homosexuals who take on the female gender and favour passive

sexual intercourse with other men, are termed as gay and usually are regarded as something comic and harmless. The classifications of gay identities and sexualities and the idea of them being entertained as mere jokes do not apply to the Zambian general context in which popular debates on gay identities and sexualities focus on the wrongness of these identities and sexualities.

Although Brazilian culture regards public display of gay identities and sexualities as a joke, it also allows instances in which gay identities and sexualities can be publicly displayed. An example is the *transformistas*, whom both Klein (1999) and Parker (1991) divide into two groups; one that performs in gay bars and clubs impersonating females, while the other group takes part in carnivals (Klein 1999:244). The second group of *transformistas* form “part of the carnival tradition of men dressing as women and taking to the streets” (Klein 1999:244). During the carnival, all men regardless of sexual and gender identity cross-dress as part of the festivities. During the carnivals, all men, no matter their sexualities or identities, are free to cross dress as part of the festivities. This situation is the exact opposite of the gay identities and sexualities in Zambia which are mainly practiced in secrecy and away from public scrutiny. This is so because of fear of intimidation, violence and in some cases arrests. All men culturally exhibit public heterosexual behaviour.

“Discreet” Gay Identities and Sexualities

In other cultures, gay identities and sexualities are constructed and maintained secretly as long as they do not unravel heteronormativity. In such cultures, gay men can perform their identities and sexualities as long as they practice bisexuality and not only homosexuality. In his book *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*, Epprecht (2004) gives an elaborate account of pre-modern sexuality and sexual practices among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. He points out how homosexual practices among boys during herding took place as experimentation and part of the learning process. However, upon maturation, a boy would be expected to refrain from such practice as “interest in male-to-male sex play was expected to wither away as a boy matured, coached on if necessary by the mockery of peers and perhaps a discreet talking-to by elders” (Epprecht 2004:32). Homosexual practices among boys was tolerated because it took place out in the bush and was regarded as a passing phase and not as an identity. A boy was expected to cease engaging in homosexual practices upon entering adulthood, failure to which, he would be subject to mockery from friends and discreet caution by elders. One was expected to be heterosexual

and contribute to communal cohesion as an adult through marrying and having children. Therefore, homosexual practices were a preserve for youths and not adults. —As in the case of youthful homosexual experimentation, such behaviour was of no concern to the community provided it remained discreet, but was the subject of mild mockery if it became known” (Epprecht 2004:33). Youthful homosexual practices were inconsequential in community as long as it remained discreet. By them being discreet, one would argue that such practices were tolerated among youths as long as they did not tamper with the larger community’s wellbeing. The notion of discretion is further observed by Epprecht in his article —Hidden ‘Histories of African Homosexualities”, noting that historical evidence abounds on how African men —denied relations with other men or boys could be counted as sex. ‘ Rather, they were play, ‘ accidents, ‘ or teasing” (2005:139). Such discretion also allowed for trivialization of homosexual practices. However, it can also be argued that the pre-modern Shona worldview was informed by its own belief systems, thus, that homosexual practices were regarded as accidents, play or teasing ought to be understood within the Shona approach towards sex and sexuality. Epprecht’s work resonates with the Zambian context on account of geographical location and also because he deals with Bantu cultures which this study also deals with.

Similarly, Asthana and Oostvogels arguing about Indian culture note that:

masculinity in India is asserted and publicly acknowledged through marriage and, more importantly, through the production of children. To be a husband and a father is to be a man. Thus, whilst certain qualities such as fighting against and competition with other men are defined as ‘masculine’ (particularly amongst certain social groups) the achievement of successful manhood is more bound up with reproductive behaviour than social performance (2001:707).

Male identities within Indian culture are largely confined within the public spaces through the assuming of gender roles such as husband and father. Implicitly, marriage takes centre stage in the constructions of gay identities and sexualities within Indian culture. Asthana and Oostvogels observe that —male and female identities are therefore sufficiently fixed in the Indian gender structure that, providing that a man does not adopt an alternative gender identity, he may engage in ‘homosexual’ activity without compromising his masculinity” (2001:708). It can be argued that gay men are culturally allowed to have sexual relations with other men as long as that does not jeopardize their gender roles of being fathers and husbands

in heterosexual marriages. In other words, a male can be both married to a female and at the same time, have other male sexual partners. In this regard, gay men's sexualities are not necessarily linked with their gender. Therefore, no matter how much a gay man may have sexual desires for other men, he is culturally compelled to marry and sire children as a mark of maleness. This study is informative to my study because within Zambian culture, like in many African cultures, procreation is a mark of maleness.

Literature discussed in this section has shown that in some cultures, public performance of gay identities and sexualities is regarded as caricature as long as such performance does not signify the seriousness of such identities and sexualities. Therefore, for some gay men, public performance of their identities and sexualities entails acting out a heterosexual façade in order to maintain social standing. Furthermore, active partners in sexual relationships are regarded as exhibiting ideal masculinity. In some cultures, gay identities and sexualities are performed discreetly, as long as they do not tamper with the normative family model where procreation is expected to be the end goal of marriage. The studies by Asthana and Oostvogels (2001) and Epprecht (2004 and 2005) inform this study on the public performance of gay identities and sexualities and some cultural perspective on this. However, the question still remains: is it possible to construct gay identities and sexualities away from the "public gaze"? Hence, my interrogating of how gay Christians "self-construct" their identities and sexualities.

Another locus for the construction of gay identities and sexualities within culture are male initiation rites as part of cultural practices. The section below attends to male initiation rites of passage.

2.3.2. Male Initiation Rites of Passage

In his book *African Traditional Religion* in which he discusses several African religious practices across Africa, Lugira notes that:

rites of passage are rites that have to do with the human life cycle. They are practices, customs, and ceremonies that people perform to move people smoothly through the stages of life from beginning to end. These stages include birth and childhood, puberty and initiation, marriage, aging, and death (2004:64).

Rites of passage are cultural practices marking a watershed from one phase of life into another. Of interest to this study are the male initiation rites of passage, also known as puberty rites.

Puberty rites are ceremonies performed to mark the time during which young people move from childhood to adolescence. They initiate young people into the adult world, marking the physical changes that signal the transition from the asexual world of childhood to the sexual world of adulthood (Lugira 2004:69).

Initiation rites take many forms, from circumcision, instructional teachings and secluded hunting sessions. The main feature is that they mark a boy's transition from boyhood into adulthood, where he will be expected and sanctioned to perform his sexuality. In his book *The Rites of Passage*, van Gennep extensively deals with the rites of passage which he categorizes as "rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation" (1960:11). Male initiation rites of passage fall under transition rites which van Gennep adds are "liminal rites" (1960:11). The male initiation rites of passage are liminal rites because they represent what I term as the "ambiguous limbo state" between childhood and adulthood. It is an ambiguous limbo state because the initiates who undergo this rite of passage are neither boys nor adults. It is also ambiguous as the initiate may not know whether to behave like a child or an adult. It can be argued that during this liminal space, some level of cognitive dissonance takes place as the initiates navigate their way into adulthood. Rites of passage are:

rites of separation from the asexual world, and they are followed by rites of incorporation into the world of sexuality and, in all societies and all social groups, into a group confined to persons of one sex or the other (van Gennep 1960:67).

Male initiation rites of passage are a bridge between an asexual world and a sexual world. Initiation is not necessarily a license to engage in sexual activities immediately after the rite of passage but introduces initiates to their first sexual encounter, with the view that they grow into sexually matured men who will marry and sire children.

Initiation rites of passage occur in various cultures in the world and in some instances involve circumcision. Writing about male circumcision as a practice within Xhosa initiation rites of passage, Vincent observes that it "is regarded as a central public endorsement of a culture's accepted norms of heterosexual manhood" (2008:434). This is usually accompanied by

training in life skills lessons. Male circumcision involves the cutting of the foreskins of initiates' penises and is symbolic of the initiates' valor as well as incorporation into the adult communal life. Although male initiation rites are regarded as being a possible conduit for the manifestation of homosexual activities, by and large, they are meant to promote and enforce heterosexual maleness and not necessarily homosexuality. In spite being condemned in some circles as life threatening,

ritual circumcision is often defended on the basis of its usefulness as a mechanism for the maintenance of social order, particularly in relation to the perceived crisis in youth sexuality marked extremely by high levels of gender-based violence as well as HIV infection (Vincent 2008:431).

Initially, male circumcision was culturally significant as a signifier of the boyhood-adulthood transition and maintenance of social order. However, in the era of HIV and AIDS, it has assumed a new significance, as a preventative measure among youths and adults.

Pinpointing when exactly culture begins constructing gay identities and sexualities is not clear cut mainly because culture is a day to day process. Arguably, “the first, homosexual contacts are begun in adolescent initiation rites” (Herdt 1985:53). This is mainly due to the seclusion the initiates and their trainers are subjected to during the initiation rites of passage. The initiation period is regarded as a time of transition and formation for the initiates. Building on the works of Turner who studied initiation rites among the Ndembu people of Zambia, Kaunda argues that within the male initiation rite of passage:²

the liminal subjects are regarded as neither males nor females... they are liberated from conventional social structures with its hierarchic, gender binary and power relations. In the liminal state, these social relationships and the structural elements are dissolved...the liminal spaces create room for nonconformist forms of sexualities (2015:27-30).

Within the anti-structural gender paradigm of the initiation camps, initiates are allowed to engage in non-normative sexualities as part of transition. Within the liminal space of initiation, the boys are not expected to operate within the normative gender alignments. Their identities and sexualities are formed in neutral spaces in which gender does not seemingly

² Victor Turner's work is extensively covered in chapter six of this study.

apply but the end result of such formation is expected to culminate into heterosexuality and not homosexuality. Non-normative understanding of the initiates and seclusion of males from females during male initiation rites of passage can be regarded as fertile ground for construction of gay identities and sexualities which sometimes may not be stopped from permeating the structured community.

In his analysis of the Onabasulu people of Papua New Guinea, Ernst (1991) observes that although the male initiation rites are no longer observed post-evangelization, the rite of male initiation is still performed and entails insemination of young males by adult males. This insemination is believed aid in the growth and maturation of young males. These transgenerational homosexual relationships continue until the young partner marries. As argued above, homosexual contact serves the purpose of reinforcing heterosexuality among initiates. Maturation into fertile heterosexual men is expected upon insemination by adult males. Implicitly, the older men who inseminate the young men attain a bisexual identity as they have sexual contacts with women and men simultaneously. Greenberg (1988) outlines the modes of intercourse in homosexuality within the male initiation rites of passage as being oral, anal, masturbation and smearing of semen on bodies of younger partners, novice anal insemination by slightly older initiates. It can be argued that homosexual contact in the male initiation rites of passage is shrouded with power as only older men can inseminate or smear their semen on the younger initiates.

Forms of Homosexuality

Greenberg outlines four forms of homosexuality: ~~trans~~transgenerational (in which the partners are of disparate ages), transgenderal (the partners are of different genders), and egalitarian (the partners are socially similar) and fourth is where partners are of different social classes” (1988:25). Transgenerational and egalitarian same-sex contacts take place in the male initiation spaces, with the former being very common as it is often ~~be~~believed to transfer a special charisma to the younger partners” (Greenberg 1988:27). Older men have sexual contacts with younger men with the belief that younger men need older men’s semen for them to become ~~full~~‘ men who will be able to sire children and also to pass on special skills. In some instances, older initiates are instructed to have sexual contact with other initiates for purposes of creating strong heterosexual men out of the younger initiates. Ajibade (2013), writing about the Yoruba people of Nigeria, argues that transgenerational and transgenderal homosexualities are important in many traditional African societies. They are believed to

facilitate proper maturation of infants into full adulthood, as well as achievement and transfer of spiritual powers and religious authority. While egalitarian homosexuality is mainly practiced by adolescents during sexual exploration among youths of the same gender.

The review of literature on the subject of male initiation has established that male initiation rites of passage are important sources of identity in some cultures. These mark the transition from childhood into adulthood, from the asexual world into the sexual world. It is a liminal space in which initiates remain secluded from structured society, thus, this seclusion creates possibilities of construction of gay identities. This is because in some cultures, trainers have same-sex intercourse with the initiates, believing that same-sex activities between an adult male and a younger male results in the potency of the initiates. In recent times, male initiation rites of passage have transitioned from being only valued for their cultural significance to being a means for HIV and AIDS prevention. These studies have established a cardinal cultural space in which gay identities and sexualities are constructed, however, they restrict such construction only to male initiation rites and do not attend to female initiation rites. It is this gap which my study fills by bringing together male and female initiation rites of passage as cultural sites for the construction of gay identities and sexualities.

Having looked at male initiation rites of passage in relation to the construction of gay identities and sexualities, I will proceed to discuss gay identities and sexualities in relation to the supernatural.

2.3.3. Gay Identities and Sexualities and the Supernatural

Another form of homosexual contact is transgenderal: in which partners involved in sexual contact are of different genders. Within some African cultures, transgenderal homosexual identities are associated with supernatural powers such as *sangomas* (diviners) and *inyanga* (herbalist). Buijs observes that:

androgyny and symbiosis of the masculine and feminine thus seems to be a widespread characteristic of a healer's identity...the profession of diviner may provide a culturally and socially acceptable role in the African societies for homosexuals or lesbians (2007:84-89).

Gender, sexual and identity ambiguities, as well as the overlaps between the male/female binary are welcome in some cultures since such overlaps enable identities of traditional healers to be approached from the cultural-health framework.

Gay identities and sexualities are believed to endow some gay men with supernatural powers as diviners, healers, priests and prophets. In other words, supernatural powers could also render one gay or lesbian. “Examples of androgynous males, male-to-female transgender, and possibly homosexual or bi-sexual include the *isangoma* of the Zulu (these spiritual leaders may also be female and heterosexual and *mwaami* of the Ila (Zambia and Zimbabwe)” (Conner 2003:19). Although not widespread within Zambian cultures, the concept of *mwaami* as found among the Ila people of Zambia portrays how gay men have traditionally been incorporated within the Ila community, largely for their contribution towards communal wellbeing through their healing powers. In his investigation on homosexuality in the context of Africa, Dlamini notes that “in some instances homosexual relations carry some religious and spiritual significance, as in the case of *izangoma*, *izinyanga* and other traditional healers” (2011:129) where the practitioner “may draw on both masculine and feminine powers” (Baum 1993:3), allowing them to communicate with ancestors and perform rituals. Dlamini critically engages some literature as a basis for his “argument that patterns of homosexuality can be found in Africa, which in turn further lends support to the evidence of the existence of African homosexuality, and that the latter is compatible with African culture, cosmology and spirituality” (2011:135). Gay identities and sexualities are revered in some cultures as being supernatural and Conner gives an example of “the *isanus* of the Xhosa (South Africa)” (2003:19). Among the Ila people of Zambia and the Zulu and Xhosa people of South Africa, some gay men are believed to hold supernatural powers which are used for communal wellbeing. By virtue of having non-normative identities and sexualities, gay men as well as lesbians are regarded as diviners or “*musonzhi* from the verb *kusonda*, to divine” (McVeigh 1974:64). Among the Ila, Tongas and Zulus, most diviners are women, thus men that become diviners become like women, hence, gay identities and sexualities are to some extent tolerated for their communal benefit.

In their article, “‘I’ve Got Two Men and One Woman’: Ancestors, Sexuality and Identity among Same-Sex Identified Women Traditional Healers in South Africa”, Morgan and Reid (2003) interrogate lesbian traditional healers (*sangomas*) in South Africa from culture, health and sexuality perspectives. They read transcripts of female *sangomas* using the frameworks

of gender, agency, kinship, community and power” (Morgan and Reid 2003:375) to show how *“sangoma-hood”* proffers different sexualities through which interaction and intersection of personal same-sex desire, and that of male ancestors, can be viewed” (Morgan and Reid 2003:375). Although they discuss the experiences of lesbian *sangomas*, to some degree, these could be similar to that of gay *sangomas*, except that gay *sangomas* would be inhibited by female ancestors. They further note how lesbian *sangomas*’ identity construction and desire oscillates between that of personal agency and that of a dominant male ancestor (Morgan and Reid 2003:375). What makes their study unique is that they introduce notions of agency and empowerment for female *sangomas* arising from their lesbian sexual identities. They note that:

as a *sangoma*, women have the opportunity of turning the marginal status of ‘lesbian’ into something that is valorised and feared transforming marginality into power. This is apparent in the way in which *sangomas* speak about themselves. The male ancestor brings a male authority to bear on decisions, actions and behaviours of the *sangoma* (2003:387).

Being a *sangoma* is therefore a status symbol as well as a source of power. In spite of this study being about female *sangomas* and the powerful positions they assume in their communities as healers, it informs my study by offering the religio-cultural powerful positions related with gay identities and sexualities.

The above discussion has shown that in some cultures, gay identities and sexualities are associated with supernatural powers and embraced for their contribution towards communal health through the work of *sangomas or mwaamis*. Ancestors are believed to inhabit gays and lesbians, thus, their desire for people of their gender. Because of dominant male ancestors inhabiting lesbians, some end up being *sangomas* and the gay men also become *sangomas* as a result of female ancestors inhabiting them. For lesbians, being a *sangoma* is both a source of power as well as status.

Having discussed in the preceding sections how Christianity and culture construct gay identities and sexualities, it is important to understand the interface between Christianity and culture in the construction of gay identities and sexualities.

2.4. An Interface between Christianity and Culture in the Construction of Gay Identities and Sexualities

In his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, anthropologist Clifford Geertz (2000) regards religion and culture as systems of communication embodied with symbols. A symbol is “a thing that represents or stands for another, usually something concrete, or material representing an idea or emotions” (Robinson 1999:1433). Religion and culture transmit belief systems and norms mainly through concrete materials. An example would be rituals observed in religion and culture which have underlying meanings. Therefore, a ritual is a symbol of a religious or cultural idea; it is not in itself a religion or culture. Although my study explored how gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, they undergo this process whilst embracing, rejecting or negotiating religious and cultural construction of their identities and sexualities. Elements of syncretism are also prevalent in Zambia, just like in many other African contexts (Van Binsbergen, 2004, Thornton 2003 and 2013). In the Zambian context in which this study was conducted, Christianity and culture are closely connected as both act either together or independently to inform how gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings. A similar observation is made by Kanyoro who asserts that “culture and religion in Africa are one and the same thing: they embrace all areas of one’s total life” (2002:14). Within Africa, there is a conflation of religion and culture as both are believed to be the representative of the totality of one’s life. Therefore, separating religion and culture in this study has only been done for purposes of conceptual clarity.

Similar correlations between religion, culture and homosexuality have been made by Adamczyk and Pitt in their investigation using cultural sociology and religious contextual effects to assess variations in national United States of America responses to homosexuality and they observe that:

religion is often seen as an important predictor of attitudes about homosexuality. However, cross-national differences in cultural orientations suggest that the role religion has in explaining homosexual attitudes may depend on a nation’s cultural context (2009:338).

They show that there is a close relationship between religion and culture in the framing of gay identities and sexualities and their levels of acceptability in given contexts, adding that

the “country’s cultural orientation moderates the relationship between religious importance and homosexual attitudes” (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009:349). Christianity is the main religion in Zambia and is practiced in tandem with ATRs which are embedded within cultural beliefs and practices, therefore showing how religion and culture are closely tied, influencing how study participants “self-construct” identities and sexualities.

The religious and cultural contexts in which gay men are situated influence how they “self-construct” their identities, as they either assimilate, reject or negotiate cultural and religious teachings about their identities and sexualities. However, in more non-tolerant religions and cultures, gay men undergo an identity conflict as their personal identities are usually at variance with their religious identities. Or they may negotiate their sexual identities and religious identities and create a balance which helps sustain their religiosity (van Klinken 2015:952). Buchanan, Dzelme, Harris and Hecker observe that “a struggle exists because gays and lesbians are asked to choose between their sexual orientation and their religious and spiritual beliefs” (2001:435). In the case of gay identities forged against the backdrop of traditional Christianity, there remains a tension between gay men’s identities and sexualities and the viewpoint of religion on gay identities and sexualities. In instances where cultural and religious constructions of gay identities and sexualities are not in line with how gay men “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, gay men’s identities are threatened due to the identity crisis. This arises partly from their personal views and the cultural and religious views about them and also because of the tension between their identity arising from their sexual orientation and their cultural and religious identities. Whether their sexual identity reflects their cultural identity or not remains ambiguous - some participants in my study opted to separate Christianity and culture, while others held these two in close proximity but did not regard them as one and the same.

The studies have shown that both religion and culture as beliefs systems do act together or separately to inform the construction of gay identities and sexualities. In instances where such constructions do not conform to self-views held by gay men, a crisis arises. However, sometimes such crisis is negotiated and common ground sought. These studies are vital as they show that religion and culture do come together to influence and construct gay identities and sexualities. Of interest to this study is the interface of Christianity and Zambian cultures, loosely termed as Zambian culture, in how the study participants “self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings.

2.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed how gay identities and sexualities are constructed in Christianity and culture in Zambia. This chapter has shown how masculinity studies have been widely used as a conceptual framework in studies on gay men in spite of the limitations that such conceptual framing offers in terms of the varieties of identities and sexualities among gay men. Following this, I have questioned the masculine/feminine binary. I have also shown that the history of sexualities is experiential and dynamic due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, further showing the rise of queer studies. The themes discussed on how Christianity constructs gay identities and sexualities focussed on literature from Zambia on the subjects of gay identities and sexualities, as well as religion and culture. The literature review has, among other things, highlighted notions of ‘Pentecostal nationalism’ in the Christianity and public politics merger, power dynamics in engaging in the homosexual discourse, and the emphasis on maintenance of gender roles. Additionally, it is evident that the Bible and biblical hermeneutics are pivotal in constructing discourses on homosexuality, which in many instances leads to gender injustice and restrictive gender roles. Homosexuality is limited to the practice of same-sex activities and not regarded as an identity. Some research is beginning to show that gay Christians are agents who engage in self-naming and articulation of incipient theologies, hence, can be sources of grassroots African queer theology. Furthermore, gay Christians’ identities and sexualities are subjective and communitarian, and the doctrine of the *Imago Dei* is important in the conceptualization of such identities and sexualities.

The chapter also discussed how culture constructs gay identities and sexualities. It established that gender categorization in some cultures is non-existent, thus allowing gay identities and sexualities to thrive. The other theme discussed was the concept of public image as some cultures embrace gay identities and sexualities as long as they do not disrupt the heteronormative public terrain. As long as they continue being regarded as caricatures, some cultures accept gay identities and sexualities. Additionally, I also discussed that male initiation rites of passages are sometimes liminal spaces which allow same-sex sexual contact. Meanwhile, transgenderal and transgenerational homosexuality serve given spiritual purposes within some cultures and as such are valued. The practice of same-sex sexualities is allowed among some cultures as they are confined to the youthful stage and are discreetly handled.

The interface between religion and culture showed that both are systems of transmitting norms about constructions of gay identities and sexualities. Religion and culture determine the social construction of gay identities and sexualities, as religion and culture in one way or another influence each other. Having discussed how culture constructs gay identities and sexualities and having shown the interface between Christianity and culture in the construction of gay identities and sexualities, the next chapter presents and discusses theories framing this study.

Chapter Three: Theories

3.0. Introduction

In the last chapter, I discussed how religion and culture construct gay identities and sexualities. This chapter builds on the preceding chapter by offering theories undergirding this study. In her book *Theories of Personality: Understanding Persons*, Coloiner contends that “a theory is a conceptual tool for understanding certain specific phenomena. It includes concepts (theoretical constructs) and statements about how they are related (theoretical propositions)” (2004:10). A theory is a useful framework through which we create and view the world around us and related phenomenon. It is a conceptual outline of how phenomena are related. A theory can either be proven or disproven through empirical evidence based on observable and sometimes measurable variables. Coloiner adds that “theories are always somewhat tentative...because theories are abstract, a certain amount of ambiguity can be expected, compared to the concrete details that come as factual observations” (2004:11). Concretization of a theory is attained through observation of participants or subjects related to it.

This thesis was informed by two sets of overarching theories; socio-psychological theories, namely social constructionism and self-verification theories, as well as gender theories; that is, feminist and queer as used within religion studies. Although it can be argued that social constructionism and self-verification theories may be at variance with each other, by using them together, I established how gay Christian identities and sexualities are constructed at social – religious and cultural – and individual levels. I have started by using social constructionism theory to interrogate how gay identities and sexualities are constructed in social relationships within social contexts. I then used self-verification theory to interrogate how participants covertly or overtly engage in accommodation and transformation of views held by religions and cultures about identities and sexualities by upholding or adjusting their self-views. I sum up this section by synchronizing these two theories in this study. I then proceed to discuss feminist and queer gender theories as espoused in the study of religions, and offer a synchronization of the two theories in this study. This chapter is summed up by offering a brief analysis of the relationship between social constructionism, self-verification and feminist and queer theories in relation to this study.

3.1. Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is rooted within symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. In his book *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, Blumer points out that symbolic interactionism refers “to the peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings” (1969:78-79). Symbolic interactionism focuses on ways in which people in given social contexts relate with each other. In other words, people do not live in isolation but interact with each other at various levels on a daily basis. Blumer notes that:

the peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or “define” each other’s actions instead of merely reacting to each other’s actions. Their “response” is not made directly to the actions of another but instead is based in the meaning which they attach to such actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another’s actions (1969:79).

Symbolic interactionism argues that as people interact, they read meaning into each other’s actions which in turn informs their reactions to each other’s actions. Additionally, no action is action in futility as all action is embedded with meaning which is captured in symbols, interpretation and aligning of meanings in relation to commonly held meanings. Symbolic interactionism does acknowledge that interpretation of actions can either be a collectively agreed upon enterprise or sometimes individually held as discussed by Blumer:

usually, most of the situations encountered by people in a given society are defined or “structured” by them in the same way. Through previous interaction they develop and acquire common understandings or definitions of how to act in this or that situation. These common definitions enable people to act alike...even though fixed, the actions of the participating people are constructed by them through a process of interpretation. Since ready-made and commonly accepted definitions are at hand, little strain is placed on people in guiding and organizing their acts. However, many other situations may not be defined in a single way by the participating people. In this event, their lines of action do not fit together readily and collective action is blocked. Interpretations have to be developed and effective accommodation of the participants to one another has to be worked out (1969:86).

According to symbolic interactionism, people's actions are usually based on previous interaction and the kind of feedback it solicited from others, owing to the interpretation attached to it. Actions are undertaken based on common definition and understanding. Denzin shares similar sentiments with Blumer (1969) adding that within symbolic interactionism, the subject's presence in the world is given through subjective and objective reports about personal experience and the interaction process. Language (and the verbal reports it permits) has been taken as the window into the inner life of the person" (Denzin 1992:2).

Social constructionism is also an offshoot of phenomenology. In the book *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Moran notes that phenomenology is:

as a radical, anti-traditional style of philosophising, which emphasises the attempt to get to the truth of matters, to describe *phenomena*, in the broadest sense as whatever appears in the manner in which it appears, that is as it manifests itself to consciousness, to the experiencer (2000:4).

Phenomenology aims to bring on board people's experiences as an essential element in realizing the truth about matter, making the subject and not the object the starting point in understanding phenomena. According to Moran (2000:4-6), it aims to first, avoid all misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance, whether these are drawn from religious or cultural traditions, from everyday common sense, or, indeed, from science itself. [Second, it enables] explanations that are not imposed before the phenomena have been understood from within. [Third, it rejects the] domination of enquiry by externally imposed methods. [Fourth, it emphasizes] the need for a renewal of philosophy as radical enquiry not bound to any historical tradition, rejecting dogmatism, opting for a steady directing of attention to the things themselves. [Last, it] pays close attention to the nature of consciousness as actually experienced, not as is pictured by common sense or by philosophical tradition." Moran concludes that "the main contribution of phenomenology has been the manner in which it has steadfastly protected the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of the nature of knowledge" (2000:21). Personal experience is considered important in the construction of knowledge.

Premised on both symbolic interactionism and phenomenology, social constructionism's primary emphasis is on discourse as the vehicle through which self and world are articulated, and the way in which such discourse functions within social relationships"

(Gregen 1999:60). It emphasizes language as the mode of constructing both self and the world within social contexts and relationships. Social constructionists regard identities as products of discourse prevailing in social settings, thus, social relations and social contexts are crucial avenues for conceptualization of self and phenomenon.

Social constructionism insists that we take a critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves. It invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us, to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world (Burr 2015:2).

Social constructionists propose that life events and the current state of reality need to be questioned, and not regarded as commonplace. They question ways in which reality comes into being within the social context and social relationships. The theory proposes that people observe the world from their biased points of view, as such, the production of knowledge by scholars remains subjectively informed and influenced.

Among some of the questions social constructionists raise is: what if phenomenon was not understood as it currently is? It problematizes scholarly constructs of what is understood as reality and the processes that inform the construction of reality. Social constructionism does not approach reality as perfect and unquestionable but questions the very construction of reality. In this regard, what if the current understanding of male and female dichotomy and identity signifiers were not constructed as they are, what would they have been? What if gay identities and sexualities were the norm, what would be the prevailing discourse within social relationships on sexualities and identities and constructions thereof?

Hibberd (2005) agrees with Gregen (1999) on the value of discourse within social constructionism, observing that social constructionism is both an epistemology and a feature of psycho-social situations with the epistemological aspect being:

...the theoretical level [which] consists of social constructionist accounts of a wide range of psycho-social phenomena—social meaning, linguistics, morality, feminism, power relations, the educational process, emotions, the self, cognition, motivation, clinical diagnosis, narrative in the therapeutic encounter, management in organizations, social movements, and so on and so on... [while the

metatheoretical level] consists of a network of philosophical assumptions, largely about semantics, upon which the social constructionist theories of the upper level may depend (Hibberd 2005:viii-ix).

Although the theoretical and meta-theoretical levels rely on each other, this study heavily relied on the theoretical level of social constructionism to interrogate discourse, social meaning, self and power inherent in constructions of gay Christian identities and sexualities within social contexts and social relationships that study participants find themselves in. For social constructionists, power is at the centre stage of their theorization, thus, they interrogate who constructs the knowledge and why, as well as what is regarded as common knowledge in a given social context (Burr 2015:25). Elements of power in the construction of knowledge as highlighted by social constructionists proved useful in this study as discourses on identities and sexualities within the Zambian context are largely influenced by heteronormativity found in religions and cultures. Thus, engagement with study participants on how they “self-construct” their identities and sexualities brought to the fore these heterosexual-homosexual power dynamics by giving the counter-narrative against dominant heteronormativity.

In his investigation “The Sociology of the Self”, Callero builds on the work of Stuart Hall (1996) to show how the self remains a product of social relationships, observing that:

self and identity are constructed within and not outside discourse. The analytical project, therefore, is not one of discovery but deconstruction. To deconstruct the self is to challenge essentialist assumptions and lay bare the manner in which the self is wholly dependent upon discourse (2003:118).

Once more, discourse as a conduit for the social construction of self and identities is illuminated. However, this construction is regarded by social constructionists (Burr 1995 and 2015, Parker 1998, Gergen 2001, Lock and Strong 2010) to only take place upon deconstruction of the self; after all, the self is not self by essence but by construction. A similar deconstruction of the world is undertaken by social constructionists. This theory does not regard the self and world as having a commonplace essence, instead these are constructed through discourses that people engage in within social relationships. Therefore, the self and identity are created through social interaction at communal, religious and cultural levels, among other avenues. Relating this discussion to this study, I have used social constructionism to interrogate discourse in the Zambian Christian and cultural contexts on

gender and sexuality. This is because discourse within these two social contexts informs the construction of gender, roles, sex and sexualities.

Within social constructionism,

the emphasis has in other words been on the social production of the personal self. Yet the social construction of selfhood is also about the meanings and understandings associated with the public self, the self that is visible and known to others and encompassed by what we come to accept within the cultural category of personhood (Callero 2003:121).

Social constructionism analyses the discourse within social relations which, in turn, informs how individuals conceive and construct themselves, their identities, the world around them and how they are viewed by those around them. Cultures usually have their templates on what constitutes personhood, thus, the self is expected to publicly project itself according to cultural notions of personhood. It is such ideals that social constructionism refuses to subscribe to, an idea which Gergen emphasises by stating that:

informed by a constructionist sensitivity, we are challenged to step out of the realities we have created, and to ask significant questions – what are the repercussions of these ways of talking, who gains, who is hurt, who is silenced, what traditions are sustained, which are undermined, and how do I judge the future we are creating? (1999:62).

Social constructionism analyses discourse, who is involved in the discourse, who is left out, which traditions are highlighted and why, which traditions are left out and why. Following this, issues of power within the realm of discourse are prominent as gay Christians, among other sexual minorities, hardly participate in public religio-cultural discourse in the formulation of what could be termed as common-knowledge on identities and sexualities. Using social constructionism, this study subverted power dynamics in the construction of knowledge about identities and sexualities by focusing on the usually absent voices of study participants in issues of identities and sexualities.

There are two main strands of social constructionism: weak and strong social constructionism. A brief discussion of both is offered below:

Weak Social Constructionism

Weak social constructionism holds that social beliefs do not *inform* social reality, but that social beliefs to a large extent *reflect* social reality. In the study “Social Perception and Social Reality: A Reflection – Construct Model”, Jussim notes that weak social constructionism

acknowledges that people’s errors, prejudices, and misbegotten beliefs sometimes create social reality. It suggests, however, that people’s perceptions often may accurately reflect social reality and, even when erroneous, these perceptions do not necessarily have much influence on social reality (1991:54).

Weak social constructionism does not focus so much on the relationship between social beliefs and social reality which it does not regard as informing social reality. Its focus is on social reality which it holds is only reflected in social beliefs. Thus, people’s social reality is verbalized through social beliefs. Social beliefs “refer to a wide variety of constructs, such as expectancies, categories, stereotypes, prototypes, schemata, intuitive and implicit theories and hypotheses, and so on” (Jussim 1991:56). Within social beliefs are gender and sexualities segmentations, aligning maleness to heterosexuality and not gay identities and sexualities. Pinker takes the discourse on weak social constructionism further by pointing out that “some categories really are social constructions: they exist only because people tacitly agree to act as if they exist” (2002:202). Without social beliefs, certain things considered as social reality would not exist or would not be known as they are in their current states. Hypothetically, if people chose to regard some of the social reality as non-existent, they would inevitably cease to exist within social beliefs. Weak social constructionism only alludes to issues of power, therefore, power is not the main focus but social reality is.

Strong Social Constructionism

Strong social constructionism holds that social beliefs have a direct influence on social reality and lead to given social reality. Jussim (1991) propose that:

social perception creates social reality as much or more than it reflects social reality....the strong social constructivist perspective implicitly or explicitly emphasizes the inaccuracy of social beliefs. The one exception is the specious accuracy that comes from beliefs leading to their own fulfilment (Jussim 1991:54).

Strong social constructionism focuses on social beliefs which, whether right or wrong, inform and shape social reality. “The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity” (Berger and Luckmann 1966:37). In many instances, what is regarded as social reality is hardly questioned as it is regarded as factual. In other words, social beliefs construct social reality and not vice versa. They acknowledge that in the construction of social reality, social beliefs are undergirded by power over who has the final say on what gets to be considered as normative social beliefs. Furthermore, there is some level of bias in how social beliefs are constructed as no construction is neutral.

Both weak and strong social constructionism highlight avenues through which knowledge is constructed in the social contexts, therefore, social beliefs and social reality inform both positions. However, this study is inclined towards strong social construction because of its focus on issues of power and how it acknowledges biases in the construction of social reality based on social beliefs. Informed by the literature review in chapter two of this study in which Christianity was highlighted as one of the major interlocutors of identities and sexuality, I chose to make religions and cultures my focus. I premised this study on the understanding that constructions of identities and sexualities are largely informed by heterosexual classifications of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ identities and sexualities as found in religions and cultures. This is because the context in which this study was located is heavily influenced by religion, that is, Christianity, which is practiced in tandem with cultures as found in ATRs (chapters one and two). Furthermore, I chose to focus on religions and cultures as social contexts in which identities and sexualities are formed since my study is located within the field of religious studies. Thus, this study questioned social beliefs in religions and cultures which in turn determine the social reality in which gay Christians forge their identities and sexualities.

Social constructionism has been critiqued on many levels. Among them is Hibberd’s discussion that “social constructionism is relativistic, and therefore, incoherent, [in as much as it is] antithetical to a positivist philosophy of science” (2005:xi). Irrespective of the criticism of social constructionism, I employed it to understand how gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of religions and cultures for four main reasons. First, based on interaction with the participants in this study, it was shown how knowledge and concepts of maleness, gender identities, the meanings of men’s bodies and

sexualities are born from social interactions, and religions and cultures as social contexts inform the conception of knowledge concerning gay identities and sexualities. This is comprehensively discussed in chapters five and seven. Second, as observed by both Farley (2006) and Edwards (2004), it stresses that identities emerge through language used in the social construction of identities and sexualities. Third, it analyses systems which inform knowledge and knowledge production about a present reality and exposes powers undergirding knowledge construction. Last, it helped me interrogate participants as social beings who are located in social contexts that directly or indirectly inform their identities and sexualities.

In Zambia, knowledge, knowledge production and language used around the construction of gay identities and sexualities are mainly informed by religions and cultures which are usually heteronormative in nature. This theory helped me explore the role religions and cultures (as social contexts) play in the construction of participants' identities and sexualities. In adopting this theory in this religion study, I took cognisance of the fact that I was using a theory largely used in the disciplines of education and psychology and its usage in these fields needs to be discussed before justifying its use in this religion study.

3.1.1. Social Constructionism in Education

The introduction of social constructionism in the education discipline is attributed to Paulo Freire, an educationist and philosopher who in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), challenges traditional approaches towards education. Within the discipline of education, social constructionism emphasizes that students are not *tabula rasa* for whom the banking system of education is cardinal for knowledge acquisition, nor is the teacher the expert who "pours" knowledge into "empty" students. Through his humanistic approach, Freire (1970) emphasizes how education ought to be to the benefit of humanity and not mere knowledge and skills transmission. Premised on this, Freire (1970:72) critiques the banking system of education for its depository approach towards students, with the teacher being the depositor and students as depositories. This system of education leads to disempowerment and dehumanization of students as it does not take into account the invaluable experiences of the students as part of the knowledge construction process, thereby, stifling the processes of knowledge (re)creation (Freire 1970:72).

Therefore, Freire suggests ‘problem-posing’ education to counter the banking system of education.

Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality (1970:81).

The problem-posing education encourages constant engagement, inquiry and interaction with reality. It does not assume that phenomena is what it is and should not be questioned, it instead questions the very reality usually taken for granted. Problem-posing does not promote maintenance of the status quo but questions why things are as they are and explores alternative ways of constructing and approaching reality. Another salient idea in Freire’s (1970) work is the need for *Conscientizacao* which “refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1970:35). Problem-posing education provides the propensity for personal agency in the liberation process. In their article “Perspectives on a Freirean Dialectic to Promote Inclusive Education”, Thousand *et al* (1999:324) observe that problem-posing education thrives on critical pedagogy which includes dialogue, dialectic, voice, praxis and reflection. In the process of knowledge construction, issues of language, dialogue and the cycle of action and reflection are paramount. Thus, the process of liberative knowledge construction is dialogical, agentic and on-going; rendering knowledge what I term as an “unfinished product”.

Within the educationist use of social constructionism, there have been significant theoretical shifts. While Freire (1970) focusses on largely political domination in the process of knowledge construction, Giroux (2016) focusses on corporate domination in the process of knowledge production. In his article “When Schools Become Dead Zones of the Imagination: A Critical Pedagogy Manifesto”, Giroux observes how corporate sovereignty has replaced political sovereignty in the production of knowledge by encroaching into schools, therefore creating “a pedagogy of repression” (2016:355). Within the pedagogy of repression, knowledge construction is based on corporate figures and icons as the epitome of knowledge and accomplishment. The pedagogy of repression:

defines students largely by their shortcomings rather than by their strengths, and in doing so convinces them that the only people who know anything are the experts – increasingly drawn from the ranks of the elite and current business leaders who embody the new models of leadership under the current regime of neo-liberalism (2016:355).

Once more issues of domination in the production of knowledge are highlighted, only this time, the corporate world is the expert while the students are insignificant others flawed with shortcomings and not knowledgeable. Within the discipline of education, social constructionism pays attention to sites in which knowledge is constructed, thereby challenging dehumanizing and disempowering processes of knowledge production in which the student is objectified and acted upon.

However, the application of social constructionism in education has been critiqued mainly on account of the techniques used by Freire (1970) and terminologies applied. Although there are a number of critiques to Freire's concept of conscientization, I choose to use his contemporary, Berger (1974). Sociologist Peter Berger in his book *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness* critiques the use of the concept of conscientization which he regards as raising consciousness of peasants by external forces. His argument is that the notion of raising consciousness assumes that "...lower-class people do not understand their own situation, that they are in need of enlightenment on the matter, and that this service can be provided by selected higher-class individuals" (1974:113). This argument highlights hegemony inherent within the process of knowledge production in instances where a higher class takes part in the knowledge production that the lower class engages in. Berger seems to suggest that the lower-class people should be left alone to navigate their experiences which they understand better and therefore, produce their own knowledge in this process without any external factors or influences.

As discussed above, within education, social constructionism has transformed approaches in knowledge production and educator-student dynamics by placing emphasis on dialogical pedagogy and student agency. Another discipline which has adopted social constructionism is social and development psychology as discussed below.

3.1.2. Social Constructionism in Social and Development Psychology

Within social and development psychology, social constructionism regards the individual as a constructor of knowledge. In his work *The Construction of Reality in the Child*, Piaget (1974) not only shows that a child learns from his or her environment and surrounding people but that “such construction is not the act of an *a priori* deduction, nor is it due to purely empirical groupings... [it] testifies much more strongly to progressive comprehension than to haphazard achievements” (1974:94). Such comprehension stems out of on-going interaction with people and objects, thus, formulation of insights about reality. Dowling in the book *Young Children’s Personal, Social and Emotional Development* shares similar sentiments with Piaget (1974:94) and notes that “the image of oneself as a distinct person is crucial in order to establish a sense of identity; initially it is most strongly established through ongoing contact with one person” (2000:2). Interaction with others is invaluable in the formation of individual identity. A child is therefore not passive but participates in the conceptualizing of objects and spaces, as well as in knowledge production, therefore, “it is striking to note how the child, in proportion as he learns to imitate, attributes objective causality to the people around him” (Piaget 1974:318). Knowledge is constructed through modelling of the behaviour and actions of people that come into contact with the child. The child is not passive but is agentic through imitation of observed behaviours and actions. Knowledge creation therefore remains experience-based and subjective owing to differences in experiences. Based on this argument, “by becoming aware of the way in which others view us we build up a composite picture of ourselves. We also learn to behave in character; we get a picture of how other people regard us and then adapt our behaviour to fit this picture” (Dowling 2000:3). Identity formation is based on how people are viewed by those that are around them, hence, behaviour is fashioned to suit the picture others hold. The views of others help consolidate individual understanding. Dowling adds that “when people are acknowledged and respected, this contributes to the regard they have for themselves. However, this must go hand in hand with them getting to know themselves” (2000:9). The social perception about an individual and self-conception both contribute to identity formation.

In both disciplines of education and social and development, social constructionism has been used to emphasize the value of individuals as agents of knowledge creation owing to their experiences, their engaging in constant inquiry, and modelling of observable behaviour. Knowledge creation is connected with power in social contexts. In relating the above

discussion to this study, the interrogation of the construction of gay Christian identities and sexualities was undertaken based on how participants experience their identities and sexualities within the social relationships and social contexts.

Being a theory largely used in the fields of education and social and development psychology, the question remains: can social constructionism be adopted in religious studies?

3.1.3. Social Constructionism in Religious Studies?

I used social constructionism because it is an overarching theory applicable in other disciplines apart from education and social and development psychology. A similar observation is made by Gould on Darwin's natural theory and its applicability in many other fields of study:

In reading Schweber's detailed account of the moments preceding Darwin's formulation of natural selection, I was particularly struck by the absence of deciding influence from his own field of biology. The immediate precipitators were a social scientist, an economist, and a statistician. If genius has any common denominator, I would propose breadth of interest and the ability to construct fruitful analogies between fields. In fact, I believe that the theory of natural selection should be viewed as an extended analogy--whether conscious or unconscious on Darwin's part I do not know--to the *laissez faire* [sic] economics of Adam Smith (Gould 1982:66).

Gould's (1982:66) argument is that a theory does not necessarily need to be locked within its initial field but ought to be broad enough for utilization beyond the scope of its field. Hence, social constructionism was useful for investigating how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and establishing the role of religions and cultures in this process mainly because it is concerned with how knowledge and identities are produced in social contexts and social relationships. Below I briefly discuss the idea of knowledge as espoused by social constructionists.

3.2. Knowledge Production as a Social Construct

Social constructionism holds that knowledge, be it of self or phenomenon, is socially constructed. In their influential book *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Berger and Luckmann (1966) observe that common knowledge, which is usually not questioned in many social contexts, is a social construct arising from daily social interaction among people. Therefore, knowledge is not a given but a creation of reality based on social interaction and on-going inquiry on what currently is. Of interest to Berger and Luckmann is how knowledge is produced; they stress that:

the theoretical formulations of reality, whether they be scientific or philosophical or even mythological, do not exhaust what is 'real' for the members of a society. Since this is so, the sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people 'know' as 'reality' in their everyday, non- or pre-theoretical lives. In other words, common-sense 'knowledge' rather than 'ideas' must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge. It is precisely this 'knowledge' that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist (1966:27).

Knowledge is mainly produced from what people ordinarily regard as 'reality' which in many instances is the normative or popular understanding of 'reality'. This commonly held understanding about reality is the common strand which invariably leads to the creation and sustaining of society. Common knowledge is what is usually believed to be the unquestionable reality by a larger section of society. For instance, in the case of this study, common knowledge on the identity and sexuality of a man is generally a masculine heterosexual. Based on common understanding of reality, meanings about life are created and a common thread maintained. Therefore, people's daily interactions are based on the assumption that they view reality in similar ways and attach similar meanings to it. Under the perception that people surrounding them also regard reality in the same way as they do, common knowledge is created, established and sustained. Having shown that knowledge is a social construct, I proceed to discuss how the construction of identities and sexualities is both relational and dialectic.

3.2.1. Social Construction as Relational and Dialectic

Knowledge, social beliefs and social reality are never constructed outside social relations and discourse. Therefore, using social constructionism, social relations and discourse as found in

religions and cultures as sites of the construction of identities were of interest in this study. In his work “The Limits of Social Constructionism”, Turner points out that:

constructionism enabled one to explain how facts could be constructed as ‘anomalies’ that gave ground for abandoning fundamental presuppositions, and thus enabled one to explain how fundamental presuppositions came to be established, how novelties came to be established, and how presuppositions came to be replaced. The secret of constructionism, and the source of its power, is that it provides an account of the creation of conceptual practices (1998:112).

Social constructionism questions the ways knowledge is produced and those who participate in its construction. This theory informs practices in social contexts. It questions prevailing practices which it suggests have been constructed in biased ways. Therefore, identities and sexualities are products of practices in a given context. In his article “Social Construction, Language, and the Authority of Knowledge”, Bruffee contends that:

social construction understands reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on as community-generated and community-maintained linguistic entities – or, more broadly speaking, symbolic entities-that define or "constitute" the communities that generate them (1986:775).

Social constructionism suggests that in as much as notions about identities and notions of sexualities are regarded as common knowledge, they are social constructs informed by social beliefs. “Common-sense knowledge is the knowledge I share with others in the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life” (Berger and Luckmann 1966:37). Therefore, “all knowledge is generated in a community of speaking subjects and is an aspect of communication within relations and inter-dependencies” (Burkett 1998:123). Within social constructionism, agentic community members are portrayed as useful in socially constructing reality because people speak about social beliefs within community settings. Thus, the construction of self-identities is highly relational.

Relational

Knowledge gains authenticity when created in social relationships. “Knowledge is sustained by social processes...people construct it between them. It is through the daily interaction

between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated” (Burr 2015:4). Although an individual can create knowledge on their own, this knowledge in everyday life gains significance only in relation with what is commonly accepted as knowledge and reality by other members of the society. An individual is both an actor and is acted upon in the creation of knowledge and their self-understanding is also influenced by what is generally regarded as common-knowledge.

The most important experience of others takes place in the face-to-face situation, which is the prototypical case of social interaction. All other cases are derivatives of it. In the face-to-face situation the other is appresented to me in a vivid present shared by both of us. I know that in the same vivid present I am appresented to him [sic]. My and his [sic] 'here and now' continuously impinge on each other as long as the face-to-face situation continues (Berger and Luckmann 1966:43).

Since knowledge is constructed in relational setups, individuals bring to the construction site their own unique individual experiences as they interact with other members of their communities, who too bring along their own experiences. Therefore, these experiences create settings that allow for social interaction, an invaluable site for social construction of identities and sexualities. Such interactions shape people’s approach towards knowledge creation, self-perception and worldviews. Additionally,

social constructionists argue that there are no ‘essences’ within people that make them who and what they are. The social world including ourselves as people, is the product of social process, it follows that there cannot be any given, determined nature to the world or people (Burr 2015:6).

Social constructionism refutes claims that people have an essence in themselves; in this regard, that all males should be sexually attracted to females and should behave according to the heterosexual script is questioned. It is for this reason that I used social constructionism because it allowed me to question the very notions of maleness, gender, sexualities and other taken for granted discourses on masculinities and sexualities. Social constructionists go against essentialism which –is seen as trapping people inside personalities and identities that are restrictive and pathological, rendering psychology an even more oppressive practice” (Burr 2015:6). Essentialism does not allow for construction of reality outside the taken for granted social reality. It regards individuals as entities that are essentially who they are and

cannot go against the essentialist grain. Social constructionism refutes these essentialist assertions, insisting that individual identities are formed through social interaction which remains dialectic in nature.

Dialectic

Although there are many daily signifiers of discourse within social relations, such as signs, gestures, and institutions, my study focused on the “institutions” of religion and culture and the language therein as vital entities leading to social construction of knowledge. Language is a useful tool in the construction of social belief and social reality which in turn inform construction of identities and sexualities. In a social context, people that make up the context are speaking beings, thus, everyday life is constructed using language between social beings.

Language originates in and has its primary reference to everyday life; it refers above all to the reality I experience in wide-awake consciousness, which is dominated by pragmatic motive (that is, the cluster of meanings directly pertaining to present or future actions) and which I share with others in a taken-for-granted manner (Berger and Luckmann 1966:53).

Language around gender and sexualities continues to be framed around heterosexuality, and femininities and masculinities in religions and cultures. It is an everyday occurrence in which people speak about everyday events, attach meaning to phenomenon and so, believe such meanings cannot be contested. For social constructionists,

language is not a means of picturing or representing a reality that exists separately and independently of it, but a means of communication that only has meaning in the context of relationships, inter-represent some ontological realm that is unchanging, and which acts as the foundation for linguistic meaning and knowledge: rather, conversations create and sustain everything that the social group takes to be the ontological foundation of life, the taken-for-granted ‘reality’. Words do not stand for anything but are elements of the constantly contested meanings in the arena of social life, involving claims, counter-claim and disputation (Burkett 1998:123).

Language only has meaning in so far as it is practiced and undertaken within the context of social relationships. It is through language that religions and cultures construct ideals of maleness as language carries meaning for individuals that make up such social contexts. Language therefore gives social groups meanings about everyday life and becomes the basis for what is considered as common knowledge. Language remains contested in social life. It is this language determined by heterosexuals about identities and sexualities - in some instances contested by gay Christians in their “self-construction” of their identities and sexualities within the social contexts of religions and cultures - that was interrogated in this study.

Based on the above, social constructionism holds social relations as the starting point for the construction of identities and sexualities. Additionally, knowledge construction is a constant process and is highly relational. As people interact with each other, they create knowledge, create meaning and gain a semblance of common knowledge of reality. This study regarded religions and cultures as points of social interaction and knowledge production about identities and sexualities. I agree with notions that what is largely taken as common knowledge about identities and sexualities is in fact a social construct that can be interrogated and alternative perspectives about reality imagined and sought. Social constructionism as a lens therefore provides an avenue for interrogating understandings on identities and sexualities as it brings to light the social relational avenues through which knowledge is constructed and how participants self-construct their identities and sexualities in relation to other members of their communities. The study participants do not “self-construct” their identities and sexualities outside the social-relational contexts provided by religions and cultures. Since this study was concerned with how participants “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, amidst the backdrop of social relations and discourse found in religions and cultures, I used self-verification as the other socio-psychological theory.

3.3. Self-Verification Theory

Self-verification theory, like social constructionism is rooted in symbolic interactionism. By simultaneously adopting social constructionism and self-verification in this study, I used both social relationships and self-views as avenues through which to understand how gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, since they are not blank slates acted upon by their social contexts. Self-verification theory posits that “individuals have a fundamental need for others to see them as they see themselves and that individuals actively seek to bring others' appraisal in line with their self-views” (Thatcher and Zhu 2006:1077).

Self-verification theory places the construction of individual identities within the self who further seeks to validate self-views by enlisting feedback from others. Self-verification theory ~~may~~ represent a way to understand how individuals are active agents in constructing stable identities across time” (Pasupathi and Rich 2005:1052-1053). It highlights that the individual is the point of departure in the construction of their own identities and sexualities; in this case, study participants are starting points in the forging of their identities and themselves as sexual beings. This process is on-going, may involve negotiating their socially constructed identities with their individual self-views, thus, allowing for formulation and reformulation of self which is accompanied by performance. Identity is ~~the~~ subjective concept of oneself as a person” (Vignoles *et al* 2006:309). Self-views ~~represent~~ the "lens" through which people perceive their worlds and organize their behaviour” (Swann *et al* 2004:12), therefore, self-verification theory holds that:

it is critical that these "lenses" maintain some degree of integrity and stability; otherwise, the visions of reality they offer will be shifting and unreliable. For these reasons, people are motivated to stabilize their self-views, and they pursue this end by working to bring others to see them as they see themselves (Swann *et al* 2004:12).

Self-verification theory enabled the interrogation, capture and analysis of how gay Christians as subjects use discourse in their ~~self-construction~~” of identities and sexualities and gender performance, which may or may not correlate with how identities and sexualities are socially constructed. With its focus on self-views in identities, self-verification in this study has been used to give visibility and audibility to the ~~subaltern~~”, in this case, study participants, to speak (Spivak 1988:287), bringing to light issues of agency in the verification of identities (Stets and Harrod 2004:155-156). I have termed the participants as the ~~subaltern~~” mainly because their voices are hardly given a platform in discourses on identities and sexualities in Zambia, as they remain marginalized on account of who they are. The theory also enabled me to explore contestations and correlations that manifested between religious and cultural constructions of gay identities and sexualities and the participants’ ~~self-construction~~” of their identities and sexualities.

Swann *et al* point out that:

self verification theorists ask, "How do individuals bring their experiences in groups into harmony with their self-views?"...in self-verification theory individuals shape their actual and perceived experiences within groups. Specifically, self-verification theorists propose that people actively strive to ensure that their experiences in groups confirm their self views (thoughts and feelings about the self) (2004:11).

For self-verification theorists, the individual influences the views the group holds about them. Within self-verification theory, individuals are regarded as creators of their own identities through forging self-views, investing themselves in relationships that consolidate these self-views through the construction of contexts that verify their identities (Stets and Harrod 2004:155-156). In their article "Trust and Commitment through Self-Verification", Burke and Stets point out that "self-verification involves the cognitive process of matching the self-relevant meanings in a situation to the meanings that define an internal identity standard and guide behaviour in a situation" (1999:349). Self-verification deals with mental acts and processes of understanding, experiencing, perceiving, reasoning and knowing that individuals engage in relation to their individual identities vis a vis, the situation at hand. Within the processes of self-verification:

people act so as to bring perceived self-relevant meanings in a situation (based in part on feedback from others and in part on direct perception of the environment) into congruency with the meanings contained in their identity standards (Burke and Stets 1999:349).

In the construction of identities, an individual performs their identity as part of the process of bringing self-constructed meaning to a given situation. Individuals engage in validating their own self-views but this is usually done alongside feedback, negative or positive, from those who form part of their social context. Feedback is weighed against individual identity standards set by an individual. Self-verification therefore commences with the self, located within a social context, which in turn has to be forged between what the self holds as individual identities and the kind of feedback their identities solicit from those who make up their social context.

Stets and Harrod (2004:156) further point out how behaviour is a result of comparison of perpetual appraisal meanings with the identity standard meaning, thus an identity system works by modifying behaviour to social situations to change perpetual input so that it matches internal standards. When perceptions correlate with the standard, identity verification exists. A lack of verification generates negative emotions leading to crisis verification. In response, behaviour may be altered to counteract perceptions from others. However →when persons experience identity verification, high self-esteem emerges from their feeling that they are accepted and valued by others; alternatively, high mastery stems from the self-evaluation that they have matched perceptual, reflected appraisal meanings to identity standard meanings” (Stets and Harrod 2004:161). This analytical lens was important for this study because participants forge their identities and themselves as sexual beings within religions and cultures that have ambiguous standings about their identities and sexualities as established in chapter two. Therefore,

when self-verification occurs, the flow of influence moves from the person, who enters the group with established self-views in need of verification, to the group. Also, self-verification theory states that the person's self-views play a critical role in guiding selection of the group, the identities that the person negotiates with other group members, and the meanings that the person attaches to his or her experiences in the group (Swann *et al* 2004:13).

In spite of using self-verification theory in this study, I critique it on account that it portrays individuals as being in constant need of some form of feedback to self-verify. Although individuals are social beings, could it be possible that self-verification is not a constant process but one that is only necessitated in an event of threat to self-views? To put it in other words, is it possible that sometimes people may belong to certain groups, not because they seek for self-verification but because that is where they find themselves? For example, a person may choose to belong to a given religion not because it necessarily serves the purpose of self-verification but because they are born in a region where that particular religion is prominent, are introduced to the religion in their infancy or merely as one way of passing time. In as much as I note such generalized quests for self-verification, I still use this theory to interrogate if the social contexts influence the study participants’ identities and to what extent sexualities correlate with the participants’ self-views.

There are two trajectories within self-verification theory; routine and crisis self-verification theory.

3.3.1. Routine Self-Verification

Routine self-verification is an on-going process in which individuals engage in establishing self-views, and is deliberately undertaken by surrounding oneself with people that verify one's identity. "From a self-verification standpoint, when others verify one's self-views, feelings of authenticity are bolstered...being authentic hinges in part on being true to the self one is in particular situations and relationships" (Chen, English and Peng 2006:940). Within routine self-verification, the identities of individuals are authenticated through reinforcement from particular situations and those that make up their social relationships. In his book *Self-Verification: Bringing Social Reality into Harmony with the Self*, Swann posits that "all of us spend a great deal of time with individuals that we know. In most instances we have established with these individuals implicit agreements concerning how we are to treat one another" (1983:46). Individuals tend to focus on cultivating relations and creating environments in which there is mutual understanding on how to treat each other, based on how they understand or regard each other. The study participants belonged to gay communities in which individuals knew each other and assumptively verified each other's identities.

Routine self-verification suggests that in everyday life, people ordinarily surround themselves with those that give them positive feedback which validates self-views. It was of interest in this study to also draw out how routine self-verification applies in religions and cultures that participants belong to and also find themselves in. Routine self-verification is undertaken within the opportunity structure which is regarded as people and situations that validate one's identity (Swann 1983:46). In order to maintain self-views, individuals establish their opportunity structure by being with people and in situations where they do not have to question their identities. For example, friendships are sustained because they provide reinforcement to the individuals' self-views. Swann (1983:46) goes on to outline elements that constitute the opportunity structure as displaying signs and symbols, selective interaction and interpersonal prompts and seeing more self-confirmation evidence than exists. Individuals operate in opportunity structures which share their understanding of signs and symbols, selectively interact according to chances of getting positive feedback, and behave in ways that will attract feedback from others that they use to attain their goals of self-

verification. Vignoles *et al* (2006:310) add that positive feedback from opportunity structure leads to self-esteem usually maintained through self-verification. For the study participants, such routine self-verification is undertaken in their small gay communities, within some families, cultural setups and Christian spheres (chapters five and seven). However, opportunity structure may not always be available to provide validation of self-views. In its absence self-verification takes the form of crisis self-verification instead of routine self-verification.

3.3.2. Crisis Self-Verification

Another type of self-verification is crisis verification. Crisis self-verification holds that “whenever people have reason to stop and ask themselves, “Who am I?” they may experience at least a mirror crisis of selfhood” (Swann 1983:47). Crisis self-verification takes place when the individual’s self-views are threatened by a situation or people, leading to the questioning of one’s own identity. When a crisis happens, crisis self-verification contends that people:

may strive to reaffirm their self-conceptions by bending over backwards to self-verify. Such intensified self-verification activities differ from the rather automatic, non-reflective activities that characterize routine self-verification insofar as people are apt to focus attention on themselves and actively attempt to confirm their self-conceptions (Swann 1983:47).

Furthermore, Swann (1983:48-49) adds that when a crisis occurs through negative feedback, people respond by either focussing attention on the self-conception that has been threatened and or by increasing their efforts to acquire highly diagnostic information in a bid to self-verify. The degree of potency determines the level of crisis. For this reason, crisis self-verification can be said to be highly potent when discrepant feedback emanates from those close to the individual and authority figures in the individual’s life. Therefore, “people avoid crisis self-verification by taking on appearances and interactions that elicit self-confirmatory reactions from others, knowing oneself by bringing others to know them by verifying their self-conceptions (Swann 1983:48).

3.3.3. Self-Conception

In his article “Self-Conception and the Reactions of Others”, Videbeck points out that:

self-conception is a term used to refer to a person's organization of his (sic) self attitudes. Operationally, it is frequently defined as a set of interrelated self-ratings, usually upon bipolar scales using some personal or behavioral quality as the referent of the scale (1960:351).

The ways in which individuals self-understand, arrange self-views and self-attitudes leads them to gravitate towards creating and maintaining contexts that support their self-concepts. In a bid to sustain self-views and self-verify, individuals try to create environments that support their self-conceptions and do not pose so much threat to their self-verification.

People seek out people and situations that support their self-conceptions...most importantly, certainty will increase whenever people acquire credible evidence that supports the conception and other beliefs that are compatible with the conception (Swann 1983:49).

In order to maintain one's self-conception, individuals avoid people and situations that do not support their conception of self. Further, self-conception is bolstered through validation of an individual's self-views, and is enhanced through selective affiliation as part of self-verification.

3.3.4. Self-Verification through Selective Affiliation

Self-verification usually takes place in circumstances where individuals engage in selective affiliation by choosing which groups and social networks to maintain. In trying to establish how self-verification happens within social interaction, Banaji and Prentice note that "one manifestation of a desire for self-knowledge is that people tend to choose interaction partners who see them as they see themselves" (1999:303). Self-verification is evident in partner choices made by individuals, as such decisions are made because an individual is viewed in a similar way as they view themselves. It takes the form of careful picking and choosing of people to interact with, associating with certain people and assuming certain roles in society.

Perhaps the most straightforward way to accomplish this is to seek out certain people and avoid others... Another means of acquiring self-confirmatory reactions through selective affiliation capitalizes on the fact that observers often base their inferences about people on the company they keep...just as people may self-verify

by affiliating with certain people, they may also do so by entering certain roles (Swann 1983:38-39).

Through selective affiliation, people choose to interact with people in right circumstances and also to take on roles that are in tandem with self-views. By selectively affiliating, people purposively avoid the company of those who do not validate them and challenge their self-views and identities. According to Hogg and Abrams (2004:252), people have many identities depending on the groups they feel they belong to or personal relationships they have, and these identities as ever changing in response to contextual changes. Therefore, in interrogating gay Christian identities and sexualities, their identities and sexualities were approached as malleable, depending on circumstances and group affiliation.

In a similar manner as Swann (1983) who uses the concept of prompts, Burke and Stets note that within selective affiliation there is “acting to elicit reactions from others that allow one to achieve one’s own goals, which in this case consists of bringing self-relevant perceptions into alignment with one’s identity standards” (1999:350). By selectively affiliating, people perform their identities and sexualities with the hindsight of enlisting feedback from their groups of affiliation and this is done in order to attain self-verification.

The central premise of identity theory is that people seek ways to establish and maintain those social situations and relationships in which their identities are verified. These are self-verification contexts that maintain the self (Burke and Stets 1999:351).

Additionally, “an important characteristic of this selective affiliation strategy of self-verification is that once people enter a particular social group, institution, or occupation, forces such as legal contracts and inertia will tend to keep them there” (Swann 1983:39). This element within self-verification theory was cardinal for this study as the pre-existing focus groups that participants belong to are part of selective affiliation, since they offer positive feedback that reinforces their identities and sexualities.

3.4. Synchronizing the Use of Social Constructionism and Self-Verification Theories

I employed these theories as a set because, first, in as much as gender and sexual identities remain social constructs, and in this case, framed by religious and cultural discourses, my study was premised on the presupposition that participants do not accept these social

constructs without weighing them against self-views. This presupposition was arrived at because I regarded the study participants as agents in the construction of their identities and themselves as sexual beings. Thus, as agents, they analyse which social constructs suit and validate self-views and which ones do not. Second, whilst social constructionism mainly focuses on who, why and how knowledge is socially constructed in social contexts and relationships, it leaves a gap on how the individual strives to create their own social context that validates self-views; hence, it is complemented in this study by self-verification theory. Third, self-verification theory also fails to capture power within sites of knowledge construction, which social construction adequately does. Last, the combination of social constructionism and self-verification theories brought together social constructs and self-views, both as crucial in creating as well as maintaining knowledge about an individual's identities and sexualities.

The theories discussed above were helpful in interrogating how study participants "self-formulated" their identities within the social contexts of religion and culture. However, in order for me to interrogate how the study participants "self-constructed" themselves as sexual and gendered beings, gender, feminist, and queer theories as used among religion studies scholars were also employed.

3.5. Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is one among the many strands of gender theory. Gender theory generally deals with the distinctions of male and female in given cultural contexts. "Feminist theory seeks to analyse the conditions which shape women's lives and to explore cultural understanding of what it means to be a woman" (Jackson and Jones 1998b:1). It is premised on the unequal relations between males and females, focusing on the subjugation of the latter by the former. Feminist theory "is not an abstract intellectual activity divorced from women's lives, but seeks to explain the conditions under which those lives are lived" (Jackson and Jones 1998b:1). Within feminist theory, the experiences of females are pivotal in understanding the conditions they live under. It focuses on ways in which gender relates to power in given contexts, with specific focus on "women's marginalization with the goal of ending it" (Zwissler 2012:358). In this regard, feminist theory aims to transform society by highlighting the marginalization of females arising from "gender and sexuality" (Jackson 1998b:131), with the hope of redress.

Patriarchy

Within feminist theory issues of power, its distribution, use, and how it affects females in given contexts are brought to the fore, based on the understanding that the marginalization of females by males is rooted in gender and sexual differences. In the book *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction*, Goss attributes women's marginalization to patriarchy which literally means "rule by fathers" (Goss 1996:23). Patriarchy is a worldview and system that vests power in males by virtue of their gender and not merit. Goss explains that:

first, patriarchy is a system in which rulership, "power over," is quite central; second, by definition, men have power over women. The extent of men's power over women was the first element of the complex to be thoroughly recognized and described. Men monopolize or dominate all the roles and pursuits that society most values and rewards, such as religious leadership or economic power. Therefore, inequality became one of the first patriarchal demons to be named. Furthermore, men literally ruled over women, setting the rules and limits by which and within which they were expected to operate. Women who did not conform, and many who did, could be subjected to another form of male dominance – physical violence (1996:23).

Patriarchy invests power in men to control and dominate women and nature and usually, such domination is exhibited through violent means, unequal access to opportunity, resources, power and position. In a similar manner, Rakoczy in her book *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology* adds that "in patriarchy the male is the norm and women are understood to be inferior in every way: biologically, intellectually, anthropologically, socially. Women – all women, every woman – are inherently of lesser value than any male human being" (2004:10). Patriarchy as an ideology emphasizes and promotes that subjugation of women by men on account of gender and sexual differences. The domination of women by men has also been discussed by Chitando, a scholar of religious studies, stating that "sexual and gender-based violence, where men are by far the prime 'doers' of violence, is informed by this very sense of power, control and authority" (2015:271). This male power, control and authority Chitando ties with notions of personhood in African cultures, noting that:

personhood in African cultures has been construed and constructed in a hierarchical manner, with men enjoying a full and privileged status. The full

membership of women in a community that places emphasis on solidarity has not been taken as a given. Indeed, as women activists (theologians, ethicists, gender and literature scholars and others) have argued, African societies need to accept this simple but profound truth: A woman is a human being! (Chitando 2015:275).

The positions of men and women in African cultures is rooted in how personhood is attributed to males and not females, with both their positions regarded as givens and subsequently leading to fixed gender roles. Rakoczy links patriarchy with androcentrism asserting that “related to patriarchy is androcentrism, the equally false understanding that the male is the norm of human life. To be truly human is to be male and thus females are an inferior and deficient type of being, most probably a divine mistake” (2004:11).

Goss proceeds to argue how “patriarchy depends, in the final analysis, on fixed gender roles. Without gender roles, no one will have automatic access to any role or automatic power over another because of her physiological sex” (1996:25). Patriarchy thrives on maintaining gender roles and insists on how fixed they are based on differences in sex. The major problem that feminist theory grapples with is “men’s automatic, rather than earned or deserved, power over women” (Goss 1996:25). Thus, as one of the solutions to dealing with patriarchy and its devastating effects on females, Goss suggests “that the problem of patriarchy is the very existence of gender roles and that postpatriarchy as freedom from gender roles is both radical and controversial” (1996:26). She regards the end of gender roles as the end of patriarchy, with the option of postpatriarchy as a way of addressing gender roles. Relating the discussion to this study, feminist theory was useful because it challenges patriarchal notions that gender roles are fixed. This understanding allowed me to interrogate how the participants in this study understood and performed their gender roles. Feminist theory challenges the vesting of power in males over women and this theory helped me investigate if the participants wielded the same power as heterosexual men in heteronormative Zambia. Additionally, the patriarchal system which feminist theory grapples with is also challenged by non-normative forms of being a man, a key interest in this study. This is because non-normative forms of maleness show that not every male wields power over women in society. Feminist theory focuses on marginalization of women and this study interrogated one of the forms of societal marginalization owing to gender and sexual identity.

Postpatriarchal and Non-hierarchical Society

Feminist theory has largely been adopted in religious studies. Out of it has arisen other foci such as race, gender identities and class, besides its prime focus on the domination of females by males. Within religious studies, it has been used to argue that factors –beyond sexism must be taken into account to explain and understand their [women’s] situations because not only male dominance but also classism, racism, and homophobia affect the religious lives of women in these [religious] groups” (Goss 1996:53). In other words, the focus of feminist theory has metamorphosed, taking into account other forms of marginalization faced by women and how these are interconnected. Goss takes the discussions further by arguing that –religion is not only an abstract set of ideas but also something practiced by people, half of whom are women. But, given that cultures have gender roles, religion affects women differently than men” (1996:65). Following up on the postpatriarchy suggestion, Goss points out that in postpatriarchal religion, language, ritual, among other religious practices need to be addressed:

because of the profound and subtle links between language and consciousness, postpatriarchal religious expression is impossible without gender-inclusive language regarding both humanity and deity. Even familiar liturgies affect people quite differently when translated into generic language, making the humanity of women much clearer (1996:202).

While Goss offers postpatriarchy as a solution to domination of females by males, Hewitt in the book *Critical Theory of Religion: A Feminist Analysis* suggests nonhierarchical structures of power as a solution, stating that:

in the absence of hierarchy, there would be little possibility for the exercise of power over others. Presumably, social relations in a nonhierarchical world would be democratic and egalitarian, with notions of power transformed into the capacity of the community to empower its individual members, as opposed to exercising power over them (Hewitt 1995:113).

Underlying notions of postpatriarchal and nonhierarchical structures of power is how the elimination of gender roles in society could subsequently lead to equal power distribution

between males and females. Such transformation leads to recognition of the women's full humanity and empowerment of community members.

Feminist Theory and Religious Traditions

Zwissler points out that “using feminist theory, it is possible to examine particular religious traditions for their contribution to either oppression or empowerment of women within society” (2012:357). Feminist theory does this by interrogating how religions and religious practices affect the lives of women through feminist theology. Feminist theory links religion and culture, interrogating them in relation to women's lived realities, thereby challenging notions that religion and cultures need not be critiqued (Kanyoro 2001:64-102). The use of feminist theory in religious studies has informed the interrogation of Christian and African cultures for their life-giving and life-denying elements with regard to women (Nadar 2009:4, Kanyoro 2002:17-19). Additionally, “feminist theory insists that all texts are products of an androcentric patriarchal culture and history” (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983:xv). It questions not only the Bible but also religious beliefs within Christianity, premised on the understanding that they promote male dominance over females. The idea of approaching the Bible and church tradition with suspicion is built upon by Pui-Lan (2005:53) who contends that women's experiences are invoked to challenge orthodox notions of revelation and dogma by exposing their historical and constructed character.

Feminist theory was useful on three accounts: highlighting patriarchy power which dictates gender roles as detrimental to gender equality; its emphasis on the contextually located experiences of individual women; and its focus on marginalization of women based on gender and sexual differences. However, it does not adequately deal with experiences and the marginalization of sexual minorities, a group which my study participants belong to. Hence the need for queer theory as another lens. Having discussed how feminist theory has been used in religious studies and how it helped me interrogate issues of gender and sexuality, I proceed to discuss queer theory as another gender theory informative for this study.

3.6. Queer Theory

Queer theory “investigates taken-for-granted categories of ‘normal’ and ‘natural,’ asking what they mean in social, political, and religious terms” (Schneider and Roncolato 2012:1). It

uses the concepts of normal and natural as points of departure in analysing gender and sexuality. It is “an umbrella term gathering together diverse issues with a common struggle: a resistance against heterosexual knowing” (Isherwood and Althaus 2004:3), as well as destabilizing lesbian and gay identities (Schneider and Roncolato 2012:2). It challenges heteronormative approaches towards gender and sexuality, as well as questions strict categorization of what it means to be lesbian or gay. Queer theory is characterized by three elements, namely, “the emphasis on the construction of sexuality; the element of plurality, which needs to be present in any reflection; and the idea of ambivalence or fluidity of sexual identities” (Isherwood and Althaus-Reid 2004:5). It critiques how sexuality and sexual identities are constructed in given contexts, and instead proposes a non-heteronormative approach in understanding sexualities, fluidity as well as plurality of sexualities.

Deconstruction of Gender and Sexuality within Religion Studies

Queer theory does not approach gender and sexuality as fixed and non-fluid but regards both as malleable. Such an approach has been drawn into religion studies leading to new religious understanding on what it means to be a gendered and sexual being, pointing to what Punt terms as “politics of identity” (Punt 2008:1). According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2002:[1]), politics of identity or identity politics signifies “a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups.” The concept “politics of identity” was pioneered by Mary McIntosh (1968) and Michael Foucault (1978) and has been adopted in queer studies.

Premised on a dialogue between queer and postcolonial theories, Punt points out that queer theory “critically analyses social dynamics and power structures regarding sexual identity and social power, by challenging and deconstructing normality especially as supported by essentialist notions of identity” (2008:2). Queer theory challenges essentialist understanding of gender and sexual identity by bringing to the fore social and power dynamics that dictate normativity. “Assuming a marginal and marginalized position, queer theory is capable of perceiving theologially with different lenses and focuses, to re-evaluate and appreciate, often from a position of otherness” (Punt 2008:5). Within religion studies, queer theory together with postcolonial theory postulate possibilities of “a prophetic vision for the world [by] recognising stakes involved in common struggles”(Punt 2008:7), as it offers “a re-visioned or reformulated world” (Punt 2008:7). Queer theory has been applied to the Bible and its interpretation. Punt (2007:395) notes how the New Testament can be analysed using a

combination of postcolonial and queer theories as these are communally read and interpreted by sexual and gendered bodies. In other words, the readers' gender and sexual identities are part of engagement with the Bible. Such approaches towards the Bible allows for exploring liminal identities, thereby enabling scholars to "investigate the relationship between sex and gender, liminality, and the Bible" (Punt 2007:395).

Queer theory has been influential in the formulation of queer theology, a theology which incorporates six features of queer theory, namely:

the method of deconstruction, the assertion that all meaning is constructed, the insight that gender is performed, the claim that identity is unstable, and the commitment that persons are constituted by discourses and subjected in the process (Lowe 2009:52).

Using the tenets of queer theory, queer theology deconstructs gender and sexual identities, asserting that all gender and sexualities are socially constructed and thus can be deconstructed and reconstructed. It also shows the flexibility and malleability of gender and sexual identities which are largely formed through discourse. Using queer theory, "claims about knowledge, the human person, and sexuality are deconstructed so that one can see how an idea or knowledge claim was formed, and which persons and groups benefited from them" (Lowe 2009:52). Furthermore, queer theory as used in religious studies highlights deconstruction which exposes and rejects dualistic thinking (Lowe 2009:52). The dualistic thinking which focuses on male/female, straight/gay is questioned "because binary constructions always privilege one concept over the other" (Lowe 2009:52). In this regard, heterosexual identities and sexualities are traditionally viewed as superior over homosexual identities and sexualities. This is largely because of power disparities between the binary, in which the former has power to determine discourses around assumed right and wrong forms of gender and sexual identities. It is based on such deconstruction that scholars like Althaus-Reid engage in queering the Godhead, suggesting "that the sexuality of God is not given or disclosed; that it is (to use a metaphor dear to many) closeted, that is, hidden and waiting" (2004:104). Goss (2002) queers Christ by discussing other sexual identities other than gay and lesbian.

3.7. Synchronizing the Use of Feminist and Queer Theories

Feminist and queer theories were useful as a combination because while feminist theory highlights and challenges gender inequality arising from gender roles and the marginalization of women in society, it does not focus on marginalization of sexual minorities, gay men included. However, queer theory deconstructs the binaries, allowing for non-heteronormative approaches towards sexualities and gender identities. Queer theory also focuses on ways in which gender is performed in social contexts, thus showing that gender and sexual identities are unstable constructs stemming from discourse. The combination of feminist and queer theories was useful for this study as it enabled me to explore the socially assigned gender roles and how the study participants approached them, as well as establish participants' gender and sexual identities which lie outside heteronormativity and are anti-patriarchy.

3.8. Appropriation of the Theories

The combination of social-psychological theories – social constructionism and self-verification – and gender theories – feminist and queer – was used in this study to explore how the study participants forged their identities both at personal and social levels and how they assume gender and sexual roles in relation to their non-conforming self-identities. The four theories have been brought into dialogue with one major thread running through them, which is the centrality of discourse in the construction of participants' gender and sexual identities. This highlights the importance of the participants' experiences.

3.9. Summary

This chapter presented theories that informed this study in which I investigated how the study participants –self-constructed” their identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in the construction process. Social constructionism and self-verification theories explain how identities and sexualities are constructed in social relationships and also how individuals create their own social contexts that support self-views. They also highlight construction of identities and sexualities using discourse. I also used feminist and queer theories as lenses in this study to allow me to understand and explain issues of gender and sexual identities among study participants. Using the last set of theories also enabled me to focus on the experiences of the study participants regarding how they forge their identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in the process. Informed by these theories, I contend that study participants in urban Lusaka, Zambia, have their gender and sexualities

constructed within social relationships, with religion and culture serving as social contexts for such construction. Both religion and culture have prescriptive understandings of maleness, gender roles and sexuality framed along the lines of heterosexual maleness, with expectations that every male should abide by the prescriptions. However, by being sexually attracted to other men and in some instances assuming traditional feminine gender roles, study participants have to contend with going against such social constructs by engaging in self-verification and creating contexts that affirm their self-views. The way they negotiate social constructs of identities and sexualities and strive to uphold self-views is explored in the next three chapters. Having discussed the theories which undergirded this study, in the next chapter I proceed to explore the research design and methodology employed.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

4.0. Introduction

In chapter three I discussed the major tenets of the theories employed, why the theories are suitable for this study and how I appropriated them in relation to this study. This current chapter discusses the research design and methodology used in data production and analysis. The research design and methodology was determined by the nature of the study which involved interrogating how gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of religions and cultures in this process. This followed the study’s main research question: How do gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and what is the role of religions and cultures in the construction process? I used a qualitative and critical research paradigm to interrogate participants’ identities and sexualities within their socio-cultural and religious contexts. The two paradigms also helped me explore tensions and correlations that arose in how religion – Christianity and ATRs - and Zambian culture construct participants’ identities and sexualities versus how participants –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings.

4.1. Qualitative and Critical Research Paradigms

In the book *Social Research*, Sarantakos observes that a qualitative research approach is a paradigm which:

sets the researchers close to reality, studies reality from the inside, uses open methods of data collection, employs a flexible research design, captures the world in action, employs naturalistic methods, analyses data during and after collection, chooses methods before/during the study, produces most useful qualitative data (2005:46).

Some of the advantages of qualitative research are that it allows for studying phenomenon at close proximity, capturing reality as it goes on, and using a flexible research design which is adjustable before and during the study. Using a qualitative approach allowed me to immerse myself into the study as I captured the experiences and perspectives of participants in urban Lusaka. Throughout this study, I bore in mind that the insiders’ views were important sources of data, thus the participants were asked and allowed to express themselves freely about their identities and sexualities within their already established –safe spaces”. I ensured that the

participants decided on the local languages to use during focus group discussions and interviews instead of restricting them to the use of English only. Furthermore, I used a flexible research design which enabled me to hold interviews at the convenience of the participants and reschedule meetings where possible. This allowed for probing the participants and clarity seeking. I relied heavily on the language used by the participants and their performance of their identities and sexualities as vital sources of data.

–Much qualitative research treats language as a mechanism for understanding the social world, so that interviewees’ replies are treated as a means of understanding the topics about which they are asked questions” (Bryman 2008:18-19). This particular author is mainly used in this chapter because of his extensive insights on research processes within social science (Bryman 2008, 2012 and 2016). The observation made here is important as I focused on responses of the participants to the questions raised in this study, thus, careful recording of the participants’ words was necessary. I used and analysed the words of the participants on how they –self-construct” and perform their identities and sexualities, as well as to explore their assimilation, accommodation, negotiation or rejection of religious and cultural constructs about their identities and sexualities. Another vital element of language analysed in this study is what I termed –the language of silence” which I analysed by interrogating the implied meanings behind the silence on gay identities and sexualities at individual, familial and communal levels. Language in this study is generically understood as a means of communication. In her chapter –Researching and Theorizing Sexualities in Africa”, Tamale among other things argues that there is a difference in the understanding of language in the Western and African worldviews:

...though in the dominant Western tradition voice is valorised and silence constructed as a total blank, in many African cultures silence can be as powerful and as empowering as speech (2011:13).

The understanding of silence offered by Tamale (2011) resonates with my view that within the silence on sexualities, especially gay sexualities in some Zambian families and communities, lies the unspoken but –intuitively” recognised form of speech which can be deciphered by both participants and their families or communities. The question therefore is: what does the silence say about gay identities and sexualities? Tamale gives an example of the silence surrounding –the sexualities of some African women, one that is ambiguous and not able to be engaged” (2011:13). While I agree with her on the ambiguity surrounding

silence on African women's sexualities and by implication sexualities of the participants in this study, I disagree with the notion that the silence on sexualities cannot be engaged. Since silence can be a form of language, it can be engaged. Its meanings are subject to both subjective and collective interpretation based on commonly held ways of life. For example, when Epprecht (2004:33) points to how youthful homosexual experimentation was allowed in a pre-colonial Shona context as long as it remained discreet, some of the meanings that can be read into such discretion are that the practice was only sanctioned in given contexts, public practice of homosexual experimentation was frowned upon, and that there was nothing wrong with homosexual practice as long as it was not practiced by adults. I read the meanings behind the silence on gay identities and sexualities as: first, a way of ensuring safety of participants in a context that is intolerant of their identities and sexualities; second, families prioritise other discussions over their sons' identities and sexualities; and third, discussions on gay identities and sexualities, like discussions on heterosexual practices, are not a daily topic of discussion for families and communities. Therefore, I regarded silence as a powerful source of unspoken language worth interrogating. For instance, what was silently spoken to a participant who during his childhood was given dolls to play with by his parents but nothing was verbalized about his sexuality or identity?

I also approached this study from a critical research paradigm, a paradigm mainly used by feminists. In their book *A Critical Introduction to Social Research*, Henn, Weinstein and Foard point out that:

critical research is both anti-positivist and anti-interpretivist, it instead regards research as a tool for social change as well as pursuit of justice, with the emancipation targeted at oppressed groups in society (2009:28-29).

This research paradigm implies that research is a transformative process and in this regard, the views of the participants about their identities and sexualities needed to be documented as one of the starting points for transformation. They undertake this task by discussing two major contributions of critical research, namely, feminist methodology and emancipatory disability research, and by showing debates that have emerged and methodological implications thereof (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2009:27). Feminist methodology has contributed towards making qualitative research a democratic, collaborative and participative process for women in which the process-product relationship remains pivotal (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2009:32-33). In a similar manner as feminist research, emancipatory

research does not only demand the participation of disabled people but their full integration in the research process (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2009:43), hence facilitating the empowerment and franchising of disabled people (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2009:45). What is evident from both research approaches is that the study participant ought to take the centre stage in the formulation of the research and has to volunteer to be part of the study. Further, the researcher-researched relationship has to be cultivated and research ought to be liberative. Critical research –sees the world as being divided and in constant tension, dominated by the powerful, who oppress the people and use that state and its institutions as tools to achieve their purpose” (Saratankos 2005:51). Although I acknowledged the importance of discussing power dynamics that critical research highlights, I recognise that daily life is not a constant site of oppression, neither are there persistent power contestations between the powerful and the oppressed. I instead approached this study noting that in the midst of oppression arising from issues of identities and sexualities, sometimes some gay Christians are not perpetually ‘powerless’ as they exhibit elements of power even in the midst of ‘disempowering’ circumstances.

By reflecting on and discussing how they “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, the participants exhibited agency amidst religious and cultural powers regarding identities and sexualities. My point of view resonates with Mahmood’s (2005) in her book *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, who, writing from a Muslim feminist perspective within the mosque movement context, attends to issues of agency. She begins by critiquing feminist scholarship for its emphasis on “politically subversive form of agency” (Mahmood 2005:153), ignoring “other modalities of agency whose meaning and effect are not captured within the logic of subversion and resignification of hegemonic terms of discourse” (Mahmood 2005:153). Agency in this regard is not confined to political subversion but entails empowering activities, operating and finding spaces within seemingly oppressive contexts. Using discourses on the wearing of the *hijab* (veil) among some Muslim women, she instead suggests that:

if we think of “agency” not simply as a synonym of resistance to social norms but as a modality of action, then this conversation raises some interesting questions about the kind of relationship established between the subject and the norm, between performative behaviour and inward disposition (Mahmood 2005:157).

She ties agency to action within the social norm, rendering agency performative. The idea of the relationship between the subject and the norm is imperative as it highlights how the norm is approached differently by different subjects. This informs my study as the agency of the participants was found not only in resistance against the norm but in interaction between individual participants and issues of construction of identities and sexualities. In yet another one of her works, “Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival”, Mahmood uses similar notions of agency –as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create” (2001:203). Among some Muslim women that the author writes of, contexts that seemingly promote domination of women by men do create spaces that enable given actions by those regarded as subordinate. Relating this understanding to my study, it can be argued that the very spaces that would ordinarily be regarded as promoting the power/powerless dynamics of gay Christians have been used by study participants as sites of empowerment. Within religious and cultural contexts, the participants did still locate spaces in which they could construct their identities and sexualities; for example, the use of the Bible – a powerful Christian tool on identities and sexualities – and initiation rites of passage – powerful sources of identities and sexualities. It is for this reason that Mahmood concludes that:

in order for us to be able to judge, in a morally and politically informed way, even those practices we consider objectionable, it is important to take into consideration the desires, motivations, commitments, and aspirations of the people to whom these practices are important. Thus, in order to explore the kinds of injury specific to women located in particular historical and cultural situations, it is not enough simply to point, for example, that a tradition of female piety or modesty serves to give legitimacy to women's subordination. Rather it is only by exploring these traditions in relation to the practical engagements and forms of life in which they are embedded that we can come to understand the significance of that subordination to the women who embody it (Mahmood 2001:225).

Understanding the notion of agency entails an interrogation of subject-norm relations and the impacts thereof. I also approached this study from a view point that the participants are not in constant tension with the state, religious and cultural powers based on how they still utilize spaces in religion and culture in their “self-construction” of identities and sexualities. This shows that although religion and culture are important construction sites of identities and

sexualities, such do not happen without counter-narratives from participants who are agents within the religio-cultural setup. This study contributes to the growing field of studies on African masculinities, African cultures, gay sexualities, identities, the concept of borderland gender and sexualities and as well as religion studies.

This chapter discusses the following: research design, sampling, methods of data production, reflexivity, methods of data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations.

4.2. Research Design

Qualitative research “takes into account that there are simply different interpretations or constructions of any set of phenomena...” (Hammersley 2008:47). As it deals with specific phenomena, therefore, results from qualitative research are specific, cannot easily be generalized and replicability is not guaranteed owing to differences in interpretation of data. In my study, I investigated the phenomenon of construction of identities and sexualities from specific perspectives of participants, contextually located in urban Lusaka, Zambia. In his book *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Neuman notes that qualitative research uses “soft data (i.e., words, sentences, photos, symbols)” (2011:165) which “dictate qualitative research strategies and data collection techniques that differ from hard data (in the form of numbers) for which quantitative approaches are used” (Neuman 2011:165). This distinction between *soft* and *hard data* is crucial as it shows that major avenues for data production employed in this study are the words and sentences of the study participants. I sought to begin from gay identities and sexualities as a phenomenon before proceeding to offer religio-cultural engagement, whilst using the language and actions of participants as primary sources of data. Furthermore, a qualitative approach to this study allowed me to offer a culturally relative study based on the experiences of these specific participants located in urban Lusaka. Thus, the findings in this study are not universal. Approaching this study from this paradigm enabled me to study the “self-construction” of identities and sexualities from a particular perspective, thus allowing for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Additionally, I employed a “multi-method research design” (Hennink 2007:12) for data production as espoused by Hennink in her book *International Focus Group Research: A Handbook for the Health and Social Sciences*. The multi-method research design is useful because “using a combination of research approaches can illuminate different aspects of a

research problem, which can provide powerful evidence to inform policy and practice...for example, focus group discussions may be used to identify and refine issues that are later explored more fully in in-depth interviews” (2007:12). The emphasis in the multi-method design is the use of more than one research method in the production of data in order to capture a phenomenon from as many positions as possible. Therefore, my study attended to the demands of the multi-method research design through the use of focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and observation methods. A multi-method design facilitated observing the same phenomenon from different angles, therefore, providing different insights to the same subject of investigation. Qualitative research methods were chosen for their flexibility as they allowed me to draw in-depth insights on how individual participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities in relation to self and others. In an investigation on –Narratives of Practice and the Construction of Identity in Teaching”, Watson brings together professional teaching, storytelling and identity, observing that:

identity can never be something that is just interior because identity is necessarily relational, to do with recognition of sameness and difference between ourselves and others. Identity only has meaning within a chain of relationships, i.e. there is no fixed point of reference for ‘an identity’ (2006:509).

Identities are both an interior understanding and exterior projection of self and in relation with others. They remain a dynamic occurrence and relational in nature. It is for this reason that Watson concludes that:

finally, as a means of carrying out research the stories are important since they are the area where practice and professional identity meet. The stories articulate elements of professional knowledge embedded in practice. They therefore provide a research tool to examine these processes (Watson 2006:525).

What Watson (2006) discusses is the merger of professional identity and social identity accomplished through storytelling. This observation is vital for this study because it gives an avenue through which identities are formed. Following this, in this study, the participants’ –self-construction” of identities is undertaken at a personal as well as social level, hence the incorporation of religions and cultures as social contexts. Branaman, writing from a feminist perspective, argues that gendered identities are –fluid, transient, multiple, and contradictory nature of identities” (2011:32). Therefore, I undertook the interrogation of gay identities and

sexualities from pluralistic perspectives, noting the multiplicities and complexities of identities and sexualities among the participants.

4.3. Sampling

Pseudonym	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	Sex assigned at birth	Self-assigned Sexual and Gender Identity (female/male/unclear)	Age Range (18-24, 25-31 and 32-37)	Location
Diva	Transgender woman	Male	Female	25 -31	Lusaka central
Maliq	Transgender man	Female	Male	25-31	Lusaka central
Maambo	Gay	Male	Male	25-31	Lusaka central
Foster	Lesbian	Female	Female	25-31	Lusaka central
Terry	Transgender man	Female	Male	32-37	Lusaka central
Roman	Gay	Male	Female	18-24	Lusaka central
Dakah	Gay	Male	Unclear	18-24	Lusaka central
Chris	Gay	Male	Male	25-31	Lusaka central
Paul	Gay	Male	Male	32-37	Lusaka central
Teta	Gay	Male	Male	25-31	Lusaka central
Taonga	Gay	Male	Male	25-31	Lusaka central
Chipobabz	Gay	Male	Female	25-31	Kanyama
Rihana	Gay	Male	Female	25-31	Kanyama
Pamera	Gay	Male	Female	25-31	Kanyama
MamaG	Gay	Male	Female	25-31	Kanyama
Ashley	Gay	Male	Female	18-24	Kanyama
Keri Hilson	Gay	Male	Female	18-24	Kanyama
Dina	Gay	Male	Female	25-31	Kanyama

Table 1. Study participants

This study used non-probability sampling in which purposive and snowballing sampling were applied. I used non-probability sampling because it is not easy to gain access to gay Christians in Zambia owing to the discriminatory laws, current social disdain against the practice of gay identities and sexualities, religious teachings and the secrecy surrounding sexualities in my research site. Thus, the two groups of participants that were availed to me through the gatekeeper were used as my sample. Using purposive sampling allowed me to “get all possible cases that fit particular criteria, using various methods” (Neuman 2011:267).

Purposive sampling “uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases, or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind...purposive sampling is appropriate to select unique cases that are especially informative” (Neuman 2011:267-268). Although I did not consider myself an expert, I used purposive sampling for its focus on specific purposes for selection of participants and their knowledge, insights and experiences on the phenomenon under interrogation. The sample provided to me by the gatekeeper fit into the category that my research investigated. Initially, the gatekeeper had introduced me to participants within Lusaka central area and as the study progressed, using snowballing, I gained access to the participants in Kanyama.

This study was made up of eighteen participants aged between eighteen and thirty-five and who self-identified as follows: fourteen gay Christians, two transgender men, one transgender woman and one lesbian. I divided them into two groups based on their locality within Lusaka, namely, Lusaka central and Kanyama. My study set out to interrogate only gay Christians’ “self-construction” of identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in the construction processes. However, upon getting to the research site, one transgender woman, two transgender men and one lesbian joined the Lusaka central focus group discussions and since I could not turn them back, they participated in the study. The two transgender men also participated in the individual interviews. However, their insights in this study have only been used insofar as they elucidate more on the views expressed by the intended participants and also for triangulation purposes. Since all the participants already knew each other prior to participating in this study, the presence of the transgender men, transgender woman and lesbian did not affect the data production process. The participants in Lusaka central and Kanyama were selected to be part of this study because they are the ones I was introduced to by the gatekeeper, although I already had some links with a few members of each of these two groups.

The sample was determined through purposive sampling. Bryman notes this takes into account the need “...to interview people who are relevant to the research questions” (2004:334). Bryman’s views are important for this study as they guided me in ensuring that participants who took part in individual interviews as well as the focus group discussion were persons that had first-hand information about gay identities and sexualities. With the help of the gatekeeper, I deliberately targeted individuals who self-identified as such, belonged to pre-existing focus groups and were capable of helping me answer the question this study set

out to answer: the question being “how do gay Christians self-construct” their identities and sexualities and what is the role of religion and culture in this process?” Neuman adds that purposive sampling is “a non-random sample in which the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of a highly specific and difficult-to-reach population” (2011:267). Gay Christians within Zambia are a hard to reach group since they are usually “in the closet” about their identities and sexualities. Access to them was only possible through my gatekeeper and internal networks, therefore justifying my use of purposive sampling. To gain access to the participants within Lusaka central, the gatekeeper had to organize our meetings, while the Kanyama participants were accessed through the gatekeeper using snowballing once I was already at the research site. I only selected my sample based on them being gay, Christian, and available for this study. A total of seven focus group discussions and six individual interviews were conducted with the participants in urban Lusaka, Zambia, for a period of five months. The focus group discussions and interviews were held in “safe spaces” upon agreement with the participants.

“Self-selected sampling” (Tranter 2010:139) was used in this study since it allowed for participants to volunteer to be part of this study. Participants self-selected by appearing at the agreed location of the focus group discussions as well as individual interviews. Originally, both groups of participants were made up of close to thirty members each, therefore, through self-selection, a manageable number of participants offered to be part of this study.

In order to gain access to participants in the Kanyama group, I relied on the gatekeeper to identify members of the Kanyama group and facilitate their coming together for the focus group discussions. This group was identified using a snowballing method. Babbie (1992:292) points out that snowballing starts with a small number of study participants who are relevant to the study referring the researcher to those within their category. Neuman once more adds that:

snowball sample (also called network, chain referral, reputational, and respondent-driven sampling) is a method for sampling (or selecting) the cases in a network... a non-random sample in which the researcher begins with one case and then, based on information about interrelationships from the case, identifies other cases and repeats the process again and again (2011:269).

Neuman's assertions are helpful as they reflect how networks among research participants are a resource for identifying other potential participants. I relied on my gatekeeper's networks and influence to organise the Kanyama focus group discussions. During the focus group discussions, I asked participants who were interested in being interviewed to write down their cell phone numbers – self-selection process – as an indication of willingness to participate in in-depth interviews.

The focus group discussions were spread out as follows: five among participants in the Lusaka central group and two in the Kanyama focus group. The Lusaka central and Kanyama groups were made up of eleven and seven group members respectively, and focused on discussing how they “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role religions and cultures play in this process. Focus group discussions created an environment which enabled expression of many different perspectives and explanations about the topic of discussion in one session. The two groups that formed the focus group discussions were already in existence before this study, and this allowed for lively discussions on this sensitive topic. The pre-existing focus groups helped the participants feel comfortable discussing their identities and sexualities as they knew each other since they all belonged to groups of sexual minorities in Zambia. The focus group discussions enlisted two levels of interaction: “interviewer-participants and participant to participant” (Smithson 2008:359). Since the groups were pre-existing, focus groups enabled the gay Christians to interact among themselves as well as generate fruitful discussions on usually veiled subjects of identities and sexualities. Since the participants already knew each other, they discussed inner coded terms and language used within their circles, sought clarity from each other, and introduced me to their inner coded terms and language. Kitzinger observes that “the fact that group participants provide an audience for each other encourages a greater variety of communication that is often evident within more traditional methods of data collection” (2004:270). These insights are helpful as they bring to the fore how focus group discussions encourage different types of group communication. There were some participants who seemed more knowledgeable about their identities and sexualities than others. I found it interesting that those who had limited knowledge about their own identities and sexualities were able to ask and learn more through interaction with others during focus group discussions. In this regard, the focus group discussions did turn out to be educational for both the participants and I. The focus group discussions were audio recorded and notes were taken.

In-depth individual interviews were undertaken with participants to facilitate a collection of biographies and in-depth information about the phenomenon under investigation. In-depth interviews, also known as unstructured interviews, are used “in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. It is focused, and discursive and allows the researcher and participant to explore an issue” (Greeff 2005:293). In-depth interviews seek to capture individual participants’ experiences and are dialogical in nature. In-depth interviews have been popularized by feminists who, according to Kvale, argue that such modes of data production place emphasis on “experiences and subjectivity, on close personal interaction, and on reciprocity of researcher and the researched” (2006:481). The success of in-depth interviews is based on their emancipatory potential for both the researcher and researched. It is for this reason that Kvale concludes that:

Interviews are a sensitive and powerful method; they are, in themselves, neither ethical nor unethical, neither emancipating nor oppressing. In a critical social science, interviews may contribute to the empowerment of the oppressed. In management and consumer research, interviews can contribute to the disempowerment of workers and consumers. A key issue concerns who obtains access and who has the power and resources to act on and consume what the multiple interview voices tell the interviewing stranger.

Interviews were useful in capturing the personal and subjective experiences of individual participants on “self-construction” of their identities and sexualities as they allowed for personal rapport between the participants and I. Through the use of in-depth interviews, I aimed to capture the views and experiences of participants at a personal level and in a context that allowed for free expression of individual perspectives. I conducted six in-depth interviews. Bearing in mind that some participants might not have opened up fully during focus group discussions, I hoped they would offer more insights into their personal experiences during one on one interviews. The interviews were guided by a set of questions I had prepared and were flexible in nature. Dingwall, writing from a social sciences perspective, argues that “interviews tell us about the construction of mundane reality in the interview. They are documents of the researcher-researched relationship” (1997:61). This insight is useful as it points out how interviews are documented researcher-researched association and interaction. Rapport between individual participants and I had already been created during focus group discussions, thus, interviews were useful methods for capturing

more information on how individual participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role religions and cultures play in this process. People construct meaning and significance of reality by:

bringing to bear upon events a complex personal framework of beliefs and values, which they have developed over their lives to categorise, characterise, explain and predict the events in their worlds... for to understand other persons’ constructions of reality we would do well to ask them (rather than assume we can know merely by observing their overt behaviour) and to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their terms (rather than those imposed rigidly and *a priori* by ourselves) and in a depth which addresses a rich context that is the substance of their meanings (rather than through isolated fragments squeezed onto few lines of paper) (Jones 2004:257-258).

In order to capture a person’s perceptions, it is imperative to ask them to give their views using the language they are comfortable with and in their own terms. This observation was important for this study as it ensured that the participants who took part in interviews assumed the centre stage and spoke of their experiences in terms familiar to them. I did not wish to assume I knew how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities nor did I want to deductively conclude that religious and cultural constructs of gay identities and sexualities are impervious. Therefore, during the in-depth individual interviews, I allowed and encouraged participants to use languages they were comfortable with and terminologies they related to as they spoke from their insider perspectives about their identities and sexualities. All proceedings were audio recorded and notes were also taken.

Furthermore, I observed how the study participants behaved, dressed and the inner relations within the groups. The observation method was useful as it allowed for the production of data which was not verbalized in the focus group discussions and individual interviews (Flick 2002:135). I took notes of my daily observations during the focus group discussions and interviews and sometimes solicited for verbalization of the observations I had made. For instance, among the Kanyama participants who were very neatly groomed with tweezed eyebrows, I jokingly asked them to teach me how to keep my eyebrows. Responses on how they were female and needed to look well-groomed arose and I was invited for an eyebrow tweezing session.

Having discussed the sampling employed in this study, I proceed to discuss the data production methods.

4.4. Methods of Data Production

Data was produced using primary sources such as focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and observation methods. I used focus group discussions to produce data within the pre-existing group settings, in-depth interviews to capture biographies, and observation to capture the dressing, mannerisms and interpersonal relations of the participants. I had prepared questions for discussions; however, during the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, some questions were modified to allow for clarity by some participants, according to how they understood some terms, and also to probe insights they offered. For example, in the Kanyama focus group discussions, participants understood religion to mean “the church”; therefore, church was used in the discussions instead of religion or Christianity. The languages used during focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were Bemba, Nyanja and English which are the common languages used by the participants. In instances where Bemba and Nyanja were used, I have loosely translated the views of the participants into English.

From inception, this study was undertaken from an emic perspective which gave prominence to the voices of participants. According to Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, an emic perspective “provides information on the insider’s point of view, the insider’s perceptions, beliefs, and meaning system. It thus reflects the cultural meaning that people attach to certain facts, events or experiences” (2011:18). This emic perspective was used in relation to the participants who are insiders to the phenomenon that was under interrogation. I sought to use an emic perspective to produce data as the study was not about my views and beliefs on constructions of gay identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in the construction. Instead, I was able to get views and perspectives on gay identities and sexualities from participants who are insiders, even as I maintained an ambiguous position of insider/outsider. I was an outsider because I am not a member of sexual minorities or the gay Christians but being an ally of the LGBTI community in urban Lusaka, I have some insider inclinations, hence the insider/outsider position. The ways in which participants self-understood and made meanings of their identities and sexualities, and the role of religions and cultures in this self-conceptualization process were cardinal for this data production process.

As time drew close for me to go to the research site, I contacted the gatekeeper who indicated that the Lusaka central group was ready for our meetings but that they no longer met from their usual venue and had no venue to meet from due to limited funding. In trying to maintain the “safe space” dynamic, the gatekeeper and I tried to arrange for booking of their usual venue but failed due to exorbitant charges, mainly because this study had not been funded by the time I was conducting fieldwork research. As I arranged the venue for the focus group discussions, I got the feeling that there is a general misconception about all researchers being excessively funded, thus, can spend without much care about cost. Having organised the venue, I then consulted the gatekeeper and we agreed that I find an alternative venue within Lusaka city. I consulted some friends within the education sector who offered me a room within their premises to use as the venue for the focus group discussions, although I did not mention to them the nature of the study for security reasons. I then went back to my gatekeeper to discuss the new venue with him so that he could inform the participants and get their consent for us to use the venue provided to us. Once they were in agreement, we discussed when we would meet and the time. We then started our focus group discussions and four focus group discussions were conducted. After the focus group discussions with the Lusaka central participants, I started holding in-depth interviews with individual participants who had indicated willingness to participate in interviews through writing down their phone numbers. On the agreed upon dates, three of the participants indicated that they were out of town and could not participate in individual interviews. Interviews with the Lusaka central participants were scheduled according to the availability of individual participants.

The second group I was referred to by my gatekeeper was based in Kanyama Township, a high density area within urban Lusaka. My initial meeting with this group was unsuccessful as my initial gatekeeper referred me to another gatekeeper who knew the Kanyama participants better than he did. Thus there was some communication breakdown. I arrived at the venue I had organised for the Kanyama group, which too did not have a meeting place, and waited for the group members for an hour but no one came. I then contacted my initial gatekeeper who later gave me the cell phone number for the Kanyama gatekeeper and we rescheduled our meeting to another date. On the new date set, the participants and I met as arranged. In the focus group discussions, I indicated that those who were willing to take part in in-depth interviews could write down their cell phone numbers so that I could call them for interviews. After the two focus group discussions, I started calling all those who had indicated their cell phone numbers but only one participant from Kanyama was willing to

participate in interviews. One indicated that he was busy and could not manage meeting me, while the other one asked me if he could be given time to ask his colleagues and get their views on participating in the interview. This was strange as I realized that they had discussed the focus group discussions after the sessions and may have felt uncomfortable about discussing their identities and sexualities, or individual interviews were regarded as spotlighting and intimidating for this participant, or he merely wanted consent from other participants before speaking to me again.

During the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and observation, I used both audio recording and took notes of proceedings. Transcription of focus group discussions and in-depth interviews was done based on what Marumo in the dissertation “Empowerment: Making Sense of the Voices of Women About Their Journey Towards Their Leadership Identity in Higher Education” terms as “content and eliciting meaning rather than a sociolinguistic approach, where the discourse analysis itself becomes significant” (2012:140). I therefore, edited pauses, non-content materials and sub-vocals. My interest in this study was to capture the language and words used by participants, as well as their performances of their identities and sexualities. Taking up the position of “non-participant observer” (Bryman 2004:167), I employed structured observation which is “a method for systematically observing the behaviour of individuals in terms of a schedule of categories” (Bryman 2004:165). In the study, I chose to observe the dressing, mannerisms and interpersonal relations of the participants. I observed that gay Christians who identified as males were dressed in generally dull colours and clothes that would not ordinarily attract public attention, while those who identified as females wore bright clothes; most of them wore tight-fitting shorts, some tweezed their eyebrows, painted their fingernails and had fancy or dyed hairstyles to match. I took notes on the main observation categories I had classified - dressing, mannerisms of and interpersonal relations. Nevertheless, I did notice what I would term ‘exaggerations’ in how some participants carried themselves within the group, especially within the Kanyama group – for instance, talking excessively as a way of being noticed or being heard. This brought to life Scott’s (1990:45) notion of the “public transcript as a respectable performance” as I felt that some of the ‘exaggerations’ were probably ways of maintaining a public façade within focus group discussions or “acting out to me”.

Secondary data also informed this study. Flick cautions that care must be taken “about which documents fit the research question and design, which one to select out of a wider range of

available documents, and what the quality is of these documents” (2014:44). Guidance on the need to carefully select secondary data in relation to the research question, design and quality of the documents was useful in the selection of secondary data for this study. Secondary data production entailed careful reading of books, journal articles, theses, online materials on gay, identities and sexualities, religions and their construction of gay identities and sexualities, and cultures and their construction of gay identities and sexualities. In order to get secondary data I visited the National Archives of Zambia, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Leeds and the University of Zambia.

4.5. Reflexivity

Qualitative methods take the researcher’s communication with the field and its members as an explicit part of knowledge production instead of excluding it as far as possible as an intervening variable. The subjectivities of the researcher and of those being studied are part of the research process. Researchers’ reflections on their actions and observations in the field, their impressions, irritations, feelings and so on, become data in their own right, forming part of the interpretation (Flick 2002:6).

In every qualitative research study that deals with people, a researcher and the study participants bring along their biases which can sometimes influence the researcher’s interaction with study participants, the data production process, findings and analysis of data. Thus, the biases and experiences during the data production phases are essential data for a qualitative study. In his book *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*, Yin contends that the issue of reflexivity

readily arises when you observe any human being or human activity. Your presence will have an unknown influence on the other persons. Conversely, their activity may directly influence the way you do your observations. Such reflexivity is unavoidable and again deserves some comment in your final methodological report... qualitative interviews can be reflexive in two directions: your influence on a participant but also the participant’s influence on you (2011:146-150).

Salient in these assertions is that reflexivity captures the researcher-participant influence and vice versa, as this has the potential to impact the research process and analysis of findings. I approached this study as a researcher passionate about issues of human rights and gender.

Having also worked with a disability organisation in Zambia for over thirteen years, I brought the activist side of me to this study. This largely influenced me as I had to constantly create a balance between activism and academia. Sometimes this balancing dialogue came naturally and other times was forced as I realized that dealing with issues of gay identities and sexualities was much more than an academic enterprise but a matter of life and death. This reality hit me during the last year of writing this thesis as I was informed of a suicide attempt by one vibrant young intersex woman who had constantly faced ridicule and resorted to ending her life. This episode was a wakeup call to me – that this study was indeed about life and death as issues of identities and sexualities hinge on the very life of the study participants, just like most other sexual minorities.

I initially intended to approach this study as an outsider, but with time I realized I had assumed the insider/outsider liminal position. I have studied gay communities in Zambia for almost four years and have been involved in some of their activities outside the academic scope, thus, as an ally, I hold the position of insider/outsider. In as much as I am not a member of sexual minorities in Zambia, having worked with them for this long as an academic, independent consultant, ally and now part of a secret online LGBTI group, I have insider insights, thus, some of the participants were known to me and vice versa. I strategically utilized the outsider/insider position to maintain objectivity as well as gather information that would ordinarily be hidden from the outsiders, such as inner codes. These inner codes would mainly be hidden from an outsider for security reasons. In their article ‘—Ethnographic Dazzle’ and the Construction of the _Other’: Revisiting Dimensions of Insider and Outsider Research for International and Comparative Education”, McNess, Arthur and Crossley (2013), writing from a comparative and international education perspective, discuss notions of insider/outsider in research. They draw on ~~the~~ work of a group of researchers involved in the first British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE)-sponsored Thematic Forum (BTF): Revisiting Insider/Outsider Perspectives in International and Comparative Education” (McNess, Arthur and Crossley 2013:298). Thus, they challenge ~~the~~ existing methodological literature by developing a number of critical arguments and issues that were first explored in the BTF Workshops” (McNess, Arthur and Crossley 2013:298). Positions of insider and outsider do not remain fixed as they observe:

there is a growing body of literature from cultural and activity theorists and others, which argues that in the process of intercultural communication, there is a third perspective, that is constructed when the insider and outsider meet...being an insider or outsider, we argue, has much to do with our own constantly evolving lives, academic scholarship, previous experiences and prior knowledge of the context to be researched. It has much to do with how we each perceive the world and how we interpret what we see and experience (McNess, Arthur and Crossley 2013:313).

They suggest the concept of a 'third' liminal space which potentially encourages new meaning. It is created on the boundary between worlds where cultural, ethical, historical, individual and political understandings meet. As the research came to an end and with all the internal codes that participants shared with me during the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, I realized I had attained the third liminal space which McNess, Arthur and Crossley (2013) introduce. I had transcended the essentialist insider/outsider dichotomy. Although my own sexual identity made me an outsider, my knowledge of the group as a person that has been in critical solidarity with sexual minorities in Zambia enabled me to attain some semblance of an insider position.

–Minimally, reflexivity asks us to examine how we shape our experience through what we bring to it, especially in what this brings out when interacting with others” (Lock and Strong 2010:195). I entered the space of gay Christians as a cis-gendered female clergy, a fact also known by the participants. This methodological challenge was navigated by earning the trust of all participants, especially those I was meeting for the first time through this study. I had to clearly state that in as much as I am a cis-gendered clergy, I was genuinely interested in understanding them, their identities and sexualities. I earned their trust to the extent that one of the participants indicated how much of a “cool Reverend” I was because I did not judge them. The third liminal space of being an insider/outsider influenced how I interacted with the participants as we established collegial relationships to the extent that during the individual interviews, three of the participants sought my guidance on their career paths. I still maintained my position as researcher but also assumed the role of confidant, and to date, two of the participants who sought career guidance from me remain close to me, maintaining lines of communication. This third liminal space was advantageous for me as it allowed participants to share with me terminologies only known within their inner circles. Being a

female in a gay Christian space, I was more drawn to participants who identified as females or women in their relationships as they shared some experiences familiar to mine being a Zambian female. I was also challenged because they seemed more “in touch with their feminine side” than myself since there were some among the participants who were more knowledgeable about feminine initiation rites of passage than I was.

Furthermore, the journey towards this study has its origins in my own background prior to entering academia. Before venturing to study for my Honours at University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2011, I did not have much knowledge about gay issues and neither was I interested in them. This was mainly because issues of sexuality, let alone sexual minorities, are hardly discussed in the Zambian context owing to the culture of secrecy surrounding issues of sex and sexuality. The culture of silence around sex in Zambia is observed by Bajaj who, in the article “Schooling in the Shadow of Death: Youth Agency and HIV/AIDS in Zambia”, notes that sex is hardly discussed at family level but that

the information offered by aggressive media campaigns often does not result in knowledge of scientifically accurate facts as intended due to social stigma, taboo, and discomfort around discussing issues related to sex (2008:318).

Sex is hardly discussed owing to taboos, mystical undertones surrounding it, and general discomfort especially when discussed across generations. Such silence is what leads Bajaj to the conclusion that “it is crucial to further explore how these youths are, in turn, actively constructing new social meanings of the disease through metaphor, language, and perception” (Bajaj 2008:324-325). This assertion shows that in the midst of taboos, discussions on sexuality and sex are discreetly on-going.

Enrolling for the Gender and Religion programme, my initial understanding was that gender issues only dealt with disparities between males and females. And this is what fascinated me. This could be because issues of gender have commonly been regarded as being about male-female power dynamics and privileges. However, during a biblical studies class in 2011 with Professor Gerald West, I was introduced to non-traditional hermeneutics of biblical texts usually summoned to condemn gay people. This challenged my worldviews about sexual minorities as I realized that there are many trajectories to approaching the Bible and each approach must be weighed against its ability to be life-affirming. The experience proved to be a starting point for my interest in gay identities and sexualities. What started out as a joke

among my course-mates with me always using the phrase “who is doing what to who!” following one of the readings, metamorphosed into an area of research interest, with Professor West encouraging me to research on it. The encounter in this particular class shows the place of academic space as ground for cultivating interest in grassroots research. This also sealed my positioning in this study as an organic intellectual, a term used by Gramsci in relation to “intellectuals who did not simply describe social life from the outside in accordance with scientific rules, but who used the language of culture to ‘express’ the real experiences and feelings which the masses could not express for themselves. In order to understand those experiences, they must feel the same passions as the masses” (1978:240). I accomplish this by transporting some of my classroom knowledge into the community and vice versa by being in academia and also engaging in activism on LGBTI issues. However, I do not assume that the gay Christians cannot speak for themselves without me; instead I join them in their passion to make their identities recognized within the Zambian community. Implicitly, this study is born out of many other things but mostly, my personal interest, curiosity and passion about sexual minorities. With time, this area has become one of my passions and I have been encouraged by a number of colleagues and academicians to pursue this and be a pioneer African woman theologian in gay identities and sexualities.

The focus group discussions and interviews were conducted away from the public gaze since discussions on gay issues are likely to lead to arrests and being charged with solicitation for immoral purposes. It was my responsibility to keep all our meetings secret and also to avoid making participants feel uncomfortable about the surroundings. During one of the focus group discussions, a cousin of mine indicated how all the “people” I was with looked like females. The participants confidently and proudly responded that they were women. I was displeased about such a comment and realized how insensitively issues of gay identities and sexualities are ordinarily handled by some members of society. After such a comment, I had to counter-check with the participants if they were still comfortable with using the classroom space which had been provided to us by my cousin. Following this incident, all our focus group discussions went on smoothly as it seems the participants are used to such reactions from some sections of society, and have learnt how to handle such scrutiny and carry on with their lives. I also tried to make them comfortable by complimenting their “feminine” looks and mannerisms.

As earlier indicated, the study intended to focus only on how gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of religions and cultures. However, within the Lusaka central participants, two transgender men, one transgender woman and one lesbian joined this group, which slightly changed the intended participant dynamics. The transgender men, woman and lesbian verified the views of the gay Christians, therefore, unintentionally offered triangulation during this study. Some of the views of transgender men, woman and lesbian have been captured in this study for purposes of verification, and triangulation purposes.

During the course of this study, I was engaged as a private consultant by a non-governmental organisation to conduct a scoping study on LGBTI organisations and their allies in Zambia, as well as analyse laws and policies that directly and indirectly target LGBTI people in Zambia. This meant that I had to once more go back to the LGBTI community in urban Lusaka, Zambia, where I had to work with some of the LGBTI people who had participated in my current study. This again proved insightful for me because it led to my critical analysis of the legal framework in Zambia around LGBTI issues as well as learning more about other LGBTI organisations working in Zambia other than the informal groups I dealt with in this particular study.

4.6. Methods of Data Analysis

Data was analysed following the set out objectives and research questions of this study. Data analysis was undertaken using the concepts of incipient theologies and borderland gender and sexualities as analytical lenses for how gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of religions and cultures respectively. Incipient theologies as advanced by Cochrane (1999:151-161) emerge out of Christian communities’ experiences leading to engagement with biblical texts or Christian practices and re-telling of both. This concept helped me analyse how the participants –self-construct” their identities and the role of Christianity in the Zambian context, based on their experiences. Borderland gender and sexualities is a concept that is put forward by Anzaldúa (1987) to indicate the –borderland spaces” in which persons found on the physical Mexican and United States of America and metaphorical border –have multiple personalities, they have an insider/outside cultural perspective since they are –seeing double”” (Anzaldúa 2002:549). The concept of borderland gender and sexualities allowed for exploration of identities and sexualities outside and in-between the binary, depicting both identities and sexualities as fluid. The concept of

borderland gender and sexualities was used to analyse how gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of Zambian cultures in this process. I listened to recordings from the focus group discussions and interviews, and read through the notes I had taken during the data production process immediately after each session. This process continued during the thesis write-up. I went through the transcriptions repeatedly to establish meanings and make connections of the findings in relation to the question the research addressed. Data analysis happened immediately after the data production process and went on during the write-up stages of this work. Focus group discussions, in-depth interview recordings and notes depicting observations were analysed, coded and thematically analysed based on emerging and recurring themes from the participants. Transcription was both handwritten and typed as this allowed for easy comparison and coding. Some responses from the two transgender men, one transgender woman and lesbian woman who were not the targeted sample for this study were also incorporated in my transcription and incorporated in the analysis only as far as they contributed to the themes raised by gay Christians and for triangulation purposes.

The data was coded as part of the analysis process. From the focus group discussions, interviews and observation, all the similar findings were grouped together, while the different findings were also highlighted. “During open coding the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data” (Strauss and Corbin 2004:303). This observation is useful for my study as it stresses the importance of closely examining the data to locate similarities and differences, so as to help in organizing and analysing the data. I aligned the data according to the research questions in my study and then categorized it accordingly.

The data was then thematically analysed according to recurring themes from participants. In data analysis, “the analyst looks for themes which are present in the whole set or sub-set of interviews and creates a framework of themes for making comparisons and contrasts between the different respondents” (Gomm 2008:244). Valuable for my study is that themes had to be identified and various responses from participants captured. As I analysed the data, I took note of recurring themes and stand-alone themes. I also discussed different views of participants to offer various perspectives on identified themes. Thematic analysis places “an emphasis on what is said rather than on how it is said” (Bryman 2004:412). This study focussed on the study participants’ articulation of how they formulate their identities and

sexualities. What the participants said during the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews formed the themes for this study. The major themes which ran through my data analysis and presentation are perspectives of gay Christians, parlance, and performance. I arrived at these themes following discussions with the study participants and in consultation with my supervisor. I identified, categorized and termed these themes as such based on articulations of the study participants. Salient in these themes is that the participants created their identities and sexualities within ambiguities of being located in the local cultures and Christian contexts which are influenced by global cultures and Christianity. Furthermore, the study participants use their own inner codes to “self-describe” which is sometimes at variance with how Christianity and culture construct them. Another feature in this study is that participants perform their identities and sexualities in masculine and feminine, as well as assuming both male and female gender and sexual roles.

4.7. Reliability and Validity

In this study, I strove to abide by the tenets of sound research by being as transparent as possible so that my study would be a true reflection of the views expressed by the participants and did not raise any doubts on trustworthiness, rigour, reliability and validity. One of the ways I made sure this was possible was by being methodical in my approach to this study. Yin stresses that “being methodic means following some orderly set of research procedures and minimizing whimsical or careless work – whether a study is based on an explicitly defined research design or on a more informal but nonetheless rigorous field routine” (2011:20). Clear research procedures are essential as they give direction and shape to any study. Taking cognisance of this, I crafted a roadmap to this study, presented all the steps I took to arrive at the conclusions I did and kept all records of the research process.

Throughout this study, it was essential to maintain rigour, validity and trustworthiness of the study. In his work “The Research Process”, Ezzy observes that “validity is the extent to which our data or results measure what we intended them to measure” (2010:71). Trustworthiness “is not something that just naturally occurs, but instead is the result of ‘rigorous scholarship’ that includes the use of defined procedures” (Padgett 1998:92). In order to achieve this, I ensured that the questions raised during data production correlated with the intended objectives of the study. Although I could not predict the results of this study, the results were nevertheless a true reflection of the participants’ experiences and views. Furthermore, I believe that this study stayed true to the critical research paradigm by

not trivializing power dynamics which surround identities and sexualities of the participants within the social contexts of religions and cultures. I ensured trustworthiness and validity of this study mainly through employing the three principles suggested by Yin (2009:114-122), namely, triangulation, creation of a case database, and leaving a trail of evidence. These three principles are essential in ascertaining that the results of a study are authentic. For triangulation, I used focus group discussions which had a last session that allowed for clarity of ideas, in-depth individual interviews, and observation methods to make sure that the data produced was correct and consistent. Furthermore, for the local terms I was not sure about, I did seek meaning from the participants as well as colleagues fluent in particular languages and who belonged to given ethnic tribes in Zambia. Although unintended, triangulation was achieved through the two transgender men, one transgender woman and lesbian as they mostly echoed and amplified views of the gay Christians. For instance, when discussing sexual identities, the participants who offered triangulation raised the critical issues of fluidity of sexual identities among gay Christians.

Another way of ensuring trustworthiness and validity of this study was through the use of a database which Yin contends should consist of “notes, documents, tabular materials, and narratives” (2009:118-122). This assertion is vital because it points to how data should be stored in various forms to ensure a reliable database informing the study. During the data production phase, I took notes of the focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews, noting the venue, questions discussed, views of the participants and duration of the discussions. I also audio recorded all the focus group discussions and interviews, documenting all activities and consulting resources in relation to this study.

The last step taken toward trustworthiness, reliability and validity was the creation of a clear roadmap of the study through conceptualization of a research proposal whose adjustments were noted along the way. I strategically employed research designs that are within the parameters of the qualitative and critical research paradigms, noting how data was produced and analysed and why I drew given conclusions. Every step of this study was recorded to allow for easy understanding of the processes employed to generate the needed data and analysis thereof.

The rigour of the study was achieved through the use of four theoretical frameworks which were combined. By using social constructionism and self-verification theories, I was able to interrogate religion and culture as construction sites in which the self as a subject is

formulated. Through the use of feminist and queer theories, I was able to investigate gender and sexuality outside heteronormativity.

4.8. Ethical Consideration

–Ethical considerations place the research participants, rather than the researcher, at the centre of the research design when deciding what is appropriate and acceptable conduct” (Henn, Weinstein and Foard 2006:78). From inception, this study was approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal ethics committee (see appendix two), and in my data production and analysis processes, I chose to abide by research ethics so that no harm would befall the participants who took part in this study. As I conceptualized this study, I bore in mind how sensitive issues of identities and sexualities are, especially for gay Christians, thus, projected many possible avenues through which harm would befall participants and tried to mitigate them. Neuman notes that –social research can harm a research participant physically, psychologically, legally, and economically, affecting a person’s career or income” (2011:145). This is an assertion which Babbie also shares, pointing out that –the fundamental ethical rule of social research is that it must bring no harm to research subjects” (2004:29). Before and while undertaking the data production process, I tried my best to protect the participants as I knew that some of them had not gone public about their identities and sexualities, thus, if not careful, my study would harm their social and religious status, security, personal integrity and emotions.

The study among gay Christians confronted me with the ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity. –Confidentiality refers to not disclosing information that is discussed between the researcher and the participant” (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011:71), while anonymity entails that –in as much as all identifiable information is removed from the interview transcript or quotations used from it, so that no individual participant can be identified from these documents” (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey 2011:71). As one way of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, participants were asked to use pseudonyms during the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. I have also maintained their pseudonyms in my data analysis and presentation. Another ethical consideration important for any study is respect for the study participants. Hennink, Hutter and Bailey argue that respect for study participants means that –participants’ welfare should always take precedence over the interest of science or society. Participants should be treated with courtesy and respect, and they should enter into research voluntarily and with adequate information” (2011:63).

Participants' welfare supersedes the need for knowledge production, hence, they need to be accorded the respect throughout any study. I sought the permission of the participants to audio record and take notes during the data production process. They did ask if I would be taking photos during the focus group discussions and interviews and I assured them that I would not. I also assured them of anonymity during and after the study to ensure their own security. The participants who were not comfortable taking part in the in-depth interviews had their decisions respected as I thanked them for volunteering to participate in the focus group discussions. "The principle of respect reflects a moral concern for the autonomy and privacy rights of those recruited for research participation" (Fisher and Anushko 2008:99). Throughout this study, the participants were at liberty to change their minds on participation since the study remained voluntary.

During the data production process, participants used their coded language to self-describe and identify. During the focus group discussions, I assumed that since these terms had been shared with me, I could use them in this study as part of my contribution to the body of knowledge. During data analysis and write-up stages of this study, I once more contacted the participants to seek their permission to use these codes for this study and some of them expressed discomfort about these codes being in the public domain. Others cited security risk while others did not mind me adopting the codes for this work. However, my ethical responsibility towards the participants compelled me not to use four of the inner codes they shared with me during data production. Herein, the unending debate on who has the final word between the researcher and researched on what information to bring to the public domain was relived. How far does the researcher uphold research ethics at the expense of contributing to the body of knowledge? Henn, Weinstein and Foard observe this dilemma when they ask "how to weigh one's ethical obligations towards those who participate in research against the quest for scientific knowledge" (2009:81). They further note that "while ethical codes of practice can be useful as guides, once engaged in the process of research, the onus is placed on the individual researcher – it is the researcher's duty to take responsibility for her or his own actions" (Hein, Weinstein and Foard 2009:85). In a bid to be a responsible researcher who placed "people over projects", I chose the former out of respect and accountability to the participants. I also chose this route because during the write-up to this study, one of the transgender women who took part in the studies I undertook as a private consultant, was outed on online media, following an interview with an international organisation. Thus, placing myself in this transgender woman's shoes, I was ethically bound

to do the “right thing” by my study participants. Since this study was designed with the welfare of the participants in mind, it was imperative that at every stage, their views and discomfort be taken into consideration. In the article “Consenting to the Consent Form: What Are the Fixed and Fluid Understandings between the Researcher and the Researched?” Bhattacharya (2007:1098-1113) raises this complexity that comes with Western research as it poses a dilemma when the researched are held accountable to their signed consent in research, and when they can choose which information about them to use in the research. The article concludes with recommendations to the institutional review board for “guidelines that address the fluid and messy nature of qualitative research” (Bhattacharya 2007:1113). And that “such spaces should discuss issues about the shifting and negotiated meanings of the consent form and multiple approaches to verify meanings and alignment of consent around data analysis and re-presentation” (Bhattacharya 2007:1113). In other words, the major argument here is that in as much as consent forms and consent of study participants are important for any research process, during and after the fieldwork research process, they may change their minds on the information they shared, leaving the researcher in a dilemma on how valid the signed consent forms are. The question of researcher verses the researched, research ethics verses epistemic contribution was one ethical dilemma I faced in this study and I chose to abide by the ethical stipulations of this study which compelled me to respect the wishes of the participants.

4.9. Summary

Chapter four gave a detailed account of the research design and methodology employed in this study. I discussed the qualitative and critical research paradigm in which this study lies. I presented focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and observation methods as modes of data production for this study. These three research methods were helpful for triangulation purposes. The sample for this study was discussed, showing that although the intended study participants were gay Christians only, two transgender men, one transgender woman and one lesbian joined the study. In this chapter, I proceeded to offer my reflexivity in this study, showing how my personal position informed this study and possibly the interaction with study participants and production. I showed that data was analysed using incipient theologies and the concept of borderland gender and sexualities. Data was thematically analysed following the recurring themes that arose from discussions with study

participants. I also showed the reliability, rigour, trustworthiness and validity of this study before discussing ethical considerations for this study.

The next chapter presents and analyses the research findings on how gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of the Zambian Christian context in the construction. Data for the next chapter was produced from focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and observation methods and was analysed using the concept of incipient theologies – which is discussed below.

Chapter Five: Gay Christians and the Zambian Christian Context

5.0. Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous chapter where I discussed the research design and methodology employed in data production. Prominent in the previous chapter was the discussion on who, between the researcher and the researched, has the final say on the data to bring to the public domain. I argued that the researcher is bound by research ethics, thus, the welfare of the researched supersedes the need for knowledge production.

Chapter five presents fieldwork research findings of this study, thematically categorized, stemming from analysis of the data produced during the focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and observation of the study participants conducted in urban Lusaka, Zambia. In this chapter, I specifically analyse and discuss how participants –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings, and the role religion, specifically Christianity, plays in this process, thereby gravitating from phenomenon to religious engagement. The focus group discussions were made up of fourteen gay Christians, one lesbian, one transgender woman and two transgender men, although the sought after sample was the gay Christians (section 4.2). Although the lesbian and transgender men and woman self-identified as such, the gay Christians‘ identified using terms I have withheld but use gay Christians for operational purposes. The discussions and analysis that follow have heavily relied on the concept of incipient theologies (Cochrane 1999, and West, 2005, 2014) as one tool which takes into account and upholds the lived and embodied experiences of participants as they mediate their identities and sexualities within the Zambian religious climate.

Having drawn on incipient theologies from the participants who participated in my study, perspectives, parlance and performance are themes running through chapters five and seven where I discuss my research findings. These themes emerged from the views of the study participants during the focus group discussions and individual interviews. Once I had captured the discussions, I identified and categorized the ideas, as well as noted over-arching themes. In this chapter, I present and analyse the following overarching themes – which lead to other minor themes – as raised by participants on how they –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of religion – Christianity – in the construction process: (1) religious perspectives of gay Christians; (2) parlance: self-identity and social identity, parlance: self-identity and Christian identity; and (3) performance. I commence by briefly discussing incipient theologies as my analytical framework.

5.1. Incipient Theologies as Analytical Framework

In this study, I understood incipient theologies as non-systematic theological, biblical and religious discourses arising from experiences of communities largely regarded as being on the margins of dominant discourse. In his book *Circles of Dignity: Community Wisdom and Theological Reflection*, Cochrane (1999) highlights biblical engagement from the community perspective of Amawoti, South Africa. Incipient theologies enable unheard communal voices to be brought into dialogue with the Bible, thereby giving rise to “incipient theology” and locating “the community as theologian” (Schreier 1985:16). Cochrane’s posits that:

whenever Christian groups meet and discuss their problems on the basis of a text or anything analogous (sermon, ritual, performance, confession, and so on), wherever they do so reflectively – accepting, rejecting, reinterpreting, and retelling its message – and wherever they do so in relation to the concrete conditions of their existence, aware of the human being as the other and as suffering, there one may discern an incipient theology worth talking about (1999:151).

Incipient theologies emerge out of Christian communities’ realization of their problems and current situations which in turn inform their engagement with the Bible and other Christian practices, beliefs and discourse. In this regard, incipient theologies arise out of communities’ agentic approach towards their problems. In a similar manner, participants engaged with the Bible, Christian beliefs and teachings, which are largely informed by their experiences as part of the sexual minorities groups in Zambia. In the case of this study, the group was not “a Christian group” in the strictest sense but a group of participants who happen to be mostly Christian. Within their small communities, participants either accept, reject, reinterpret or re-tell Christian beliefs and teaching on identities and sexualities based on their experiences. This recounting of identities and sexualities from the religious worldviews of participants was fertile contextual ground for theological engagement informed by personal experiences. Since incipient theologies are fostered through processes that allow for rejection, re-interpretation and re-telling of some dominantly held theologies, in my study, participants gave their accounts of how they “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of Christianity in this process. At the centre of this re-telling are biblical hermeneutics, Christian practices, performances, rituals and beliefs. Salient in the process of conceiving incipient theologies is the agentic nature of the communities; in a similar manner, participants were

cardinal subjects in the conception of incipient theologies as religion does not only act upon them but they too take part in the formulation of their identities and sexualities.

What plots our perceptions and perspectives at any one time depends upon our location in the grand narratives into which we are born and by which we are brought up, as well as our embodiment in a narrative of the self for which we are in part responsible (Cochrane 1999:161).

Participants' worldviews are informed partly by the fact that they are contextually located in Lusaka, Zambia, a context which is mainly unwelcoming of gay identities and sexualities. This context is not only informed by the legal framework but also the dominant Christian narrative on the wrongness of gay identities and sexualities. It is within such a context that participants have to bring forth their incipient theologies as they "self-construct" their identities and sexualities within the context of religious imputations.

The place of communal biblical engagement as part of the process for establishing incipient theologies is cardinal. This fact is highlighted by West who in his work "Articulating, Owning and Mainstreaming Local Theologies: The Contribution of Contextual Bible Study" contends that "for many Christians [on the margins] there is a dislocation between their embodied or lived theology and the public theology of the church" (2005:23). In relating West's (2005) assertions to participants' identities and sexualities, using incipient theologies this study shows that in some instances, the dominant religious position on gay identities and sexualities in Zambia does not necessarily consistently reflect the embodied theologies and religious experiences of the participants and some of the Christian communities they belong to. "What makes matters worse is that the embodied theology of Christians is seldom given expression as it remains inchoate and incipient, waiting to be articulated" (West 2005:23). The embodied theologies of participants are hardly given expression or enough room for articulation, especially in light of the dominant Christian theological positions on gay identities and sexualities. West therefore suggests Contextual Bible Study as a tool that would enable Christians to interrogate the Bible whilst at the same time uphold their lived realities, allowing them to "an embodied theology and not usually an articulated theology" (2005:26). Although my study did not involve engaging the Bible, I still acknowledged that it is these untapped, unheard and unarticulated theologies from participants that are the major contribution of this study to academia. Participants offered theologies and religious views arising out of their daily experiences of their identities and sexualities.

Both Cochrane (1999) and West (2005 and 2014) show that incipient theologies arise out of communal engagement and experiences. What is salient about incipient theologies is that the margins can also speak, liberate themselves, are agents and not objects; sometimes their theologies and religious views may not correlate with dominant church or Christian theologies and they have the potential to offer counter-narratives.

5.2. Religious Perspectives of Gay Christians

According to Allen, a perspective is “an individual way of regarding a situation, e.g. one influenced by personal experience or considerations” (2000:1034). Perspectives attest to the aspects of personal experiences and views which in turn inform an individual’s approach to given situations or phenomenon. They are lenses which humans approach and interpret the world with. I identified Christianity and Zambian culture as operation systems that significantly contribute to how participants “self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings, thus shaping how they view the world around them. Below, I discuss some religious or Christian perspectives held by participants and discussions thereof, commencing with the infallible Bible, fallible biblical hermeneutics and belonging or not belonging. These themes arose out of discussions with participants.

5.2.1. Infallible Bible, Fallible Biblical Hermeneutics

The role of the Bible and biblical hermeneutics in gay identities and sexualities discourses continues to be contentious. This study drew on insights from participants on how they relate with the Bible and contemporary biblical hermeneutics. In spite of the contestations surrounding the use of the Bible and its application in issues of gay identities and sexualities, it remains an integral sacred text in shaping worldviews of participants. Not only did they engage with the use of the Bible in their respective churches of affiliation but they also interpreted given texts according to their lived realities, while some opted to treat the Bible as a text that cannot be questioned. The following are some of the views of the study participants:

Diva:³ The liturgy in the churches...they use the Bible to fight LGBTI...they use the Bible as a weapon to fight us...but I think, as Christians, we should be a people of love,...a people who are accepting ... a people who are very down to

³ Diva is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a transgender woman.

earth...(be)cause we are all the same in God's eyes and no one is perfect...and most of these pastors, priests or whatever you call them...they will be preaching about homosexual issues...saying these people are demonic, these people are evil, they shouldn't be allowed in our churches...which makes most members of our community not comfortable to go for church or for mass and what not...so I think, them using the Bible as a weapon to fight us is really wrong...it shouldn't be a tool to fight against us...the same Bible was used in the slave trade...it was used against us as black people and now it is being used against the LGBTI community.

Following Diva's contribution, it could be suggested that the Bible remains an authority used by some expressions of Christianity that condemn gay identities and sexualities. For this particular Christian expression which Diva refers to, the Bible is a tool for fighting gay identities and sexualities. Diva challenges biblical hermeneutics that aim at vilifying LGBTI members by emphasizing the sameness of all human beings in spite of their different identities and sexualities. She further pointed out how acceptance and love regardless of identities and sexualities needs to be fundamental in Christian life unlike using the Bible in the promotion of given identities and sexualities over others. She cites some clergy as spearheading biblical hermeneutics which do not promote life, but instead propagate hate against members of the LGBTI community. Diva highlights how the Bible was ideologically used to promote the slavery and colonialism against "black" Africans and now is being used against the LGBTI community. Another study participant added that:

Paul:⁴ Let me try and quote from the Bible on the Sodom and Gomorrah thing...mainly when you hear someone talk about that...the first thing that is going to click into your mind is homosexuality in Sodom and Gomorrah but in reality when you read that passage...there were so many other sins...but people pick on homosexuality and then they condemn people saying you are not supposed to be doing this.

Paul cites the Sodom and Gomorrah account in Genesis 19:1-29 as the text mostly used in anti-homosexuality theological discourses. The story has been used extensively from a heteronormative perspective to consolidate anti-homosexual teachings within traditional Christianity. A heteronormative reading of Genesis 19:1-29 was challenged by participants

⁴ Paul is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian man.

who suggested an alternative reading of the text that takes into account their experiences, unlike the traditional dominant theological positions taken on gay identities and sexualities. The participants offered a counter narrative of the dominant reading of the Sodom and Gomorrah text with Taonga and Foster offering how they individually approach the Bible:

Taonga:⁵ Contemporary Christianity does not help me at all...I have to rely on my own interpretation of the Bible.

Foster:⁶ I have also come across some articles...they were compiled by a number of clergy...talking about the same passage...(be)cause I think we all know that "s where most of the discrimination comes from when it comes to the Bible ...they"ve come to a conclusion to say...the Sodom and Gomorrah didn"t even talk about homosexuality at all...it was mainly about greed, drunkenness...all these vices...but how homosexuality came in , they don"t really understand...but I think they are still working on making people interpret that passage in a different way or just translate some of the words...(be)cause the Bible is a book that has been translated over a period of time...so language gets lost in the process.

Some participants owned the Bible and re-interpreted the Genesis 19:1-29 text according to how they experience life, not adopting traditional and contemporary Christian biblical hermeneutics which they regard as fallible, especially on issues of gay identities and sexualities. Foster brought to the group's attention how the Sodom and Gomorrah text needs to be interpreted in empowering ways for members of the LGBTI community. Based on her personal research, she deconstructed the Sodom and Gomorrah story, noting that it is not about gay sexualities but about greed and drunkenness. She also highlighted how the Bible has been translated over time and some words having lost their original meaning. These responses express the liberty that some participants have to engage in their own experience-based biblical hermeneutics which is at variance with the dominant traditional and contemporary Christian trajectories which they regard as fallible hermeneutics.

However, some participants held the Bible as an infallible text that should not be read with suspicion or questioned. They instead opted to contradict dominant discourses on gay sexualities. The following two participants reflected this in their responses:

⁵ Taonga is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian man.

⁶ Foster is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a lesbian.

*Chipobabz:*⁷ *I contradict with the church and not the Bible...because the Bible is simple and straightforward to my side...why sibakamba kuti olemala sitimufuna but why bakamba che pali homosexual...church na bible visiyana. (Loose trans: I contradict with what the church says and not the Bible...because the Bible is simple and straightforward for me....why don't they (in reference to the church) say that they do not want lame people but why do they only talk about homosexuality? What the church and the Bible say differ).*

*Rihana:*⁸ *Church imatipuzinsa vonse vamene tifunika kuchita but we follow our feelings, since naise we are following our interests...mwamene tilili, mwamene tinabadwila...Bible ikamba ati thou shall not judge. (Loose trans: The church teaches us everything about what we should do but we follow our feelings, since we are also following our interests...this is the way we are, this is the way we were born...the Bible says that we should not judge).*

These responses indicated how the Bible is regarded as an infallible text which should not be questioned. Instead, they chose to disagree with the biblical interpretations offered by the churches they belong to. Where the biblical text and dominant biblical hermeneutics are at variance with their identities, sexualities and feelings, some participants choose to follow their desires and feelings. Implicitly, their gay identities override their Christian identity. They do not concur with biblical interpretations which disagree with their identities and sexualities, opting to use Luke 6:37 or Matthew 7:1 which encourage non-judgemental attitudes. Gunda in his study on the Bible and homosexuality in Zimbabwe argues that:

the Bible has been invoked mostly as the final authority on the subject of homosexuality, and two contending modes of reading have emerged: on the one hand, the majority of Christians have insisted on using the “explicit texts” (namely, Gen.19:1-29; Lev.18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor.6:9-10; Rom.1:18-32, and 1 Tim.1:10), while, homosexual persons have emphasized the central message of the Christian faith represented in the empathy and love demonstrated by Jesus towards those on the fringes of society (2010:20).

⁷ Chipobabz is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian woman.

⁸ Rihana is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian woman.

The Bible in the Zambian Christian context, just like in the Zimbabwean context, remains influential in informing discussions on gay identities and sexualities. In spite of the dominant theological position being that homosexuality is biblically disapproved, gay participants offered other theological/biblical hermeneutics, with love taking centre stage in their position. These responses are vivid examples of biblical hermeneutics in relation to gay identities and sexualities. In the article “The Bible on Homosexuality: Exploring its Meaning and Authority”, Locke (2010) links the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative to the rape of the male visitors and the failure to exercise hospitality for the sojourners, and not homosexuality. Locke (2010:125) observes how “the Bible is silent on matters of orientation, [although] it does seem to adopt a negative attitude [to] male same-sex encounters”, and how the Bible’s prohibitions are selectively applied by some fundamentalist Christian groups. Meanwhile, biblical scholar Robert Gagnon (2001), in his book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics*, challenges interpreting texts like the Sodom and Gomorrah in terms of hospitality and rape. Instead, he uses the Genesis creation accounts to argue that the Bible presents the anatomical, sexual, and procreative complementarity of male and female as clear and convincing proofs of God’s will for sexual unions, thus, portraying gay unions as an affront to God’s creation plan.

Every biblical hermeneutics is largely influenced by ideology, and issues of gay identities and sexualities are approached from ideological positions. Although the worldviews of the churches, traditional Christianity and articulations of the study participants may sometimes be at variance, participants interpreted the text in line with their experiences. However, the dilemma remains on how to balance personal perceptions and being faithful to the biblical text. Additionally, the place of church leaders within Christianity and their influence in shaping views of participants about their identities and sexualities cannot be ignored. In the article “Homosexuality and the Bible”, Greenspahn points out that:

whatever one’s position, it is important that the biblical evidence not be taken lightly nor its teachings rejected out of hand. Since the authority of religious leaders derives ultimately from the bible, those who discard it run the risk of undermining their own credibility as well (2002:38).

Within this study, the position of clergy as biblical authority is subverted by some participants who bring along their experiences as they engage the Bible. Greenspahn adds that “homosexual relationships need not be understood as violating biblical teachings.

Homosexuality is not the real issue in the stories of Sodom, Gibeah, or Noah's son and may not even be a factor there" (2002:44). Contestation of the relationship between homosexuality and the Bible has been one source of tension within Christianity and is also approached variedly among participants, denoting how the Bible is an ideologically read text, in spite of similar experiences of marginalization of participants.

Another sub-theme captured during the focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews is that participants either felt a sense of belonging or not belonging within the Zambian Christian context.

5.2.2. Belonging and/or not Belonging

The idea of belonging and/or not belonging is crucial to how participants –self-construct" their identities and sexualities. The notion of belonging and not belonging has a lot to do with self and social identity, ideas I explore further within this section. I start by capturing some of the views of the participants who felt they did not belong within their churches before showing the views of those who felt they belonged within their churches.

Maambo:⁹ Like in youth meetings...there will be no point in time where somebody is going to talk about a man dating a man...they will always talk about a man dating a woman...so personally, you find that those youth meetings will be irrelevant to you...thereby making church boring...you don't see the benefit out of it...because when you go there...you feel like it's one of those points where you are crucified for being what you are...it's not helping you in anyway.

Diva: When I was in university...I used to be the Catholic student community's secretary...and when I found out that am transgender, they asked me to step down...I think it's really wrong...I don't know why they use that against us...I don't think me being transgender is what's going to define me...there's more to me than that...it's just a part of me...I do not go to church...but being Catholic...I can't miss Easter and Christmas.

⁹ Maambo is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian man.

Maliq:¹⁰ I used to teach Sunday School but because of my identity, I stopped teaching because I feared to be called a paedophile...I just stayed away from church.

The three responses reflect how some participants do not feel any sense of belonging within their churches. Maambo terms such churches as “crucifixion points” and I use this to note an incipient **theology of crucifixion**. Rutledge holds that “the crucifixion is the touchstone of Christian authenticity, the unique feature by which everything else, including the resurrection, is given its true significance” (2015:44). The theology of the crucifixion entails understanding the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as liberative to humanity. The death of Jesus Christ is understood within traditional Christianity as the pillar of the faith. The death culminates in the resurrection which too is believed by Christians to be redemptive and a sign of victory against physical and spiritual death. From Maambo’s response, he restricts the theology of crucifixion to the death of Jesus at the cross and does not highlight the resurrection victory beyond the cross. The understanding of church offered by some participants based on their experiences brings into question the concept of the church as a place of refuge and a community of believers when some participants do not regard it as such. Maambo indicates how youth meetings and church are irrelevant to him owing to the lack of space for the free expression of or discussion on his identity and sexuality. Youth meetings are irrelevant to Maambo because they are framed within heterosexual ideologies that do not accommodate him.

Additionally, Diva highlights how her piety was questioned based on her identity and sexuality, thus, she was dismissed from Christian youth leadership. The response from the youth group she led vividly shows how the youth group was tolerant of her identity and sexuality as long as she remained discreet about it. The idea of discretion around homosexual practices as already indicated in section 2.3.1 by Epprecht (2004:33) shows how in some instances, non-conforming identities and sexualities are tolerated as long as they do not permeate normativity. The response by Maliq shows how construction of identities and sexualities is sometimes undertaken in religious contexts that instil fear in some participants. In anticipation of possible rejection from the church, Maliq stopped being active in the church. This reflects a preference for sexual identity over religious identity. The fact that being a Christian is not strictly linked with being part of the institutional church shows how

¹⁰ Maliq is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a transgender man.

some participants uphold individual religiosity over belonging to an institutional church. Evidently, some participants opt to stay away from the church for fear of either being outed or being implicated for crimes they would not have committed. Since they still regard themselves as Christians, they dissociate Christianity from the church and offer a critique of the church. These three responses reflect how gay identities and sexualities have been used within their Christian setups to proscribe who belongs and who does not belong.

However, other participants, especially from the Kanyama group, expressed that in spite of their identities and sexualities, they still felt accommodated by their churches. The following are some of their views:

*Pamera:*¹¹ *Ine muchurch mwatu balibe problem naine mwe...niyimba noiba maningi muchoir, so vamene nilili si problem...olosiuliko, bakufunsa nokufunsa kuti ukazibwela. (Loose trans: My identity and sexuality is not a problem in my church...I sing a lot in the choir...the way I am is not a problem...even when I miss church/choir, they ask me to be attending).*

Rihana: *Awe naine mwe...niyimba muchurch...ndine music director...banitenga che mushe muchurch...kwenzeli chabe baelder bamozi bamene benze vokambakamba but manje nima order yanga. (Loose trans: Even I sing in my church...I am the music director...they treat me well...there was only one elder who used to speak ill of me but now, I have a sexual relationship with him).*

*Chris:*¹² *I used to be an altar boy and had foreplay with a brother...within our church, there is no segregation...I was always thought I would get married but found that I am 70% into men and 30% into women...I wanted to join priesthood to hide my homosexuality...my church does not judge...they do not mind...the Catholic community is very gay friendly.*

The two responses offered by participants from the Kanyama group are only a reflection of the unanimously held views by this group. Pamera and Rihana regard themselves as belonging in their churches and feel that their identities and sexualities are not looked down upon by the churches they belong to. Notably, Kanyama is a high density area in urban Lusaka, thus presents differences in dynamics from the Lusaka central group in terms of

¹¹ Pamera is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian woman.

¹² Chris is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian man.

class, level of Christian participation, economic, cultural and education levels, among others. Thus, when the Kanyama participants indicate being tolerated in their churches, it could be because the churches they belong to within Kanyama have other priorities than focussing on gay identities and sexualities. Therefore, the two gay Christians play active roles of singer and music director in their churches which recognize their piety in spite of their identities and sexualities. The churches which Pamera and Rihana belong to are in the densely populated area of Lusaka, thus, it is possible that their gay identities and sexualities are overlooked due to many factors, among them, economic hardships in these areas which supersede implications of having gay Christians within the churches. Additionally, issues of lawlessness are usually rife in densely populated areas of Zambia, thus, gay identities and sexualities within these churches may have assumed a level of tolerance as part of daily life.

Chris indicated how his own parish does not focus on gay identities and sexualities but exhibits dissonance by sharing his desire to join the priesthood to hide his identity and sexuality. What Chris' response reflects is that in some instances, gay identities and sexualities are tolerated as long as they are discreet and not openly performed in churches. Interestingly, Diva and Chris belong to the same church tradition but different parishes and yet their experiences are so varied in terms of how their churches respond to their gay identities and sexualities.

There is no consensus by scholars on how gay Christians experience their piety as they negotiate their gay identities and Christian identity. Based on a study conducted among Evangelical gay Christians in the United States of America, Thumma (1991:333) contends that although gay Christians experience dissonance between their Christian identity and gay identities, within an Evangelical group called Good News which helps gay Christians feel accommodated, they resolve the dissonance between Christian beliefs and their homosexual feelings.

Accommodation of discrepant identities does not always result in an either/or decision that destroys one of the identities. Rather, identities negotiation can be construed as a process in which much of these identities remain intact (Thumma 1991:333).

However, Thumma (1991) presents gay identities and Christian identity as being discrepant, based on his study of evangelical gay Christians. Ganzevoort, van der Laan and Olsma

(2011:215-216) analyse four basic modes for negotiation of conflict identity elements of religion and homosexuality: first, is the choice for a religious lifestyle which implies adherence to religious groups and downplays homosexual identity elements. Second, is the choice for a gay lifestyle in which one relinquishes his or her religious affiliation in favour of a clearly homosexual identity. Third, religious lifestyle and gay lifestyle are combined in a commuter approach to identities where people move from one identity to the other, belonging to both mutually exclusive groups in what can be seen as parallel worlds. Last is a seamless integration of both identity elements in which one does not see these elements as mutually exclusive towards each other. The participants in this study exhibited the first three modes of negotiating their identities and Christianity. In some instances, there was a level of both identity dissonance as well as identity congruency based on the location of their churches and the positions of individual churches.

In his research on non-heterosexual Christians leaving the church, Yip (2000:129) points out that leaving the church is not a result of their succumbing to stigmatisation but a deliberate move to counter-reject institutions that do not affirm their sexualities. Leaving the institutional church is therefore one way of self-validation and rejection of non-affirming religious institutions. He also shows that leaving the church does not lead to a process of “de-spiritualisation” (2000:129). The study participants also showed elements of personal piety outside the institutional church. He concludes that “in the case of non-heterosexual Christians, their quest for personal authenticity is even more eager, fuelled by the fact that their sexualities are often highlighted in moral debates” (Yip 2000:145). Although Maambo, Diva and Maliq are no longer “active” Christians with their institutional churches owing to their feeling un-accommodated by their churches, they still regard themselves as Christians by faith, with Diva insisting that she can never miss Christian festivities like Easter and Christmas while Maambo emphasized individual piety away from the institutional church.

5.3. Parlance: Self-identity and Social identity

Allen defines parlance as “a manner of speech and choice of words” (2000:1013). The manner in which people use speech and decide which words to use and which ones not to use says a lot about both the speaker and the phenomenon being addressed. Desirability, daily frequency and commonality are among some factors that influence choice of words and usage. In this section, I discuss the way participants use particular words to subvert the parlance from some heterosexuals in Zambia.

My work adopted definitions of self-identity and social-identity from social psychologists Terry, Hogg and White who define self-identity as “a collection of identities that reflects the roles that a person occupies in the social structure” (1999:226) and proceed to state that “an important component of self-concept is derived from memberships in social groups and categories” (1999:227). Participants play different roles in their families, communities and churches which significantly impact who they perceive themselves to be. Whilst socially belonging to the LGBTI community in Zambia, they are also members of their families, communities and churches. This in turn informs their social identity which is

our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us). Social identity, is, therefore, no more essential than meaning; it too is the product of agreement and disagreement, it too is negotiable (Jenkins 1996:5).

Social identity deals with who an individual understands or perceives him or herself to be, who he or she understands other people to be and who society understands the individual to be. Therefore, social identity is more illusionary than concrete as it designates who an individual is within the bigger group based on perception. In this regard, social identity has to do with who participants conceive themselves as being and how they are perceived by other people within their given contexts and the similar traits they exhibit with people in their own category. Social identity only takes place within a communal setup as it remains “relational: defined relative to other people or groups. I find out who I am by knowing what I am not: understanding where and with whom I do (or don’t) belong” (Scott 2015:2). As an individual interacts with other people, he or she creates his or her social identity in comparison and differentiation with others and attempts to find similarities which in turn act as building blocks towards social belonging. The comparison and differentiation in essence leads to self-categorization among those whom one perceives he or she belongs but the major difference between personal identity and social identity is that the “former emphasises difference, the latter similarity” (Jenkins 1999:20). In the case of some participants, the mark of belonging within their sexual minority groups have for a long time been sexuality which Susie Scott terms as “a descriptor” (2015:2), and Hurst regards as “one of the prime sites for the expression of identity” (2004:64). Thus, self-identity and social identity are closely associated, as self and social identities influence how a person understands and describes oneself and his or her place within a given social context.

The participants who took part in this study belong to already established focus groups and the LGBTI community in urban Lusaka and volunteered to be part of this study. Thus, they were either “out of the closet” or “in the closet”. Being “out of the closet” means having publicly disclosed one’s gender and sexual identity. It must be noted that although my study did not necessarily focus on the geographical locality of the study participants, participants from Kanyama referred to each other as “*muzimai*” (loosely translated as woman or female) or “she” and not “he” since they all identified as female and not male, owing to their female gender identities, gender roles and sexual preference for men. This was unlike the Lusaka central participants who referred to themselves only as male. The Lusaka central focus group discussions were made up of a lesbian, transgendered men and woman, gay Christians (who identified as male and those who did not explicitly identify as female, in spite of taking up feminine roles in their relationships). When I asked them to discuss how they “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, the following were some of the views expressed on how they “self-describe”, with parlance being identified as an integral component of how they “self-construct”, “self-describe” and “self-identify”. They all agreed on the homogeneity within Zambia of the term they used to self-describe – but this has been withheld in this study following their advice – and it generated a conversation which elicited a lot of excitement and laughter. The following are some of the views put forward:

Roman.¹³ The most common names we call ourselves are [term withheld], there is also [term withheld]... I like it [in reference to the withheld term])...I have used it on Facebook to upset straight guys who upset me, I said goodnight [term withheld]...not everyone on Facebook knows that I am like that [term withheld]...not everyone knows it [term withheld], but those who know it were like iye! (shock). It feels good like when you are like with friends and you are like „iwe [term withheld] ulemoneka bwino” (term withheld, you are looking good) and you yeah! like that you won’t get hurt...but then it hurts if somebody who is straight calls you a [term withheld]...but when you are around people like that [gay men], you will be there calling yourselves stupid names...you will be like “umm diva wamoneka bwino” (diva, you are looking good!), it’s fun, like you are having fun.

Chipobabz: We also use [term withheld] here... it is used throughout Zambia mwe...we use it in Lusaka...I have been in Ndola and they use the same term...it is

¹³ Roman is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian man.

a word they use mwe... but we also use [term withheld] or [term withheld] to mean the same thing.

Foster: [Term withheld] is an internal name, it is a good term.

These views have been captured to depict the acceptability of the term used to “self-describe” among the participants. Although I did ask them about the etymology of the term they used to “self-describe”, they could not pinpoint the exact source or meaning of the term. Instead they insisted that this term is only known and used by members of the LGBTI community in Zambia. According to Foster, the term is mainly known among persons that identify as such and is not known by “outsiders”. The term is covertly used to create and claim spaces where participants can “safely” practice their identities and sexualities without raising suspicion from the general Zambian populace. For the sake of personal safety and security of my study participants, I do not use this term in this study. The term creates a sense of belonging and community for participants within the broader sexual minority category throughout Zambia who identify as such and use this coded language to identify who belongs within their ranks and who does not. The term may be regarded as “good” because it is internally coined to self-describe and self-identify, conceal their identities and sexualities and does not originate from heterosexuals.

As pointed out by Roman, the usage of the term is a preserve of gay men and other members of the LGBTI community, as it is offensive once used by “straight” people to address gay men. From these observations from the study participants, the use of the term brings into question who names and classifies in matters of identities and sexualities and issues of power that underlie naming and names given. Additionally, it also brought to life on-going debates on who between the researcher and the researched has the final say on what information to divulge. The term implicitly expresses the authority participants have with regards to naming themselves, and who is allowed to use the term and who is not – sexual minority identity being an integral determinant. For example, Foster, who self-described as a lesbian woman and Terry who self-described as a transgender man, used the term during this particular focus group discussion without it raising acrimony among gay Christians who participated in my study. Evidently, only members of the LGBTI community in Zambia are allowed to use the term but liberty on its use lies with gay men and no one else, especially heterosexuals. Based on Roman’s insights, the term can also be used in a derogatory manner against “straight” people – heterosexuals – once more; the term itself is used as a power tool against

heterosexuals by some gay Christians. Since the term is “owned” by participants, its very existence and usage causes a reversal of power along identities and sexualities. This in turn indicates how participants assume some level of power in a context that seemingly renders them powerless.

Furthermore, Roman highlights the place of social media, in this case, Facebook, as a platform for reclaiming gay spaces and introducing gay identities and sexualities to the general public. I regard this as the ~~un~~planned coming out of the term [term withheld]” as the term was used only as a reactionary moment. The use of social media as one of the modes of communicating gay identities and sexualities may be because social media is widely accessible, in as much as it also allows for anonymity among its users who can use phoney identities. Cyberspace may be ~~safe~~ space” as it does not need physical contact among its users. Social media also allows for networking across national borders but its place in religious communication is also possible. Notable is that local gay identities and sexualities are constructed in globalized spaces through the use of social media.

However, these participants do not engage in ~~self~~-description” without subverting terminologies emanating from ~~external~~ forces’ such as some heterosexuals who too have their own ways of describing them which may or may not be in tandem with participants’ ~~self~~-descriptions”. This presents contestations between participants’ self-identity and social identity resulting from ~~self~~-descriptive” parlance and Zambian societal parlance. The discussion on how participants ~~self~~-describe” and the language usage in this ~~self~~-description” process led to the following views expressed by some participants:

Terry:¹⁴ Ok, one thing I can say is that there are some names...ok...like [term withheld] which people call each other...ahh, iwe ndiwe [term withheld] (you are a [term withheld]) and they are ok with it...but there are some other names that people will bring up like he-she, boy-girl...you know, some of them are abusive, she-male.

Diva: I have heard people call us „tu Ban Ki Moon” after Ban Ki Moon”s visit to Zambia.

¹⁴ Terry is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a transgender man.

*Teta:*¹⁵ *Some [in reference to heterosexuals] even call you as ba no-fish.*

Since the focus group discussions were dialogical in nature and were directed by the study participants while I captured their views, the “no-fish” comment by Tate raised a lot of questions from other participants who wanted to learn more about it as much as I did. Diva who had been called a no-fish by some callboys requested that Tate enlightens the group on what that means:¹⁶

Teta: As in fish is...pardon my French...these days, straight men are calling the vagina fish...so if you screw another man, you are no-fish.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the participants reject some terms used by some members of society, especially heterosexuals, to describe them, regarding such as derogatory. Diva’s observations that gay Christians as well as other members of the Zambian LGBTI community are referred to as Ban Ki Moon in some quarters of the Zambian society stems from the United Nations General Secretary Ban Ki Moon’s advocacy for the recognition of lesbian and gay rights during his 2012 visit to Zambia (United Nations, 2012). This shows how all sexual minorities in Zambia are generally lumped together under the gay tag and not understood as being distinct from each other. Diva identified as a transgender woman but was regarded by the community as gay. This shows limitedness in knowledge on identities and sexualities currently prevalent in many Zambian communities. The no-fish name given to LGBTI community members in general and gay Christians in particular by some heterosexuals also points to the formulation of gender identities within the male and female binaries prevalent in Zambian societies. Covertly, the study participants created an intersection between gender and sexuality, as it is widely assumed within the traditional Zambian society and traditional Christianity that a person’s gender automatically determines their sexuality or sexual orientation. Tate’s “no-fish” narrative indicates how the construction of gay identities and sexualities is understood in terms of sexual roles that participants engage in. Being regarded as a “no-fish” is indicative of how sexual roles are assigned to males and females, with sexual complementarity being emphasized.

¹⁵ Teta is a pseudonym of a study participant who self-identified as a gay Christian man.

¹⁶ Callboys are young men who load buses in Zambian bus stations and are usually feared by the public for their roughness.

The above assertions show contestations between self-identity and social identity emanating from the use of language, that is, the withheld term versus no-fish. In their work “Theorizing Identity in Language and Sexuality Research”, Bucholtz and Hall note that queer linguistics “allow us to talk about sexual ideologies, practices, and identities as interconnected issues without losing sight of power relations” (2004:471). Although identities and sexualities of participants are constructed within ideologically influenced religio-cultural spaces, these spaces are undergirded by power relations in which heterosexuals are usually normative determinants of acceptability of identities and sexualities. Therefore, the withheld term can be categorized as part of broader global queer linguistics and a mode of taking power back. Intentionally or not, by adopting the term used in “self-description”, participants engaged with their own sexual practices and identities and amidst underlying internal ideologies, asserted that there is nothing out of the ordinary about their sexualities and identities. The term may not necessarily have any meaning in itself but is appealing to study participants who use it to self-identify. Conversely, the “no-fish” terminology used by some heterosexuals to identify gay Christians is shrouded in issues of acceptable and unacceptable forms of sex and sexuality, and is highly derogatory. The no-fish term and its negativity is not only linked to gay Christians but is extended to the female gender which is largely regarded as secondary to males within Zambian societies. The withheld term versus the no-fish discourse is a reflection of power contestation between sexual minorities and heterosexual majorities within the Zambian space, and how participants control their own spaces to self-identify.

There is power inherent in self-naming and the study participants exhibited this, therefore proving right Dewey and Bentley’s long standing assertions that “naming does things. It states. To state, it must both conjoin and disjoin, identify as distinct and identify as connected. Naming selects, discriminates, identifies, locates, orders, arranges, systematizes” (1949:133). In the case of the study participants, the withheld term not only identifies them as members of one group of persons with sexual preference for other men but also distinguishes them from other LGBTI members in Zambia as well as heterosexuals. By naming themselves as such, they self-select, locate, identify and arrange themselves on account of their identities and sexualities, thereby “othering” the other.

In their investigation “The Trouble with “MSM” and “WSW”: Erasure of the Sexual Minority Person in Public Health Discourse”, Young and Meyer argue that “sexual-minority people—like other oppressed groups—have fought pitched battles over the right to determine

the names by which they will be known in public discourse” (2005:1145). These participants opted to overtly name themselves as such and not adopt names from heterosexuals, thereby empowering themselves whilst creating internal cohesion. By calling them no-fish, some heterosexuals engage in labelling. Sociologist and labelling theorist Howard Becker (1963) suggests labelling is used by society to condemn what it regards as deviant behaviour and what those considered deviant use to reinforce their behaviour. It is such labelling which gay participants subvert by naming themselves. Furthermore, the views from the participants highlight contestations between self-identity and social identity. Guardo and Beebe (1971), Giddens (1991) and Bailey (1999) all offer similar insights on self-identity with Guardo and Beebe, arguing that it

encompasses that experience whereby the individual is aware that he [sic] is one being with a unique identity who has been, is, and will be a male [or female] human person separate from and entirely like no other (1971:1911).

Participants understand themselves as individuals influenced by their personal experiences, either by identifying as male or female. In the discourse under analysis, participants’ self-identity differs from social identity as held by some heterosexuals. In their article “The Absent Presence: Negative Space within Discourse and the Construction of Minority Sexual Identity” Ward and Winstanley create a link between self-identity and social identity “which focuses more on ‘who am I in the eyes of others’ and is a comparatively conscious set of self-images, traits or social attributes perceived and reflected back by others” (2003:1257). Arguably, some participants are comfortable with their “secret” self-identity as long as it remains unknown to the public but at the same time, refute social identity which portrays them as he-she, no-fish, among others. In this case, self-identity and social identity are closely connected with identities and sexualities of participants. The act of naming and the language used in self-naming by participants is at variance with how they are named by some members of the Zambian society.

In addition, participants covertly raised the intersection of gender, sexuality and sexual roles when they discussed the no-fish term used against them by some heterosexuals. Some of the participants were biologically male but their sex did not correlate with their gender identity as they identified as female or women. Participants attain their identities through a series of repeated actions in line with their gender identities, in this case, either as male or female. This self-identity may not be at variance with communally assigned identity. The intersection of

gender and sexuality shows how closely related gender and sexuality are, how both are cultural constructs and are imbued with elements of power. Gender and sexuality remain religious and cultural constructs deeply embedded with power especially concerning who determines acceptable and unacceptable identities and sexualities and who defines conforming and non-conforming identities and sexualities. I discuss power constellations inherent within gender and sexuality below as I briefly discuss participants' identities and sexualities and gender roles.

In her work *Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity*", Cameron asserts that:

sexual identities, like gender identities, are shown to be culturally and locally variable. Yet, in fact, these are intersecting rather than parallel developments, because gender and sexual identities do not only inflect one another, they are to a considerable extent mutually constitutive (1997:494).

Traditional Christian views about gender and sex use exclusivist understandings to differentiate and emphasize differences between male and female, thereby creating gender polarity which my study participants do not conform to. As observed by Butler, *underpinning the significance of gender and sexuality is the traditional 'naturalist' understanding of masculinity and femininity usually based on ideas about biological reproduction and natural differences*" (1990:16). Traditional Christianity holds that a person's biological anatomical composition determines their gender and sex, thus, a person born in a male body should by design assume male gender roles in society and must be sexually attracted to females only. As pointed out by Halperin (1990:22), such essentialist understandings of gender and sex have not always been true. Accounts of Greco-Roman homosexuality attest to the fluidity of gender and sexualities, as gender was never the premise for acceptability of a man's sexual partner; what was important was the active or passive roles one assumed. Nevertheless, the generalization of the acceptability of same-sex sexuality in classical Athens is refuted by Cohen (1987:[23]), citing Xenophon who states that Greeks in various states had varying laws and customs on pederasty. In states which allowed pederasty, a man's sexual partner was inconsequential, unlike the position he took during the sexual act. Rahman and Jackson, writing from a sociological perspective, argue that *issues around sexuality and gender cannot be understood as merely personal and private since they raise key sociological questions about the connection between structure, culture,*

the self and identity – and the operation of power across all these aspects of social life” (2010:5). Taking cognizance of the discussion on self-identity and social identity, the next theme discusses the use of personal pronouns before looking at parlance, self-identity and Christian identity.

5.3.1. Participants’ Use of Personal Pronouns

Throughout the discussions with study participants, ambiguities in the use of personal pronouns arose. In as much as the intended study participants were males or assigned the male gender and sex at birth, they used both feminine and masculine personal pronouns of she and he to self-describe. The transgender woman referred to herself as she, the transgender men as he and the lesbian as she. The table shows the connection between sexual orientation and gender identity and the usage of personal pronouns among study participants.

Pseudonym	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	Preferred Personal Pronoun
Diva	Transgender woman	She
Maliq	Transgender man	He
Maambo	Gay	He
Foster	Lesbian	He
Terry	Transgender man	He
Roman	Gay	He
Dakah	Gay	He
Chris	Gay	He
Paul	Gay	He
Teta	Gay	He
Taonga	Gay	He
Chipobabz	Gay	She
Rihana	Gay	She
Pamera	Gay	She
MamaG	Gay	She
Ashley	Gay	She
Keri Hilson	Gay	She
Dina	Gay	She

Table 2: Participants’ sexual orientation, gender identity and usage of personal pronouns.

The table above has shown that study participants who aligned their sexual and gender identities with maleness opted to use the personal pronoun ~~–he~~” to self-describe while those who regarded themselves as female used the pronoun ~~–she~~”. This is indicative and confirmation of how they regard themselves and their identities. Whether the preferred personal pronoun is reflective of the gender roles assumed by these study participants is inconclusive. For example, in spite of Roman using the pronoun ~~–he~~”, he takes on feminine gender roles in his relationship, and Gina who regards herself as ~~–she~~” takes on feminine gender roles too. However, what this table shows is that these study participants, despite being assigned the male gender and sex by society, frame their identities and self-describe using both male and female personal pronouns. Complexities in the use of pronouns is further shown by Diva who is assigned the male gender and sex, regards herself as woman and uses the personal pronoun ~~–she~~”.

5.3.2. Parlance: Self-identity and Christian Identity

In section 5.3, I have discussed the usage of parlance and self-identity among participants. Christian identity however will be used to denote persons that identify as Christians and profess to be Christian within Zambia. The study participants professed to being Christians (although some are not ‘active’ Christians in institutional churches) and belonging to churches within urban Lusaka.

Although I interrogated how participants ~~–self-construct~~” their identities and sexualities, and since they are Christian by faith, they do not undergo this process without the influence of Christianity in the Zambian context. The participants displayed two paradoxical expressions of Christianity in the Zambian context and acceptability of gay identities and sexualities thereof, in urban Lusaka as discussed below. When I asked the study participants in Lusaka central to discuss the role of Christianity in how they ~~–self-construct~~” their identities and sexualities, all the participants except two disclosed that they do not feel welcome within the Christian faith and the language used negatively affects them. When the same question was asked of participants in the Kanyama group, the opposite views were expressed as all group members agreed that they feel very welcome within Christianity and the language used influences them positively. The following are some of the captured views that show these differences. I start by presenting views from three Lusaka central participants before moving on to reflect views by three Kanyama participants:

Taonga: Christianity does not help me at all...the everyday Christianity does not help me at all because they have all these rules...so I have to some extent to rely on my own interpretation of the Bible...how I think God makes everyone in their own image...[be]cause my own congregation is so traditional...so they have all these rules of how people should behave...if you are a guy, you should be like this...macho, which am not...I am expected to have a girlfriend in the choir and if I do not have that...then all these rumours start...oh, he talks with his hands a lot, he behaves like this...ahh nibakazi baja (that one is a woman)...so for me, I have to rely on my own...contemporary Christianity does not help me at all.

Diva: Growing up in a Catholic home and being raised as a boy when I identify as a transgender woman....it's kind of hard, because I was an altar boy but when I reached adolescence or adulthood, I discovered that I was transgender, I wasn't really a heterosexual man...so, it's kind of hard because they expect me to behave as a man...to have all these male roles that men perform in society...so I kind of stopped going to church because I feel like am being judged there...I feel like am attacked there.

Chris: I think I am comfortable with the church I go to...I used to be an altar boy but when I grew up, I had to stop...so I am so safe with that...I was born in Catholic, my family is still in Catholic.

Based on the two responses from Taonga and Diva, Christian identity is linked to rules on personal conduct and a traditionalist approach to life. However, some participants do not subscribe to this because they self-identify in a way that may not be in tandem with traditional Christianity's position. Although Taonga is not a devout Christian, he still finds the Bible useful in his own understanding of creation, thereby bringing to the fore **a theology of creation**. A theology of creation holds that God is the Creator of all things and that God creates from nothing (Morales 2001 and McFarland 2014). This theology has been informative to traditional Christianity as it denotes how creation is a product of God. In this regard, nothing is without God, hence, all creation comes into form out of the Creator's volition. Therefore, since all things were created by God, so are the study participants. It would seem Taonga's Christian identity is overshadowed by his sexual identity and self-identity although he finds certain Christian elements like the Bible useful. Both Taonga and Diva highlight how Christian identity is usually surrounded by an ideal of maleness which

gay Christians do not live up to. Taonga, who identifies as a male and gay, holds that he falls short of the Christian prescription of ideal maleness. Diva, who identifies as a transgender woman, also asserted how she does not fit within the ideal maleness expected of her in the Christian identity. Notably, the two study participants have resolved these dissonances by not being active Christians. Another dimension on the ambiguities of belonging and not belonging in the church is presented by participants like Chris who stopped being an altar boy not necessarily because he is gay but because of age. From observation, although Diva and Chris belong to different parishes of the Roman Catholic Church, their difference in approach towards Christian identity may largely be informed by the fact the Diva is an openly transgender woman while Chris maintains a public heterosexual façade and has a child. Thus, Diva's Christian identity is informed by the fact that her parish knows about her non-conforming sexual and gender identity whilst Chris' parish regards him as heterosexual.

Chris' position is similar to the position held by the Kanyama participants, despite them being openly gay. The Kanyama group decided to use Nyanja as a medium of communication – although two participants in this group used Nyanja and English. In spite of my question being phrased as how religion/Christianity shapes how they “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, it was difficult for them to understand what was meant by Christianity. So the gatekeeper explained to the rest of the group members that Christianity meant church and thus, responses referred to Christianity as “church”. The following are some of the responses:

Pamera: ine mu church bananjaila, sibakamba vilivonse voipa pali ine...sibamani chita judge olo kuti banizonde awe...yenangu ma church ok bamalalikila voipa but church yanga baniziba...ni imbanoiba. (Loose trans: my church is used to me and my identity...they do not say anything bad about me...they do not judge me at all neither do they hate...yes, some churches do preach against our identity but that is not the case in my church...I do sing in my church).

Rihana: Ise muchurch si problem kuti tiliso...like ine banilemekeza...notisanka ma leaders batisanka...bamene bakukamba voipa muchurch kambili ninshi bakufuna...mong aba elder abo benangu, bananikambila voipa but manje nima order. (Loose trans: for me, it is not a problem that I am like this...like for me, I am respected...I can even be chosen as a leader...those that tease us or say bad things about us are usually attracted to you...like one elder who spoke ill about me

but now I am going out with him)...when my uncle chased me, the church took me for a short course.

Chipobabz: Awe ma church kuno sibakamba voipa pali ise...ok but niba one one bokakamba voipa but like ine my church, banichita understand. (Loose trans: The churches here do not speak ill of us...only a selected few speak ill about us...for me, my church understands).

From the discussion above, it is evident that Christianity's role is ambiguous. Some participants like Taonga submitted that contemporary Christianity does not help them at all, while Diva, among others, offered that Christianity has and does shape their identities and sexualities, until their identities and sexualities are "outed" or at variance with their Christian identity. Some participants insisted that Christianity or the church positively impacts how they construct their identities and sexualities. Among some of the Christian elements cited as being unhelpful in the construction of gay identities and sexualities by participants are the rules – codified and uncoded, spoken and unspoken, Christian groups, Christian tradition and the heteronormative biblical hermeneutics. Participants who struggle with Christianity's role in constructions of gay identities and sexualities insisted that male identities and sexualities are framed within male heterosexual understandings, as every male within Christianity is expected to be macho, to date women and speak like a man without using too many gestures (which is considered feminine). Failure to fit into this proscription is enough to render one effeminate. Furthermore, as pointed out by Diva, every male is expected to take on male roles in society in spite of their identities and sexualities and these roles are determined within the heterosexual male framework.

The other participants noted that the parlance in Christianity positively influences their identities and sexualities, bringing to light how their piety is recognised within Christianity in spite of their identities and sexualities. Pamera, Rihana and Chipobabz show that their piety is recognized in their churches as they are members of choir groups, can be chosen as leaders and are respected, in spite of their identities and sexualities. The language within the churches they belong to embrace their identities and sexualities; what remains fundamental is their piety and not their gay identities and sexualities. All group members in Lusaka central except two felt that Christianity is not helpful in how they construct their identities and sexualities. The Kanyama study participants unanimously agreed that Christianity is, or their churches are, very welcoming of their identities and sexualities. These observations underline the

intersections of class, sexuality and piety as the Lusaka central and Kanyama groups were from two different social and class backgrounds. As already established, Kanyama is a densely populated residential area while Lusaka central is a low density area; thus it can be argued the churches in these two localities have different priorities.

In their qualitative study among Christian homosexual men and women on the potential conflict between Christianity and homosexuality, Subhi and Geelan argue that:

many homosexual people have felt that they had to completely renounce their Christian identity when they identified as a homosexual. While renouncing religious faith may offer a solution to conflicts for some homosexuals, there are some people for whom both their sexuality and their religious faith are important facets of their lives (2012:1383-1384).

The participants who expressed that their piety is challenged by the churches sometimes opted to renounce their Christian identity as a way of resolving the dissonance between sexual identity and Christian identity. As observed by Conway (1991:27), at no point has the tension between piety and erotic attachment been more marked than in the case of homosexuality – as an orientation no less than a cluster of practices. The Christian identity usually does not readily accept gay identity as gay people are usually not expected to be Christian, especially in Zambia. Thus, my bringing gay and Christian together in addressing gay Christian identities and sexualities seemingly forces two worlds that are generally understood to be apart into the same room and to be discussed as one world. In his article “Still Looking for my Jonathan’: Gay Black Men’s Management of Religious and Sexual Identity”, Pitt agrees with findings by Subhi and Geelan (2012:1383-1384) and asserts that “one approach that gays and lesbians use to alleviate conflict between their sexual and religious identities is to reject one or the other. Some attempt to reject the homosexual identity” (2010:44). In instances where Christian identity and sexual identities conflict, some participants opt to give up their Christian identity in preference for their sexual identities. In some instances, some participants manage to hold both their gay identities and Christian identity, as noted by Thumma who argues that “while many persons may hold incongruent identities in a workable tension, these identities seldom both function as organizing ‘core identities’ of the self-concept...the identities, as originally construed, are mutually exclusive; however, they are also considered too important to surrender” (1991:334). As shown above,

some participants, especially from the Kanyama group, exhibited the ability to hold both gay identities and Christian identities simultaneously without raising a lot of inner tensions.

However, experiences of participants indicated that churches within Kanyama – a high density area in Lusaka – are tolerant of the piety of the study participants in spite of their identities and sexualities. Implicitly, what matters most for Christian expressions found in high density Kanyama is how religious or pious and active gay Christians are as well as their contributions to the churches, and not their identities and sexualities. Such differences in acceptability of participants in the two Christian communities I investigated could be because of the differences in class and education levels of church members and clergy found in these churches. I would therefore suggest that the more educated and socially upper-class a church is, the more unfriendly it is likely to be towards the study participants and their presence therein.

Having discussed how parlance within Christianity contributes to how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities, I proceed to explore another theme which arose from focus group discussions, individual interviews and observation, namely, performance.

5.4. Performance

Allen defines performance as “the act or an instance of performing” (2000:1033). Following this definition, I use performance in my work to show how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities through their daily actions, with the underlying influence of Christianity. As noted by Butler, gender is an act since “the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. The repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established” (1999:420). When participants were asked to discuss how they –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of Christianity in this process, what was evident is that performance of their identities and sexualities is crucial to how they –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings. Behaviour, dressing, and sexual position preference were highlighted as non-negotiable in the construction of identities and sexualities of these participants. The following are some of the views expressed on behaviour in relation to –self-construction” of their identities and sexualities:

Roman: Well, as a man...I am expected to behave as one and religion has been helpful in how I behave as a man...ok, the way I conduct myself... I don't want to raise confrontation, maybe at home...since am ahh, am the odd guy there...I am expected to behave in a way whereby my family won't be like, what is he doing? Or what's really wrong with him? I am expected to behave in such a way that I don't raise tension in my family... such that they won't start asking themselves like is he gay? Is he straight? You know? Am supposed to behave in a straight way...though am not straight, but am expected to behave in a straight way whereby my family won't have doubts about me...you have to be straight acting around people.

Roman's views that gay Christian identities and sexualities are sometimes constructed in tandem with familial and religious expectations were dominant among study participants. These constructions are undertaken in "private" and in many instances away from the watchful eye of the family and religion which have their own expectations of how males should and should not behave. This is done so as to avoid confrontation and suspicion in families that expect their sons to be "straight" religious men. Roman indicated how he is expected by his family and religion to behave like a "straight" young man in spite of his gay identity and sexuality. By behaving like a "straight" man, Roman is expected to be sexually attracted to women, take up male gender roles in the family and society, marry and sire children, among others. Similar sentiments were expressed by Chris who insisted that he had found a way of maintaining a "straight" public image in spite being privately gay.

Chris: Like myself...I don't think I have a problem with this whole thing [being gay] ...[be]cause first of all, I am proud of who I am and if I am to connect with what my friends said about the marriage part...with myself I think I played a good role...like I thought of...like one day I would want to get married and it's high time I have a child...to cover up everything [be]cause I knew where I was going with all this...so, I did that and I don't think and I don't expect any of my family to come and point a finger at me...to like say...why are you not getting married? I will give them a very good reason to say I have got a son...I mean what do you want me to do? I think that works out for me...I don't have a problem...I have got a son already and I play myself like this...I have protected myself that way...my son will protect me.

Foster: The church expects you to marry when you reach a certain age...and when you do not, then...they start questioning and wondering why you are not married when you have reached the marriage age.

Although Chris exhibits some levels of inconsistency in negotiating his gay identity by asserting that he is proud of being gay but at the same time hiding his identity through having a child. By him bearing a child, he has fulfilled the expectations of his family and church. The only reasons he opted to have a child was to protect himself from being a subject of discussion in his family and church. He maintains a heterosexual public façade even though acknowledging that he is a gay. It can be noted that sometimes participants negotiate their identities and sexualities within strong family and Christian ties and expectations. As they may try not to “disappoint” their families and churches, their identities and sexualities take second place to their families and religion. This could be because first, they do not want to be the “odd” ones out, second, they fear disappointing their families, and third, they try to maintain their places in families and churches. As such, they act “straight” as a coping and survival strategy in heteronormative contexts.

Additionally, in some cases, families and the church expect the “closeted” gay Christian to marry and have children. Chris and the other study participants who indicated willingness to have children as a way of maintaining family and church “peace” reflect elements of compartmentalization which characterizes the lives of some participants as they remain secretly gay but maintain a public heterosexual façade. In his article on “The Formation of Homosexual Identities”, theorist Richard Troiden (1989:43-74) argues that among other ways of coping with cognitive dissonance resulting from conflict between sexual and religious identities, homosexuals may undergo compartmentalization in which they lead double lives which allow them to draw a line to keep their homosexual and religious identities as separate and as far apart as possible. This is exactly what I experienced as true for most of the participants within Lusaka central as only four participants openly admitted that their identities and sexualities are known by their families, let alone their churches. The rest of the participants hinted at how their identities and sexualities remain unknown to their families and churches, with others stated how they would only tell their families about their sexualities and identities in future. In a similar manner as Troiden (1989), Rodriguez and Quellte in their article “Gay and Lesbian Christians: Homosexual and Religious Identity Integration in the Members and Participants of Gay-Positive Church” add that “by keeping

two conflicting identities separate, conflict resolution, or identity consonance, is achieved” (2000:334). By keeping and maintaining their sexual lives and identities far away from their families and churches, some participants have created some level of harmony in their lives, as long as their double lives do not meet.

However, all the participants in the Kanyama group did not exhibit compartmentalization which characterised most of the participants in the Lusaka central group. Participants from Kanyama indicated how their families and churches are accepting of their gay identities and sexualities and how they openly perform these identities and sexualities without raising many questions from both family and church. Below are some of the responses on how they perform their gay identities and sexualities:

Pamera: Ine mu family bonse baniziba...nakukula, nenzeli kusobela natudolly, nabatate bazekukamba ati musungileni olo mudobeleni tudolly twake...nenze nakukonda kutunga totungatunga. (Loose trans: All my family members know about my sexuality...even as I was growing up, I used to play with dolls...even my father used to ask my family members to keep dolls for me or to pick them for me...I also used to enjoy sewing stuff).

Chipobabz: Tikankala namalilo, bakuchurch bamabwelako, baimbako...naise bakankala namalilo, naise tima enda...tapikatapika, ta servinga, so bamuchurch nabeve batimvela mushe...although sibamatichitako defend kuli va same-sex, bachurch muZambia bayopa chabe law, kabili bakamba ati Zambia is a Christian nation, so bachurch bayopa law...law ndiye yamene yabyopa, otherwise, batikonda. (Loose trans. When one of us is has a bereavement, people from our church come and sing...when they also have bereavements, we go there...we cook, serve...so people in church like us...although they do not defend us from issues of same-sex discrimination, the church in Zambia is scared of the law...they say Zambia is a Christian nation...so the church is scared of the law...it is the law which they are scared of, otherwise, they love us).

Rihana: Ngati malilo yakuchurch yachitika, we go to the funeral, we don't act like men, we usually go kuja kwamene bamapika kuja, tipika,...sometimes tavala navitenge...nabopika kuja, they even call us different names...ati make iwe, Cecilia...tipusula nkuku, manzi titwika pamutu...they would even joke ati babe,

sweetie chani...nima elders abo ninshi bakuitana so. (Loose trans. When there is a bereavement in our church, we go to the funeral house...we do not act like men...we go where the women are cooking...we cook...sometimes we even wear wrappers...we work with those who are cooking...they we call us different names...like mother of someone, Cecilia...we dress chickens...we draw water and carry it on our heads...they would even joke with us calling us babe, sweetie...that would be an elder calling you babe or sweetie).

The discussion above shows that some participants have been aided by their families and churches to “self-construct” their identities and sexualities in seemingly gay-friendly contexts. Pamera cites her father as being a positive influence in how she constructs her identity and sexuality as he has been very encouraging of her feminine identity. As part of her feminine identity, Pamera took to playing with what would generally be considered feminine toys – dolls – and took up a generally feminine hobby of sewing. Furthermore, these participants indicated how they enjoy performing what are traditionally perceived to be feminine tasks such as cooking, serving food, and drawing water at funerals. Rituals such as funerals prove to be useful avenues for some of these participants to “self-construct” and exhibit their identities and sexualities within communal and religious spaces that accept them, even as they dress up in the *chitenge* (a wrapper worn by Zambian women). Rihanna’s acknowledgment that gay Christians who identify as female do not act like men during bereavements but join women in cooking also denotes how these particular feminine gay Christians knowingly or unknowingly abide by socially constructed gender roles. Since they identify as women, they take on feminine gender roles, hence their active participation in the kitchen at funeral houses. Once more, the participants show that they have harmonious relations with their churches as they are supported when bereaved and vice versa. This shows how the churches they belong to are once more accepting of their piety in spite of the legal framework of the country which criminalizes the practice of homosexuality. The question is: why do these churches in Kanyama covertly condone gay identities and sexualities in a country that criminalizes homosexual practices? Chipobabz raises the intersection of gender roles, sexuality, piety and civil law. It can be argued that some sections of Christianity in Zambia are caught in between embracing gay Christians on account of their piety and upholding the law which criminalizes the practice of homosexuality. What seems to be of importance to some of the churches is the role that the study participants play within the churches and communities rather than the dictates of the law.

While some of the participants openly and freely perform their identities, within their family and religious and cultural spheres, the Zambian constitution prohibiting the practice of homosexuality remains a deterrent for some churches to fully and openly support gay identities and sexualities. In as much the identities and sexualities of the participants may not be considered problematic for some churches, the legal framework tailored in line with the “Christian nation” preamble of the Constitution of Zambia hinders some quarters of Christianity from coming out to openly support gay Christians. In instances where participants feel embraced in their churches of affiliation, they choose to participate in the life of the church in Zambia through various activities as discussed above, thereby, maintaining their gay identities and sexualities and Christian piety in a legal structure that so far remains discriminatory. Gross argues that

homosexual Christians manage the coexistence of their faith, their need to belong to a community of believers, and their homosexuality differently, depending on whether they participate in a traditional church or whether they have distanced themselves from official church doctrine (2008:93).

This is true for some participants, especially those who formed the Kanyama focus group. Not only are they gay but they are also active Christians; they belong to faith communities that reinforce their piety and identities and sexualities. Another salient element raised by study participants is performance of their identities and sexualities through dressing.

5.4.1. Dressing

Dressing was raised as one of the ways in which participants “self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings. I observed that participants who identified as female were well groomed with some having tweezed eyebrows, blonde dyed hair, painted nails, skinny jeans and tight fitting clothes. The transgender woman started powdering her face as we waited for the first focus group discussion. The transgender men dressed in what can be classified as “masculine” clothes while the participants who identified as men dressed in “masculine” clothes. The following are some of their views on how they “self-construct” their identities and sexualities with dressing taking the centre stage:

Terry: I used to be an Adventist...SDA... but I no longer go to SDA because of some of the norms that are there...because of the way I identify...umm...when they

look at me, they say am supposed to be wearing a long dress or whatever but I don't identify as a woman...yeah, so, I have that issue and I cannot go with my family dressed the way I am...because they will be telling me we are going to church so why do you have to do that...it is against what they say at church... so I found myself switching from an Adventist to Anglican...because where I go now, am free to go as I am...no one will tell me to say no you are not dressed the way you are supposed to be dressed.

Chipobabz: Ine baPastor banani pepaka ninshi ningena mu Cock Pit ninshi namvala skinny jean, navala nemwine...ninaleka kuimba muchurch ine...the Pastor followed me in the pub to look for me. (Loose trans. The Pastor ran after me as I entered Cock Pit (night club) and I was wearing a skinny jean...after that I stopped singing in church...the Pastor followed me into the pub).

Diva: I buy clothes from men's shelves...but I buy my clothes smaller...and they (family, society and church) say why? ...the size of the clothes matter...even skinny jeans when worn by heterosexual men...they look gay.

Teta: More straight men are emulating the way homosexual men are dressing...the short pants raise questions...girlish dressing and sitting all raise questions.

The participants showed how dressing plays an important role in how they –self-construct” their identities and sexualities, especially within their personal and religious spaces. Dressing is one visible way in which participants perform their identities and sexualities – for example, tight fitting clothes and painted nails – although they did not attach any feelings to their dressing. However, power constellations are shown when they indicate that Christianity in most cases determines the dress code for its adherents and such prescriptions do sometimes influence the denominational affiliation of participants, as well as other sexual minorities. Therefore, dressing and its acceptability, or not, in given churches creates a sense of belonging, or not, for some participants who either have to conform or leave the churches. Dressing within Zambian Christianity is closely tied to personal piety. For example, during my childhood, Christian women’s piety was associated with wearing head scarves during some church services. As noted by Chipobabz, church leaders are usually regarded as custodians of religious prescriptions on “right” forms of dressing for adherents. Skinny jeans are largely frowned upon by some churches but are mentioned by participants as trendy

dressing for some participants who consider themselves trendsetters for some heterosexual men.

In his study on employer regulation of gay and lesbian appearance, Skidmore outlines three messages that the wearer of the clothing communicates and to which gay and lesbians are more conscious:

first, a desire to communicate a message about one's sexuality which is intended to be readable by the world at large...second, a desire to communicate a message that only certain others in the know will be able to read...thirdly a desire to communicate with the self, perhaps in private or by wearing underclothes not (usually) seen by others (1999:513).

During discussions, participants indicated how they had been outed in church by a pastor during the funeral service of one of their colleagues and when I asked them if there was anything about their dressing which gave them away, their responses were negative. However, it is possible that unintentionally and unknowingly, participants communicated their identities and sexualities through their dressing. Furthermore, skinny jeans are regarded as a gay trademark, although such dressing is not the preserve of gay people. Dressing also symbolizes personal style as well as class and culture.

In their exploratory qualitative study of a group of younger British lesbians, gay and bisexuals on how they actively through clothing and appearance construct and manage a visual identity as lesbians, gays and bisexuals, Clark and Turner (2007:6) observe that there is a link between lesbian and gay sexuality and their dress and appearance. Some of their participants described the typical gay man as having (bleached) blond or highlighted hair and wearing tighter t-shirts, lower trousers, and generally more feminine styles and colours, more jewellery and more revealing clothes than do heterosexual men (Clark and Turner 2007:6). Skidmore aligns dressing with gender performance stressing that the

choice of particular colours, styles and brands of clothing, hairstyles and body jewellery which for some gay men and lesbians have been important tools of their gender performance, especially when attempting to communicate with the world at large, do not always conform with employers' expectations, thus leading to potential conflict (1999:513).

Some participants perform their gender through their dressing which is sometimes held in contempt by some churches in Zambia. Although these participants intimated how they are considered trendsetters in dressing for some heterosexual men in Zambia, Skidmore insists that “it is a matter of considerable debate how far gay men’s fashion leads or influences mainstream men’s fashion” (1999:514). Whether gay people are generally trendsetters for some Zambian heterosexual men, and whether many heterosexual men would concur with such assertions, is unproven but worth investigating.

Another theme that arose in relation to performance of identities and sexualities by participants was the sexual and gender roles assumed within the sexual relationships.

5.4.2. Sexual and Gender Roles

Sexual roles refer to intimate behaviours during sex (Kippax and Smith 2001:417) and any other behaviours associated with sexuality and sex, while “gender roles...are the expected attitudes and behaviours a society associates with each sex. This definition places gender squarely in the sociocultural context” (Lindsey 2015:4). Sex “refers to the biological characteristics that define humans as female or male. While these sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive, as there are individuals who possess both, they tend to differentiate humans as males and females” (WHO 2006:5). This study regards sexual roles as sexual behavior associated with sexuality and sex within and outside intimacy. Sexuality “encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction” (WHO 2006:5). Sexual and gender roles are sociocultural constructs which dictate the roles in society, social and sexual relationships. Sexual roles and gender roles are interrelated as one identity is informed by the other, just as one role is influenced by another. Therefore, sexual roles influence sexual identities and sexuality, in as much as gender roles inform gender identities. Thus, as noted by Tamale:

sexuality and gender go hand in hand; both are creatures of culture and society, and both play a central and crucial role in maintaining power relations in our societies. They give each other shape and any scientific enquiry of the former immediately invokes the latter. Hence, gender provides the critical analytical lens through which any data on sexuality must logically be interpreted (2011:11).

When the participants were asked to discuss how they –self-construct” their identities and sexualities, the following discourse on their sexual positions preferences and sexual roles ensued. This section is discussed here because traditional Christianity prescribes sexual relations between an adult male and female, but participants subverted this based on the following responses:

Taonga: I do not understand this whole bottom, top thing...though people try to explain it to me...I think it is them trying to mimic heterosexual kind of relations...although Tate tried to explain to me that it is something to do with preference.

Tate: There are three types, there"s top, bottom and versatile. ..it all depends on what you prefer as a gay person... It depends on the individual and what the individual likes...for example myself, I would say I am a bottom...that is what I prefer and I don"t think I would become a top for that person...even though we"ve put these labels that there"s top, bottom, versatile...it"s not guaranteed or it"s not definite that that person is going to be that way for the longest time...it can be maybe later in homosexual life that you would realize that oh! you like the top...it"s not fixed, it"s fluid...but there those who are just strict bottoms and they will tell you that me am bottom and there are also some strictly top as well.

Paul: There are some people that prefer anything anytime...like depending on the type of person that you meet.

Chris: Am new in this thing...I only discovered this four years ago...and I started meeting up with people through Facebook and started learning about stuff...my first encounter in this was with my boss in South Africa in 2007...my boss used to be that, he is Indian, he took me for a beer...he told me he was top and he asked me if I wanted to be bottom...I did not know where I was...but now I know that I find that I am much of top...but because in the first scenario...it was the genesis, I was forced to be bottom...when I came this side [Zambia], I am more of a top.

Foster: I have never come across a man who is strictly top...I think they can be top in the gay sense but probably also bisexual as in, they like women...like that for me, it makes sense... (be)cause I have never come across someone who is gay and they are just top...gender roles still play a part in this bottom-top issue...most

feminine gays here are bottoms...because one of the two has to look like...at the end of the it"s all gender roles.

Terry: Something that I have realized is that most bottoms are also feminine.

The responses above show that study participants could not agree on how the self-labelling of top, bottom and versatile takes place and if these are permanent or not. However, the responses reflect elements of fluidity and flexibility of position identities and sexual roles. Evidently, within the broader categorization of gay identities and sexualities lie individual pockets of sexual identities born either from preference of sexual position, power or knowledge on gay sexuality. Taonga and Foster assumed that these positions are nothing more than mimicry of heterosexual relationships and gender roles, while Tate and Chris insisted it all had to do with preference and Paul focused on the fluidity of sexual preference as it is dependent on one's partner. Chris' narration clearly shows fluidity in sexual preference as he started off being a bottom gay when his Indian boss took up the top position. However, Chris later on discovered he prefers being top. In Chris' case, his position identity during his first gay sexual encounter was largely embroiled in dynamics of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, economic, power and limited access to information on gay sexuality. The normative understanding that sexual roles in gay relationships are indicative of power relations has been critiqued by Kippax and Smith who assert that

power dynamics in anal intercourse need to be contextualized within given sexual relationships. If the receptive partner persuades his partner to penetrate him, then power of a kind lies with the receptive partner. Power is not synonymous with being an active or passive partner, thus, power is mobile (2001:417).

Self-labelling is another further categorization which takes place within gay identities and sexualities, pointing to sexual roles. Scholars like Moskowitz, Rieger and Roloff (2008) and Zheng, Hart and Zheng (2012) all categorize self-labelling within gay identities and sexualities as tops, bottoms and versatiles. Moskowitz, Rieger and Roloff point out that:

tops generally preferred insertive to receptive roles and bottoms generally preferred receptive to insertive roles. Versatiles had an equal preference for both. These results suggested that self-label was indeed related to other sexual behavioral attributes (2008:198).

The responses of the study participants discussed in this section reflect all the three categories of self-labelling and highlight how these categories are as a result of sexual preference and not any other factors. However, whether preference in position identity shifts with time, experience and partner type remained unresolved in our discussions as an array of views were expressed. However, in their survey, Grov, Parsons and Bimbi (2012) link position identity to penis size stating that men with below average penises were likely to identify as bottoms, men with above average penises more likely identified as tops while those with average penises likely identified as versatiles. The participants did not make the penis size argument as determinant of the position identity but pointed out how position is associated with gender roles and sometimes it is not fixed as it remains subject to change.

Some participants also indicated how sexual roles and identities connected to gender roles in their sexual relationship. Carballo-Diéguez *et al* (2004) in studying gay populations in Latino communities show that gender stereotypes of masculinity and femininity play an important role in the sexual behaviour of this population and that gender stereotypes play an important generic role; contextual and emotional circumstances may significantly affect sexual-role behaviour in specific cases. Foster observed that bottoms are usually feminine and take on feminine gender roles in their relationships which holds true as the participants who regarded themselves as female took on bottom positions in their relationships and were more inclined to assume feminine gender roles. However, the fact that sexual identities are not fixed is worth noting as pointed out by Paul and Chris. There are many reasons that may enlist change in sexual identities but in the case of Chris, the more experience he gained in his newly discovered sexuality, the easier it became for him to decide his preference in position and the sexual roles he assumed. Pachankis *et al* observe that among reasons for change of sexual positions were personal reasons which:

included personal growth, such as concomitant changes in other aspects of identity, increased experience, increased self-awareness, increased self-confidence, and increased sexual self-awareness; greater sexual experimentation; and changes in ways of finding sexual pleasure (2013:1246).

Chris' change in sexual identity was a result of increased experience owing to friends and partners met through Facebook, increased self-awareness about his sexuality and possibly self-confidence in his identity and sexuality with the passing of time and exposure to same-sex sexual encounters.

Once more the place of a globalized context in which gay identities and sexualities of gay Christians are forged is highlighted and I have discussed the global culture in chapter seven.

Some of the participants linked sexual roles with gender roles as shown below. I start by discussing how, according to some participants, Christianity constructs gender roles. Then I show how participants take on gender roles. The following are some of the responses on how Christianity constructs gender roles:

Paul: Christianity is full of heterosexual norms...it teaches what being a man is...a man is identified through how he behaves and all that...from the Bible background, they teach that a man should get married and have a family at a certain age.

Foster: Society and Christianity always expect a man to be the provider for the opposite sex...the women, he must have children...whatever...they expect him to marry...and that a woman should submit to him...since I identify as a woman but conform to the other gender...to church people...I come out as being rebellious because I do not expect a man to provide for me...I am my own provider.

Based on these responses, Christianity frames gender roles along heteronormative binaries of male and female. Therefore, a man is expected to marry a woman, behave as a man, provide for his wife and children and be respected by his wife. Although the participants did not elaborate on how a man is expected to behave, it can be argued that a man is expected to be a leader, macho, sexually attracted to women and exercise self-control of his emotions. Christianity mainly regards gender roles in fixed binaries that should not be crossed and when crossed, such “transgressors” are usually regarded as rebellious. Gender roles are also constructed in opposition to the other; for example, a man is expected to be the provider while the women plays the role of being provided for. My interest then is to also highlight how participants exercise their gender roles.

Gender roles as constructed by Christianity and performed by participants are usually at variance as some participants do not conform to gender roles prescribed by Christianity. To clearly show variances in gender roles assigned by Christianity and those assumed by some of my participants, I have chosen to discuss predominantly feminine gender roles performed by some participants. The following three responses highlight these views:

Roman: Me being bottom...I have to perform (sexually) for my top boyfriend...as a bottom gay, I have to do “wifey” stuff like make breakfast, lunch, do laundry...do all the womanly things...the top gay has to provide for the bottom man...I am not a woman, but am his wife.

Rihana: Since me being a male but having feelings for a woman...as a woman...I have to entice a man...perform in bed...I learnt from my female friends how to perform in bed and how to please...I am enticing a lot...I am staying with my man and he looks after me very well...he provides everything that I want...I cannot complain.

Chipobabz: My dad enjoys my cooking...bakamba nokamba atinibapikile...ati siyani azanikipa mwana wanga...nipika lumanda, delele maningi...I cook veggies so well. (Loose trans: My dad enjoys my cooking...he even says I should cook for him...he tells my family that they should leave his (me) child to cook for him...I cook a lot of lumanda (traditional food from the Eastern province of Zambia) and okra...I cook vegetables so well).

The above responses reflect how these participants either identify as women or claim femininities by taking up gender roles that are the opposite of perceived proscriptions of Christianity. They assume “wifey” roles with other men, take on generally feminine roles of cooking meals and attending to laundry as their “men” provide for them just like is expected of some heterosexual relationships. Rihana connects sexual performance to appeasement of her sexual partner and how well her partner provides for her. Implicitly, each partner in gay Christian relationships has gender roles aligned within heterosexual binaries, in spite of both partners being of the same sex. Same-sex gender roles are constructed along heterosexual gender roles with the major difference being the sex of the parties involved. “Sex refers to the biological characteristics distinguishing male and female. This definition emphasizes male and female differences in chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, reproductive systems, and other physiological components” (Lindsey 2015:3). Of interest is how Roman distinguishes taking on feminine roles from being a woman by insisting that he is his partners “wifey” but he is not a woman. These ambiguities characterized findings among gay Christians, thus showing elements of gay Christians operating on borders of femininities and masculinities. This is different from Rihana who regards himself as a woman and takes on feminine roles in his

relationship with his partner. Chipobabz assumes feminine gender roles within his family setup and reflects a supportive father who enjoys his cooking.

In their article “Construction of Male Sexuality and Gender Roles in Puerto Rican Heterosexual College Students”, Peraz-Jimenez *et al* assert that “gender roles relate to a set of norms and beliefs about how men and women must behave and think in a particular culture” (2007:358-359). Religion and culture both have written and unwritten codes of behaviour and thought patterns which men and women are expected to live by. However, in the case of some of these participants, they do not subscribe to religio-cultural gender norms as they are sexually attracted to other men and not women, may dress in an “unmanly” manner, and for Rihana and Chipobabz, when Christianity and culture expect them to be providers for women, they are provided for by other men. Siann adds that gender roles are “subject to social and cultural influences and are only minimally, if at all, influenced by sexual characteristics such as hormones, chromosomes and sex organs” (1994:vi). Gender roles are socio-culturally assigned to males and females but the participants sometimes take on gender roles against the grain of religio-cultural expectations and prescriptions.

5.5. Summary

This chapter has presented how participants “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of Christianity in this process following my research findings in urban Lusaka, Zambia, which employed focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and observation methods. It has shown that gay Christians exhibited ambiguities in their worldviews on the infallibility of the Bible and fallibility of biblical hermeneutics. The study showed that some participants engage in their own biblical hermeneutics emanating from their experiences and this is usually at variance with dominant traditional Christianity’s biblical hermeneutics. Furthermore, participants are faced with the ambiguity of belonging and not belonging within some quarters of Zambian Christianity which either tolerate or reject them. Churches that tolerate gay Christians do so based on gay people’s piety and church priorities. The chapter has also highlighted the theology of crucifixion and creation as emerging from participants.

Additionally, participants “self-construct” their identities and sexualities through parlance of self-identity, social identity and Christian identity. Evidently, they still negotiate their self-identity in light of social identity and Christian identity which does not in some instances

correlate with participants' "self-construction" of their identities and themselves as sexual beings. Participants' identities and sexualities are exhibited through performance such as dressing, mannerisms, position identities, sexual roles and gender roles.

Having discussed how participants "self-construct" their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of Christianity in the Zambian context in this process, the next chapter conceptualizes borderland gender and sexualities. This is an analytical framework I employ in chapter seven to analyse and present research findings on how participants "self-construct" their identities and sexualities and the role of Zambian culture in the construction process.

Chapter Six: Theorization of Borderland Gender and Sexualities

6.0. Introduction

As established in the preceding chapters, my study sought to interrogate study participants' "self-construction" of their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of religion and culture in this process. In the previous chapter, using incipient theologies as an analytical lens, I presented and discussed research findings on how participants "self-construct" their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of religions and cultures therein. The chapter discussed ambiguous spaces in which the participants formulate their identities and sexualities such as infallibility of the Bible and fallibility of biblical hermeneutics, belonging and not belonging within some spheres of Zambian Christianity, an emphasis on individual piety, and differences in church priorities and their relationship with the spaces study participants occupy therein. It also highlighted two incipient theologies from the study participants, the theology of crucifixion and creation. Language and performance were discussed as ways in which the participants construct and act out their identities and sexualities. Negotiation of self-identity and Christian identity of study participants was also discussed.

This chapter builds on the previous chapter by theorizing borderland gender and sexualities as an analytical framework used in understanding how participants "self-construct" their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of religion and culture in that construction as presented in chapter seven. Below, I begin by explaining the use of the concept of borderland gender and sexualities in this study before exploring feminist cultural hermeneutics. I then use some of its insights in relation to how participants formulate their identities and themselves as sexual beings within Zambian culture. I proceed to facilitate an understanding of the concept borderland as adopted in this study, starting by discussing its use as a physical location and as borderland theory. I then discuss the concept of borderland gender and sexualities as my analytical lens for the "self-construction" of participants' identities and sexualities and the role culture plays in this process. I go on to discuss borderlands as sites of power, structure and surveillance, resistance and agency.

6.1. The Concept of Borderland Gender and Sexualities

I propose the concept of borderland gender and sexualities as a second analytical framework to analyse the role of Zambian culture in the construction of participants' identities and

sexualities. Zambian culture in this study is understood as both precolonial and post the introduction of Christianity to Zambia. Proffering of the concept of borderland gender and sexualities was necessitated by my research findings which presented ambiguities. These include the following: first, some participants regard themselves as women and take on feminine roles in their relationships and communal life, whilst others view themselves as females in their relationships but not as women. Second, their families intuitively know or *‘suspect’* they are gay but choose not to speak about their identities and sexualities nor do they want their neighbours and communities knowing about their sons’ identities and sexualities. Third, some participants cohabit with their sexual partners under the guise of platonic friendship in the communal gaze, whilst their families know that they are in sexual relationships with their "male friends" and do not seem to mind. Fourth, two communal expressions are evident in which some communities know about the identities of some of the participants and embrace them, while other communities are less tolerant of gay identities and sexualities. Last is the construction of participants’ identities and sexualities in both predominant masculine spaces – male initiation rites of passage – and predominant feminine spaces – kitchen parties or initiation ceremonies immediately before marriage.

I found such ambiguities informative on three accounts: first, they demonstrated that some gay identities and sexualities are outside as well as between the male and female binary dominant in heteronormative Zambia and western worldviews. Second, they highlighted that gay identities and sexualities are known within given communities but there is no homogenous response to them. Third, they portrayed how the participants’ identities and sexualities are both non-fixed and partially fixed identities and sexualities, therefore lying in between borders of general understandings of masculinities and femininities. Hence, borderland gender and sexualities has been used to critically explore the ambiguities that belie how participants *‘self-construct’* their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of Zambian culture in this process.

The use of the concept of borderland gender and sexualities was further necessitated by analytical lenses that have been used in studying African masculinities. The construction of African masculinities has been analysed using Africa’s colonial past, patriarchal cultures and religious knowledge systems by Ouzgane and Morrell (2005). Masculinities on the African continent have also been investigated using social construction of actors and the relational nature of masculinity by Lindsay and Miescher (2003). While Barker and Ricardo (2005) use

the general masculinity lens, Ratele (2008) frames his studies within social-psychology and Punt (2007) applies queer theory. The lenses used by the outlined scholars in the analysis of African masculinities are vital since they not only acknowledge Africa's historical past as an integral component in the construction of African masculinities, but also the necessity to destabilize African gender and sexualities. However, these frameworks are inadequate in analysing how gay Christians –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of religions and cultures in this process. First, they tend to present African masculinities in heteronormative terms to the negation of African gay men. Whether heterosexual or not, men do not experience their identities in one homogenous manner or as one homogenous entity. In other words, heterosexual men’s experiences may not be the same as those of gay men. Neither do all gay men hold similar experiences in relation to their identities and sexualities. Gay men in Africa can also be categorized according to race, ethnicity, class, age and religious affiliation among other categorizations, thus, understanding them as one entity is antithetical.

Second, the lenses that have mainly been used in analysing African masculinities have not focused so much on the influence of African cultures – both pre-colonial and post the introduction of Christianity – in the construction of gay men's identities and sexualities. Where African cultures have been co-opted into studies of African masculinities, it has been in the negative light of patriarchy and its subjugation of women. This perspective usually depicts all African men as proponents and benefactors of patriarchy, even within cultures which function in matricentric worldviews. The frameworks used neglect to show that within the much emphasised patriarchy, some African men, namely, gay men, suffer the brunt of discrimination for not being the ideal men - discrimination from the indigenous cultural perspectives in which the ideal man would be one with many children, cattle and sometimes many wives. Gay Christians sometimes forge their identities outside and between the masculine and feminine binary. My interest is how study participants formulate their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of Zambian culture – both precolonial and post the introduction of Christianity – plays in this process led me to read works on feminist cultural hermeneutics since it too has engaged with African cultures in relation to women and gender issues.

6.2. Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics

In this study, I adopted Berger's approach towards hermeneutics as “a certain conception of philosophy and its typical methods. In its broadest sense, hermeneutics means interpretation and the theory of interpretation” (1986:143). Worldviews and their interpretations give rise to how cultures are interpreted. Thus, cultural hermeneutics is not an event but a process of everyday life as found in given communities. African cultures and their interpretations have in recent times been critiqued by African feminist scholars. In her book *Introducing Feminist Cultural Hermeneutics*, Kanyoro (2002:14) observes that African culture is regarded as a thread which strings community beliefs and the social set-up together, thus its critique is a great threat to community security as it contains elements which are the very veins through which solidarity of communities is nurtured. Not only are African cultures a uniting force for African communities, they are also sources of African identities which in turn inform and influence the African worldview on everyday life. There have been contending positions on the place of individual identities within communitarian African cultures, with Bujo (2010) arguing that identities within African cultures are mainly understood within the communal framework and not necessarily at personal or individual levels. Similar sentiments on the communal and corporate nature of African identity is emphasized by Mbiti (1970) and recently by Gade (2011 and 2012) who uses *Ubuntu* as an African humanism, philosophy, ethic and a worldview. Thus, one attains identity or personhood only within communal identity. Implicitly, outside community, one has no identity or identity is distorted.

Such an understanding of African identity and personal identity is refuted by Gyekye (1997) who considers personal identity as important even within a community, since a person is not presented with any option other than belonging to a community.

The individual is by nature a social (communal) being, yes; but she (sic) is also by nature, other things as well; that is, she (sic) possesses other attributes that may also constitute her (sic) nature. The exercise or application or consideration of these attributes will whittle down or delimit the “authoritative” role or function that may be ascribed to, or invested in, the community (1997:47).

Based on Gyekye's (1997) observation, the study participants who are part of the Zambian cultural community are not passive, but instead are agents whose lives are in dialogue with their communal identity, but sometimes their personal identities in relation to them as sexual

being override communal identity dictates. Arguably, contemporary Zambia presents moderate multiple communitarianism paradigms in which the individual and community are in dialogue and the individual has autonomy on which identity to adopt and (re)formulate. Furthermore, Zambian culture is not homogenous, especially within urban Lusaka in which this study was located. Therefore, depending on circumstances and personal preference, one can choose the level at which communitarian identity overrides personal identity, although community identity requires one not to go against the communal grain. This choice between communitarian identity and personal identity is not unique to study participants as other members of the community sometimes have to make similar choices.

Furthermore, Kanyoro's (2002:14) argument presents African cultures as homogenous. I disagree with her on the homogeneity of African cultures because African cultures are an array of ways of life presented by people of diverse ethnicities in Africa. Therefore, approaching them in their plurality avoids essentialism, thereby allowing for distinctiveness of each culture in Africa. Even within urban Lusaka, there are many cultures not only based on ethnicity. Urban cultures are based on class, age, education levels, and locality, among other determinants. I observed that even among gay Christians there are ambiguous "city/town cultures" which have derivations of rural cultures. Additionally, Kanyoro (2002) offers a critical understanding of African culture in relation to women, showing that African culture needs to be questioned. Such an approach to African cultures leaves room for critiquing African cultures; a task I undertook in interrogating Zambian "city/town cultures" in the "self-construction" of gay Christian identities and how gay Christians construct and reformulate themselves as sexual beings in Lusaka-Zambia.

Kanyoro (2002:13) adds that culture remains "a double-edged sword and is both the creed for the community identity and the main justification for difference, oppression and injustice – especially to those whom culture defines as 'the other', 'the outsider'". She offers an analysis of African cultures from a feminist perspective, bringing to light how cultures give communities a sense of who they are and also belonging to community members, whilst at the same time, operating on the notion of inclusion and exclusion on account of adherence or lack of adherence to social norms. She is right by bringing to the fore the positives and negatives in African cultures, as well as showing how the concept of borders in cultures acts as determinants for who is in and who is out. I wish to take her critique of African cultures further by analysing them in relation to gay Christians, acknowledging that there are many

persons that are “othered” by African cultures, apart from women. My study critiques culture from the vantage point of sexually marginalized gay Christians within the Zambian context.

I also borrowed insights from African feminist cultural hermeneutics, a framework espoused by Oduyoye (2001) and Kanyoro (2002) who both contend that not everything in African culture is liberating. They further state that African culture needs to be approached with suspicion and that it remains a locus of resistance. Therefore, using cultural lenses, culture and cultural practices need to be investigated in relation to how they shape people’s reality in a given context. Premised on this understanding, I critique culture for its role in the construction of gay Christian identities and sexualities within Zambia. Assertions offered by Oduyoye (2001) and Kanyoro (2002) are supported by Russell (2004) and Phiri and Nadar (2006) who point out that everyday realities are socially constructed; there is a need to analyse this construction in regard to the culture that shape our worldviews by providing us with an identity and way of life; and life-giving elements of culture need to be promoted while life-denying aspects are rejected. In my interrogation of Zambian culture and its place in the construction of gay Christian identities and sexualities, I approached Zambian culture both with suspicion and appreciation, realizing that not everything in it is life-affirming, and yet, it still has elements that promote life, gay life in particular.

I also approached the interrogation of Zambian culture and its role in the construction of gay Christian identities and sexualities cognisant that culture remains contested, especially in relation to matters of sexualities since they dictate which sexualities are included and excluded from communities. However, African feminist cultural hermeneutics was limited for the analysis of “self-construction” of gay Christians’ identities and sexualities and the role of culture therein, because it focuses on women and not men – especially gay Christians – within the cultural spaces. It also understands men and women within the gender binary. However, the concept of borderland gender and sexualities is applicable to both men and women, including gay Christians, as it does not focus on gender binaries, heterosexual and homosexual binaries. The interest in this study pushes the argument away from gender binaries to gender and sexualities that lie within the physical and metaphorical borderland of masculinities and femininities, legality and illegality, recognized and unrecognized.

Nevertheless, African feminist cultural hermeneutics provides new possibilities for the inclusion of gay Christians as it queries the notion of stable, all-encompassing African cultures. It therefore facilitates for “dissidence” and difference within African cultures. This

observation is made by Chitando (2009) in his book *Troubled but not Destroyed*. He reflects on how African women scholars differ from African male scholars in their willingness to critique African cultures. Having discussed African feminist cultural hermeneutics, I proceed to discuss border, borderlands and borderland theory.

6.3. Borderlands and Borderland Theory

Developed from the term border mainly used in the discipline of geography, the concept of borderland is now closely associated with anthropological and geopolitical studies, and has been adopted in many other fields. Wilson and Donnan define borders as:

the political membranes through which people, goods, wealth and information must pass in order to be deemed acceptable or unacceptable by the state. Thus, borders are agents of state's security and sovereignty, and a physical record of a state's past and present relations with its neighbours (1998:9).

The authors present two understandings of the border: restrictive and porous. Hence, it can be argued that physical borders reflect points of exclusion and inclusion of individuals based on their identities and abilities to fit into particular states. Stanca points out that "a borderland may be associated with a kind of "no man's land", a fluctuating space between two scenes whose frontiers can often be hard to decipher" (2006:87). A borderland, therefore, is a space of ambiguities, belonging but not belonging, being part of but not part of (chapters five and seven). Although borders are physical spaces, the understanding of borders can be adopted in relation to ideologies, cultures, gender, race, sexualities, among others. I use the term "border" metaphorically to denote ambiguities that characterize constructions of gender and sexual identities of the study participants.

Recent studies conducted on the concept of borderlands have mainly been premised on Anzaldúa's (1987) book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* in which she writes about physical borderlands between Mexico and Texas, and the cultures of the Mexicans who lived on and crossed over the border in United States of America (USA). Not all Mexicans living on the border with the USA cross the physical border but they experience both Mexican and American cultures, thus, experience life within cultural liminality by taking on both Mexican and American cultures. Anzaldúa (1987) refutes the dichotomy of borderland cultures as presented in the western worldview which emphasize duality of western and non-

western cultures. She opts for hybridity in which two cultures come together, not held far apart from each other. However, the question worth raising is: how authentic then would borderland identities be if they are only a hybrid of cultures on both sides of the border? Is it then possible to hold both duality and hybridity simultaneously, drawing from both as need arises, therefore, allowing for semi-authentic and/or authentic dual-hybridized borderland identities?

Borderland spaces are in themselves liminal spaces where one is, but at the same time, is not. In his book *The Rites of Passage*, Van Gennep (1960) presents an anthropological and ethnographic account by discussing rites of passage which are considered as liminal spaces. Building on the works of Van Gennep (1960), in his books *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* and *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Turner (1967 and 1974) deals with aspects of the ritual system of the Ndembu people of Northwestern Zambia. He specifically explores the *Mukanda* ceremony – an initiation rite of passage for boys – as an anti-structured space for identity formulation. Turner (1974) regards the anti-structure as a space allowing identities that would not ordinarily be tolerated within the structure spaces. Furthermore, in another chapter contribution, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage”, Turner (1987) focusses on the nature and characteristics of transition in relatively stable societies by focusing on rites of passage which tend to have developed liminal periods (Turner 1987:5). For Turner, within the liminal space, “the subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, ‘invisible’” (1987:6). The invisibility alluded to here enables initiates to explore ordinarily “unacceptable” structured identities and sexualities. In light of this study, study participants constructed their identities and sexualities on the borders between masculinities and femininities, thus, they experience both masculinities and femininities although they do not categorically fit as either male or female (sections 7.4.2 and 7.4.3). Their identities and sexualities lie in between and outside the gender binaries. Implicitly, participants symbolically struggle to overcome the gender binaries within the borderland which allows for experimentation of gender and sexualities and re(creation) of semi dual-hybridized gay Christian identities and sexualities. Therefore, they experience their identities and sexualities as in-between the binaries but remain out of the categorical stipulations of the binaries.

According to Anzaldúa, the border is “*una herida abierta*” or an open wound where “the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. . . the lifeblood of two worlds merging to

form a third country – a border culture” (1987:3). Arguably, border culture is a reflection of both forms of cultures but cannot be typically classified as either/or as border cultures lie in-between, therefore duality and hybridity are possible. Thus, living on the border allows for non-conformity to either cultures/normative genders or holding both simultaneously. Instead, forging of border culture takes place. Being on the border creates spaces of hybridized and dualistic identities that are continuously re-created, sometimes in contestation with either culture. A similar observation is made by Bhabha (1994) who posits that in relation to identity and diversity, the concept of liminality goes beyond western binaries but instead shows the in-between-ness and hybridity, thereby creating a Third Space. Bhabha (1994) argues that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in ambivalence and are not fixed, which subsequently leads to cultural difference. On the borders, a ~~third~~ culture”, even a ~~fourth~~ culture” is formed and keeps being formed following interactions of cultures on either sides of the border. Anzaldúa adds that people living on the borders ~~have~~ multiple personalities, they have an insider/outsider cultural perspective since they are ~~seeing~~ double” (Anzaldúa 2002:549). Border cultures allow for plurality of personalities, non-fixed, transitional, dualistic and hybridized identities.

The concept of dual and hybrid borderland culture can also be applied to how the gay Christians in this study forged their identities and sexualities – as sexual dissidents in the broader Zambian context but accepted within some of their families and communities. Although Anzaldúa’s (1987) writing is about Mexicans on the border with United States of America and uses border in the literal sense, her argument can still be used symbolically in relation to my study participants whose sexual and gender identities are held as illegal but recognized in some pockets of their communities. They remain ~~outsiders~~” within Zambian culture which does not homogenously accept their identities and sexualities, but at the same time, are ~~insiders~~” who are sometimes allowed to participate in both masculine and feminine rites of passage (sections 7.4.2 and 7.4.3).

The concept of borderland has been expanded to incorporate other components of human life such as spirituality, sexuality, the mind, thereby understood as spaces that ~~trigger~~ encounter and exchange (cultural, personal, etc.)” (Nicoleta 2006:87). Expanded understanding of borderland and its theorization propelled Anzaldúa to develop the theory ~~new~~ mestiza” which has been

influential and represents an innovative expansion of previous biologically based definitions of *mestizaje*. For Anzaldúa, “new mestizas” are people who inhabit multiple worlds because of their gender, sexuality, color, class, body, personality, spirituality, spiritual beliefs, and/or other life experiences. This theory offers a new concept of personhood that synergistically combines apparently contradictory Euro-America and indigenous traditions (Keating 2009:10).

The theory suggests that people can have multiple identities owing to borderlands in gender, sexualities, class, personality, spirituality, among many other forms of categorization. For example, when study participants indicated construction of their identities and sexualities within masculine and feminine cultural spaces, they covertly subscribed to Anzaldúa’s (1987) notions of borderlands where ambiguities are the very state of being. In this regard, ambiguities are in themselves some form of authentic identities. Borderland theory does not subscribe to operating on the binary but points to hybridized, non-fixed, non-conforming and ever evolving identities which in many instances are in resistance to cultures on both sides of the border. I use borderland theory as allowing for both dualism and hybridity only insofar as the former and the latter denote authentic identities of participants in the process of construction of their identities as gendered and sexual beings.

Therefore, as Anzaldúa points out, “the borderlands are a bridge between the worlds of the Chicano/a and *gabacho/a*, the straight and the *queer*, the male and the female, and essentially breaks down either/or dichotomous thinking. The *mestiza* consciousness is a ‘tolerance for ambiguity’” (1987:79). In her article “Bisexual, Pansexual, Queer: Non-binary Identities and the Sexual Borderlands”, Callis adds that

borderland theory points to the creation and maintenance of identities that fall outside of cultural norms, asking how borderlands simultaneously develop their own cultures while challenging hegemonic ideology...I find the theoretical and metaphorical borderlands to be a productive space to understand identities that are complex, multiple, and existing both within and outside of a binary system (2014:68-69).

The borderland presents itself as a “safe space” for self-discovery, self-(re)formulation as well as potentialities for counter-cultural lifestyle. Culture on the borderland is usually in contestation with dominant ideology and in one way or another. Both borderland and ~~in-~~

state” cultures encounter each other and overtly or covertly transform each other. For example, twenty years ago, it was uncommon to openly hear same-sex discourses in Zambia. Discussions on same-sex sexualities have been brought into the public domain in the last fifteen years mainly as a result of the gay subcultures’ influence on dominant cultures and also human rights campaigns for sexual minorities. Arguably, borderland cultures in this case are prodding dominant cultures to assimilate elements of the counter-culture. Study participants are on the borderland of counter-cultural forms of identities and sexualities and dominant cultural forms of identity and sexuality. They oscillate between subscribing to gay subcultures and belonging to the broader Zambian culture that may not be embracing of their identities and sexualities.

Furthermore, the borderland is a socially constructed bridge of two worlds for participants – the world of masculinities and femininities, illegality and legality, conformity and non-conformity, belonging and not belonging (section 5.2.2). Additionally, more ambiguities are shown in discussions on how families of some of the study participants intuitively know about their sons’ identities and sexualities but choose not to openly discuss the subject or risk the rest of community finding out. The ambiguities presented by the participants generated my curiosity, as their identities and sexualities lie in-between – although unaccepted by the general populace, their identities and sexualities are a reality for them and their lives go on within this liminal space. In this regard, the concept of borderland gender and sexualities closely relates with incipient theologies used in chapter five to analyse the role of religion in how participants –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings mainly because they do not belong within the norm, but adopt elements of the norm to sustain the anti-normative. Both analytical frameworks look at understanding life experiences away from the dominant and focus on the emerging and sometimes counter-discourses mainly located on the margins. The emerging discourses stemming from individual experiences are sometimes in resistance to the already established dominant narrative. Cardinal is that both analytical frameworks point to the agency of participants in how they construct their identities and sexualities amidst the influence of religion and culture.

Critique of Borderland Theory

In spite of using borderland theory for analytical purposes, I still offer the following critique of it: first, it presents a homogenous border people as being in a state of perpetual liminality as a state of being. However, it is possible that cultures on different sides of the borders may

not necessarily influence or affect all people in similar ways. I contend that it is therefore possible that by choice, some people on the border may align themselves with one culture only and not with the other, thus, have fixed cultural identities. Other people may adopt both cultures to form ambiguous borderland cultures. Second, the theory presents the borderland as the end of territorial space and authority. However, the border can also be a starting point of something and not only the end of the territorial space. In this regard, sexual and identities borders offered by the binary model are not an end but a beginning for imagining and conceptualizing sexualities and identities that go beyond the normative boundaries of the binary. Last, Gonzalez (2003:35) has critiqued borderland theory on three accounts: its tendency to romanticize the border; the political limits of multiculturalism and pluralism, projects promoted by borderland theory; and the ideological contradictions of theorizing cultural identity non-dialectically as a condition of perpetual liminality.

In summing up this section, the above discussion shows how the borderland is a space which allows for malleability of self and identities. It is a site that enables operating in between, within, as well as outside the cultures on either sides of the borders. In spite it having been located in a physical location, namely, urban Lusaka in contemporary Zambia, my study adopts the concept of borderland and applies it metaphorically in relation to the construction of study participants' identities and sexualities. The borderland gives room for both hybridized and dualistic identities subject to individual preference. One important feature of the borderland is that ambiguity is the very state of being and a sphere that gives rise to ambiguous identities. Therefore, establishing how study participants "self-construct" their identities and sexualities and the role of culture in this process propelled me to use borderland gender and sexualities as an analytical lens to allow me to adequately analyse ambiguities presented by participants. In this section, I have discussed borderland theory and in the following section, I proceed to analyse borderland theory as appropriated in gender and sexualities.

6.4. Borderland Gender and Sexualities

As established (section 6.3), the concept of borderlands has evolved from being a preserve of anthropology, geography and politics to an interdisciplinary concept. For instance, it has been adopted in the field of medicine and psychology, as shown by Jackson (2005) who uses it in relation to mind-body borderlands. Similarly, borderland theory has been applied in relation to gender and sexualities to denote identities that are forged in-between male and female,

heterosexuality and homosexuality binaries. In relation to sexual orientation and gender identities, Waitt contends that:

the uncertainties of GLQBTI borderlands indicate it might be possible to revisit the queer political agenda by acknowledging that sexual identities are actively and spatially produced through processes that simultaneously draw from and defy social borders (2002:773).

The spectrum of sexual and gender identities presented within LGBTQI communities indicates the varieties in gender and sexual identities beyond the heterosexual/homosexual binaries. The spectrum shows a non-fixed continuum of gender and sexual identities and it is within this continuum that my study participants fall. The participants drew from masculinities and femininities, through utilizing male and female initiation rites and gender categorized cultural practices, to “self-construct” their identities and sexualities. Such ambiguities overtly show how identities are always under construction, and operate outside the normative. The concept of borderland gender and sexualities does not subscribe to ideals of being male or female; in their state of ambiguities, they lie in-between the two binaries, borrowing from the two ends and at the same time defying the “totality or wholeness” of both ends and constantly “self-constructing”.

Additionally, Anzaldúa argues that borderlands are “an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries” (2009b:243). In a similar manner as Anzaldúa, Butler states:

How do drag, butch, femme, transgender, transsexual persons enter into the political field? They make us not only question what is real, and what “must” be, but they also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted. These practices of instituting new modes of reality take place in part through the scene of embodiment, where the body is not understood as a static and accomplished fact, but as an aging process, a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone (2004:29).

The concept of borderland gender and sexualities remains difficult to define, categorize or even confine to normativity as gender and sexual borders are always shifting, boundaries remain blurred and are constantly reworked. The concept of borderland gender and sexualities highlights spaces where an individual in a male body can dress as a female, behave both as male and female, have sexual attraction for females but have sexual relationships with both males and females, thus projecting difficulties in strict categorization of gender and sexualities. In the article, “Gender Outlaws Before the Law: The Courts of the Borderlands”, Gross, using court trials of gender outlaws held in the United States, United Kingdom and Israel, concludes that the cases manifest

not only the unresolved tension between sexual and gender identities, but also the internal conflicts within the identities themselves, as well as the difficulty of maintaining boundaries amongst them (2009:165).

Of interest to my research findings were the tensions of gender and sexual identities as manifested in the concept of borderland gender and sexualities. Within the concept of borderlands of gender and sexualities, study participants self-define and self-affirm, sometimes by embracing genders and sexualities on either ends of the religio-culturally prescribed male and female borders. But they still find unique ways in which to perform their identities and sexualities. For example, different participants aligned themselves with different gender roles – those who self-identified as female assumed more feminine gender roles while those who self-identified as male assumed masculine gender roles. Self-verification was undertaken as part of “self-construction” and against the dominant cultural grain where males are expected to take on male gender roles and females assume female gender roles.

In her article, “Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard”, Perez (2003:123) brings to the fore the Mexico and USA border, observing how borderlands have been imprinted by people who move across the region. While Perez (2003) is arguing about the physical border, the same principle can be metaphorically applied to the concept of borderland gender and sexualities as exhibited by study participants. Study participants are living on the borderland of gender and sexualities overtly or covertly by deconstructing and reconstructing borders around gender and sexuality. At the same time, they are formulating and reformulating their own border cultures on what it means to be a gendered sexual being. However, discrimination of the practice of gay identities and

sexualities in Zambia and the dictates of Zambian culture also influences how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities. Perez furthers her argument to probe gender borders by arguing for

a decolonial gaze that allows for different possibilities and interpretations of what exists in the gaps and silences but is often not seen or heard...decolonial queer interpretations that obligate us to see and hear beyond a heteronormative imaginary (Perez 2003:129).

She queers the borderland arguing that it is a space in which domination of queer by the heteronormative is challenged, a space where formulation of new and unique identities is allowed, making visible and audible non-normative imagining of the concept of borderland gender and sexualities. The concept of borderland gender and sexualities cannot be restricted to physical borders where cultures, gender and sexualities are constantly reformulated as it also captures the metaphorical borderland spaces within given communities in which gender and sexualities operate. It is for this reason that Callis (2014), using an ethnographic analysis, focuses on sexualities in the USA highlighting borders between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Callis examines the usefulness of applying borderland theory to non-gay/non-straight sexualities such as queer and bisexual. Borderland theory offers avenues for formulation and exhibition of ambiguous gender and sexualities. Callis adds it is useful in –the ways that the sexual borderland touches on all sexualities, as individuals knowingly cross, inhabit, or bolster sexual identity borders” (2014:63). Whether the study participants cross the gender and sexual borders, the borderland still remains fertile ground for self-discovery, self-validation and resistance of normativity.

For heterosexual and homosexual-identified people living on either side of the border, the borderland serves multiple purposes. It can become a boundary not to be crossed, or a pathway to a new identity. Because the borderlands are emerging from within the current binary system of sexuality, they interface with individuals of all sexual identities (Callis 2014:64).

In relation to gender and sexual identities, the borderland is not easily permeable but still remains porous for incorporation and adoption of certain practices from both binaries to be incorporated into the new identities. At the same time, the borderland deals with spaces for forging new identities for those on the borders.

This section has shown that gender and sexualities on the borderlands are non-fixed, unstable, ambiguous and “unpredictable” identities. These identities lie outside and sometimes in-between the socially constructed binaries. In a similar manner, study participants’ identities and sexualities are constructed in sites that create spaces for subverting gender and sexual normativity, thus, enabling for their reformulation.

The borderland therefore presents sites of power, structure and surveillance, resistance and agency. I go on to show that study participants continue to forge their identities and sexualities within the borderland.

6.5. Borderlands as Sites of Power

Borderlands remain sites of power as observed by Nicoleta:

borderlands have been considered sites of power, involving elements such as agents of state power, victims of the abuse of power, subverting state power, border acceptance as an ideologically hegemonic belief that has to be broken in order to redraw borders (2006:89).

As sites of power, borderlands determine which activities are welcome on the border and who holds authority and who does not. Borderlands as sites of power bring into play power dynamics among border players, for instance, between smugglers who are involved in illegalities and constantly try and subvert power, and customs agents authorized by states to facilitate legal business at the border. Zambian culture and guardians of culture, that is, traditional leaders, act as powers to determine the legality of sexualities; in this case, gay sexualities and identities are largely regarded as unwelcome and not to be permitted within structured society. Not only are the state, religion and culture powers in issues of borderland gender and sexualities, but heterosexuals too are powerful. In the article, “On Borders and Power: A Theoretical Framework”, Newman raises critical questions on power within the borderland, such as:

“borders for whom?”. Who benefits and who loses from enclosing, or being enclosed by, others. This, in turn, raises questions of power relations. Who are the groups in society who desire borders and what are the decision making, and law enforcement, processes which enable certain groups, normally relatively small elites, to make these decisions? (Newman 2003:22)

Borders usually serve to benefit those who have power to determine the parameters of the border, who is inside and outside the border. Within discourses and practices of sexual and gender identities, borders are not only metaphorically but physically marked and enforced by heterosexuals who usually police gay men and other sexual minorities. Thus, in order to control who belongs to the “rightful” sexuality and who practices the “right” identity, sexualities like homosexuality have to be closed off and the borders of heterosexuality enforced in order to avoid “encroachment”. To relate this argument to my study, in many instances, heterosexuals as the majority within the Zambian context exercise power over participants’ sexual and gender identities by determining their unacceptability and acceptability. The power is assumed to be inclined towards heterosexuals, rendering participants seemingly powerless. Although this is largely understood as the norm, in this thesis, I refute notions of complete powerlessness of gay Christians as I hold that by negotiating their identities and sexualities within the very presence of heterosexual power which controls sexualities, they exhibit elements of power.

6.6. Borderlands as Sites of Structure and Surveillance

A site is “the place where something was, is, or is to be situated” (Robinson 1996:1310). In this study, I relate sites to places where borders are situated and where structure and surveillance, resistance and agency exist. I use sites and not site because there are many places on the borderland where gender and sexualities are constructed.

According to Flint, structure is:

a set of rules (formal as in legally enforceable laws) and norms (culturally accepted practices) that partially determine what can and cannot, could and should not, be done. In this sense, structures are expressions of power as they define what is permissible and expected (2006:26).

Within the concept of borderland gender and sexualities, it can be argued that spaces of power to prescribe gender, gender roles, sexualities and sexual activities that are allowed and which ones are not lie with hetero-patriarchy. Structures of power such as the legislation, cultural norms, religious teachings, familial rules, among others, dictate how gender and sexuality are to be performed and this is usually within hetero-patriarchal terms. Arguably, the structure helps in maintaining a semblance of order; the borderland is a space that allows

and thrives on disordering the organisational nature that lies in power. Turner (1969) points how the liminal spaces, which also operate on similar principles as borderlands, are anti-structure since they operate from the bottom-up, and are spaces for creativity and pressure for change. And so, Turner (1974) adds that within the anti-structural liminal space, the greater the powerlessness, the greater the need for positive anti-structural activities, terming this the *communitas* where ritual-as-social-drama is enacted. Being on the borderland can loosely be termed as anti-structure as it allows for formulation of non-conforming gender and sexual identities which cannot be allowed in the structure where power prescriptively assigns gender on account of an individual's biological sex. The borderland enables counteractions to the dictates of power through individual and collective borderland agency; rules are broken. Thus, the borderland gives room for both expressions of power to exist, that is, power from those that hold authority as well as power from those who seemingly do not hold any power. Only in this case, power from the bottom supersedes power from the top by enabling enactment of anti-structural gender and sexual identities. Performance of anti-structural gender and sexual identities is what I encountered during my research with the study participants: the fluidity and non-fixity in gender and sexual identities brought to life borderland gender and sexualities. Borderlands are anti-structure, although I would argue that even within the anti-structure lies a structure which is not just recognized as such by the normative but is viewed as structure by those in the anti-structural space. The only difference is that the structure in the anti-structure does not prescribe identities nor hold down those who subscribe to the anti-structure: in fact, the structure in the anti-structure is in the anti-structure itself.

In order for structure to maintain its power and ensure that order exists, it employs surveillance on the borders to dictate who crosses and who does not, who is allowed to cross and who is not. In his book *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life*, Lyon defines surveillance as “any collection and processing of personal data, whether identifiable or not, for the purposes of influencing or managing those whose data have been garnered” (2001:2). Surveillance, mainly employed in security, governance, and recently, consumer studies, is used to gather as well as process information and personal information for purposes of influencing and managing those whose data is captured. Although surveillance can also be used in the positive sense, it is mainly used in the negative sense and aligned with control and regulation. Once more, in his book *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*, Lyon adds that

the word ‘surveillance’ has a natural affinity, it would seem, with policing and what today is often called crime control. Police routinely place certain persons ‘under surveillance’, meaning that they are specifically and carefully watched when they are suspected of committing an offence (2007:36).

Three ideas from Lyon (2007) are of interest to my study in relation to the concept of borderland gender and sexualities: policing, control and watching. Zambian culture acts as a border where policing, control and watching of gender and sexuality conformity occurs. A similar argument is also made by Kaunda who addresses liminality and border patrol from an Ndembu cultural perspective:

while the community could have tried to suppress and repress such [same-sex] identities because of its overemphasis on procreation, there was always a possibility that in time this sexuality would eventually escape from anti-structural confinement, find its locus for expression within structured societies, begin the process of struggle for recognition and force cultural tradition to reorient into that direction (2015:32-33)

Genders are held as complementary, whilst sexuality is regarded as serving the sole purpose of procreation. Within Ndembu culture, in as much as the structured community would have tried to police and control sexualities and identities such as those of gay men, it was not guaranteed that such sexualities and identities would not subvert the borders to find themselves within structured community. Thus, under surveillance, study participants are culturally expected to perform their gender identities and sexualities as males because they have male bodies. Implicitly, they are expected to marry an adult female and sire children. Failure to abide by the cultural grain renders them deviant and culturally unacceptable.

Under cultural as well as religious and legal surveillance, study participants are not expected to perform their identities and sexualities outside the gender assigned roles. In his article ‘Tear Down the Walls’: On Demolishing the Panopticon”, Haggerty, writing from a sociology perspective notes the purpose of surveillance is that “its ‘soul training’ component seeks to transform individuals such that they shape their behaviour in prescribed directions” (2006:27). Surveillance seeks to create an assemblage in which people behave in one particular way and in turn, homogeneity is created. Under surveillance, going “astray” is punished. Arguably, the concept of borderland gender and sexualities feed on surveillance

found in heteronormativity. In “escaping” surveillance, the borderland becomes a “safe space” where non-conformity and subjectivity is encouraged and explored. Haggerty adds that surveillance entails

the monitoring of people who reside at a lower point in the social hierarchy...it is reminiscent of the functioning of a microscope, where specific marginalized or dangerous groups are situated under the unidirectional gaze of the powerful who can watch while remaining unseen by their charge (2006:29).

Although recent surveillance has also captured lifestyles of those who wield power, surveillance also points to monitoring those who are regarded as potential sources of disorder, such as marginalized and dangerous groups. Therefore, being on the border of performing their identities in-between masculinities and femininities, participants “escape” from the gaze of power which prescribes and controls gender and sexual identities, that is, Zambian culture. Implicitly, surveillance

continues to play an important role in establishing and reinforcing social inequalities. Groups are differently positioned to be able to exploit these surveillance potentialities, and their abilities to do so are often structured according to traditional social cleavages (Haggerty 2006:29).

Surveillance is cited for perpetuation of social inequalities between those who place others under surveillance and those who are constantly under surveillance. Therefore, the borderland in which surveillance is absent becomes a site for attainment of a semblance of social equality.

Borders are also sites of resistance and agency because those on the borders may escape surveillance as they operate outside the watch of the power gaze but neither do they cross the borders. Instead, they live on the borders where they continue to construct their identities, cultures and lifestyles.

6.7. Borderlands as Sites of Resistance and Agency

The borderlands are also sites of resistance. Resistance is “an act or process of resisting, the ability to, or degree to which, something damaging can be withstood” (Robinson 1996:1188). Using Anzaldúa’s work, Martinez, in her article “Storytelling as Oppositional Culture: Race,

Class, and Gender in the Borderlands”, creates a nuance between borderlands and empowerment and resistance within the domination matrix. She asserts that themes in

Anzaldúa's work reflects a conscious oppositional culture in that they bring to light the experience of internal colonialism, institutional discrimination, and racial formation, as well as multiple axes of oppression...they speak to empower the reader and the community, to enlist their part in a struggle to resist this hegemony whether on the battlefields of institutional discrimination, sexism, or heterosexism (1999:39).

Martinez's (1999) argument portrays borderlands as spaces where people resist domination which results from discrimination. In the case of my study participants, domination comes in the form of policed gender and sexual identities. Domination of gender and sexual identities occurs mainly due to hetero-patriarchy which reinforces male-heterosexual superiority and hierarchy on account of gender and sexual identities. The question then is: what form would homo-patriarchy take and how would it manifest itself? This is addressed in section 7.7 where I discuss elements of violence within some gay Christians' sexual relationships under the caption "homo-patriarchy". Lugones adds that the work of Anzaldúa

deals with the psychology of resistance to oppression. The possibility of resistance is revealed by perceiving the self in the process of being oppressed as another face of the self in the process of resisting oppression. The new mestiza consciousness is born from this interplay between oppression and resistance (1992:35).

For the study participants, "self-construction" of their identities and sexualities, especially in a context that hardly recognizes their identities and existence, entails forging identities born out of contestation between domination and resistance. Their identities and sexualities are formulated and re-formulated within the borderland of "deviancy" and self-validation.

Therefore, resistance in the face of domination in the site of power is either individual or collective as participants engage in the "self-construction" of their identities and sexualities. Their resistance can either be overt or covert; the mere bodily presence of non-conforming gender and sexualities is resistance in itself. Scott posits that resistance from below consists of "open, declared forms of resistance, which attract more attention and the disguised, low-profile, undeclared resistance that constitutes of infrapolitics" (1990:198). This observation

resonates with the forms of resistance I experienced from participants during this study who were both overt about their resistance through typically non-masculine dressing, walking, sitting and general mannerisms, assuming feminine gender and sexual roles in their sexual relationships, within their families and communities. Meanwhile, some participants resisted domination in covert ways by maintaining a semblance of heterosexuality to delude the communal gaze, in spite of being gay. These forms of resistance are synonymous with borderland gender and sexualities which can either be publicly performed in spite of non-conformity and the risk of bearing communal brunt, or be performed away from the public gaze as subtle resistance to normativity to avoid the communal brunt. For Scott, “each of the forms of disguised resistance, of infrapolitics, is the silent partner of a loud form of public resistance” (1990:199). Whether subtly or not, participants resisted domination.

Donnan and Wilson (1998, 1999) point out how borders are not just symbols and locations of these changes, but often also their agents. Not only are borderlands sites of resistance, they also are sites of agency, as life goes on, on the borders. Although gay Christians’ identities and sexualities are not broadly recognized in Zambian culture, within the borderland of gender and sexualities, participants still perform their identities and “self-construct” their identities and sexualities. They are agents amidst surveillance, and borderland gender and sexualities on which they operate remain sites of agency.

Agency is defined as “an active part played by someone or something in bringing something about” (Robinson 1996:23). Flint contends that

agents are those entities attempting to act...agents are given both opportunities to act but also constraints to their possible actions given the structures they operate within...agents will be able to use, and be frustrated by, a number of structures simultaneously, given the multiplicity of spheres they operate within...a particular structure is not monolithic but made up of a number of agents (2006:26).

As agents, study participants are given avenues within Zambian cultures to perform their identities and sexualities but only to a certain extent. For example, they are given the opportunities to perform their identities in line with their feminine sides (section 5.4) by wrapping *chitenge* materials around their waists as they join women who cook at funeral homes but are constrained from wearing the *chitenge* in their day to day lives. Hence, they are not passively acted upon by culture but find means to use cultural spaces that allow for

performance of their identities in spite of cultural delimitations of gay identities and sexualities in daily life.

Agency speaks

a language of fluidity, migration, postcolonialism, displacement...of subaltern identities...the discourse of people who live between different worlds. It speaks against dualism, oversimplification, and essentialism. It is a discourse, a language that explains the social conditions of subjects with hybrid identities (Elenes 1997:359).

Within the borderland, gender and sexualities are non-fixed and are deconstructed, constructed and reconstructed by individual agents on the borders. The borderland can loosely be termed as enabling gender and sexual migration, as binaries are countered to highlight gender and sexual identities that do not conform to the structural understanding of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, it presents persons as complex beings that cannot easily be categorized. I have highlighted this difficulty in the categorization of my study participants, hence, I use the term gay loosely following populist notions. The borderland is therefore a space where hybridity is not only encouraged but also allowed. Thus, borders as sites of agency entail active participation of individuals in the construction of their identities. It is for this reason that Elenes emphasizes that

identity formation is never a project that any subject constructs by herself. Identities are co-constructed by the subject and society at large; whether the subject is marked as “inferior,” “deviant,” “passive,” or unmarked (the “norm”) (1997:359).

In the process of identity construction, societies do not act on passive individuals, instead, there is interaction between the individual and society, whose end result is an individual's identity. Thus, the role of culture in the construction of gender and sexual identities of participants is cardinal.

Herdt contends that culture is “more insidious in its potential to ‘play’ symbolically with the classifications of human bodies and minds” (1993:34), while Hammack (2005 and 2008) and Cohler and Hammack (2006) share similar sentiments and show that culture and personal

development are important in the formulation of sexual identities. Culture engraves on human bodies and inscribe into minds their identities, sexualities, roles and places in social contexts. Thus, construction of gay Christian's identities and sexualities cannot be separated from Zambian culture. It is for this reason that I used social constructionism, self-verification, feminist and queer theories in this study since individual participants are constructed in given ways by religion and culture but at the same time, they either reject, assimilate or negotiate the external constructions of their identities and sexualities in a bid to self-verify or self-validate. However, their "self-construction" of identities and sexualities presented ambiguities worth interrogation.

Borderlands, whether used physically or metaphorically, are sites of power, structure and surveillance, resistance and agency. While borders exist to control and regulate, actors on the border directly or indirectly try to find ways of avoiding the border controls. In this study, religion, culture and heterosexuality were understood as some of the borders that participants deal with in their "self-construction" of identities and sexualities. However, within this study, gender and sexuality borders remain porous enough for (re)creation of identities and sexualities that subvert border regulation.

6.8. Summary

This chapter discussed the concept of borderland gender and sexualities as the analytical framework used in data analysis and presentation in chapter seven. I justified the use of the concept of borderland gender and sexualities since it allows for (re)creation and (re)formulation of identities and sexualities outside the normative binary. The concept of borderland gender and sexualities also helps present ambiguities in identities and sexualities on the borderland as the state of being. Theorization of the concept of borderland gender and sexualities was undertaken with African feminist cultural hermeneutics as the stepping stone. The chapter also discussed the border as a physical space and metaphorical space before relating the borderlands to the "self-construction" of participants' identities and sexualities. As a metaphorical space, the borderland allows for ambiguity, dual and hybrid identities and sexualities. As a physical space, the borderland showed control and policing of gender and sexual identities. The chapter further showed how borderlands are sites of power where states, religions, culture and heterosexuality determine who is in and who is out. Borderlands are also sites of structure and surveillance, as well as resistance and agency. The operationalization of borderland gender and sexualities among study participants is

undertaken in the following chapter where I analyse gay identities and sexualities in relation to Zambian cultures.

Chapter Seven: Gay Christians and Zambian Culture

7.0. Introduction

Building on chapters five and six, this chapter discusses how participants –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings, and the role of Zambian culture in this construction. In chapter five, I discussed how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of Christianity – within the Zambian context – while chapter six discussed the concept of borderland gender and sexualities as the analytical framework used in data analysis and presentation in this current chapter. Chapter six focused on how the concept of borderland gender and sexualities enable the (re)formulation of identities and sexualities outside the gender binary model.

It must be noted that participants were more eager to engage in discussions on how Christianity informs their identities and sexualities than on the role of Zambian culture in their identity formation. This could be because they are urban youths who have very limited contact with indigenous Zambian culture as practiced in rural Zambia but come into contact with much more globalized urban cultures found in Lusaka. Being a cosmopolitan city, culture in urban Lusaka operates on the borderlands of modernity and traditional cultures as they are influenced by interaction with global cultures. For instance, participants had some knowledge about traditional Zambian culture, framed their identities and sexualities within traditional worldviews and dressed along modern cultural trends. Data was produced from focus group discussions, individual interviews with and observation of eighteen study participants.

In this chapter, data analysis and interpretation tasks were guided by the concept of borderland gender and sexualities which is theorized in chapter six. The concept of borderland gender and sexualities deal with –an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries” (Anzaldúa 2009b:243). Study participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities within non-normative cultural scripts and in-between masculinities and femininities, and in some instances, conflating the gender binary. Three overarching themes, based on recurring and unanimous views of participants run through this chapter namely: perspectives, parlance and performance.

7.1. Perspectives on Indigenous Worldviews

As shown in chapter five, participants view the world using many different lenses. This study addressed Christianity within the Zambian context and Zambian culture as frameworks which inform their perspectives about the phenomenon. In the work “Indigenous Knowledge Systems and The African Renaissance Laying a Foundation for the Creation of Counter Hegemonic Discourses”, Ntuli (2002:53-66), writing from a Pan Africanist perspective, argues that the African worldview rejects the instrumentalism embedded in the separation between subject and object – as dominantly espoused by the Western worldview – and seeks a harmonious balance between people and nature. This assertion is informative for my study as it shows how the African worldview does not allow for dichotomy between humans and nature, thus, African cultures cater for both entities. Indigenous worldviews depict people and nature as being in constant communion and the two entities needing to live in peace with each other. These indigenous worldviews are informed by culture and are found within cultures. Ntuli concludes that:

any postcolonial study of colonialism and the process of decolonisation point to the fact that the African was not completely pacified and silenced; that reverse-discourse as an oppositional practice continued to exist especially amongst the rural masses in the interior of the countries (2002:65).

Although unrelated to this study, the conclusion offered is essential as it centralizes counter-narratives to the dominant discourse, an approach also taken in this study. Culture is “a key part of the interplay among individuals, relationships, social contexts, and institutions rather than as a monolithic force acting on individuals or as immutable psychological traits” (Copper 1999:25). Culture remains dynamic and in constant reformation and reformulation owing to interaction. Zambian culture shapes study participants mainly through their communal and institutional relational approach to life. Since culture thrives on communal and institutional relations, these relations frame how participants formulate their identities and themselves as sexual beings. The way participants view the world within indigenous perspectives was integral in my study as cultural influence permeates all aspects of an individual’s life within the Zambian context. Furthermore, participants do not operate outside Zambian culture, thus, by operating within Zambian culture, their identities and sexualities are forged. In establishing how participants view the world, I start by highlighting the contestations between some Zambian cultural beliefs that link same-sex sexualities with

ancestral spirit possession/inhabitation and how participants acknowledged existence of such beliefs but did not align their identities and sexualities with this particular understanding.

7.1.1. Ancestral Incarnates

There are many terms used within some Zambian cultures to name or describe same-sex sexuality or males that have feminine features. Participants highlighted *boibo mutukashi* meaning boy-girl used by Soli people of Lusaka province, *chilume chikazi* also meaning boy-girl as used by the Luba people of North-Western province and *shimbilombe* used among the Tonga people of Southern Province. These local names signify the existence of same-sex persons within some Zambian cultures, refuting assertions that same-sex identities and sexualities are a Western imposition. According to the participants and further inquiries from some Tonga speaking people of Zambia, *shimbilombe* is a Tonga term used to describe a woman with masculine features or a man with feminine features and also encompasses transgender people. Within the Tonga worldview, a *shimbilombe* has supernatural powers bestowed on him or her by the ancestors. I had to depend on the interpretation of fluent Tonga speakers and participants because I am Chewa by tribe and not Tonga, hence *shimbilombe* was new to me. Although some of the participants indicated how their identities and sexualities are culturally closely linked to supernatural powers and ancestral inhabitation, they did not subscribe to this indigenous worldview about their identities and sexualities. The response below shows how Zambian culture views gay identities and sexualities:

Maliq: In Tonga there's the name they call gay men...shimbilombe...they recognize those people and they are respected...in my tribe, the Lozis, they also respect those who are like that...if they are feminine, masculine...just like the shimbilombe...those people are considered to be sent by the ancestors and have special powers...they believe that the spirit of one of the ancestors has gone into that person...so, they respect those people...they believe that they speak to their ancestors...so they are like the vessels that speak to people about things from the ancestral side...in the village setup, gays are considered as normal and they will just say this is how they are.

This response highlighted how gay people, by virtue of their identities and sexualities, are respected and recognized in the Tonga (Southern Zambia) and Lozi (Western Zambia) cultures. The Ila people of Central Zambia also recognize same-sex identities and sexualities.

Gay identities and sexualities are culturally regarded as endowing gay people with supernatural powers. This is because of cultural beliefs that hold that gay identities and sexualities result from direct links with the ancestors and inhabitation by ancestral spirits, leading to gay people assuming gender identities opposite to their sex. Since they are believed to be inhabited by ancestral spirits, they are viewed as capable of communicating with their ancestors and relaying messages to the living within their communities. According to Maliq and with affirmation from other participants, gay identities and sexualities are not regarded as odd in rural settings that recognize sexual diversities. When I probed the participants whether they believe their identities and sexualities give them supernatural powers or that they are inhabited by the spirits of their ancestors, they all refuted this traditional worldview. They instead attributed their identities and sexualities to how God created them. The refusal to view their identities and sexualities along supernatural lines is a vivid example of the effect of global cultures on the construction of identities and sexualities. They are rooted in Zambian cultures that have, to some extent, acknowledged the existence of same-sex identities and sexualities but at the same time are influenced by the global cultures. In as much as the participants expressed knowledge about this traditional view, they are rooted in the cultural understanding but subscribe to global identities and sexualities.

The responses below capture the notion of being created in the image of God and not necessarily subscribing to the cultural understanding of gay identities and sexualities:

Terry: I believe God made me in His image...He loves me to be in the world.

Chipobabz: God knows why He created me this way...God keeps me for a reason.

In spite of some sections of Zambian culture accommodating gay persons, the responses show that some gay participants opted to link their identities and sexualities with God's creative agenda and not cultural beliefs on same-sex sexualities. This contestation highlights not only how Christianity is influential within the Zambian context but also how it influences the participants in urban Lusaka. Since I was dealing with participants in urban Lusaka, it is possible that the desire to identify with Christianity is due to desire for them to fit into the globalized modern world and not limit understanding of self to Zambian cultural worldviews. Herein lies another ambiguity of being rooted in Zambian culture but forging identities and sexualities within global identities and sexualities.

In the traditional Zambian context, ancestors remain important entities in communities and day to day affairs of the living. –Ancestors are vested with mystical powers and authority. They retain a functional role in the world of the living, specially in the life of their living kinsmen (sic)” (Kopytoff 2010:314). This observation is insightful for my study as it shows the place and authority of ancestors in the African setup. Ancestors remain part of everyday life in their living dead state. It can be argued that the place of the living dead within the Zambian indigenous worldview remains fundamental as they are believed to have the power to bless and also punish community members. Sometimes, the ancestors are believed to come back into the world of the living through their descendants, giving some gay people supernatural powers and sexual attraction for those of their sex. Being a healer or prophet is a calling from the ancestors and an inescapable duty. Thus, same-sex sexuality is inevitable for some gay people, especially when inhabited by an ancestor of the opposite gender. Based on such a worldview, healers and prophets of same-sex sexuality are not only allowed in some cultures but are revered and largely contribute to communal wellbeing. This is true among the Ila, Lozi and Tonga people of Zambia. In his article –Betrayed by Cultural Heritage: Liminality, Ambiguous Sexuality and Ndembu Cultural Change”, writing from a theological perspective, Kaunda (2015:30) notes that among the Ila people there was a man who wore women’s clothes, slept among women and was regarded as having supernatural powers. Although there is no information on whether the Ila man mentioned here had sexual relationships with other men or how widespread this practice was, it can still be argued that non-conforming identities and sexualities had spaces within Ila cultures. –The fact that this man was *mwaami* confirms the recent research among the gay *Sangomas* in KwaZulu-Natal that in cultural liminal [space], taboos are un-tabooed” (Kaunda 2015:30). Kaunda regards “*sangoma-hood*” or “*mwaami-hood*” as operating within the liminal spaces of culture where non-conformity of identities and sexualities is embraced and allowed. It can be argued that as long as same-sex identities and sexualities serve the wellbeing of the community, they are embraced within some cultural settings. He concludes that:

the Ndembu ritual thinking suggests that African cultures can no longer be perceived as immutable, unchanging and frozen in the timeless past but as something dynamic and many of social changes taking place are not of alien influence but aspects of African cultures that were inexorably to rapture out of [a] cultural cocoon, acquire viability and exert authority over possible modes of African human being and becoming (Kaunda 2015:39).

This particular work is useful for my study as it addresses the Zambian context and also because it shows liminal spaces within some sections of Zambian culture in which male same-sex exploration is allowed. While scholarly works link same-sex sexuality with supernatural powers, such as “*sangoma-hood*” or “*mwaani-hood*”, and ancestral inhabitation, the participants did not agree with such assertions, insisting that they do not concur with the general indigenous worldviews of some sections of Zambian culture about their identities and sexualities.

Another issue raised by the participants is the contestation between Christianity and Zambian culture on issues of gay identities and sexualities. The participants opted to adopt the Christian stance of human beings being created by the Christian God who is believed to endow people with their sexuality, over the cultural worldview that links same-sex sexuality with ancestral spirit inhabitation. In the work “What Role do Institutions of Theology and Religious Studies Play in the Engagement with African Cultural Dynamics?”, Shyllon writing from a theological perspective, observes that “Religion and culture interact in Africa, the complexity of which has resulted in a cultural-religious symbiosis” (2003:11). This argument does not hold true for the participants in this study. They created a distinct dichotomy between Christianity and culture, and aligned with the former regarding origins of their identities and sexualities. It can be argued that this dichotomy is due to the superior space that Christianity has assumed in the Zambian context which has seen ATRs and their practice largely relegated to rural areas of Zambia and with many of its adherents regarded as people that have not undergone Western education.

Tensions are created when the old traditions come into contact with modernization. Cultural gaps develop when some Africans embrace the new knowledge whereas others resist the new ways. Traditional African customs in this situation appear to drag Africans backwards away from progress and thus separate traditionalists from those living in the new culture, most of whom have embraced either Christianity or Islam. Nevertheless, the traditions of Africa are resilient despite the impact of outside cultural, social and economic forces (Shyllon 2003:11-12).

These insights are useful for my study as they show that in some instances, African cultures and Christianity are not held in tandem by some Africans who choose between the two, However African cultures are in many instances reflected as retrogressive and preference is placed on global identities that emerge from religions like Christianity and Islam. For

example, in contemporary Pentecostalism, acquiring a new Christian identity means relinquishing one's African cultures and identities, thus, it is a question of either/or and not intertwining of identities. Shyllon concludes that –African Christians are dissatisfied with the differentiation between so-called physical and spiritual healing, which seems to have become accepted in mainline, missionary founded churches” (2003:20). Syncretism of African and Christian identities is encouraged by ATRs, unlike in mainline churches where these identities are held and kept at bay. In his analysis of Congolese Traditional Religions, Abioje notes the marginalization of ATRs in all spheres of the African setup, noting that –Congolese Traditional Religions are secondary to Christianity, because according to some Christians, there is no relationship between the two religions” (2014:543). The context addressed by Abioje (2014) resonates with the Zambian context. This is also evidenced in this study in which participants identified with the Christian teachings on the creation of human beings which override cultural teachings, hence, the outright denial of latter.

The other perspective raised by the study participants was that traditional leaders remain custodians of what I term –cultural public opinion” on issues around identities and sexualities. I proceed to analyse this.

7.1.2. Traditional Leaders as Custodians of “Cultural Public Opinion”

I use the term –cultural public opinion” to denote sets of widely accepted values, norms, mores, motifs and practices relating to the day to day life of a given community. In the Zambian cultural setup, traditional leaders are opinion leaders on –cultural public opinion” in relation to acceptability and non-acceptability of identities and sexualities. The place of traditional leaders within Zambian culture, especially in rural Zambia, is one of authority. Urban areas too have traditional leaders in spite of their dwindling authority in cosmopolitan settings. Chiefs and Chieftainesses, headmen and women, *indunas*, among other traditional leaders remain some of the integral and undisputed custodians of Zambian culture; therefore, their opinions are highly respected by their subjects, especially those based within their jurisdictions. Although this study was situated within urban Lusaka, the participants indicated having some rural experience and related how they were regarded as Satanists owing to their identities and sexualities. The term Satanist is a very modern term but in depicting globalization of cultures, it is adopted even by traditional leaders to describe gay people. The following participant showed that in some cultures intolerant of gay identities and sexualities,

custodians of “cultural public opinion” determine cultural public discourse on same-sex identities and sexualities:

Paul: I had an opportunity to go and work in the villages...they don't even know about these things...and mostly, the subjects listen to what the headman [sic] is going to say...so if the chief [sic] says this is satanic...they are just going to go by that...because there was the time that we would go to households and they would just label you as a Satanist and they would say “oh, the Satanists are here!”...they listen to what they headman [sic] is going to say...if the headman [sic] is going to say no to this...it is no.

Paul's response highlights four cardinal points: first, that traditional leaders as opinion leaders on cultural public opinion have authority and influence over their subjects, thus, prescribing which identities and sexualities are welcome in their areas of jurisdiction. Second, gay identities and sexualities are aligned with evil in cultural settings that do not condone them. Third, that there is insufficient knowledge on gay identities and sexualities in some Zambian cultural contexts. Last, that traditional leaders are sources of knowledge for their subjects. The association of homosexuality with Satanism is a discourse influenced by both Christianity and global culture.

It can be argued that even among some traditional leaders, gay identities and sexualities are framed within the ambiguous space of globalized identities and sexualities and traditional identities and sexualities. By terming gay Christians as Satanists and not resorting to cultural understanding of gay identities and sexualities, traditional leaders also exhibit elements of operating within traditional cultural tenets but using globalized terminology.

Having discussed the participants' perspectives around indigenous worldviews, I proceed to discuss the parlance within Zambian culture as experienced by participants, and its influences on their self-understanding.

7.2. Parlance within Zambian Culture

As earlier shown, parlance denotes the usage of speech and how words are chosen in daily life. In the traditional Zambian cultural setup, life is undergirded by idioms, dance, drums, song, and adages used to convey given messages to particular people. In this section, I

discuss cultural parlance in daily family life, adages, dance, idioms, songs and the construction of participants' identities and sexualities.

7.2.1. Daily Family Life

When participants were asked to discuss how they "self-construct" their identities and sexualities and the role that Zambian culture plays in the process, once more, the place of daily life within their families and elements that make them regard themselves as male or female were raised. The nuclear family was cited as the first site within the cultural setup in which they understand themselves. The participants chose to start the discussion with how their families view their identities and sexualities, with the following responses reflecting this:

Taonga: I am very close with my family...so, I tend to feel sometimes that they send me signals to say live your life but do not tell us about it...I think for me, with the current situation here in Zambia concerning laws and what not...they do not want to worry about me...so they feel like when I start coming out to them, I'll come out to everybody else...and they'll start worrying about me...so for them, it's like let's not talk about it.

Maliq: The families always know that you are different...like for me, they've always known that am different...that there's something special about you.

Paul: I think people know already...they just want you to tell them.

Terry: On my side, some members of the family know...and they are ok with it...there was a time when my cousin saw a photo of me and my partner and she was asking "is that our in-law?" but then other members of the family, I think they also know but there are others who have decided, we know but let's not talk about it...because it's safer that way...maybe when you talk about it, that's when they will like react badly.

The responses indicated how participants value strong family ties, mostly the nuclear family. Intuitively, their identities and sexualities are known by their families even if there is no verbalization. Both the participants and their families opt not to openly discuss the subject of gay identities and sexualities. Instead, they engage in the "language of silence" in which gay identities and sexualities are known probably through actions attached to this knowledge.

Implicitly, the “language of silence” or culture of discretion (Epprecht 2004:33) can be interpreted as abiding to the general taboos around sex and sexualities in Zambia and fear of bringing up the subject of gay identities and sexualities. The “language of silence” can also be regarded as avoidance which can be a survival technique. The non-verbalization of gay identities and sexualities could also be a result of the uncertainty on how to handle the discussion or general lack of interest in verbalizing the subject matter. The participants also highlighted how the law in Zambia is sometimes a hindrance for them to openly perform their identities and sexualities. Further they indicated how their families fear for their safety in a context that sometimes is not welcoming of their identities and sexualities. Three ambiguous responses characterize gay Christian identities and sexualities at family level. First, some family members may not be open to discussing their sons’ identities and sexualities. This is usually due to inadequate information on gay identities and sexualities, thus, feelings of incapacitation to linguistically handle the discourse. Additionally, some families secretly hope that their gay sons will change to become heterosexuals with time. Second, some participants were not willing to discuss their identities and sexualities, assuming that their families already know but opt to sweep the matter under the carpet. Participants’ inability to discuss their identities and sexualities with their families could be out of fear of rejection, possible breaking of family ties, and shame. Last, within Zambian culture, discussions of all forms of sexualities and sex are shrouded in secrecy to the extent that even dominant heterosexuality is not openly discussed, thus, discussing gay identities and sexualities presents some level of discomfort on the part of discussants.

In spite of the above indications of the failure by families and participants to discuss matters of gay identities and sexualities, family responses towards gay identities and sexualities are not homogenous. The participants below showed that their identities and sexualities are at some level open for discussion in their families:

Rihana: Kumwambo baku itana ati mwamuna but from behaviour nichita behave monga mukazi...kumwambo bangakuitane ati mwamuna but deep down they know...ni ijache yakuti sibamafunache kusebana kuli bantu nokuitana kuti uli so but beve che olo kumbali as family bamaziba ati uja mwana wantu ali so...nimukazi type but kuli bantu bazayambo ukuitana as mwamuna but since childhood...kaili bamationa mwamene timakulila, baona che behaviour baona ati uyu nisonaso...upyanga, usuka mabale...bamaziba. (Loose trans: Traditionally,

they refer to you as a man but from your behaviour, I behave like a woman...traditionally they can refer to you as a man but deep down they know...it's just that they do not want to be embarrassed that their child is like that, a woman type but they refer to you as man in front of their friends...but since childhood...since they see how you are growing up...they see your behaviour and they know this one is like this...you sweep, you clean the dishes...they know).

Pamera: Panyumba sibakamba nokamba ndaba na nephew wanga ndiye vamene alili sochabe...amapezeka nama girls. (Loose trans: The people at home do not even talk about it as my nephew is also like me...he is found with girls).

Rihana and Pamera are gay Christians who self-identify as females in spite of being males by sex. They highlight how their families embrace their identities and sexualities. Rihana separates his sex from his gender which he points out is exhibited by his behaviour as a “female”. In as much as their identities and sexualities may be accepted within their families, they are not openly talked about in the communal cultural spaces for fear that families would be humiliated. Humiliation has a lot to do with family social standing, other than with the security of the participants. Such ambiguities show borderlands in which participants “self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings. They are there in their families, recognized as such but the same is not applicable at communal level. On one hand, some families allow participants to perform identities and sexualities freely, while on the other hand, families fear such performance slipping into the larger communal spaces where the family name and standing matter most.

Although the place of the daily family life as a social setting in the “self-construction” of participants’ identities and sexualities cannot be disputed, individual family responses to their son’s identities and sexualities are not uniform. From the views expressed by the participants, depending on what I term as “family cultures”, responses range from discretion, avoidance of the subject to tolerance of gay identities and sexualities. I noted that some participants did not disclose their identities and sexualities to their families on the assumption that they are given signals not to speak about their identities and sexualities or that the families knew but preferred not to talk about it. Participants who did not disclose or discuss their identities and sexualities to and with their families were mainly more masculine in appearance, assuming a heterosexual public script. For the participants whose identities and sexualities are accepted by their families, they did not indicate any need to “come out” as their identities and

sexualities were “common knowledge” to their family members owing to their feminine behaviours.¹⁷ This raises the question on whether the “coming out” model glorified as liberative in Western cultures is useful in the case of gay Christians within the Zambian context, especially given that some families intuitively know about their sons’ identities and sexualities without any form of individual disclosure. Coming out “is the term given to the process of defining oneself as gay, lesbian or bisexual, marking a shift in self-defined sexual identity” (Gorman-Murray 2008:32). The question then is: is it even necessary for participants to “come out” to their families when heterosexuals do not “come out” about their identities and sexualities to anyone? I argue that the “coming out” model is not suitable for every gay person and every context.

In his article “Lesbians, Gay Men, and Their Parents: Family Therapy for the Coming-Out Crisis”, LaSala writing from a clinician’s perspective notes that

it is considered psychologically healthy for lesbians and gay men to come out and live outside the closet. However, parents tend to react with shock, disappointment and shame when they learn of their son’s or daughter’s gay sexual orientation (2000:68).

Although such reactions were not explicitly highlighted by the participants, Rihana notes that families intuitively know about their son’s sexual orientation but out of shame, do not disclose this to other community members. Such family response is due to the need to maintain the family’s social status and place within the community. LaSala adds that

coming-out lesbians and gay men hope for acceptance but are often bitterly disappointed by their parents’ initial reactions and, as a result, may distance from them or attack them defensively. Cultural prejudice toward lesbians and gays can contribute not only to parental reactions but can also impede a gay person’s own adjustment (2000:73).

The participants did not reflect any negative responses from their families or parents about their identities and sexualities. What they highlighted was the silence about the issue at hand or non-verbalized acceptance. However, LaSala concludes:

¹⁷—“Coming-out” means the open disclosure of one’s sexual and gender identity. The term is largely associated with sexual minorities.

For a variety of reasons, some parents may never be able to have relationships with their openly gay, adult children, and will sever all ties when their son or daughter comes out. However, therapeutic intervention can help many families avoid estrangement. In order to shepherd the family through this crisis, the clinician should address the distinct needs of the gay person and the parental subsystem (2000:79).

This conclusion seems to suggest that in many instances, parents react negatively to the “coming out” of their gay children, a conclusion not reflective of my findings in this study. This argument may not necessarily apply to participants who informed this study but is nonetheless worth noting since only one participant indicated having “come out” to his father while the rest expressed that their families intuitively knew or did not know. For this particular participant who came out to his father, he recounted that his father encouraged him to be true to his identity but cautioned him not to perform his identity in public for security reasons and ended their conversation with prayer. In the article “Queering the Family Home: Narratives from Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Youth Coming Out in Supportive Family Homes in Australia”, Gorman-Murray (2008:33-34), writing from an Earth and Environmental Sciences perspective, contends that many studies on the “coming out” of gay people to their families usually indicate negative responses, but he captures heterosexual nuclear families that are accepting of their gay, lesbian and bisexual children. This article is useful for my study as it resonates with the findings especially among the Kanyama participants who indicated being accepted by their nuclear families. Gorman-Murray further presents geographies of sexuality, home and family which actually ‘queers’ the family home, therefore providing a space for the flourishing of non-heterosexuality within an apparently heteronormative site (Gorman-Murray 2008:33-34). He concludes by suggesting that more attention be paid to homes as key sites of interrelations between the same-sex attracted, interrogating how gay men, lesbians and bisexuals used domestic spaces for the formation of individual selves, coupled relationships and wider subcultures, among others (Gorman-Murray 2008:41). This observation is vital for this study because some participants use their nuclear family spaces as sites for the construction of their identities and sexualities by performing non-gender-conforming house chores. All the participants from the Kanyama group exhibited elements of ‘queering’ their families since their families accept their identities and sexualities as long as they remain family secrets. They perform their identities

and sexualities within family spaces although families do not support them doing so within the communal gaze.

Having discussed elements of daily family life of the study participants and showing ambiguities in how families deal with their sons' gay identities and sexualities and the parlance thereof, I proceed to discuss adages, dance and songs as part of the parlance in participants' "self-construction" their identities and themselves as sexual beings.

7.2.2. Adages, Dance and Songs

Adages, dance, idioms and songs are some of the modes of communication within many African cultures. In a similar manner, culture in Zambia uses these modes of communication which in turn inform how participants formulate their identities and sexualities. These are used in daily life and, as highlighted by participants, within specific initiation spaces (section 7.4.2 and 7.4.3). The following are some of the adages, idioms and songs that participants raised:

Roman: They say ati umwaume ichipuba bamumwena kumatako... (Loose trans: a stupid/foolish man is identified from big buttocks).

As already indicated in section 7.0, the participants in this study did not express a great deal of interest in the role of Zambian culture, neither did they have a lot of contributions to make on how culture informs how they forge their identities and understanding of themselves as sexual beings. This can be attributed to the effects of global culture that informs urban culture in Lusaka. Only two participants in the Kanyama group seemed to be more informed in cultural practices and had no problems relating "self-construction" of their identities and sexualities with Zambian cultures. However, from Roman's response, it can be observed that some participants forge their identities within modern cultural contexts where a male is expected to have a masculine physique and well-toned body. Thus, the importance of physical appearance is expressed through the above adage and some participants try to adhere to this cultural expectation. This adage seemingly is directed at participants who self-identify as male and so, would prefer maintaining a culturally accepted "male" body structure. However, the question is whether participants who self-identify as female subscribe to this adage or do they prefer to be round and seemingly feminine?

Furthermore, some participants disclosed that traditional songs play an important role in their self-understanding. The following views were expressed by some participants who identified as female, hence, their identities and sexualities are framed within predominantly feminine cultural perspectives and spaces.

Chipobabz: Siankala palibwanyanya...iminingi kuti ngati wangena munyumba...wakwatiliwa...sifunika kunti alionse mwamuna umuvulila bwa...paliponse ni bwa...nimwanuna wako eka kuti so...it helps me, panoniyenda na boyfriend but nimutengelatu...vizasila... kulinyimbo yamwambo ati nenzelele oyaye, nenze mutulo namvachingoma chabilikila.(Loose trans: You do not seat anyhow...it means that when you are married...you are not supposed to have extra-marital affairs as sex should only happen between you and your husband...it helps me, because I am so good that right now I am dating somebody's boyfriend and I will grab him from him completely...there is a traditional song which says I was sleeping, I was fast asleep when the drum sounded when my husband required sex from me).

Chipobabz brought to the fore Chewa songs from Eastern Zambia usually used in feminine spaces such as female initiation rites of passage known as *malango yamunyumba* (teachings of the home) to show how he constructs himself as a gay person who identifies as female. The song places emphasis on marital faithfulness and how a wife is expected to be faithful to her husband. I have further discussed in section 7.4.3, *malango* or traditional marriage teachings as passed on to young women by *aphungu* (traditional marriage counsellors who are usually older married or widowed women) a few months or weeks before the marriage ceremony and are believed to be cornerstones for successful marriages. It is during this stage that traditional songs embedded with symbols are sung by traditional marriage counsellors and explained to initiates. Thus, it is these songs sung during the marriage initiation rites that both Chipobabz and Rihanna refer to. For Chipobabz, taking on the role of a female in his relationship, he takes it upon himself to learn “ways of females” and, as depicted in this song, fidelity to his partner is indispensable, thus, he is not expected to engage in any sexual relations with any other man apart from his partner. Although Chipobabz is not married, he still uses the Zambian feminine traditional marriage framework to “self-construct” his identity and sexuality, thus, highlighting issues of gender disparities even in some gay relationships where gender roles prominent in heterosexual relationships are adhered to. In

this case, the faithfulness of a wife is emphasized over that of a husband. For example, the Bemba people of Northern Zambia have an adage which explicitly encourages a wife's faithfulness in marriage while the husband is left to his own whims - *ubuchende bwamwaume tabonaula in''ganda* - (Loose trans: a man's promiscuity does not destroy a home/marriage). Implicitly, Chipobabz is expected to be faithful to his partner who assumes the masculine gender role even when his partner may not be faithful to him. Through this song, Chipobabz forges his identities and sexualities along submissive ideologies encouraged of females in Zambian culture.

Additionally, Chipobabz's response also shows how sexual performance is also regarded as pivotal in songs used by some participants to "self-construct" their identities and sexualities. Implicitly, Chipobabz reflects how through sexual gratification of his sexual partner, longevity of relationships is seemingly guaranteed. The question is: do participants who identify as male and assume masculine gender roles have the same levels of pressure as their female identifying partners to sexually perform and satisfy their partners so as to keep or sustain their relationships? The song that Chipobabz discussed encourages females in marriages to sexually gratify their husbands at all costs. Culturally, a wife is taught never to deny her husband sex. This raises questions on how fulfilling some gay relationships are when sex is used to ensure continuity of the relationship. This presents elements of homo-patriarchy under which some participants forge their identities and sexualities, a discussion I pursue in section 7.5.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Rihana who responded:

Rihana: Since me being a male but having feelings for a girl...culture has helped me a lot...in that whenever you meet with a guy...you have to perform wonders should I say...even in bed. Following all the dances, the movements...I have got a lot of female friends...the ones that take me whenever there''s such things [feminine cultural events] because I know how to beat those drums...kubalangizi [traditional counsellors]...and I also know how to dance...I can teach someone how to dance...how to perform in bed...how to take your man in bed...I can do all those things...I am very much flexible...So culture has really taught me a lot... Mubanga mulume wandi (Loose trans: Mubanga my husband)...this means he is the only one, no one can take him away from you...ndikasense, ndimukambatile (Loose trans: I am a cricket, I am stuck to her or him)...you submit yourself to him...this

one helps me to be faithful to him...no jumping around...changa namwela mukashi wandi, changa namwele ukajipaya (Loose trans: You my wife who likes “playing” with the knife will kill me)...this helps me that whenever you have an argument in the house...you don’t have to touch any object in the house that is harmful to your friend...so a woman shouldn’t just get a knife ati twatendekeshana (Loose trans: that we have a disagreement)...you just have to talk things out in a polite way...you don’t just go into relationship without being taught these things.

Rihana presents Zambian culture as useful in how he forges his identity and sexuality as one who identifies as a male with female feelings. What Rihana meant was that he is a gay person who takes on feminine gender roles in his relationship with his partner, thus, his identities and sexualities are shaped within feminine cultural spaces. This once more brings to the fore borderland gender and sexualities where some gay identities and sexualities are formed in feminine spaces in spite of describing themselves as male. Rihana in a similar manner as Chipobabz discussed the importance of sexual gratification of his partner as a measure for his femininity. Evidently, some feminine participants like Chipobabz and Rihana, upon assuming feminine gender roles, are also expected to perform “sexual wonders” to keep their men or risk losing them. Therefore, forging gay feminine identities entails performance as a feminine sexual being. The place of traditional counsellors in the “self-construction” of identities and sexualities of participants like Rihana is important as traditional teachings are passed on in feminine cultural spaces through songs, dances, drums, stories and demonstrations. Thus, by being a drummer in the feminine initiation rite of passage, Rihana can also be regarded as a traditional counsellor since drums and songs are modes of transmitting messages about married life. Rihana is informed by Bemba marriage initiation rites of passage, thus, the songs below are reflective of this:

Mubanga mulume wandi is sung by imbusa (Bemba traditional marriage counsellors) as a lesson to the initiate and a form of declaration of a husband-wife relationship. The lesson in this song is that a marriage should not break down, implicitly, the wife has a duty to keep the marriage going as she declares ownership of her husband.

Ndikasense, ndimukambatile is embedded with meanings of submission by a wife to her husband. Thus, gay Christians like Rihana adopt it in their relationships as a lesson and reminder to remain faithful. Songs such as the one cited above have

the propensity to lead to strong relationships as well as reduce the spread of HIV among gay people, through their emphasis on faithfulness. Symbolically, a cricket is believed to be a household insect, thus, it can be assumed that gay Christians who assume feminine gender roles also take on household chores as well as remain faithful to their partners.

Changa namwela mukashi wandi, changa namwele ukajipaya is a song that discourages violence between husband and wife, pointing to a wife who plays around with a knife and could easily kill her husband.

According to Rihana, this song helps him to learn to amicably resolve conflicts in her relationship and not use violent means. As the female in the relationship, Rihana has learnt to be polite to the man as the head of the house who has authority over him as one way of maintaining harmony. The question this discussion raises is: do some gay males exhibit elements of violence towards their partners in some of these same-sex relationships? I explore this in the section 7.5. where I discuss the concept of homo-patriarchy.

Having discussed parlance through adages, dance and song as adopted by some participants to “self-construct” their identities and sexualities, I proceed to discuss performance, another salient theme in the responses of participants.

7.4. Performance – Gay Christians and Zambian Culture

Participants operate and perform their identities and sexualities within the Zambian cultural spaces which are predominantly heteronormative and patriarchal. Below I discuss how study participants perform their identities and sexualities and the role Zambian culture plays in this performance.

7.4.1. Gender Roles

The study participants indicated how they construct their identities and sexualities in ambiguous cultural spaces in which they assume feminine and masculine gender roles. Once more, “gender refers to those social, cultural, and psychological traits linked to males and females through particular social contexts. Sex makes us male or female; gender makes us masculine or feminine” (Lindsey 2015:4). The Zambian cultural context assigns gender roles along sex distinctions, thus, it would seem almost a given that a male ought to assume masculine gender roles. These gender roles are not strictly adhered to by some participants

who either take on feminine, masculine or both masculine and feminine gender roles. Lindsey adds that –a role is the expected behaviour associated with a status. Roles are performed according to social norms, shared rules that guide people’s behaviour in specific situations. Social norms determine the privileges and responsibilities a status possesses” (2015:2). The following are some of the insights from participants who conformed to generally feminine gender roles:

Chipobabz: Nakumanyumba, we do take up nchito zachikazi, that is our priority...kuseni ufunika wauka, wapyanga, wasuka mbale...uchite chani...usambike bana...upikile ba daddy kuseni...ine sinichitako garden work, nabamai banga bakanilatu...nipika monga ma offals...batate bachita kukambilatu ati napapata musiyeni mwana wanga ndiye wamene aziba mwamene apikila...ndaba nikadya nima chita enjoy. ..naba mai babalesa. (Loose trans: Even in our homes, we do take up women’s chores, that is our priority...in the morning you have to wake up, you sweep, you clean the dishes...you bath the kids...make breakfast for dad...I never do garden work, even my mother does not allow me do gardening...I cook, for example, I cook offals...my father tells everyone at home not to cook that as he likes the way I cook it...he enjoys my cooking...even my mother does not cook that for my father).

Pamera: Ine ba daddy niba engineer but baziba kuti ine vau engineer awe...koma kupika...pali banyamata patu but bamaziba nchito yao naine yanga niyiziba. (Loose trans: My father is an engineer but he knows I can never be an engineer...I cook...there are other boys at my home but they know their chores and I also know my chores).

Rihana: For me, even if culture places a lot of emphasis on having children...as for me...I take it that how about those people who are born barren? As for me I just count myself as one of those people...because they say even those people that are married, it’s not only babies that can bring happiness into a home...as long as God has blessed that marriage, that is well and good...so as for me, I put myself among those people’s shoes.

The participants who belong to families that are accepting of their identities and sexualities indicated how they assume feminine gender roles by performing generally feminine tasks and

avoiding masculine chores in their homes. By taking up feminine gender roles, these participants may show how readily accepted they are within their families where feminine chores are their responsibilities without any questions raised. Chipobabz cited his parents as encouraging his assuming feminine gender roles, while Pamera is “shielded” from taking on masculine roles. Arguably, in spite of gender roles being emphasized at communal levels, they remain malleable within some family settings where participants are not pushed into assuming gender roles that are not necessarily in tandem with their identities and sexualities. The gender role of bearing children ascribed to males in Zambian culture is either rejected as shown from Rihana’s comment or subverted through having children as shown in section 5.4. The correlation between participants’ inability to biologically bear children and associating this with barrenness is an insightful observation made by Rihana in trying to come to terms with the fact that he may not biologically bear and raise children. Interestingly, adoption of children by these participants does not seem to be a considered option, neither was it raised during focus group discussion and individual interviews.

In his work on the culture of the Chewa people of Eastern Zambia, Banda notes how based on assigned gender roles, boys are taught not to touch pots or perform house chores in the kitchen (2002:[6]). This teaching is based on the cultural understanding that the kitchen is meant for women and not men. Failure to abide to this cultural teaching is believed to result in a man or boy having his “fingers peel off and [his becoming] lazy” (2002:[6]). The meaning behind such cultural assignment of gender roles is that males are supposedly gatherers and hunters while females tend to indoor chores. Thus, the kitchen and cooking for Chewa people is traditionally out of bounds for males, especially opening of pots. Through assuming feminine gender roles, some participants overtly subvert culturally assigned roles in which males are not expected to cook, bath children or participate in certain household chores. Gender roles that some participants take on are dependent on the gender one identifies with and family acceptance of the gender role assumed. In spite of some participants assuming masculine gender roles, I chose to focus on participants who take on feminine gender roles. This was in order to understand more about participants’ gender and sexualities on the borderlands of belonging but not belonging. This particular ambiguity of belonging and not belonging is based on the participants, despite being male, assuming feminine gender roles.

Having discussed how some participants take on feminine gender roles in spite of being male, the following section discusses male initiation rites as another avenue for the construction of study participants' identities and sexualities.

7.4.2. "Unrestrictive" Male Traditional Rites of Passage

Within Zambian culture, there are a selected number of ethnic groups which perform male initiation rites of passage especially to mark the threshold between childhood and adulthood. An example is the *mukanda* ceremony observed by the Luvale of North-Western Zambia. Some of the elements that constitute male traditional rites of passage are circumcision, teachings, seclusion, and hunting sessions, among others. Themes that emerged during the discussion on how Zambian culture constructs the identities and sexualities of participants was how open male traditional rites of passages are to participants. The following views capture this particular theme:

Tate: In culture, for example, the Luvalas, cultural practices for all men are all the same...provided that you are a man whether you are gay or not...you still have to go through certain rites of passage.

Foster: I think for men ...if they suspect that you are gay...culturally, they will give you a woman...and they give you a timeframe for you to have a child with that person...if you don't manage to do that...I think it confirms their suspicions.

Terry: I hear there's a tribe somewhere, where they used to get small boys, thirteen or fifteen, I don't know if it is after or before circumcision...older men sleep with them and see if their penises are working and can become erect.

Diva: Some men in the village do sleep with other men but they do not just formalize.

Maliq: Within many Zambian cultures, they teach that men should be macho...to be a man you have to undergo circumcision...for example, in mukanda, the older men sleep with the small boys to teach them about sex.

Male initiation rites of passage are performed on boys and young men on account of ethnic identity and not on the basis of sexualities. Therefore, whether gay or not, some ethnic tribes expect all boys and young men to undergo male initiation rites of passage as a transition from

boyhood into manhood. The participants brought to the fore how the initiates are sexually initiated from the asexual into the sexual world through practical tutorials by their teachers. By undergoing such cultural practices, participants are officially considered members of particular cultures and ethnic groupings. In this regard, their self-identities are formed in tandem with cultural identities. Additionally, for some participants, being located in urban Lusaka in which global cultures thrive, they learn of traditional cultures through hearsay. In this regard, they identify more with global urban culture than traditional Zambian culture.

7.4.3. “Unrestrictive” Female Traditional Rites of Passage

From the evidence gathered, participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities in both male and female traditional rites of passage. The participants who self-identified as male largely –self-constructed” their identities and sexualities along male traditional rites of passage while those who identified as female largely –self-constructed” their identities and sexualities along female traditional rites of passage. The following were some of the views of the participants when they were asked to discuss how culture constructs their identities and sexualities:

Chipobabz: Naine ndiye mwamene nakulila...and like whatever happens...like ku kitchen party ningenamo...kabili ndiye moye wanga wanamene uyo...ndine ba matron...you see...olo kwachitika kitchen party...kuli chezela ningena munyumba ndine niyenda kumulangiza cousin wanga...baniitana ati matron. (Loose trans: I too grew up like that...and like whatever happens...like at kitchen party I do go into the premises...because the young lady they would be marrying off would be my virgin...I am her matron...you see...even the night before the kitchen party...there is the all night teachings and celebration I enter inside the house to teach my cousin...they refer to me as matron).

Rihana: Kubalangiza bwino bwino...ise nangoma tiziboliza kabili...we even recorded a video yaku kitchen party kwamene tinalili last week. (Loose trans: I do teach brides quite well...we even play drums...we even recorded a video of a kitchen party we attended last week).

Rihana: Ukutoba imbusa...kwabafilya bashana...meaning muntu akakwela pamwamba you have to wavinawavina wamunymula...ukatenga mwamuna atipamwamba...sikugonelela...kulibe nikunyamuka ...noti kugona monga plantain.

(Loose trans: Breaking sacred emblems [a suitable English term for this practice is elusive] ...there is that dance...meaning when you are making love with your partner you have to wriggle your waist as you lift him up...you do not sleep like a piece of plantain).

Within modern Zambian culture, a kitchen party is a pre-wedding party held for the bride, is attended by women and is accompanied by song, dance, traditional teachings about marriage and presentation of kitchen utensils as gifts to the bride. This cultural space is mainly considered a feminine setting where men are not allowed. But the responses from some of the participants who identified as female reflect how this restriction is broken by allowing them to be part of the 'feminine' proceedings, as well as be part of the marriage counsellors and drummers. The participants proceeded to show some of the cultural practices that accompany the feminine initiation rites of passage such as breaking of the sacred emblems. The breaking of the sacred emblems is closely connected with sexual performance expectations within marriage. The centrality of feminine initiation rites of passage as ritual spaces that allow for the construction of identities and sexualities are utilized by some participants who self-identified as female as they transcend gender defined spaces.

7.5. Homo-patriarchy

Patriarchy has been associated with male domination of females, male power over females, male violence against females, and the rule of the father. However, within issues of sexual minorities, homo-patriarchy has been used in relation to the domination of gays in sexual minority discourses. For example, writing from a justice perspective, Cattán and Clerval (2011:1) in their article "A Right to the City? Virtual Networks and Ephemeral Centralities for Lesbians in Paris", align homo-patriarchy with hetero-patriarchy which work towards the exclusion and invisibility of lesbians from the gay "village" based on sexuality and gender. Their observations allude to the invisibility of lesbians in cities dubbed gay cities – a direct result of homo-patriarchy. They conclude that

lesbian centralities are either ephemeral or invisible, and sometimes both. Their precarious existence relies on the will of a small number of people. They are also rendered more precarious by the fact that many lesbian parties cease to be women-only (Cattán and Clerval 2011:14).

They write specifically to highlight the invisibility of lesbians in gay cities. However, in this thesis, I link intimate sexual violence to homo-patriarchy exhibited in some same-sex relationships. Sometimes, some participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities in intimate relationships where elements of violence are present. The following responses reflect this:

Rihana: I like the one I am staying with and I perform [sexual] wonders...he looks after me very well...some people know that I am staying with a man and what”s going on but a lot of them don”tknow what”sgoing on...it only comes out when he finds me with another person, then along the way we start arguing and people become suspicious and then they know...my family is very much comfortable with it and since from childhood and they have been like ok...I have to account for my movements...he is very jealous.

Chipobabz: I was dating this guy, he got married and we broke up...after some time, I met another guy, we started dating and one day went to a club together and when the first guy saw me, he beat me up, chased me from the club and told everyone there that I am gay and he had slept with me.

The responses of these two participants bring into visibility homo-patriarchy in some gay intimate relationships which takes the forms of physical violence, control of the movements of one’s partner, jealous outbursts, and public humiliation among others. In other words, homo-patriarchy in some gay intimate relationships, just like hetero-patriarchy in some heterosexual intimate relationships, is synonymous with domination of one partner by another. Based on these responses, it can be argued that some of the –victims” of intimate partner violence are the participants who self-identify as female. These suffer intimate partner violence at the hands of their partners who identify as males. From Rihana’s response, he created a connection between economic support and intimate partner violence, which is open to further exploration. Domination of one partner by another can be a result of many factors and economic power over another is one such reason.

Until recently, most of the scholarly work on intimate partner violence in same-sex relationships have focused on violence in lesbian relationships and not so much on violence in gay relationships (Lie and Gentlewarrier 1991, Lockhart, White, Causby and Isaacs 1994, Kaschak 2001, West 2002, among others). In their study –Intimate Partner Violence Among

Same-Sex Couples in College: A Propensity Score Analysis”, Graham, Jensen, Givens and others writing from social work perspective define intimate partner violence —as physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse perpetrated against an intimate partner—is a pervasive social problem with established links to elevated risk of poor physical and mental outcomes” (2016:2). They associate intimate partner violence with other consequences which mainly affect the victims. Based on their preliminary findings, they suggest that —college students in same-sex relationships experience higher levels of IPV victimization and perpetration resulting in injury compared with students in mixed-sex relationships” (2016:23). This study informs my current study in that it shows how intimate partner violence does exist in some of the relationships that participants engage in. It is therefore possible that some participants forge their identities and sexualities within atmospheres of intimate partner violence, leading to the creation of subservient gay Christian identities and sexualities and in other instances, volatile gay Christian identities and sexualities. What struck me was that as these two participants gave these responses, they either smiled, recounted these incidences with some level of excitement, or trivialized the violence encountered. It would therefore seem that either intimate partner violence in some gay relationships is commonplace, regarded as insignificant or is a valuable sign of affection and attachment by the perpetrator, which in turn enhances the ‘self-worth’ of the victims.

In their study —Lessons from Examining Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence”, reviewing research on intimate partner violence in the United States of America, Baker *et al* contend that

in heterosexual relationships intimate violence is related to rigid gender roles because men who beat their wives or girlfriends often engage in a coherent and disciplined rage to defend what they consider to be their rights, which the men construe to be absolute authority over —their” women...The existence of same-gender domestic violence contradicts this assumption and suggests that domestic violence is an abuse of power that can happen in any type of intimate relationship, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Yet simply having power is not the key to domestic violence. In gay male relationships, for instance, differences in various sources of power do not predict partner abuse. That is, disparities in physical size and strength, masculine appearance, affluence, education, race, and ethnicity are not correlated with rates of battering in gay couples (2013:182-183).

Although contested, in some of the gay relationships, mimicry of heterosexual relationships and gender roles can be cited as one of the reasons for the practice of intimate partner violence. Power difference in same-sex relationships is not synonymous with same-sex intimate violence. They conclude that

a better understanding of IPV will be generated if we use gender as a way of identifying issues that require further study rather than as an explanation. By focusing on the role played in IPV by factors such as strength or verbal skill, which may be linked to gender in the aggregate but vary from individual to individual, we can gain a better understanding of ways to both predict and reduce IPV. By focusing on the ways that gendered roles influence the manifestation of personal and relationship dynamics, we can gain a better understanding of how to intervene in individual violent relationships (Baker *et al* 2013:190).

The argument above contends that possession of a level of power does not necessarily lead to intimate partner violence in gay relationships. My study establishes otherwise based on the response offered by Chipobabz and Rihana. Differences in physical size, income and strength were bases for violence towards these two participants. For example, Rihana depends on his partner for his livelihood as his partner goes out to earn a living while Rihana stays at home performing culturally feminine roles. Thus, the partner has economic power over him, leading to the sense of ownership of Rihana. This therefore establishes that in spite of homo-patriarchy being understood as occurring in relation to gays' versus lesbians' spaces, homo-patriarchy is also visible within some intimate gay relationships.

Homo-patriarchy reflects broad patriarchal patterns in Zambia within heterosexual relationships which is mainly caused by differences in economic privilege between men and women, with women being economically dependent on men. In their article "Perpetration of Gay and Lesbian Partner Violence: A Disempowerment Perspective", McKenry, Serovich, Mason and Mosack, writing from a clinician's perspective divide causes of intimate partner violence into three, namely:

individual characteristics such as gender role orientation, attachment, psychological symptoms, family of origin characteristics such as witnessing or experiencing violence in their families of origin, parental homophobia and intimate

relationship characteristics such as relationship stress, income status, status differentiation, emotional dependency (2006:234-235).

The categorization offered is useful in showing how multi-faceted issues of intimate partner violence are and my study did not interrogate its causes in depth. The notion of intimate partner violence only arose out of the findings, highlighting homo-patriarchy in gay relationships. McKenry *et al* conclude that the

salient area for clinicians to explore is attachment. Although power may be more equally distributed in gay/lesbian relationships, one partner can be more dependent and more vulnerable to violence when perceiving a lack of power and control. High levels of attachment or dependency may create an environment that supports violence. Findings from this research indicate that both male and female perpetrators tended to have less secure attachment styles than do non-perpetrators (2006:240).

The causes of intimate partner violence in gay relationships cannot easily be singled out as they are not strictly tied to gender roles. There are many factors associated with this violence but in the era of HIV and AIDS, the link between intimate partner violence has already been established in heterosexual relationships. Patriarchy in heterosexual relationships has been cited for the rise in HIV and AIDS infection in Zambia (Hampande 2016:123). Is it then possible that homo-patriarchy in some gay relationships has the potential of exacerbating the transmission of HIV and AIDS?

Having offered a discussion on how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of cultures in this process, the question therefore is, how do participants define themselves?

7.6. “Self-definition” of Gay Christians

In discussing how they –self-construct” themselves and the role cultures play in this process, participants pointed out that how they –self-define” is imperative in their identities and sexualities. The views on how and why they define themselves were largely from participants who regard themselves as males and not females. Self-definition makes them feel in tune with their identities and the following are some of the elements that were highlighted as being

cardinal in how and why they –self-construct” their identities and sexualities in the ways that they do:

Tate: What makes me a man is the beard, the looks...especially the facial looks...most guys when you are growing up, the only thing that will identify you as a man is the beard.

Paul: In my family, what identifies me as a man is I think my responsibilities...I have to do something for my siblings...culturally, people expect me to do something and provide for my sisters.

Chris: The job I do...the dress code...the haircut and the beard make me feel like a man...I have to dress as a man.

Taonga; I think for me it...am not the macho-ist man ever but if there's one thing that I like is ugly clothes...to some extent, people think they are manly...so I embrace that...in a way I like that...it makes me feel like a man...if I wear my ugly shoes, ugly pants. I also like to take up leadership positions and I like to provide...I am not really a fan of skinny jeans...so I go for manly clothes.

Among ways in which they define themselves is through appearance, such as dress, haircut and general grooming etiquette. From these responses and my observation, the participants who self-identified as males wore darker coloured clothes, maintained what could be traditionally assumed to be the versions of the ideal Zambian male. Furthermore, they take seriously their family responsibilities as providers for their families, and thus they take on what can be regarded as predominantly male dominated professions as part of their self-definition. From these responses, it can be argued that some participants deliberately put in a lot of effort to define themselves as males in line with communal expectations. I make this conclusion based on Taonga's response in which he seems to self-define based on what is communally expected of males in terms of dressing, leadership and ability to provide. Salient is that this self-definition occurs around the context of family, that is, assuming of leadership roles in the family, providing for the family, as well as physical appearance and dressing.

7.7. An Interface of Christianity and Culture from Participants' Perspectives

In this study, I also sought to understand the interface of religion and culture in the –self-construction” of identities and sexualities of participants. In section 2.4, I theorized the

interface of religion and culture in the –self-construction” of identities and sexualities of gay men. Section 2.4 is closely linked with this section which offers an interface of Christianity and culture specifically from the viewpoints of study participants. The following are some of their responses:

Rihana: Culture and Christianity are different and they teach me different things...in culture, the things that they teach there are very much different from the Bible...from culture...for example, when they are teaching someone on how to perform in bed...they do all sorts of things...like no man's business...now when you go to church...it will just be like simple things...they do not go into too many details.

Dakah: Nowadays the churches have also started doing traditional teachings like vaulangizi (traditional teachings) within the church...but they select some traditional things, add Christian teachings to them. But these teachings do not target us, not that they would but anyway, the church is what borrows from tradition, not the other way...they teach heterosexuals anyway.

These two responses show that within Zambia, the interface of Christianity and culture in the construction of participants' identities and sexualities is not clear cut. On one hand, some participants believe there is a dichotomy between Christianity and culture. On the other hand, Christianity is believed to assume some traditional elements infused with Christian teachings which are targeted at brides and bride-grooms to be. Christianity is held as being more subtle about issues of sex, sexual performance and sexualities than is culture.

7.8. Summary

In this chapter, I presented how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of Zambian culture in the construction. The discussion arose from the research findings conducted in urban Lusaka, Zambia, among gay Christians and the analysis was conducted using the concept of borderland gender and sexualities as an analytical lens. Three themes ran through this chapter, that is, perspectives of participants, parlance and performance. The chapter established that although some sections of Zambian culture hold that gay identities and sexualities arise out of being inhabited by ancestral spirits, participants refuted this belief, opting to align their identities and sexualities with the Christian understanding of human beings being created in God's image. Furthermore, the chapter has

shown that traditional leaders are influential within Zambian culture in respect to the acceptability of gay identities and sexualities.

At nuclear family level, gay identities and sexualities are hardly verbalized, thus, this study brought to light “the language of silence” which requires careful reading. Adages, songs and dance provide another avenue within culture through which participants “self-construct” their identities and sexualities. Generally, the adages, songs and dance are used by participants to construct identities and sexualities that promote harmonious living within gay intimate relationships.

Study participants perform their identities and sexualities by assuming both masculine and feminine gender roles within their intimate relationships and families. Furthermore, the chapter has presented ambiguities in the construction of the participants’ identities and sexualities in both masculine and feminine traditional rites of passage. Masculine and feminine traditional rites of passage are accommodative of participants, with the feminine rite of the kitchen party allowing participants to play active roles of drummers and counsellors. The question is: would gay Christians be allowed to be teachers in male initiation rites of passage? The chapter also showed that participants do not have a homogenous understanding of the interface between Christianity and culture but in one way or the other, these two social contexts remain their sites of construction.

This chapter further discussed sexual and gender roles which participants assume in their daily enactments of their identities and sexualities. It also raised the issue of homo-patriarchy in which the discourse shifted from gays versus lesbians in given spaces to internal gay intimate power dynamics. The argument made is that intimate partner violence within some gay relationships exhibit elements of homo-patriarchy which is based on differences in economic status, physical size and strength. Additionally, it has shown that participants self-defined in relation to roles they assume in their nuclear families, physical appearance and dressing.

Having discussed how participants forge their identities and sexualities and the role of Zambian culture in the construction process, the next chapter offers a conclusion to this study.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.0. Introduction

The preceding chapter presented research findings on how study participants –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of Zambian culture in this process. Salient among the findings in chapter seven is that Zambian culture is influenced by global cultures. These provide ambiguous sites in which participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities as they assume global identities whilst remaining rooted in the local context, transcending and conflating the gender binary, among others. Thus, the concept of borderland gender and sexualities was used to interpret the gender and sexualities constructions in-between and outside the gender binary model.

In this concluding chapter, I present and tie together discussions from previous chapters by offering a summary of each of the chapters covered in this study. The summary of each chapter also shows how the chapter attended to the research objectives in relation to the research question this study set out to address. This is followed by a discussion on the contributions this study makes before offering suggestions for future research.

8.1. Summary of the Chapters

The major question I sought to explore in this study was – **how do gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and what is the role of religion and culture in this process?** This question informed the four main objectives of this study. These were as follows: first, to understand the role of religion in the construction of gay Christians’ identities and sexualities. Second, to understand the role that culture plays in the construction of gay Christians’ masculinities and identities. Third, to explore how gay Christians self-construct their identities and sexualities. Last, to analyse why gay Christians self-construct their identities and sexualities in the way that they do. Therefore, in order to address this question and fulfil the study’s objectives, the chapters in this study were divided as follows:

The first chapter introduced the study by discussing the location of the study as well as discussing how maleness is constructed within the heteronormative Zambian context. The main objective in this chapter was to lay the foundation for this study.

Building on chapter one which introduced the study, chapter two used a thematic analysis method to review the literature on how gay identities and sexualities are constructed in Christianity within Zambia. The review of the literature revealed that the masculinities framework adopted in most studies on gay men do not adequately address diversities in identities and sexualities of gay men. I further argued, in line with Butler's (1990) assertions, about the restrictiveness of the gender binary model as a framework for understanding masculinity and femininity. I critiqued the gender binary's inadequacy for the conceptualisation of gender and sexual identity construction based on this study's findings in chapters five and seven which reflect fluidity and conflation in sexual and gender identities. This chapter also discussed how cultures construct gay identities and sexualities, showing that gender categorization in some cultures is non-existent. The chapter further highlighted how some cultures embrace gay identities and sexualities as long as they remain "discreet" and youthful experimentation, are understood as a caricature, as transitional, or operate within the liminal cultural spaces and serve spiritual purposes that benefit the broader community. In this chapter, I also argued that both religion and culture are vital construction sites of gay identities and sexualities.

Chapter three discussed theories that informed this study, namely, social constructionism and self-verification theories from social-psychological theory, as well as feminist and queer theories from gender theories and as used by scholars in religion studies. As a combination, social constructionism and self-verification theories enabled me to explore how study participants constructed their identities and sexualities at social – religion and culture – and individual levels. In the chapter, I argued that sexual and gender identities are constructed within social relations present in social contexts and continue to be modified at personal levels through self-views held by participants. Religion and culture prescribe gender and sexuality identities along heterosexuality norms, prescriptions which some of the study participants did not subscribe to, owing to self-views. Feminist and queer theories were also used to explore gender identities, gender and sexual roles as fluid entities among the participants. These two theories helped show the power dynamics surrounding gender and sexual identities, as both are anti-patriarchy. Using the four theories, I continued to probe how gay Christians "self-construct" their identities and sexualities within religion and culture as construction sites.

The research design and methodology used in this study's data production and analysis processes was extensively discussed in chapter four, whose objective was to explain how data for this study was produced and analysed. I used a qualitative and critical research paradigm to investigate how the study participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in the construction process. The chapter captured the research design, sampling employed, methods of data production, reflexivity, methods of data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical consideration.

Chapter five thematically presented research findings based on discussions with study participants. This chapter fulfilled the two objectives of showing how study participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities, why such construction is done in given ways, and the role of Christianity therein. Using the concept of incipient theologies as an analytical framework, I discussed the participants' perspectives and worldviews, parlance and performance. The chapter highlighted the ambiguities in participants' approaches towards the Bible and biblical hermeneutics, notions of belonging and not belonging with issues of personal piety outside the institutional Church, and differences in priorities of churches taking centre stage. Additionally, two incipient theologies emerged from the study participants; the theology of crucifixion and creation. The chapter also showed that participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities through parlance, with self-identity, social identity and Christian identity coming together, while dressing, mannerisms, sexual roles and gender roles make up performance of participants' identities and sexualities.

As a build up to chapter seven, in chapter six, I discussed the use of the concept of borderland gender and sexualities as the analytical framework used in presenting how the study participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of culture in this process. The objective in this study was to explain the concept of borderland gender and sexualities which was used to analyse data in chapter seven and establish its relevance for this study. This chapter showed that the borderland gender and sexualities allow for (re)creation of identities and sexualities outside the normative gender binary model by portraying ambiguities in identities and sexualities as the state of being. Although the notion of borderland has been used in the physical sense, in this study, I used it metaphorically as spaces in religion and culture that allow for ambiguity, duality and hybridity in identities and sexualities. The chapter argued that borderlands, both physically and symbolically, are sites of power, structure and surveillance, and resistance and agency.

Chapter seven presented how participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities and the role of Zambian culture in this process. It fulfilled the objective of finding out how study participants –self-construct” their identities and sexualities, why such construction is done in given ways, and the role of culture. In the chapter, I argued that global culture remains influential in local urban culture that informs the construction of identities and sexualities of participants, presenting ambiguities of the desire to identify with global cultures whilst based within the ambiguous local Lusaka urban culture/traditional culture. It established that in spite of culture regarding gay identities and sexualities as supernatural, the study participants identified with the global Christian identity of being created in God’s image. The place of traditional leaders as custodians of public opinion was also discussed. Furthermore, –the language of silence” was taken as significant, and adages, songs and dance in the construction of participants’ identities and sexualities were analysed. The chapter also discussed how participants construct and perform their identities and sexualities in both feminine and masculine initiation rites of passage. Performance of participants’ identities and sexualities is enacted in daily activities such as household chores, position in the family, and family responsibilities, among others. Additionally, matters of homo-patriarchy arose, showing violence in some gay relationships which is a result of difference in economic status, physical size and strength.

8.2. Study’s Contribution

This study sought to understand how Zambian gay Christians within urban Lusaka –self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings and the role of religion and culture in this construction process.

8.2.1. Theoretical Contribution

The study was informed by two sets of theories, namely, social-psychological – social constructionism and self-verification, as well as gender – feminist and queer theories. Social constructionism and self-verification theories are generally discrepant. However, in this study, I brought the two theories into dialogue and used them as lenses in understanding how the study participants formulate their identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture in the process.

I started by using social constructionism, a theory espoused by Berger and Luckmann (1966), Gergen (1999), Callero (2003), Hibberd (2005), and Burr (2015). Social constructionism’s

major argument is that the self is a social product arising from language (Gergen 1999:60) and power relations in a given social context (Burr 2015:25). It holds that although language is the main way through which the self is formed, there are given people who control what publicly gets to be accepted as the normative use of language. This theory places value on social relations as conduits through which people's identities, in this case, gender and sexual, are formed and acted out and that such identities are informed by prevailing worldviews whose very existence needs to be questioned (Burr 2015:2). Within the discipline of education, Freire (1970) has used social constructionism to show how education happens within social contexts, hence, placing value on outside classroom experiences as part of learning. Of further value is that he raises arguments on how the individual, although a product of social relations, is not a blank slate lacking agency (1970:72). Although located in the social context which informs who one is, an individual also interacts with the social context, to either assimilate, reformulate or reject the worldview held within social relations and contexts.

The proffered arguments were aligned to this study to show how my study participants' "self-construct" their identities and sexualities and the role played by religion and culture in this process. For instance, Christianity and culture within the Zambian context allow for social relations through which identities are constructed and my study participants showed how they understood themselves based on their social contexts which remain relational and dialectic in nature. Religion and culture both have prescriptions, written and unwritten on how, who and what an ideal male should be. However, within religion and culture as social contexts where self-formulation takes place, the power to determine the language used in construction of gender and sexual identities mainly lies with heterosexuals. Thus, by highlighting the usually unheard voices of gay Christians, this study purposefully subverts normative language on gender and sexual identities. By engaging with frontiers that determine what it means to be a male, the study participants on one hand borrow from the templates offered by religion and culture, while on the other hand, challenge these templates and reformulate their identities in relation with their self-understanding. This engagement with religion and culture shows that study participants were not only subjects acted upon but agents who also have a say in what religion and culture stipulate about gender and sexuality.

Assertions of agency among participants justify the use of self-verification theory in this study. Self-verification theory, like social constructionism, is rooted in symbolic

interactionism and focuses on self-views of individuals which do not fade away in as much as they are rooted in a social context. These self-views are cultivated by individuals routinely (Swann 1983:46), as they place themselves in social relations and contexts that validate their concepts of self (Thatcher and Zhu 2006:1077). Individuals usually avoid being in situations and contexts which prompt identity crisis, resulting into crisis verification in which they question who they are (Swann 1983:47). In self-verification, the self creates a social context that affirms who they are, while in social constructionism, the social context is already available and the individual finds themselves in it. This theory highlights how the self is an active agent in the creation of stable identities within spaces of time (Pasupathi and Rich 2005:1052-1053). Swann *et al* (2004:11) assert that an individual is an agent in the formulation of their own identity; the self creates a circle of individuals who hold similar views about who they are, termed as “selective affiliation” (Banaji and Prentice 199:303, Swann 1983:38-39 and Hogg and Abrams 2004:252). Using this theory, correlations and contestations of self-views and worldviews in the social contexts of religion and culture were explored, to establish how participants view themselves.

Following this, it can be noted that study participants were not subjects acted upon by religion and culture without interaction on their part with both construction sites. They created their own social contexts that validated self-views by belonging to informal gay Christian communities which seemingly viewed them as they viewed themselves. However, religion and culture as social contexts remained vital sites in which they “self-constructed” their identities and sexualities. In instances where there were discrepancies in how they self-viewed and views about them held by a social context, they either opted to stay away from the social context that created crisis verification or found ways of holding together the dissonant self-views and social contexts. However, self-views thrived in social contexts – religion and culture – that upheld self-understanding. Furthermore, by engaging with how religion and culture construct their identities and sexualities, study participants showed how they are agents in how they formulate their identities.

This study was also theoretically framed by feminist and queer theories which helped in interrogating sexual and gender identities of the study participants. Feminist theory interrogates women’s experiences, what shapes them and cultural meanings of being a woman (Jackson and Jones 1998:1). Feminist theory highlights the marginalization of women by men, thus, brings issues of power based on gender and sexual roles to the fore. This theory

also challenges gender disparities which it attributes to patriarchy (Goss 1996:23, Rakoczy 2004:10) and androcentrism (Rakoczy 2004:11). Feminist theory attributes the marginalization of women to unearned societal privilege by men and the belief that men are more superior to women because they are men. Based on its emphasis on challenging gender roles which are the cause of women's marginalization, this theory was useful for this study as it allowed the critique of gender roles from the perspective of the study participants.

Queer theory was another gender theory which framed this study. Queer theory refutes the taken-for-granted gender and sexual categorizations which inform what is considered as normal and natural in social, political and religious contexts (Schneider and Roncolato 2012:1). Queer theory does not subscribe to heteronormativity as it deconstructs normative fixed approaches towards gender and sexuality (Isherwood and Althaus 2004:3-5). It allows for questioning how and who constructs knowledge about gender and sexualities and the powers inherent in such construction. It insists that gender and sexual identities are constructs of discourse (Lowe 2009:52). Feminist and queer theories helped me investigate gender and sexual roles as fluid entities in this study.

The four theories enabled this study to show that gender and sexual identities are formed in social contexts within social relationships where language is the mode of construction, remain personal and social, are fluid, and challenge heteronormativity and patriarchy. Sexual and gender roles were interrogated based on the lenses provided by feminist and queer theories.

8.2.2. Conceptual Contribution

Three major conceptual contributions have been made in this study: that there are discrepancies in terms used by gay Christians to "self-describe" and those used by Zambian society to describe them; the gender binary model and the "coming out" model do not necessarily apply for study participants in this study.

Terms used by study participants to "self-describe" did not correlate with those used by some sections of Zambian society. The study participants opted to use terms which validated them, their gender and sexual identities. Although I have not disclosed these terms, they nevertheless signify the importance of self-naming. However, terms used by some sections of Zambian society, such as no-fish and Ban Ki-Moon, are derogatory and do not depict how

my study participants regarded themselves. This study has shown that there are discrepancies in terms used by gay Christians to self-identify and those used by some sections of Zambian society to describe them.

In the book *Undoing Gender*, Butler problematizes how the gender binary is understood in gender studies noting that:

one tendency within gender studies has been to assume that the alternative to the binary system of gender is a multiplication of genders...the disruption of the binary system need not lead us to an equally problematic quantification of gender (2004:43).

The gender binary model assumes that every person operates and performs their gender and sexual identity either as male or female, and most times these are poles from each other. However, this study has shown through engagement with Butler (2004) how restrictive the gender binary model is in that it does not consider identities that bring together the binary nor those forged outside the binary. In this study, I have argued that the gender binary model does not adequately capture the ways in which my study participants understand and forge their identity. The gender binary model is challenged by the concept of borderland gender and sexualities which allows for liminal gender and sexual identities. Based on the experiences of study participants, this study has established that their genders do not neatly fit into the gender binary categorization.

Another conceptual contribution made in this study is that much of the “coming-out” model in relation to sexual minorities does not necessarily apply to every context, especially the location of this study. The “coming-out” model is regarded in the literature as empowering, a positive contributor, and essential to the development of the self-esteem of LGBTI persons (Savin-William 1989, Griffin 1992, Cohen and Savin-Williams 1996, and Jordan and Deluty 1998). It is generally regarded as beneficial for LGBTI persons to “come-out” about their gender and sexual identities to their friends, families and communities. Although regarded as a good model, this model does not seem suitable for participants in this study who have to contend with issues of security and safety, economics, social status, family dynamics and personal choice. This study has shown that in many instances, some participants and their families opted to engage in the “silence language” to avoid verbalizing issues of gay identities and sexualities. This seemingly does work for both the participants and their families, thereby, providing a semblance of family coordination without risking family

disruptions that could possibly arise out of “coming-out”. Furthermore, coming out may not be necessary since families seemingly intuitively know about their son’s gender and sexual identities. The questions the “coming-out” model raises are: why come out and to whom? For whom is “coming-out” important if the closet seems to be a safe place for the study participants? Is it necessary to “come-out”? What is “coming-out” in contexts where sexuality is hardly a subject of discussion? This position is also supported by Sedgwick in the *Epistemology of the Closet* where she challenges notions of “coming-out” as a way of countering homophobia and gaining social inclusion, instead opting to portray the closet as a space that conceals more than it reveals (1990:69-90). In other words, the closet is a space where some LGBTI persons can be themselves as the closet space has elements that serve the purposes of self-construction of identities. Although “the image of coming out regularly interfaces the image of the closet, and its seemingly unambivalent public siting can be counterposed as a salvational epistemologic certainty against the very equivocal privacy afforded by the closet” (Sedgwick 1990:71). The “coming-out” model negates the fact that individual’s gender and sexual identities are as much about private arenas just as much as they are public spaces. However, the closet affords individuals privacy of their gender and sexual identities and sexualities.

8.2.3. Methodological Contribution

The dilemma of the power dynamics between the researcher and researched is a methodological contribution this study makes. Since some of the study participants were not comfortable with their inner codes being brought into the public domain, issues of research ethics versus epistemic contribution were salient. In a study where the study participants are bound by their signed consent forms, how binding is the consent when issues of participants’ security and safety are of essence? In this particular study, I opted to abide by the desires of the study participants, thus, I took their welfare as being more important than epistemological contribution. Additionally, this study has shown that the normative research requirement of signed consent forms may be subverted by study participants, especially when the study employs more than one research method of data production. This could be due to trust relations created between the researcher and the researched or that signing consent forms at each stage of the study may be cumbersome for some study participants but their presence in a study is consent enough to them.

8.3. Possible Areas of Future Research

Having focused on how gay Christians formulate their identities and sexualities and the role of religion and culture, this study is not exhaustive, as such, future areas of research have been identified as follows:

First, it would be informative to take this study further by exploring how other sexual minorities within the LGBTI bracket construct their identities and sexualities. This is because notions of homo-patriarchy show that many studies on sexual minorities have been about gay men, to the negation of other sexual minorities. It would be of particular interest to interrogate the less researched categories of transgender and intersex with regards to their identities and sexualities.

Second, another worthwhile avenue worth exploring is how Christianity and ATRs construct transgender and intersex persons. What do these two religions teach and what are the discourses they engage in when confronted with issues of transgender and intersex. Are they also regarded and understood in a similar way as same-sex sexualities and identities?

Third, the place of initiation rites of passage has been highlighted in this study as a site for the construction of gay identities and sexualities. Both male and female initiation rites of passage were regarded by study participants as spaces in which they “self-construct” their identities and themselves as sexual beings as these spaces remain accommodative of them. However, it would be helpful to interrogate how and why some gay Christians are accommodated in female initiation rites of passage as trainers and if this is also possible within male initiation rites of passage. Additionally, it would be informative to interrogate how far such incorporation into the female initiation rites of passage such as the kitchen party goes. That is, would an “only gay” group of trainers be accepted and entrusted to take on the lessons at kitchen parties and the all-female night vigil held before the kitchen party? Or are they only occasionally accepted as long as they are in a group of female trainers? How are such levels of incorporation empowering or disempowering to gay men who identify as female?

Last, the place of the economy in the construction of gay identities and sexualities is a potential area of future research, especially in relation to differences in class, race, age and geographical location of gay men. This is in light of the concept of the “pink economy”

which focuses on ~~the~~ spending power of the gay economy and now with gay lifestyles being more overtly expressed in monetary terms” (Power 2009:1). How then are gay men being embraced in their social contexts based on their spending power and how does this contribute to the identity of gay men? Does the pink economy serve as a potential liberative option for gay men in predominantly heterosexual Africa? Or does it offer new ways of furthering the marginalization of gay men through economic manipulation?

8.4. Conclusion

How do gay Christians “self-construct” their identities and sexualities and what is the role of religion and culture in this process? This study has shown that gay Christians are agents in the formulation and reformulation of their identities and sexualities, while religion and culture remain vital construction sites through which these identities are constructed and performed. The ambiguities provided within Christianity and culture of both embracing and not embracing gay identities and sexualities create borderlands in which gay Christians operate and understand themselves. Religio-cultural reflection on the findings in this study concludes that Christianity and culture in the Zambian context need to reconsider how they define maleness, and who fits the prescription, allowing for the recognition of identities and sexualities that lie outside the normative borders to be part of the Zambian Christian and cultural context. Additionally, Christianity and culture in the Zambian context need not be holistically disregarded as being unhelpful to gay Christians as gay Christians still find spaces in these social construction sites in which they thrive and negotiate some of the prescriptions on maleness.

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Appendix One: Research Instrument: Focus Group Discussions with the Lusaka Central Group

1. How does religion contribute to the way you understand yourself as a man? (Day one)
2. How does your religion influence how you view your sexuality? (Day two)
3. In which ways does culture influence your understanding yourself as a man? (Day three)
4. How does culture influence how you views on your sexuality? (Day four)
5. Following our four discussions we have had, is there anything you would like to clarify and add? (Day five)

Bemba Loose Translation

1. Bushe bukapewa bumwafwa shani mukuiishiba ngabashitata?
2. Bushe bukapewa bumitungilila shani mumatontokanyo yenu pabufyashi bwenu?
3. Ninumshilanshi intambi shachikaya shimwafwa mukutungilila ukuiishiba ngabashitat?
4. Bushe intambi shachikaya shimwafwa shani mumatontokanyo yenu pabufyashi bwenu?
5. Mukukonka pafyo twalanshenye kunuma uku, bushe pali fimo ifyo mwingafwaya ukwipusha nangula ukulundapo?

Nyanja Loose Translation

1. Kodi mapempero yamitandizilani bwanji kuziziba ngati azibambo?
2. Kodi mapempero yamitandizalani bwanji mumaganizo yano pankani yaufyazi?
3. Nimunjila bwanji mwamene mwambo umutandizani kuziziba ngati azibambo?
4. Kodi mwambo umitandizilani bwanji mumaganizo yano pankani yaufyazi?
5. Uwonjezela pavamene tinakambapo kumbuyo uku, pali vamene munga waonjezele olo kunfunsa?

Appendix One (a): Research Instrument: Focus Group Discussions for the Kanyama Group

1. What roles do religion and culture play in how you construct your masculinities and sexualities? (Day one)
2. How do you understand yourself as a man and why do you understand yourself in the way that you do? (Day two)

Bemba Loose Translation

1. Bushe nimunshilanshi bukapepa nangula ichalichi ne matambi shachikaya fimyafwa imwe mukuishiba ngabashitata?
2. Bushe mwaiishiba shani ngabashitata olo kabili chinshi chalenga ukuti muishiibe mumusango uyo?

Nyanja Loose Translation

1. Nimunjila bwanji mwamene mapempero olo church nama mwambo vimitandiza mukuziziba imwe ngati azibambo?
2. Kodi muziziba bwanji ngati azibambo olo futi nichani chilengesa imwe kuti muzizibe munjila yamene muzizibilamo?

Appendix One (b): Research Instrument: Questions for Individual interviews

1. How do you understand yourself as a religious man?
2. What factors have helped shape how you understand yourself?
3. How has religion shaped how you understand yourself as a religious man?
4. How has culture shaped how you understand yourself as a man?
5. What are some of the practices, adages and terms used in religion and culture that you find useful in how you understand yourself as a man?
6. What are some the practices, adages and terms used in religion and culture which you do not find useful in how you understand yourself as a man?
7. Is there anything you would like to clarify or add?

Bemba Loose Translation

1. Bushe mwaiishiba shani nga bashitata ababa bakapepa?
2. Fintu nshi ifyamyafwa ukuiishiba?
3. Bushe bukapepa bwamyafwa shani ukuishiba nga bashitata ababa bakapepa?
4. Bushe intambi shachikaya shimafwa shani ukuishiba nga bashitata?
5. Fichitwa nshi, insoselo nshi namashiwi nshi aya sangwa muli bukapepa namuntambi ifyamfwa mukuiishiba nga bashitata?
6. Fichitwa nshi, insoselo nshi namashiwi nshi aya sangwa muli bukapepa namuntambi ifishimwafwa mukuiishiba nga bashitata?
7. Pali fimbi mungafwaya ukwipusha nangula ukulundapo?

Nyanja Loose Translation

1. Nanga muziziba bwanji ngati ababambo amapepero?
2. Nivichani vameme vimitandizani kuziziba?
3. Kodi kunkhala abambo amapempero kumitandizani munjila bwanji kuziziba ngati abambo?
4. Ninachitidwe abwanji, makambidwe abwanji ndi mau abwanji yamene yapezeka mumapempero namu mwanmbo yamene yamitandiza mukuziziba kwanu?
5. Ninachitidwe abwanji, makambidwe abwanji ndi mau abwanji yamene yapezeka mumapempero namu mwanmbo yamene yamitandiza mukuziziba kwanu?
6. Ninachitidwe abwanji, makambidwe abwanji ndi mau abwanji yamene yapezeka mumapempero namu mwanmbo yamene siyamitandiza mukuziziba kwanu?
7. Pali vinangu vamene mufakepo o?

Appendix Two: Ethical Clearance Letter



18 March 2015

Reverend Lilly Phiri 211513491
School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Reverend Phiri

Protocol reference number H55/1598/014ns
Project title: "Self Construction" of Gay Mosaic/Tritics and Sexuality: Intersections of Religion and Culture.

Full Approval – Committee Reviewed Protocol

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol (i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods) must be reviewed and approved through an amendment/modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Sherukta Singh (Chair)

/ps

cc: Supervisor: Professor Samjini Nadar
cc: Academic Leader Research: Professor P. Denis
cc: School Administrator: Mrs. Catherine Murugan

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

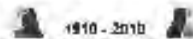
Dr. Sherukta Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Goven Mbeki Building

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Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 5187/03604667 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4908 Email: humanities@ukn.ac.za / ukn@ukn.ac.za / hr@ukn.ac.za

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Appendix Three: Consent Letter and Form

CONSENT LETTER FOR RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED BY LILLY PHIRI (211513491)

Title of Project: “Self-Construction” of Gay Masculinities and Sexualities:

Intersections of Religion and Culture.

Academic Supervisor: Professor Sarojini Nadar **Email:** nadars@ukzn.ac.za

Researcher’s Name: Lilly Phiri **Email:** phiri.lilly@yahoo.com **Cell:** +260976639668 or +27839925404

Study Overview: I am a Doctoral student in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) and conducting a research under the supervision of Prof. Sarojini Nadar.

You are invited to participate in a study exploring how you self-construct your masculinities and sexualities and the roles of religion and culture in this construction. Past research has demonstrated how masculinities and sexualities have been understood in heterosexual terms with religion and culture being influential in this understanding. This study will extend previous research by exploring your voices on masculinities and sexualities.

What You Will Be Asked to Do: As a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in five focus group discussions within your already existing structures. The two main questions that you be asked to discuss in these focus group discussions are;

1. What is the role of religion and culture in how you self-construct your masculinities and sexualities?
2. How do you construct your masculinities and sexualities and why do you construct your masculinities and sexualities in the way that you do?

Participation and Remuneration: Participation in this study is voluntary, and will take approximately 60 minutes of your time per focus group discussion. You will be served with light snacks during this study.

You may decline to answer any questions presented during the study if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time by advising the researcher, and may do so without any penalty.

Personal Benefits of the Study: The benefits of participation in this study include you being able to speak about your lived experiences and also coming up with theologies arising from your own experiences. You will receive additional background information about the study. There are no other personal benefits for participation.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Be assured that this study will be held in confidentiality and all discussions will only be used for purposes of this study and any publications that may result from this study. Your name will not be used during and after the study, thus, you shall be allowed to choose a code or a pseudonym so

that you remain anonymous.

Risks to Participation in the Study: Risks that may arise from this study are minimal. You shall be accorded all the respect and to ensure that no harm comes your way, all focus group discussions will be held in the venue where you always meet for your usual group meetings.

Questions and Research Ethics Clearance: If after receiving this letter, you have any questions about this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please feel free to ask the me or my academic supervisor listed at the top of this letter.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact the Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Thank you for your interest in our research and for your assistance with this project.

Consent of Participant

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by (*names of researcher*) under the supervision of Prof. (*names of academic supervisor*) of the School of Religion, Philosophy and classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the study without any penalty at any time by advising the researcher of this decision.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Study participant's code or pseudonym:.....

Signature of participant:.....

Date:.....

Signature of Group Leader/Witness:.....

THANK YOU.

Appendix Four: Gate-keeper's Letter



Friends of RAINKA
MEDICAL CONSULTANCY

P O Box 30600

Lusaka - Zambia

The Ethics Committee

University of KwaZulu-Natal

RE: Permission Letter for Lilly Phiri

Dear Sir/Madam

This is to confirm that our organization, Friends of RAINKA MEDICAL CONSULTANCY has been in contact with Lilly Phiri over the research she wishes to conduct with us and are willing to work with her on the same. She has made contact with us and attended two of our meetings in December 2012, conducted her studies with us in 2013 and so, it is our sincerest hope to assist her in her research and that the research will be enriching to our organization and the communities we serve.

We look forward to working with her.

We hope that this letter seeking permission for her will meet your kindest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Lundu Mazoka

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Plot 7928 Chozi Road Northmead, Lusaka

ZAMBIA

Appendix Five: Audio Recording Authorization



P O Box 30600

Lusaka - Zambia

The Ethics Committee

University of KwaZulu-Natal

RE: Permission Letter for Audio Recording during Lilly Phiri's research

Dear Sir/Madam

This is to confirm that our organization, Friends of RAINKA MEDICAL CONSULTANCY has agreed that Lilly Phiri should audio record all the focus group discussions she will hold with us during her research period. It is our sincerest hope to assist her in her research and that the research will be enriching to our organization and the communities we serve.

We look forward to working with her.

We hope that this letter seeking permission for her will meet your kindest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Lundu Mazoka

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Plot 7928 Chozi Road Northmead, Lusaka

ZAMBIA

Appendix Six: Turn-It-In Report

Turnitin Originality Report
PhD revised by Lilly Phiri
From PhD (Phiri PhD)

- Processed on 02-Dec-2016 4:22 PM CAT
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3

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[Submitted to CSU, Long Beach on 2010-12-17](#)

4

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[van Klinken, Adriaan, and Lilly Phiri. "—If the Image of God?": Reconstructing and Developing a Grassroots African Queer Theology from Urban Zambia", *Theology and Sexuality*, 2015.](#)

5

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<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/85530/>

6

< 1% match (student papers from 05-Nov-2013)

Class: Lilly Phiri

Assignment:

Paper ID: [369861588](#)

7

< 1% match (student papers from 10-Dec-2014)

[Submitted to Georgia State University on 2014-12-10](#)

Appendix Seven: List of Study Participants

Ashley

Chipobabz

Chris

Dakah

Dina

Diva

Foster

Keri Hilson

Maambo

Maliq

MamaG

Pamera

Paul

Rihana

Roman

Taonga

Terry

Teta