"THIS MAY NOT BE YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S PAGE, BUT WE WILL DEFINITELY TALK ABOUT HER": LUSAKA WOMEN AND THE *ZAMBIAN FEMINISTS* FACEBOOK PAGE.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a degree of
Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies

RHODES UNIVERSITY

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March 2021

ABSTRACT

The internet has facilitated the creation of a global community of feminists who use it both for discussion and activism. Recently, high-profile campaigns, such as *#MeToo* and *#AmINext,* have garnered massive support online, attracting tens of thousands of women in diverse social and geographical spaces who have used the internet as forums for discussion and a route for activism. However, there are still parts of the world where feminism is a contentious topic, and one such place is Zambia, where the Facebook page *Zambian Feminists,* seeks to challenge patriarchy and gender non-conformity in a highly heteronormative society. This study investigates how prolific women fans of the *Zambian Feminists* page contest, negotiate and appropriate meanings from the posts and associated comments into their lives as "everyday feminists". As a reception study, it inquires into how Lusaka women fans of the page negotiate their roles as strong feminists online and their offline social roles as women, mothers, daughters and wives living in a patriarchal and conservative society. The study draws primarily on qualitative research methods, specifically qualitative focus group discussions and individual in-depth interviews, to investigate this audience's reception of the page's content. The study establishes that *Zambian Feminists* is consumed in a complex environment where contesting notions of Christianity, traditionalism, and modernity are at play. The study also shows how a Christian nationalism discourse acts as a stumbling block to women fans identifying as feminists and women fans who identify as members of the LGBTIQ community, as they must negotiate and construct their identity against this prevailing discourse. The study concludes that inasmuch as the *Zambian Feminist* page provides a platform for women to 'call out' and challenge patriarchy, sexism and misogyny, the offline space is more difficult to overcome; Zambian women continue to conform to patriarchal norms as they construct and negotiate their feminism in line with the broader societal gender order.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Beit Trust for awarding me the prestigious Beit-Rhodes scholarship. To Sir Andrew Pocock, Sara Williams, Wicks Burton and Ashleigh Mitchley, thank you for believing in my dreams. I am forever indebted for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

To my supervisor, Dr Priscilla Boshoff, thank you for introducing me to this exciting world of cultural and gender studies. You have been my lighthouse during this process, thank you for your patience, kindness and guidance, you have left an indelible mark on my life.

I am forever indebted to my parents Catherine Chowa and Edmond Kasanga. I know how much you sacrificed for me to attain an education that you never had the opportunity to achieve. Words can never express my gratitude. Your daily phone calls, encouragement, and advice are what kept me going. I hope when you read this, you will be proud.

To my biggest cheerleaders, my siblings Clara, George and Chola Kasanga, being away from home meant missing out on some of your major milestones, thank you for understanding. Your love and unwavering support made this possible.

To all my dear friends, thank you. To Menelisi Falayi, thank you for reading my work, discussing ideas and keeping me grounded. To Makomborero Muzenda, Tsholofelo Sepotokele and Karabo Baloyi, thank you for helping me settle in the department and in Grahamstown. To my housemate and sister, Mutale Mpuku, thank you for reminding me to give myself grace and prioritise self-care.

Lastly, thank you Situmbeko Wambuluwae and the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook Page. My deepest gratitude goes to all my respondents who willingly shared their experiences with me.

When I think of the journey to achieve my Master's, Maya Angelou's words ring true: "I come as one, but stand as ten thousand".

DEDICATION

For my parents Catherine Mubanga Chowa and Edmond Kasanga.
"Where my father couldn't reach, I'll get there, and I'll surpass. Where my mother couldn't reach, I'll get there, and I'll surpass".

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"Research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose (Hurston, 1942: 91)".

1. Introduction

This study investigates how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity, and how Lusaka women fans of the page negotiate and make meanings of the representations they encounter on the page. The study is located within cultural and digital media studies. It interrogates culture, gender, feminism, the Internet, social media and their position within conservative African societies.

This chapter discusses the study's background and context, and briefly highlights the research goals, the research methods, and the thesis structure.

1.1 General background of the study: A Personal note

This study is set in Lusaka, and it is prompted by my own formative experiences with patriarchy and gender non-conformity as a young woman growing up in Zambia. From a tender age, I knew culturally there were things I could say in public spaces and others I could never say. I was 12 years old when one of my aunts asked me to prepare a meal for my elder brother. I casually responded, "If he is hungry, he should fix his plate, doesn't he have hands?" My aunt harshly rebuked me for my sentiments. I still vividly remember her words "A good lady never talks back! You are going to be a wife, and you need to start practising your roles while you are young, if you keep running your mouth like a crazy woman you will never get married and even if you do, your in-laws will insult your mother and all your aunties for not training you well". From that day, I knew my role was to work diligently without questioning and never talk back if I wanted to be a good wife who brings honour to her family.

The second influence came from growing up hearing the ideology that "Zambia is a Christian nation" from the media, church and school. I never questioned it; I took it at face value and accepted it as true. I did not know how much this statement impacted me and how I viewed the world and especially those who did not conform to these beliefs. After I travelled to Namibia in 2015 for a student exchange program at the University of Namibia (UNAM), I became aware of my conditioning and, to some extent, homophobia. I was at the mall in Namibia when I first came into contact with a gay couple. In my 20 years of existence, I had

never seen a gay couple except on television in American movies and South African television dramas like *Generations* and *Isidingo*. I could not hide my disbelief and bewilderment: how could they be walking so openly? I convinced myself it only happens in other countries like Namibia and South Africa, not Zambia. I later attended the 21st International AIDS conference in Durban, South Africa, where I heard Zambians narrating their experiences of being part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer (LGBTIQ) community while living in a Christian nation. From that moment, I started to exercise reflexivity and began to question certain beliefs and practices that are considered normal in Zambia. Armed with curiosity and a hunger for more knowledge, I returned home and learned that the Christian nation ideology extends to all spheres of our lives, from the law (what is acceptable practice and what is a punishable offence), to social spaces (what can be said in public and what cannot).

Another influence stems from my experience with sexual assault. I was assaulted at the age of 11, but never publicly shared my experience with anyone outside my immediate family. I was 23 when I first came across the #MeToo movement on Facebook. After reading the stories of abuse, rape and harassment shared by different women across the world, I knew I was not alone, and it was time to share my story too. In 2018 I took part in a digital storytelling project where I finally shared the traumatic experience that marred my childhood, and made a commitment to help fellow survivors and bring public attention to the realities of sexual abuse in Zambia.

All these experiences revolve around my experiences with patriarchy and online activism, and societal expectations of my behaviour as a young Zambian woman. My last experience comes from seeing a Facebook post challenging the practice of labia elongation on a page called the *Zambian Feminist*s. I felt as though the post was talking about me, and my interactions with family matriarchs who perpetuate the practice. The page's boldness and courage drove me to become an avid fan and follower of the page. I read about other women's struggles and experiences similar to my own, a constant reminder that I was not alone.

During a discussion with my supervisor about patriarchy in African societies, I mentioned the role of this page and its representation of patriarchal practices in a Zambia context. From this discussion, I developed an interest in understanding how other Lusaka women fans of the page negotiate, contest, and make meanings from, the representations shared on the page. That discussion led me to the conclusion that this phenomenon needed to be further investigated and understood.

These experiences informed the conception of my research into the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page, which has positioned itself as a page seeking to challenge patriarchy and gender non-conformity, and give Zambian women a "voice" - as reflected in its tagline "we want to share the voice of a Zambian woman that has not been heard". The *Zambian Feminists* posts a variety of topics/issues, such as patriarchal practices, LGBTIQ, gender-based violence, rape, harassment, and menstrual hygiene, that affect Zambian women daily. What caught my interest is their courage to share content on a public forum like Facebook which in Zambia is normally regarded as "private", "sacred to women only" or "offensive to men" . These topics are widely debated and contested mostly among Zambian women.

1.2 Significance of the study

Several studies have been conducted on social media's role in challenging sexism, misogyny, rape culture and patriarchy (Baer, 2016; Fotopoulou, 2017; Mendes and Carter, 2018). Similarly, recent work on digital activism in South Africa has focused on safety among activists in online spaces (Radloff, 2013; Roux, 2017). Although recent scholarship has documented the ways social media is being used to challenge patriarchal practices, little research has been done to explore how Zambian women challenge patriarchy in online and offline spaces.

Therefore, this research seeks to add to the existing body of research by understanding how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity and how Lusaka women fans of the page contest, negotiate, and appropriate meanings of the representations they encounter on the page. The research is contextualised within Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. It contributes to the current debates around the growing popularity and effectiveness of digital activism and online feminism in an urban African context, which is characterised by contesting discourse of traditional and Western practices.

1.3 Goals of the study

The overarching goal of this research is to understand how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity. This forms the basis for the critical research question: What meanings do women make of the *Zambian Feminists* content and comments, and in what ways are they able to put these meanings into practice within their everyday lives as self-proclaimed feminists?

Further questions arise from these goals:

1. In what ways does the page provide support to women contributors who express their views on this platform, given Zambia's patriarchal context?
2. How does the administrator select content and regulate commentary on this platform?
3. What role has the page played in participants' understanding of gender politics and their role as feminists in Zambia's gender-unequal context?
4. In what ways does this participation translate into feminist action in their day-to-day lives?
5. What do their responses reveal about what "counts" as feminism in this social space?

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter one introduces the study; it highlights the research objectives and its significance and provides an outline of the thesis as a whole.

Chapter two presents discussions around gender relations in pre-colonial, colonial and present-day Zambia. Secondly, it discusses the main features of Lusaka's socio-political background - the context of reception of the *Zambian Feminists* in the scope of this study. It also discusses Internet penetration, Facebook and the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page.

Chapter three reviews literature that deals with the constructivist approach to understanding gender by focusing on Connell (2009) as a primary scholar within this scholarship body. It also highlights other scholarly opinions about patriarchy and feminism in African society.

Chapter four is devoted to the theoretical considerations that inform the digital aspect of this study. The chapter discusses the Habermasian (1974) concept of the public sphere to explore the argument on whether social media platforms are viable platforms for the formation of public opinion concerning pertinent issues.

The methods, procedures and techniques employed in the study are the focus of Chapter five. The chapter gives a rationale for the adoption of qualitative research design rooted in reception theory. It discusses focus groups and in-depth interviews as data collection methods.

Chapters six and seven present the findings in the light of the literature explored in Chapters three and four. The two chapters unfold by presenting findings from interviews (focus groups and individual interviews). The chapters combine the findings from in-depth interviews (group and individual) and present them in narrative form.

Finally, Chapter eight gives a summary and conclusion of the study and provides a recommendation for further research.

1.5 Limitation of the study

This study examines how prolific Lusaka women fans negotiate, contest, and make meanings from the gender representations they encounter on the *Zambian Feminist* Facebook page. This is a very specific audience, which is a minority within the larger population. As such, it is too small and specific to represent the larger population and too small to make general claims about a phenomenon. Also, it cannot claim to be representative of all Zambian feminists as a group: not all feminists may participate on the site. Therefore, the limitation of my research is characteristic of the nature of qualitative research generally. In addition, I chose to conduct small focus groups to ensure that participants had enough time to talk and discuss amongst themselves. However, I acknowledge that the size of focus groups is a potential limitation, as fewer focus group participants may result in fewer talking points and experiences. As a Lusaka woman fan of the *Zambian Feminist* page, my positionality enabled me to understand what women fans talked about during focus groups. This understanding and familiarity, although beneficial, also poses a challenge if taken-for-granted phenomena are not interrogated thoroughly. To guard against this limitation, instead of relying on my own experience and knowledge of this social context, I chose to let participants explain their perspectives based on their experiences with the city and the Facebook page.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

"Gender should be seen in a specific cultural context and through time (Brinkman, 1996: 4)".

2. Introduction

This chapter discusses the broader political and gender context within which the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page is created, shared and received. The current gender relations in Zambia must be understood within the history of the changes that have taken place since colonisation. It is this history that helps us to make sense of the present. Traces of pre-colonial "custom" remain in contemporary gender-relations. This chapter unfolds by firstly, discussing gender and gender relations in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Zambia. Secondly, it discusses some of Zambian society's main socio-political features that shape the social context in which this study is situated. These underlying gender issues need to be understood within Lusaka's context, where this study was conducted and within the discourse of femininity and the collision of Western and traditional practices.

2.1 Gender in pre-colonial Zambia

Women's or female narratives concerning gender relations are mainly absent in historical accounts of pre-colonial African society. Ahmed (1996) and Rasing (2001) argued that this absence of female narratives reflects European male-dominance in ethnographic studies in which the assumption is that women are subjugated. As a result, European scholars excluded women from their studies (Rasing, 2001: 29). Ahmed (1996) further explains that the alteration of gender relations is as significant to history as political and economic relations changes. The literature on the changes in gender relations in pre-colonial Africa provides very little information on the scale or kind of changes that may have taken place in gender relations during pre-colonial history (Rasing, 2001). This assessment includes Zambia, where female or women narratives during the pre-colonial era are absent.

In pre-colonial times, kinship was central to communities' economic and political life (Crehan, 1997). Marriage defined relationships between men and women, regulated sexual activity, located their children in the kinship system, and determined property inheritance (Parpart, 1994). Marriage was usually arranged, contracted and dissolved by kin groups, and thus reinforced heads' of households and seniors' authority, usually male members of the lineage (Parpart, 1994). While marriage rules and regulations varied among societies, most marriages were either matrilineal, patrilineal or bilateral.

In matrilineal societies, which are numerous in Zambia (Bemba, Kaonde, Tonga, Luvale) a husband acquired rights to his wife's domestic and sexual services (spousal rights) at marriage, but rights over children (genetrical rights) remained with the wife's lineage (Parpart, 1991; Poewe, 1978). In a matrilineal society, the uncle is more important than the father (Parpart, 1991; Crehan, 1997), as inheritance and status were passed from a man to his sister's son (Taylor, 2006). Richards (1940) explains that instead of paying significant bride-wealth, a son-in-law would perform bride-service, working under his wife's kin's authority as such male matrikin's political strength depended heavily on the fertility of his sisters and matrilineal kin (Richards, 1940; Evans; 2014). With matrilocality, men moved to their wife's village at marriage, but after acquiring economic control over his household, he could be granted permission to relocate to his natal village (Evans, 2014). For this reason, women enjoyed high status, with parents welcoming the birth of girls, as potentially able to bring male labour to their village and reproduce the lineage (Richards, 1940). Furthermore, separation and divorce seemed to be more prevalent among matrilineal people since there were no high bride-wealth payments to be returned (Richards, 1940; Poewe, 1978; Parpart; 1991; Crehan, 1997).

In patrilineal societies (Ngoni), fathers' rights over children were secured by the payment of *lobola* (bride price) to the wife's family (Parpart, 1991; 1994). Both spousal and genetrical rights were usually transferred at the marriage ceremony; this transfer was further solidified by the wife's move to the husband's village (Parpart, 1991; 1994). Women under patrilineal authority had no jural rights, and divorce was almost impossible to obtain (Parpart, 1991). Parpart (1991) explains that a man could divorce by returning the woman to her kin, but this was rare during this period.

In bilateral societies like the Lozi, there is an emphasis on spousal rather than genetrical rights which provides flexible residence and property rights (Parpart, 1991; 1994). Parpart (1991) explains that, with an emphasis on spousal rights, children received property from both kin groups. Lozi women remained firmly tied to their kin groups, but their children were expected to live in their father's village and elder children could choose to live with either set of relatives (Parpart, 1991). Parpart (1994: 244) argues that marriage is not immutable; it responds to social, economic and political change. Because it affects access to human material resources, it is often a central arena of struggle between the sexes, both within and between generations.

The gender order of pre-colonial times was based on a sharp distinction of responsibilities between men and women. Boys learnt traditional skills such as hunting,

trapping and shooting, while girls learnt skills from women, such as *Banachimbusa,* which in Zambia included much of the agriculture cultivation. (Rasing, 2001; Allen, 2010). Allen (2010) describes how the informal education provided was within the context of the tribe, and intended to prepare individuals for adult life. Part of this education included intricate gender initiation rites (Rasing, 2001). A girl's initiation rites took place after she started her first menstruation, *Ichisungu* (Rasing, 2001). Rasing (2001) explains that the rites marked the passage from childhood to womanhood, and the girls were supposed to behave accordingly. Initiation rites emphasise reproductive roles within marriage, domestic and agriculture duties, respect for elders and the novice's future husband, sexuality and food taboos (Rasing, 2001). Rasing (2001) describes how a future bride, usually about ten years old, cleaned her future husband's house and was allowed to sleep there at intervals, including having sex, although only coitus interruptus was allowed. As a result, most girls were married off to older men, who took them as a younger wife. During this period, polygyny was common among most groups (Taylor, 2006).

In the pre-colonial period, religion was undergirded by the spirituality that saw God in nature and celebrated their ancestors' role and importance (Taylor, 2006; Rasing, 2001). Both Rasing (2001) and Taylor (2006) agree that there was a general belief of a higher God similar to monotheistic world religions during this time. For example, most Zambians believed in a creator, a High God, referred to by a range of names: *Nyambe* in Lozi, *Nzambi* in the western regions, *Mulungu* in Nyanja, *Leza* in Tonga, or *Lesa* in the Bemba (Rasing, 2001; Taylor, 2006). This High God/Deity was considered the creator of all things but did not actively take part in human affairs, instead this space was occupied by the spirit realm (Rasing, 2001; Taylor, 2006). Taylor (2006) argues that, in this sense, traditional practices were not monotheistic in that there were several spirits or intermediate realms occupied by different types of spirits: ancestral, nature, individual. Although these were not worshipped per se, spirits in this intermediate realm were believed to control everything from the weather to pestilence to the availability of food to death and disease (Taylor, 2006). Whereas the ancestors' spirits could bring luck and success, if treated with the proper reverence, failure to properly appease them could result in bad luck and misfortune.

2.2 Gender in colonial Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) 1888 - 1964

Since the advent of colonialism in 1888, Zambia - then Northern Rhodesia - underwent a paradigm shift in its social, economic, political and religious systems (Siwila, 2017). Northern Rhodesia transitioned from a traditional, self-sustaining small-scale agriculture, cattle-herding

and fishing economy, to a robust capitalist economy that mainly depended on revenue from copper (Hansen, 1984; Siwila, 2017). Zambian communities progressed from a clan-based type of leadership to the amalgamation of different ethnic groups under the umbrella of one system of colonial control (Siwila, 2017). During this period, women suffered double oppression, enforced on one hand by traditional patriarchal practices and on the other by the system of Western patriarchal colonialism (Parpart, 1983; Siwila, 2017).

During the early 1920s when copper mining in Northern Rhodesia was lucrative, more than half of the able-bodied male population worked for wages away from home on the mines of the Copperbelt (Hansen, 1984; Siwila, 2017). The British South African Company (BSAC) which owned the mining rights on the Copperbelt drew on the South African model and expected a male, migrant and unmarried African workforce requiring only the needs of a single worker rather than the reproductive costs of a family working on the Copperbelt (Chauncey, 1981; Hansen, 1984; Parpart, 1983; 1994). Hansen (1984) and Parpart (1994) argue that this model imposed a heavy burden on women and children who remained in the rural areas under patriarchal control, working on the land to which men still controlled access rights. As the Copperbelt became the hub of economic development, women also began to leave the villages searching for employment on the Copperbelt.

The colonial government was against the influx of women on the Copperbelt and imposed strict restrictions on them (Parpart, 1983). Patriarchal alliances were formed between the colonial authorities and provincial chiefs to ensure that women remained in rural areas. In a bid to help rural chiefs maintain their authority over women and prevent the loss in food production, the colonial government granted the chiefs native authority to issue marriage certificates (Parpart, 1983). With this authority, women without valid marriage certificates or permission to visit urban areas from the chiefs, were removed at checkpoints on bus routes into the Copperbelt (Parpart, 1983; Siwila, 2007). The colonial government also encouraged chiefs to visit the mines to pressure unmarried women and children under twelve to return home (Parpart, 1983).

Parpart (1983) notes that in 1936, the colonial government set up Urban African Courts to increase urban Africans' chiefly control. The court assessors opposed women coming alone to the Copperbelt without the chief's permission and encouraged government and mine police to search the compound for such women (Parpart, 1983). If found, such women were fined 10 pounds and repatriated, women who were married more than three times were branded as prostitutes and banned from the Copperbelt, while women caught committing adultery would

be fined 5 pounds and declared immoral and could then not claim any damages from her husband (Parpart, 1983: 6). Although chiefs repatriated single urban women to the rural areas, they often escaped and clandestinely returned (Evans, 2014). In essence, women needed to be married to a miner to live on the Copperbelt, and single women had to register their presence with mine authorities.

Initially, mine owners did not favour the idea of allowing women to live in the mine compounds; they resented the cost of housing and feeding women and children; besides women were seen as a distraction to production on the mines (Parpart, 1983; Siwila, 2017). To reduce the costs of married workers, mining companies relied primarily on single unskilled labour (Parpart, 1983). It was only in 1943 that this changed when an Anglo-American manager admitted that "the married employee was undoubtedly more contented than the single, he was better fed, looked after and clothed and had the rudiments of a sense of responsibility which tended to make him a more stable and efficient worker" (Parpart, 1983: 3). Chauncey (1981) observes that women were only allowed on the Copperbelt as an incentive to lure the male labour, which was lost to competition in neighbouring countries where conditions were better than those in their homeland. While Parpart (1983) maintains that it was only after the mining companies began to recognise the profitability of a more skilled stable black labour force, that they became increasingly committed to married labour. Fundamentally women were only allowed in the mining compounds based on their reproductive labour.

Siwila (2017) argues that patriarchy played an essential role in excluding women from participating in the economic development that took place on the Copperbelt during that period. She maintains that the colonial government, traditional leaders, missionaries and media were against the influx of women into the Copperbelt, especially single women, as these were seen as a threat to what was termed the 'traditional moral code' of society, since they were not under male control (Siwila, 2017). Parpart (1983; 1994) explains that during that period, married women on the Copperbelt were required to wear a copper bracelet *chingolongolo* as a sign that they were married to miners. The media propagated a smear campaign against unmarried women who came to the Copperbelt searching for economic opportunities. The newspaper *Mutende* ran countless editorials and dubbed 'the good woman' as one who stayed in the rural areas taking care of children while the men went to work and provide (Parpart, 1994). Furthermore, colonial-capitalist ideologies about 'good housewives' were communicated by mining companies, churches, government social welfare and the media: 'the European way-of-life' [was] a standard or scale of prestige' (Evans, 2014: 6).

Hodgson and McCurdy (2001) call this negative perception of women in urban cities 'the wicked woman' phenomenon. A "wicked woman" is one who is a 'vagabond', 'a prostitute', 'wayward', 'unruly', 'indecent' and 'immoral' (Hodgson & Mc Curdy 2001: 1). Due to the repatriation and fining of single women on the Copperbelt, temporal marriages mushroomed. Women momentarily attached themselves to men in order to enjoy the privileges that married women had, such as access to market trading spaces and married housing only available to married miners (Chauncey, 1981; Hansen, 1984; Parpart, 1983; 1994). Spearpoint (1937: 37) contends that if a woman stayed with a miner for a week, cooked and cleaned for him, she was considered a wife. Essentially women's presence in the mine compounds depended upon their attachment to a mine worker whether legally or illegally.

Colonial authorities also tried to limit female income in urban areas because African women were deemed to only be in town as dependents. Independent women were potential "troublemakers" (Parpart, 1983). However, due to the increase of unoccupied women in the mine compound, trouble soon arose as women were bored. At first, mine authorities were against women engaging in any income-generating activities such as beer-brewing and vegetable selling, as their presence in the compounds was to be dependent on men (Parpart, 1983). Nevertheless, given the low wages paid to miners, the authorities soon allowed gardening and beer-brewing to sustain the households and supplement the bland food issued as company ration (Chauncey, 1981; Hansen, 1984). Some women engaged in bead gambling and prostitution for economic survival (Parpart, 1983; 1994; Evans, 2014). Despite all the efforts to keep the women content with being dependent on men, women still wanted economic independence.

2.2.1 Mission works in Northern Rhodesia

Along with colonialism came the missionary enterprise. With the advent of missionaries, mining authorities turned to the United Missions in the Copperbelt (UMCB) to teach women skills (Parpart, 1983). Mining authorities decided to introduce support programs to teach women skills that would stretch their husbands' meagre wages and keep them from mischief (Parpart, 1983). Parpart (1983) explains that UMCB offered classes in hygiene, baby care, laundry, sewing, knitting, cooking and other domestic chores. Parpart (1994) and Allen (2010) further describe that these informal schools focused mainly on housewifery, with a few hours of religious instruction each day. Parpart (1994) argues that missionaries taught women and girls to be good wives and mothers; the education centred on making them better wives. Also, Parpart (1994) and Allen (2010) maintain that the colonial government's introduction of girls'

boarding schools on the Copperbelt aimed to prepare girls for wifehood and motherhood, with a syllabus designed to emphasise housewifery, childcare and sex hygiene.

Similarly, Hansen (1984) argues that the educators of this era idealised the home as a woman's place and aimed to turn girls into good homemakers. She further postulates that while men were given just enough education to hold semi-skilled or simple office jobs, the chief career which schools prepared girls for was that of a housewife, instilling the standards of a house-proud woman whose rightful place was the home and preferably in the village (Hansen, 1984). During this era, traditional ceremonies were truncated and merged into Christian ceremonies (Rasing, 2001), with the emphasis on being a good wife (Parpart, 1994).

The oppression faced by Zambian women during this era has contributed to how women who leave their homesteads in rural areas to go to the city to seek economic stability are viewed by society, even today (Siwila, 2017: 76). During this era, men were the town's *bona fide* residents (Hansen, 1984: 223). Offering a feminist reading of gender relations in colonial Zambia, Siwila (2017) argues that the perceptions and practices during this era are revealed not only to be Victorian but patriarchal, and oppressive to women, stifling their quest for self-development and self-advancement. Patriarchal alliances among traditional chiefs, colonial government and missionaries not only kept women from the economic development on the Copperbelt but served as a form of surveillance for what women did. As argued by Parpart (1994), missionaries used their biblical ideologies of a woman's position in society to proclaim and brand single women on the Copperbelt as sinners who indulged in adultery. Siwila (2017) argues that women's reproductive labour was not recognised or honoured, despite it being the backbone of economic production and at the centre of industrialisation during this period. Gender during this era shows the complex interaction between colonial capitalist ideologies, tradition and religion, with women as the independent actors struggling to gain autonomy and define their position in society.

2.3 Gender relations in post-colonial Zambia

The year 1964 signalled a change in Northern Rhodesia's political dispensation and a turnaround in women's participation in politics. Soon after achieving independence from Britain in 1964, Northern Rhodesia officially became known as the Republic of Zambia (Taylor, 2006). The United National Independence Party UNIP party President Kenneth Kaunda was ushered into office as the first republican president (Taylor, 2006). UNIP created a respectable space for women to participate in politics, in the form of the women's brigade (Geisler, 2004; Evans, 2014). However, Geisler (2004) notes that the men created the brigade,

directed its organisation, policies and activities, and appointed its officials to such a degree that it was called an "all-men affair". Women assumed a subservient position as men also decided when the brigade was to meet and what they were to discuss (Geisler, 2004). Geisler (2004) argues that women's role during the fight for independence was never recognised. Instead, the women's brigade members were reduced to dancers who paraded themselves in UNIP party colours dancing for their male leader and foreign dignitaries at airports. Patriarchal and stereotypical beliefs that men were born leaders, while women were followers, are evident in the first Zambian cabinet, which had no female representatives.

The theme of men being natural-born leaders continued until women began to push the envelope and contest for political positions such as market chairperson, ward councillor and member of Parliament (Evans, 2014). During this time, most men did not support their wives' participation in active politics, work, or any form of business for fear of being laughed at by their friends (Evans, 2014). Evans (2014) explains that during this time, a woman working was read as a sign of a man's incompetence to provide for his household. These beliefs can be attributed to the colonial era in which women were supposed to be dependent on men to provide and them to be housewives (Parpart, 1983). However, women who challenged the status quo were labelled as prostitutes, and the stereotype for women who participated in politics was that they were promiscuous or divorced (Geisler, 2004; Evans, 2014). Evans (2014) explains that these stereotypes of women in politics hindered political participation among women, but others defied the odds and contested regardless.

In 2001 Zambia's first female candidate, Gwendolyn Chomba Konie, contested for the presidency, and though she lost overwhelmingly, she set an important symbolic precedent for women (Taylor, 2006). Since then, women have taken up several cabinet ministerial positions in the different regimes: from tourism to information, education, health and finance. Despite these great strides, female politicians are still called prostitutes or judged by their appearance. For example, Information Minister Dora Siliya was called a prostitute by angry University of Zambia students during a students' funeral (Chabala, 2018a). United Party for National Development (UPND) Member of Parliament Sylvia Masebo has been branded as a prostitute by the ruling Patriotic Front PF (Funga, 2016), and Forum for Democracy Development (FDD) president Edith Nawakwi has been labelled an adulterer (Tumfweko, 2015). Simultaneously, Minister of Livestock and Fisheries Professor Nkandu Luo's femininity is openly mocked and doubted on social media (Zambian Watchdog, 2018). Currently, a female vice-president has been playing an essential role in the government's decision-making processes. However,

women's overall participation in politics is relatively small compared to neighbouring Southern African countries, indicative of Zambian women's generally subordinated social status. At the policy level, however, steady steps towards gender equality have been made. For example, in 2012, the Ministry of Gender became an independent ministry, and the National Gender Policy was formulated in 2014. The Anti-Gender-Based Violence Act and the National Gender Policy (referred to as "the Gender Policy") were introduced in 2011 and 2014, respectively (Ministry of Gender, 2014).

Zambia stands out as one of the continent's most peaceful countries with no modern history of war or significant socio-political conflict (Taylor, 2006). Soon after independence in 1964, the then President Kenneth Kaunda had to unify the 73 ethnic groups into one nation. Using the political ideology of humanism, Kaunda emphasised humanity's importance above all else (Gifford, 1998). Gifford (1998) and Taylor (2006) describe how in 1991, Zambia became the first country in southern Africa to have a peaceful, fair and internationally heralded transition of power from UNIP to the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD). Today, Zambia sits at 17.8 million people across a land area of 752,618 square kilometres (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2015).

Gender inequality in Zambia today is founded on deep-rooted social and cultural norms (JICA, 2016). One crucial reason for the continuation of gender inequality is the fact that the Zambian Constitution (enacted in 1991 and revised in 1996) endorses customary law; this is compounded by men's prejudice against women and a lack of knowledge on women's rights among the general public (JICA, 2016). This dual statutory system means that even though statutory law recognises equal rights regardless of gender, Article 23 accepts personal as well as customary law. Customary law entails rules and disciplines that are not written but accepted by the individual ethnic groups and vary from one group to another among the 72 ethnic groups (JICA, 2016).

As a result, customs that contradict statutory law have created serious problems in Zambia's socio-economic activities. For example, under statutory law, the legal age for marriage among females is 18. In section 138 of the Penal Code (1931), sex with a girl under the age of 16 is an offence, but under customary law, these provisions rarely apply as marriage can occur at puberty, even below the age of 16 (World Vision, 2015; JICA, 2016). As a result, in 2015 Zambia was ranked 16th amongst countries with the highest rate of child marriage in the world: 42% of women aged 20-24 years were married by the age of 18 (World Vision, 2015). In most tribes, girls are still taught to become wives, mothers and caregivers and to be

submissive (Crehan, 1997; Rasing, 2001; Evans, 2014). On the other hand, boys are groomed to take up leadership roles and become providers. Consequently, men tend to dominate in decision-making at the household and community level (Rasing, 2001). In terms of traditional leadership, out of the 286 chiefdoms, only 22 are headed by a female (CSO, 2015; JICA, 2016).

Furthermore, men are given powers to control community assets such as land while women are subjected to subordinate positions with limited capabilities (Taylor, 2006; JICA, 2016). It is difficult for women to own land in Zambia, where 94% of the land is under customary law and 6% under statutory law, as in customary law land is inherited by men. In terms of social-economic status, Zambian women constitute a vital labour force for agriculture (JICA, 2016). For instance, 78% of women are engaged in several agriculture activities. However, their role is largely confined to assisting men in family farming for household consumption: compared to men, they have limited access to production equipment and land for large-scale agriculture (JICA, 2016).

Outside the agricultural sector, many women are employed in the informal sector as marketeers and vendors. Early marriages, teenage pregnancies and violence against women are common in Zambia (Sida, 2014; JICA, 2016). Furthermore, HIV/AIDS prevalence is higher for women than for men (Ministry of Gender and Child Development, 2014). The prevalence is higher because women lack a voice on issues that concern their sexuality (Ministry of Gender and Child Development, 2014). These social and cultural practices, in turn, perpetuate patriarchy as men are looked to as providers.

2.3.1 Modern- day Zambia

Modern-day Zambian society is the result of the collision between traditional and modern or western practices, first via colonialism and more contemporarily through globalisation and the various media. The media landscape in Zambia has dramatically evolved with time, from the one-party state-controlled media during Kaunda's era to the liberalisation of politics in 1991 under Chiluba's regime (Taylor, 2006). Taylor (2006) explains that during the one-party state, the state controlled the media, television, radio, newspaper and the broadcast of music and entertainment, and notes that although the government, like in most African countries, still enjoys control over the media, there are more vibrant privately-owned media houses these days, so that people are better positioned to draw their own conclusions on politics, economic and social conditions, and ideology from a diverse array of viewpoints and outlets.

With the advent of the Internet, access to information has been democratised as information is now at people's fingertips. The Internet first came to Zambia in 1994; Zambia

became the second sub-Saharan country after South Africa to connect (Taylor, 2006). During this time, Internet access was limited to the elite of Zambia as it was expensive (Taylor, 2006). Today, 82% of Zambian households have access to the Internet, mostly through mobile broadband services using a mobile phone, modem or fixed wireless broadband services (ZICTA, 2018). However, this broad Internet access does not mean everyone can access the Internet as data costs and infrastructure issues continue to act as barriers to accessing the Internet.

2.3.2 Christianity and homosexuality debate in post-colonial Zambia

Post-colonial Zambia is predominantly a Christian country with a small number of Hindus and Muslims, although few have abandoned all aspects of traditional belief systems. According to the 2015 census, 95% of the population is Catholic or Protestant (CSO, 2015). This statistic's reliability is difficult to verify, but other sources give a general estimation of 80–90% (CSO, 2015). On December 29, 1991, President Frederick Chiluba declared Zambia a "Christian nation", a formulation included in the Zambian constitution by an amendment in 1996 (Gifford, 1998; Phiri, 2003). Although the phrase "Christian Nation" was enacted, it is not very clear what this sentence means legally, even though it has been referred to occasionally in religious debates and debates on homosexuality.

Traditionally, homosexuality is considered a taboo and is commonly described as a "non-African phenomenon", in the context of African culture (Sida, 2014). Zambia has inherited the 'sodomy laws' from its former coloniser Britain; thus, section 155 of the Penal Code (1931) states that, "Any person who-has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature; or permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature is guilty of a felony and liable to imprisonment for fourteen years" (Penal Code, 1931). Furthermore, church organisations have on repeated occasions openly condemned homosexuality. Nevertheless, a Zambian LGBTIQ community exists, whose members are far from able to express their sexuality openly (van Klinken, 2013; 2015; Sida, 2014). For example, in 1998, a Zambian student publicly came out as gay in *The Post* newspaper (van Klinken, 2017). He established the non-governmental organisation Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Association (LEGATRA); however, the initiative met with stiff resistance from government officials, the church and in the media (Sida, 2014; van Klinken, 2017). LEGATRA was denied official registration, and the then Vice-President stated that "human rights do not operate in a vacuum" and urged arrests by the police of anybody who identified or supported

gays and lesbians (Sida, 2014). After an initial silence, President Chiluba contributed to the debate stating that: "homosexuality is the deepest level of depravity. It is unbiblical and abnormal. How do you expect my government to accept something abnormal?" (quoted in van Klinken, 2017:16). Since then, arrests of gay men have become more frequent, generally with ample media coverage, but charges have rarely led to imprisonment (Sida, 2014).

van Klinken (2017) maintains that since then, homosexuality and gay rights have frequently been the subject of both public and political controversy in Zambia. For instance, in February 2012, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Zambia. During his visit, he addressed the Zambia National Assembly about the importance of standing up for human rights and human liberty (van Klinken, 2017; 2015). van Klinken (2017; 2015) explains that this statement hardly received attention, but controversy arose after he visited first president Kenneth Kaunda, where he called on Zambians to use the constitution review process at the time as an opportunity to enshrine the highest standards of human rights protection for all regardless of race, religion gender sexual orientation or disability. This statement caused a media frenzy with news outlets such as the Lusaka Times headlining "Ban Ki-moon calls for respect for homosexuals and lesbians" (Lusaka Times, 2012). Religious leaders, opposition leaders, and NGOs fuelled the debate by adding that Ban's call to recognise homosexuals was a sign that the 'end was near' and homosexuality could never be accepted in Zambia because it is against the country's traditions and religious beliefs (van Klinken, 2017). van Klinken (2013) describes this as the "eschatological enchantment' of the homosexuality debate in Zambia, with eschatological imagery being used to interpret global liberal discourse, in which the politics of homosexuality have become a symbol.

Since then, other notable incidents include the arrest of human rights activist Paul Kasonkomona, who was arrested minutes after appearing on a live discussion show on *Muvi* TV*,* calling for same-sex relations to be decriminalised. He was charged with "inciting the public to take part in indecent activities" (BBC, 2013). Soon after, two men in Kapiri Mposhi were arrested by police and charged with "having sex against the order of nature contrary to the laws of Zambia" (Lusaka Voice, 2013). The then Minister of Youth and Sport Chishimba Kambwili stated that "the government will not tolerate nonsense and they will fight the vice with vigour" (Lusaka Voice, 2013). Police have since been arresting people involved in same-sex activities. On January 30 2018, police launched a search for a lesbian couple whose pictures went viral on social media alongside a story purporting them to be in an intimate relationship (Chabala, 2018b). Police spokesperson Esther Katongo explained that engaging in same-sex

intimate relationships or sexual affairs is an offence liable to imprisonment of seven years minimum and fourteen maximum (Chabala, 2018b).

A recent event that fragmented the country's opinions and views on homosexuality was the US Ambassador Daniel Foote's reaction to a gay couple's sentencing to 15 years in prison. In his statement, Foote said that "I was personally horrified to read yesterday about the sentencing of two men, who had a consensual relationship, which hurt absolutely no one, to 15 years imprisonment" (Foote, 2019). Foote went on to say, "the sentencing of the men was particularly disturbing, given that government officials can steal millions of public dollars without prosecution" (Foote, 2019). In reaction to Foote's statement, President Edgar Lungu defended the anti-gay laws, calling homosexuality "unbiblical and unchristian" (Sky News, 2019). "Even animals do not do it, so why should we be forced to do it?" Lungu said. "Because we want to be seen to be smart, civilised and advanced and so on" (Sky News, 2019). "If this is how they intend to bring their aid, the west can leave us alone in our poverty, and we will continue scrounging and struggling" (Sky News, 2019). Foote later reacted in a statement saying, "I was shocked at the venom and hate directed at me and my country. I thought, perhaps incorrectly, that Christianity meant trying to live like our Lord, Jesus Christ" (Foote, 2019). Also, Foote (2019) stated that he was not qualified to sermonise but could not imagine Jesus would have used bestiality comparisons or referred to his fellow human beings as "dogs," or "worse than animals;" allusions made repeatedly by your countrymen and women about gays. Reacting to Foote's statement on December 15 2019, Lungu said Zambia sent a letter to Washington to protest Foote's comments "we do not want such people in our midst, we want him gone" (News Diggers, 2019). Ambassador Foote has since been recalled from Zambia. During this period, most Zambians took this debate to social media, which served as a platform for contesting conflicting and unpopular opinions.

2.4 Lusaka

This study was conducted in Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. In 2018 the population of Lusaka was approximately 3 million (CSO, 2018). The city started as a railway siding in 1905 for the railway line that was constructed primarily to transport copper from Katanga Province in the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo to South Africa's seaports (Mulenga, 2003). Mulenga (2003) explains that Lusaka soon attracted several white settler farmers mostly of Afrikaner origin, whom the British South Africa Company (BSAC) granted the right to manage their local affairs in Lusaka. During this time, most cities and towns in Zambia emerged in two

zones; firstly, along the railway line which was constructed to connect the rich copper mines in the Katanga region to the South African ports, and secondly, on the Copperbelt, where towns and cities developed around the copper mines. Other towns also developed around administrative centres established for administering the vast sparsely-populated territory (Mulenga, 2003).

In contrast to the mining towns on the Copperbelt that grew most rapidly because of copper mining industry, Lusaka's economic potential was limited during the colonial era (Hansen, 1984). Its main functions were administration, commerce and transportation (Hansen, 1984). However, the rapid growth of Lusaka began in 1935, when it was designated as the new capital or principal administrative centre of Northern Rhodesia (Mulenga, 2003). Several factors necessitated the selection of Lusaka as the new capital, the main one being its central location on the main north-south axis of the railway line, which was expected to become the centre of development (Mulenga, 2003). Mulenga (2003) explains that Lusaka's central location was also evident from the intersection of the main roads to the north and south, and east and west. Lusaka was also within easy reach of the Copperbelt, the country's economic heartland (Mulenga, 2003).

However, Zambia's mining industry, which had been the backbone of the emerging nation, began to stagnate and decline in the mid-70s and worsened in the 1980s due to low copper prices, falling production and rising debt. In contrast, Lusaka started to grow and has been the fastest-growing city in the post-independence period (Mulenga, 2003). The rise of rural-urban migration at this time is attributed to the closure of the mines and redundancies on the Copperbelt. This resulted in individuals moving to Lusaka to pursue economic opportunities, higher education and higher wage options (CSO, 1996; LCC, 2008). The 2010 CSO report indicates that the urban population growth rate is 4.2 %, with Lusaka's population growth rate at 4.6 %.

Lusakan society is a blend of all the 73 ethnic groups found in Zambia, and a small proportion of people from all over Africa, as well as of European and Asian origin (Mulenga, 2003). Today Lusaka serves as the melting pot for diverse cultural and traditional beliefs. In terms of languages spoken, Nyanja was the lingua franca of Lusaka in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it seems to have lost some ground to Bemba since the 1980s, probably because of the numbers of new immigrants from the Copperbelt, where Bemba is the lingua franca (Wood et al., 1986). Present-day Lusaka is a mix of Nyanja and Bemba.

In terms of governance, Lusaka city is run by Councillors who are elected each year and who manage its daily affairs (Mulenga, 2003; LCC, 2008). Lusaka is a bustling cosmopolitan space with modern infrastructure, shopping malls and marketplaces dominated mostly by female traders selling vegetables and second-hand clothes locally known as *salaula* (Lusaka City Council (LCC), 2008). For city residents, Lusaka is no exception to the nuisances that come with living in big cities, from petty theft, water-borne diseases such as cholera, poor sanitation, squatter settlements, high noise levels and traffic congestion. Nevertheless, Lusaka is still the glittering capital that continues to persuade rural Zambians young and old to migrate to the city in search of job opportunities and dreams. With the advent of global media, Lusaka is connected electronically to the rest of the world, although it is a remote and landlocked location in central Africa. Lusaka has for a long time now been at the crossroads of new ways of life, new intersections in ways of thinking, and cultural transformation. This insight is central to my analysis of how Lusaka women fans negotiate their feminist identity that emerges in the meanings that they make from the gender representations on the *Zambian Feminists* page.

2.5 Overview of Facebook and the *Zambian Feminists*

2.5.1 Overview of Facebook

With almost 2.5 billion active monthly users, Facebook is the biggest social media network worldwide. Boyd and Ellison (2007: 211) describe social networking sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to, first, construct a public or semi-public profile within a bound system, second, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and third, view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system". Currently, there are over a hundred social networking sites in the world. However, Facebook is undoubtedly one of the most popular, which can be seen in its staggering growth over the past decade (Wilson et al., 2012). As of the fourth quarter of 2019, Facebook had over two billion daily active users on average, with over two billion monthly active users (Facebook Newsroom, 2019; Clement, 2020). Users spent more than 9.7 billion minutes per day on the site and shared four billion pieces of content per day, including uploads of 250 million photos (Wilson et al., 2012).

Facebook is a popular social networking site across a broad swath of demographic groups, and Zambians have taken to using the site with alacrity. As of December 2019, there were over one million Zambian Facebook subscribers out of a population of 18 million people (Internet world stats, 2019). Zambia Information Communication Authority (ZICTA, 2018) reports that Lusaka has the highest number of mobile phone users and records the highest

Internet penetration. With the government controlling most media outlets, Facebook serves as a platform for political, social and economic debates (ZICTA, 2018). It serves as an arena for contesting views that affect the population but that cannot make it to mainstream media due to censorship.

Unlike popular opinion, the Internet is uncensored, and people are free to express themselves. Facebook nevertheless has regulations that govern how information is shared on the platform. These regulations are known as community standards, and they are enforced to create a place of expression and give people a voice (Facebook Newsroom, 2019). Ostensibly, Facebook aims to build a community that brings the world closer together by providing a platform where people can share diverse views, opinions, experiences, ideas and information. What constitutes a violation of community standards and freedom of expression by minority groups on the platform, however, is not always clear.

Feminists have often accused Facebook of being sexist in its implementation of community standards policy. Statements such as "men are trash" or "men are scum" are immediately taken down from the platform and the content generator banned from the platform for a period (Curtis, 2018; Newton, 2019), while comments targeting feminists such as "feminists should burn in a bonfire" or "women are scum" take longer to be taken down and are sometimes never taken down (Curtis, 2018). In reaction, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg defended his company's content moderation on hate speech and said: "gender is a protected category, substitute in your mind while you are thinking this, what if this were 'Muslims are trash', you wouldn't want this on the service" (Newton, 2019; Samson, 2019). Similarly, Facebook head of global policy management Monika Bickert said: "the world is too diverse, and people see hate speech and safety so differently. I don't think we will ever be able to craft the best of policies" (Zuylen-Wood, 2019).

2.5.2 Overview of *Zambian Feminist*s

Zambian Feminists is a public Facebook page that identifies itself as a community of Zambian-based feminists with over 32 000 followers. It was created on January 3 2018, by a feminist who sought to challenge patriarchy and gender non-conformity in Zambia. The precipitating event for its formation was when the founder watched documentaries on the Harvey Weinstein Hollywood sexual assault accusations and realised that even women in developed countries struggle to openly discuss sexual assault. This realisation drove her to create a platform that would serve as a safe space for Zambian women to share their own experiences. The name

Zambian Feminists comes from the different feminist works worldwide that influence the founder's stance on feminism.

The tagline of the page is "Of course we are angry". It describes Zambian women's anger at not "being heard" and attempts to provide a space where women can listen to each other and "share a voice". By addressing its followers as "we", a community of like-minded women, the page goes on to describe how women "have been at the mercy of cultural barriers and patriarchy for so long". The page addresses victims of patriarchy, which encompass all women from different walks of life. Explaining its purpose it argues that "it is time to usher in a movement of change, of self-love, of examining and re-evaluating." The page description ends with the words "this may not be your grandmother's page, but we will definitely talk about her". In other words, it is addressing a new generation of women with new needs and ideas of self-worth. It is from this description that the title of this paper was drawn.

Zambian Feminists regularly posts a variety of topics concerning, *inter alia*, patriarchal practices, LGBTIQ issues, gender-based violence, rape, and menstrual hygiene that affect Zambian women daily. These topics are mostly presented in the form of well-written captivating short stories in English, combined with daily vernacular phrases and visuals in artwork or humour using memes. As a public Facebook page, it allows anyone who has access to Facebook to comment, view and participate in discussions on the platform. What caught my interest as a follower of the page is its boldness in challenging social and cultural norms by sharing content which, in a Zambian context, may be regarded as "private", "sacred to women only" or "offensive to men" on a public forum like Facebook. These topics are widely debated and contested by the page's readers, and the most active contributors frequently engage with the content by commenting, liking or sharing the posts and are identified as "top fans" with a badge next to their name. This study focussed on how these women fans of the page discuss, contest, appropriate and make meanings of the representations they encounter on the page and how they apply them in their daily lives.

2.6 Conclusion

The *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page is created, consumed and interpreted in a highly gendered environment. Lusaka is an arena of contestation between modern and traditional practices, with western influences of human rights, freedom of speech, democracy and Christianity, which signal a new wave of gender identity, and citizens' emphasis on "Zambian" and "African" culture with regards to gender roles. The gender norms are highly influenced by

Zambia's colonial history and have continued through the various changes the country has undergone.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

> "Indecent dressing among women is contributing to them being victims of vices such as defilement and gender-based violence. Women must dress decently because young people look up to them for guidance (Mwansa-Mbewe, 2019: 2)"

3. Introduction

The previous chapter mapped out the various changes in Zambia's economic, social and political landscape. It describes the changes that have taken place in gender relations during pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Zambia. These changes have since necessitated new ways of men and women relating to each other that call for further investigation; of particular interest to this study is the contestation between men and women for a place in an emerging cosmopolitan city like Lusaka. The opening quote of this chapter is an excerpt from the *Zambia Daily Mail* newspaper report, of a speech delivered by Zambia's first lady Esther Lungu. In her address, she calls on Zambian women to dress modestly or risk being victims of defilement and gender-based violence. She further challenges women to dress decently as young people look up to them for guidance. This speech is a form of representation of what is deemed moral, decent or acceptable behaviour for a Zambian woman today. It also shows how women, including those in powerful social and political positions, continue to be scripted into deep-rooted patriarchal practices. Importantly for this study, we see how women negotiate different views of gender and how the media serves as a platform for contesting notions of gender representations and for proposing appropriate femininities and masculinities.

This study locates itself in the broader framework of cultural studies and digital media studies. This chapter relates gender representations on social media to debates about feminism, patriarchy and identity formation. These perspectives provide a framework for studying this audience's reception of the *Zambian Feminists* page among women fans in Lusaka.

3.1 Cultural studies

Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary and multi-theoretical field of study that is not marked by clear-cut fundamental topics, methods or concepts (Barker and Jane, 2016; Barker, 2004). Instead, cultural studies seeks to explore the role media play in constructing society. It is particularly interested in questions of power such as gender, race, class and colonialism, and seeks to explore the connection between them to develop ways of thinking that agents can utilize in pursuit of change (Barker and Jane, 2016). Cultural studies thus does not merely study

culture as though divorced from the social or political context. Instead, it aims to understand the culture in all its complex forms and analyse the social and political context within which it manifests itself (Barker and Jane, 2016).

3.2 Representation, discourse, power and subjectivity

Central to the study of culture is the concept of representation. Representation is what connects meaning and language to culture (Hall, 1997). Representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture: it involves the use of language, signs and images which stand for or represent things (Hall, 1997). Hall proposes a constructivist approach to understanding representation, as he argues that meanings are socially constructed through language to meaningfully communicate ideas and concepts within a specific culture or social context (Hall, 1997). In this context, the term 'language' is used broadly and is inclusive of the obvious written or spoken system of a particular language. It also includes visual images, facial expressions or gestures, the fashion of clothes and even music (Hall, 1997). Thus, representation is the production of meaning through language (Hall, 1997: 28).

Going beyond this approach to the concept of representation, French philosopher Michel Foucault shifted the focus from the production of meaning through language (semiotics) to the production of knowledge and meaning through discourse (knowledge) (Hall, 1997). By discourse, Foucault refers to a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment (Hall, 1997: 44; Barker, 2004). Foucault (1980 in Hall, 1997) argued that discourse is not simply speech, language or representation. Rather, discourse shapes and constructs the very thing it describes (Hall, 1997). Discourse "constructs the topic", it governs what counts as a topic, who can speak, when and where, how we can interpret what we say, how we come to know what we know, and what counts as truth (Hall, 1997; Barker, 2004). For Foucault, discourse produces the objects of knowledge and nothing meaningful exists outside discourse (Hall, 1997).

Furthermore, Foucault became concerned with the relationship between knowledge and power and how knowledge is put to work through discursive practices in specific institutions to regulate others' conduct (Foucault, 1980). His concept of power is contrary to the common understanding that power radiates in a single direction, from top to bottom, and that it comes from a specific source, such as the sovereign, the state or the ruling class. Instead, Foucault (1980: 98) argues that power does not radiate in a single direction, but rather circulates through

the social body. It is never monopolised by one centre but is deployed and organised through a net-like "capillary" organisation, suggesting that to some degree, we are all caught up in its circulation—both oppressors and oppressed (Foucault, 1980). To Foucault then, discourses do not exist in simple 'bipolar' relations of power and powerlessness but are "tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations" (Foucault, 1980: 101). Thus, power is a relationship (Weedon, 1987: 110). Power relations permeate all levels of social existence and are found operating at every site of social life: in the private spheres of the family and sexuality, as much as in public spheres of politics, the economy and the law (Foucault, 1980; Weedon, 1987).

Additionally, Foucault argues that power is not solely negative, repressing what it seeks to control; it is also productive (Foucault, 1980: 119). "It doesn't only repress us with a force that says no, it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, and produces forms of knowledge and discourse. It needs to be thought of as a productive network through the whole social body" (Foucault, 1980 in Hall, 1997: 50). For instance, the efforts to control sexuality have produced a veritable explosion of discourse: talk about sex, television and radio programs, sermons and legislation, novels, stories and magazines, medical and counselling advice, essays and articles, learned theses and research programs, as well as new sexual practices (e.g. 'safe' sex) and the pornography industry (Hall, 1997: 50). At the centre of the struggle between knowledge and power is the 'body', referring to the physical human body produced within discourse according to the different discursive formations in specific contexts and time.

Power is constituted within discourse, and through power, individuals take up different subject positions in specific contexts (Weedon, 1987). Foucault proposes two meanings for the word subject; first, as being subject to someone else's control. Second, dependence "tied to one's own identity by conscience and self-knowledge". (Foucault, 1982 in Hall, 1997: 55). In both meanings, a form of power subjugates and makes subjects. Interestingly, Foucault's 'subject' seems to be produced twice in discourse. First, the subject is a figure that personifies a certain form of knowledge produced by discourse, and which exhibits the attributes defined by discourse, for example, the madman, the hysterical woman and the homosexual (Hall, 1997).

Second, a subject place or position is offered to a reader or viewer, from which the particular knowledge and meanings of discourse make the most sense (Hall, 1997). In essence, subject positions are neither fixed nor permanent, but instead, are fluid, fragmented and constituted in discourse (Hall, 1997). In Foucault's discursive approach, the subject of

discourse cannot be outside discourse because it must be subjected to discourse (Hall, 1997: 55). Moreover, particular discourses themselves offer more than one subject position (Weedon, 1987). While a discourse will offer a preferred form of subjectivity, its very organization will imply other subject positions and the possibility of reversal (Weedon, 1987).

In Foucault's work, discourse is a way of constituting knowledge, as well as the social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations in which we are embedded (Weedon, 1987). Hence discourse is defined as the ways of thinking and producing meaning, and it constitutes the 'nature' of the body, the unconscious and conscious mind and the emotional life of the subjects it seeks to govern (Weedon, 1987). Regarding gender, representation, and discourse, these provide a framework to examine how patriarchy is portrayed and sustained in Zambia. These theoretical lenses also help us understand how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page strategically employs certain kinds of representations to challenge patriarchy. As a prominent site of contestation, the media produces discourses about acceptable femininities in its construction, selection and circulation of gender representations.

3.3 Gender

In keeping with Hall's constructivist approach to representation, this section draws on Connell's (2009) social constructivist understanding of gender. Connell establishes her approach on the distinction she makes between biological sex and reproductive capacity, and gender. At the centre of common sense thinking about gender is the presumed 'natural' difference between men and women. This is the basis of the idea that natural difference provides the basis for the social pattern of gender relations. What then is the distinction between "sex" and "gender"? Connell argues that in the 1970s, feminist theorists proposed a sharp distinction between "sex" and "gender" (Connell, 2009). The difference was grounded on the classification of 'sex' as the biological fact that differentiates male and female, and 'gender' as the social fact determining masculine and feminine roles (Connell, 2009: 57). This distinction challenges the 'natural' assumption that combined sex and gender as one. Therefore, the use of the term "gender" denoted a rejection of the biological determinism implicit in the use of words such as "sex" or "sexual difference" to explain gender (Scott, 1986: 1054). It explicitly rejects biological explanations that justify female subordination (Scott, 1986: 1056; Connell, 2009: 57). Instead, it becomes a way of denoting "culture constructions", the entire social creation about appropriate roles for women and men (Scott, 1986: 1056). According to this view, men and women are defined in terms of one another, and no understanding of either could be achieved by an entirely separate study (Scott, 1986; Connell, 2009).

Connell argues that the reproductive difference between male and female humans is hardly controversial, but its significance certainly is (Connell, 2009; Connell and Pearse, 2015). In this case, approaches to understanding gender diverge sharply. Some postulate that the body is a machine that manufactures gender differences, some postulate that the body is a canvas on which culture paints images of gender, while some combine both the machine and the canvas ideas (Connell 2009; Connell and Pearse, 2015). These reproductive differences are mirrored through a range of other differences: bodily strength and speed (men are stronger and faster), physical skills (men have mechanical skills, women are good at fiddly work), sexual desire (men have more powerful urges than women), recreational interests (men love sports, women gossip), character (men are aggressive, women nurturant), intellect (men are rational, women have intuition). It is widely believed that these differences are large and natural (Connell and Pearse, 2015: 36).

Rejecting this approach, Connell defines gender as a set of social relations constituted in relation to the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes (Connell, 2009; Connell and Pearse, 2015). Similarly, Scott (1986: 1067) defines gender as a "constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is the primary way of signifying relations of power". Gender, like other social structures, is multidimensional; it is not just about identity, or just about power, or just about work, or just about sexuality, but all of these things at once (Connell and Pearse, 2015). Both Connell (2009) and Scott (1986) independently challenge the existence of universal symbolic meaning inherent in physical differences, making the discourse of difference itself visible as an object of politics.

The politics of gender begin at birth when a specific sex category is assigned to a baby based on their genitalia (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2009). When the midwife announces 'it's a girl' she initiates a process by which 'Girling' is compelled (Barker and Jane, 2016: 366). From that point onwards, the body is dressed and adorned to suit the assigned category. Gender becomes a lived experience in which compliance leads to rewards and positive sanctions, while deviance leads to punishment and negative sanctions (Barker and Jane, 2016; Connell, 2009). Thus, we can talk of gender as "performative" (Butler, 1990: 185; Connell, 2009: 42). Gender is "performative" because it is not biologically fixed but socially constructed and varies from one situation to another (Butler, 1990: 185). In other words, "acts, gestures and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance but produce this on the surface of the body" (Butler, 1990:185). Therefore, "gender is not a stable identity or locus of agency from which various

acts proceed; rather it is an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler, 1988: 519).

Similar to Butler's theorization of gender as 'performative', French feminist Simone de Beauvoir suggests in *The Second Sex* that one is not born a woman, but rather "becomes" one (Beauvoir, 1986: 301; Butler, 1990: 11). Being a woman or man is then not a predetermined state, rather it is becoming a condition under construction (Connell, 2009). Thus, for Connell, as for Beauvoir, gender is "constructed" (Beauvoir, 1986: 301). Beauvoir is clear that one "becomes" a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion to become one; for her, the compulsion does not come from "sex" (Beauvoir, 1986: 301; Butler, 1990: 11). Nothing in her account guarantees that the "one" who becomes a woman is necessarily female (Butler, 1990: 11). If "the body is a situation" (Beauvoir, 1986: 38), as she claims, there is no recourse to a body that has not already been interpreted by cultural meanings; hence, sex could not qualify as a pre-discursive anatomical facticity (Butler, 1990: 11). Connell (2009) argues that, though women's positions do not merely parallel that of men, this principle is also true for men; one is not born masculine, one must *become* a man. This approach has led Butler to argue that, "femininity is thus not a product of choice, but the forcible citation of a norm, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment" (Butler, 1993: 232). Connell adds that "we make our own gender, but we are not free to make it however we like. Our gender practice is powerfully shaped by the gender order in which we find ourselves" (Connell, 2009: 74). Gender, therefore, is defined as a "social category imposed on a sexed body" (Scott, 1986: 1056).

Femininity on its own has no particular meaning and makes sense only when examined together with, and in contrast to, masculinity (Scott, 1986; Connell, 2005). Often it is assumed that there is a single set of traits that characterize women in general, thus femininity, and likewise masculinity, are a set of attributes that characterize women and men in general. Connell rejects this monolithic view, as she argues that the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' point beyond categorical sex difference to the ways men differ among themselves, and women among themselves, in matters of gender (Connell, 2005).

In her model, Connell introduces the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Here Connell (2005) borrows Antonio Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' which refers to the "cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (Connell, 2005: 77). 'Hegemonic masculinity' is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is instead the masculinity that occupies the

hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable (Connell, 2005: 76). Put simply; hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity at any given time that is culturally exalted above other forms. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is defined as the "configuration of gender practise which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005: 77). However, Connell (2005) opposes the notion that hegemonic masculinity's most visible bearers are always the most powerful. Instead, she argues that holders of institutional power and great wealth may be far from the hegemonic pattern in their personal lives (Connell, 2005). Connell emphasises that "hegemonic masculinity embodies a 'currently accepted' strategy to legitimize patriarchy, when conditions for the defence of patriarchy which change the bases of dominance by particular masculinity are eroded" (Connell, 2005: 77). New groups can therefore challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony. For Connell "women may challenge the dominance of any group of men" (Connell, 2005: 77).

Hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinate masculinities as well as in relation to women (Connell, 2005; 1987). Connell (2005) labels these non-hegemonic masculinities as complicit, submissive and marginalised masculinities. Complicit masculinity refers to a kind of masculinity constructed in line with the dominant or hegemonic masculinity but does not embody all the characteristics and does not do much to challenge it either. Connell (2005: 79) calls complicit masculinity the 'slacker version' of hegemonic masculinity since most men do not practice hegemony in its entirety, but the majority fall into this category. Complicit masculinity does not challenge the gender systems but instead it benefits from them by being male; these benefits are what Connell (2005: 79) calls the "Patriarchal dividend". Subordinate masculinity refers to men who deviate from the hegemonic notions of masculinity (Connell, 2005). A contemporary example of subordinate masculinity is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of gay men (Connell, 2005). Lastly, marginalised masculinity refers to a form of masculinity in which a man cannot embody all the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity because of unequal relations external to gender, such as race and ethnicity (Connell, 2005).

Unlike hegemonic masculinity, there is no hegemonic femininity. Connell explains that the concept does not apply to women because all forms of femininity are constructed in the context of male domination; "there is no femininity that is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men" (Connell, 1987: 183). Instead,

Connell proposes the concept of 'emphasised femininity', which is constructed as a complementary, compliant, and accommodating, subordinate to hegemonic masculinity and non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1987: 183). Connell argues that this kind of femininity is promoted in mass media through 'magazines', 'the women's pages', and in marketing through 'advertisement'. She maintains that this kind of femininity is performed, and performed mainly to men (Connell, 1987: 188).

The notion of power relations between hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity is what Connell refers to as the *gender order* of contemporary societies (Connell, 2009). The gender order is hierarchical in nature and context-specific, there being different orderings of masculinities and femininities in every society. The relationships between men and women in social institutions and organizations mostly correspond to society's gender order's overall broader pattern. This way of gender arrangement is what Connell (2009) refers to as institutions' *gender regimes*. By "gender regime", Connell refers to the gendered hierarchical structure of social institutions such as schools, offices, armies, factories, police forces and sports clubs. In essence, the underlying connection between the gender order of a whole society and the gender regime of an institution is the set of social relationships—ways that people, groups and organisations are connected and divided (Connell, 2009: 73).

3.3.1 Gender in Africa

Within the African context, gender is similarly understood as the socially constructed roles, activities and responsibilities assigned to women and men in a given culture, location and time (Tuyizere, 2007: 111). Gender in Africa is premised on the binary division between male or female, masculine or feminine, usually not on an equal basis but in an hierarchical order (Tuyizere, 2007; Orgeret, 2018). The gender order reflects an asymmetrical cultural valuation of human beings, in which the ranking of traits and activities associated with men are normally given a higher value than those associated with women (Tuyizere, 2007). In Africa, gender is a powerful ideological device which produces, reproduces and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category (Tuyizere, 2007).

Connell (2009) proposes a view of gender as a social construction, meaning it is created collaboratively by men and women within social interaction. Because it is made, it can also be unmade. Gender comes into being by continually creating and re-creating human interactions and social life within specific times and spaces (Connell, 2009). Connell (2009) acknowledges that gender orders and gender politics are not homogeneous; they are complicated and turbulent, hence her emphasis on a contextually specific gender order and not a universal one.

While Connell's constructivist understanding of gender is written for the West's industrialized democracies, Connell's (2009) work draws on the global south's experiences by redirecting attention to colonial experiences and theorizing coloniality with gender. Connell describes colonialism as the most "sweeping exercise of power in the last 500 years" which included "the creation of global empires, the invasion of indigenous land by imperial powers and the domination of the post-colonial world by economic and military superpowers" (Connell, 2009: 78). Connell argues that colonising forces pulverized indigenous societies, mining them for labour and transforming their gender order through plantation economies, missions and population displacement (Connell, 2009: 78). Similarly, Ray (2018) argues that the colonisers - British, French, Dutch and German - transformed both the economic and cultural powers of the countries they colonised and by the end of colonialism, the gender orders of societies had been changed (Ray, 2018). For example, by the mid-20th century, women's legal status around property was redrawn, matrilineal decent in some areas was abolished, new types of masculinities were created among men and male ideas of breadwinner and female homemaker enshrined (Ray, 2018).

To understand gender today, Ray (2018: 79) proposes three legacies of colonialism. First, while most countries today are neither coloniser nor colonised, what we have in its place is a radically unequal world that approximates the colonial world. Second, anti-colonial struggles produced forms of nationalism in which gender came to play a central and resistant role. Third, in the struggle over the demise of colonial rule, women colonisers were on one side while colonised women were on the other, locked in a battle over land, ways of life, and freedom (Ray, 2018: 79). Ray maintains that as a result of these three legacies, we have a world in which memories of colonialism trouble questions of a global sisterhood, where post-colonial nations are both dependent on and resentful of the global north, and where these resentments may take a form of masculine aggression or policing of the gender order (Ray, 2018: 79). Both Connell and Ray argue that we must understand relationships between nations both historically and today to truly understand how gender works (Connell, 2009; Ray, 2018).

3.3.2 Gender and Media

The media is among the social institutions such as the family, church, school and peers that structure human behaviour by forming social norms (Krijnen, 2017; Tuyizere, 2007). In the social role theory, the media is thought to be an important contributor to gender socialization; it shows us the appropriate behaviour for women or men (Krijnen, 2017; van Zoonen, 1994). The majority of media content is thought of as actively constructing ideas about femininity,

creating gendered stereotypes and maintaining patriarchal values (van Zoonen, 1994). Different media like film and soap operas maintain the dominant social values like heterosexuality and gender roles (van Zoonen, 1994). In some media, representations are premised on the sex-gender dichotomy, in which "people are born with a certain sex (male or female) and then culturally inscribed with norms for male or female behaviour (masculinity or femininity)" (Krijnen, 2017: 5). Barker and Jane (2016) explain that media tends to portray women as passive, maternal (wife or mother), dependent, subordinate, emotional and sentimental, whereas men tend to be represented as assertive, self-centred, decisive, dominant, rational and conniving.

Krijnen (2017) argues that the media's representation of men and women is often limited to traditional ideas about the right setting for men and women (home or work) and conventional conceptions of what women and men have on their minds (cleaning bathrooms or driving sports cars). This marginalization and denigration of women transmits and sustains society's dominant sexist, patriarchal, and capitalist social values (van Zoonen, 1994). Furthermore, the invisibility of women is not only limited to Western media. Orgeret (2018) argues that African media also represents a male-centric view of the world, marked by extensive gender bias and stereotypes that underpin marginalisation, discrimination and violence against young women and girls. She further argues that women in African media are still portrayed as housemakers and unemployed persons (Orgeret, 2018). Tuyizere (2007) argues that African media's depiction of men as assertive and independent, and women as tender and sensitive, is deliberate and unconscious - *deliberate* in the sense that media personnel invest in sustaining a stereotypical feminine and dominant image and *unconscious* due to a of lack gender understandings - but that its effects affect women more than men, which is harmful to their development (Tuyizere, 2007).

3.4 Patriarchy

The concepts and theory of patriarchy are essential to this study as it captures the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of different aspects of women's subordination, and can be developed in such a way as to take into account the various forms of gender inequality over time. Walby's (1990) theorization of patriarchy is usefully applied to Zambia's patriarchal context, as it enables us to understand how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity within this Southern space.

The term 'patriarchal' refers to "power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men" (Weedon, 1987; 1-2). Weedon (1987) explains that power

rests on the social meanings given to biological sexual difference; thus, within patriarchal discourse, women's nature and social roles are defined in relation to the male's norm. Walby (1990: 20) defines patriarchy as a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". In her definition, Walby (1990: 20) defends the use of social structures as it usefully rejects both "biological determinism and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman a subordinate one". To understand how patriarchal practices are perpetuated and sustained, Walby (1990) proposes conceptualizing patriarchy at different levels, arguing that patriarchy at the most abstract level exists in systems of social relations such as capitalism and racism in contemporary societies, while at a less abstract level patriarchy is composed of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations with the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions (Walby, 1990).

The first structure is the patriarchal mode of production in the household. This refers to the unpaid domestic labour of women that involves cleaning, cooking and sewing, looking after children, and almost all of the work of caring for babies. Connell (2009; 2015) argues that this work is often associated with a cultural definition of women as caring, gentle, self-sacrificing and industrious, i.e. as good mothers. The woman may receive her maintenance in exchange for her labour (Walby, 1990). Through this organisation of domestic labour, women's work is expropriated by their husbands or cohabitees (Walby, 1990). In essence, housewives are the producing class, while husbands are the expropriating class (Walby, 1990).

The second patriarchal structure within the economic level is that of patriarchal relations within paid work. There is a deliberate structural division of labour whereby the skills and education accorded to men and women restrict and determine the work that men and women do (Connell, 2009). In turn, this forms a complex patriarchal closure within waged labour, excluding women from better forms of work and segregating them into worse jobs that are deemed to be less skilled (Walby, 1990). Nowhere in the world are women's earned incomes equal to men's (Connell and Pearse, 2015). Despite women making up a substantial part of the paid workforce, women are lower down in the hierarchy and are mostly concentrated in service jobs - clerical work, call centres, cleaning, serving food, and professions connected with taking care of the young and the sick, such as teaching and nursing (Connell, 2009).

In contemporary societies, capitalism plays a vital role in production relations. Capitalist societies have thrived through a "gendered accumulation process", which

continuously discriminates against women (Connell, 2009: 80). Connell argues that the "global economy rests on the bedrock of 'colonization' and 'housewifization' which once saw women in the colonised world formerly full participants in local non-capitalist economies being increasingly pressed into the 'housewife' pattern of social isolation and dependence on a male breadwinner" (Connell, 2009: 80). The global economy is organized so that even the products placed on the market for consumption have gendered effects and uses, for example cosmetics, cars, computers and machine guns (Connell, 2009).

The third patriarchal structure is the state. Walby argues that the state is not only patriarchal but capitalist and racist (Walby, 1990). The state is the institution that holds a monopoly of legitimate force in a given territory (Walby, 1990; Connell, 1987). In contemporary societies, state elites are the preserve of men; most of the world's presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers, generals and civil service managers are men (Connell, 1987; 2009). Women gained legal status and the right to vote much later than men, and in some parts of the world women still do not enjoy equality with men (Connell, 2009). The state also actively engages in considerable ideological activities on sex and gender issues ranging from the criminalization of forms of fertility control, the limiting of women's access to paid work, and support for regulating the institution of marriage. The state attempts to control sexuality by criminalizing homosexuality and legislating on the age of consent. The state also intervenes in the sexual division of labour through equal opportunity policies and subsidized immigration (Walby, 1990; Connell, 1987). While being a site of struggle and not a monolithic entity, the state has a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests in its policies and actions (Walby, 1990). Connell (1987) argues that the state regulates all aspects of life, from workplaces to families, provision of schools, and building of houses. In essence, the state arms men and disarms women (Connell, 1987).

Male violence constitutes a further structure, despite its individualistic and diverse forms. Connell (2009) explains that the definition of the state purports a consensus on what constitutes legitimate use of force in a given territory and ignores other kinds of forces such as domestic violence. "Husbands' beating of their wives to enforce obedience is a widespread practice that used to be broadly legitimate, in many places still is, and has only recently been challenged" (Connell, 2009: 135). Acts such as rape, sexual assault, wife-beating, workplace sexual harassment, and child abuse constitute male violence against women (Walby, 1990). Walby argues that male violence is taken to be a few men's acts upon a few women, with few social consequences, except the trauma caused to a few women (Walby, 1990). Instead,

women's behaviour is routinely experienced, with standard effects upon most women's actions (Walby, 1990). Male violence is systematically condoned and legitimated by the state's refusal to intervene against it, except in exceptional instances such as rape or wife-beating (Walby, 1990).

Patriarchal relations in sexuality constitute the fifth structure. Connell (2009) purports that sexuality, both negative and positive, is a significant arena of emotional attachment. Emotional relations, particularly those associated with sexuality, are often organised on a gender basis (Connell, 2009). For example, global hegemonic patterns prioritise and encourage cross-gender attraction (heterosexuality) over same gender (homosexuality) relations (Connell, 2009). Thus, homosexuality is frequently declared 'unnatural' and bad (Connell and Pearse, 2015: 5; Butler 1990: 108). This idea is sustained and displayed in contemporary society through bourgeois family households. Heterosexual couples constitute ideal households, and this ideal is sustained by advertising and other cultural pressures in the media (Connell, 2009). Regarding female sexuality, French feminist Luce Irigaray emphasises the absence of a clear-cut definition for women's eroticism and imagination in a patriarchal society (Irigaray, 1985). Irigaray suggests an 'othering' in women's sexual pleasure, play, and joy, outside of intelligibility (Irigaray, 1985). Compulsory heterosexuality and the sexual double standard are two of this structure's key forms (Walby, 1990).

Patriarchal cultural institutions complete the array of structures. In Connell's model, the patriarchal gender order is characterized by the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and subordinated and marginalised masculinities, as well as emphasized femininities (Connell, 1987). Here Connell explains that men in both the hegemonic and non-hegemonic (complicit, subordinate and marginalised) category gain a dividend from patriarchy through honour, prestige, and the right of command (Connell, 2005) and that such men resist change because of the benefits they acquire from patriarchal gender relations. The ordering of masculinity and femininity in society is based on a single structural fact, the global dominance of men over women (Connell, 1987). Cultural institutions are significant for generating a variety of gender-differentiated forms of subjectivity (Walby, 1990; Connell, 1987). This structure is composed of a set of institutions which create the representation of women within patriarchal gaze in a variety of areas, such as a) religion: through religious doctrines that emphasise the need for women's subordination; b) education: through single-sex schools; and c) the media: through soap operas, 'women's pages' in newspapers, and advertisements and

articles in women's magazines (Walby, 1990; Connell, 1987). All these cultural institutions are financed and supervised by men, who benefit from the subordination of women.

3.4.1 Patriarchy in Africa

In the African context, patriarchy is not a new phenomenon. Mamdani (1996) argues that patriarchal structures existed in Africa even before the advent of colonialism. However, dominant patriarchal structures are interwoven with the history of political and cultural imperialism. Imperialism and colonisation have perpetuated and re-enforced gender inequality on the continent (Connell, 2009; Mamdani, 1996). Connell argues that in itself imperialism is a deeply gendered system, from the moment of colonial conquest by a workforce of men (soldiers, sailors, administrators, priests) to the stabilization of colonial societies with racial/ gender hierarchies and institutions of plantation labour and domestic services (Connell, 2009: 92). It is important to note that imperial conquest smashed and restructured the gender order of the colonized: women lost legal status around property, matrilineal descent was abolished where it could be, and the normative idea of male breadwinner and female homemaker was globally emphasised (Ray, 2018). Men from the metropole seized land and women's bodies (Connell, 2009; Ray, 2018). Ray argues that gendered violence patterns in the global south today can be traced to imperialism's gendered violence, and resistance to gendered reform ideas emanates from former colonial powers (Ray, 2018: 79).

Colonialism also affected the gender relations within the colonising powers (Ray, 2018). Ray explains that only a particular class of men from colonizing countries were provided with job opportunities abroad. Simultaneously, women were offered a chance to move from being an inferior group to being part of a select group flourishing abroad as wives of colonists, travellers or missionaries, in a way they could not be at home (Ray, 2018: 79). This led to the creation of new patriarchal structures among both the colonizer and colonized (Connell, 2009).

Although Walby (1990) is writing from a western perspective to theorize western patriarchal practices, she proposes that patriarchy exists in more than one form, and in each of these forms it is found to varying degrees. Connell (2009: 76) critiques Walby's model for being premised on gender inequality, arguing that we need new formulations to theorize democratic gender relations. However, Walby maintains that women are not passive victims of oppressive structures (Walby, 1990). Women have struggled to change their immediate circumstances and the broader social structures through political and social activism in feminist movements.

3.5 Feminism

The purpose of this study is to understand how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity in Zambia and how the page has shaped participants' understandings of gender politics and their role as feminists in Zambia's gender unequal society. Feminism is centrally concerned with sex as an organizing principle of social life and is thoroughly saturated with power relations. This section focuses on feminist theory, its development and emerging principles such as intersectionality, shaping the 'three' historical feminist waves. Along with other feminists, contemporary authors and commentators (Cochrane,2013; Munro, 2013; Schuster, 2013), I argue the existence of a "fourth wave" of feminism, one in which the Internet enables feminists to network on digital platforms and collectively fight for social justice. A detailed discussion of fourth wave feminism is given on page 45.

Feminism is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society (Weedon, 1987). Weedon (1987) argues that these power relations structure all areas of life: family, education, work, politics and culture. Thus, feminism is an emancipatory, transformational movement aimed at undoing domination and oppression (Steiner, 2014). As a movement, feminism has been concerned with two key issues. First, to win citizen rights such as voting and equity before the law. Second, to influence cultural representations and norms in ways beneficial to women (Barker and Jane, 2016). Barker and Jane explain that feminist intervention in social life in pursuit of women's interest has been periodized using the 'wave' metaphor, offering a chronological way to think about feminist practices over time (Barker and Jane, 2016). These 'waves' have been categorized as 'first-wave', 'second-wave', 'third-wave' and more recently what may be considered as 'fourth-wave' feminism.

3.5.1 First-wave feminism - the suffragette movement

The liberal first-wave of feminist activism is associated with the suffragette movement in the United States (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006; Munro, 2013). First-wave feminists were concerned with women's suffrage and property ownership in the late 19th and early 20th century and managed to win the vote for all women over 21 in 1920 (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006; Munro, 2013). "Parallel to this strand of liberal first-wave feminism, a distinct socialist/ Marxist feminism developed in workers' unions in the United States, in reformist social-democratic parties in Europe, and during the rise of communism in the former Soviet Union" (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006: 6). While both movements shared a basic belief in equity and

equal opportunities, "the latter focused particularly on working-class women and their involvement in class struggle and socialist revolution" (Kroløkke and Sørensen 2006: 6).

In the early stages, the first wave of feminism in the United States was interwoven with other reform movements such as abolition and temperance, and initially involved women of the working class (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006: 4). While the suffragettes were seeking equality with men in terms of the right to vote, there was also a sense that women were morally superior to men, thus embracing what might be called "difference first-wave feminism" (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). First-wave feminist movements championed equity and civil rights such as the right to vote and property ownership. This paved the way for second-wave feminists, who continued fighting both politically and in their own private lives for women's rights.

3.5.2 Second-wave feminism - "the personal is political"

The term second-wave feminism is associated with the radical feminist activism of the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States (Barker and Jane, 2016; Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). With the vote won for all women over 21 in 1928, the feminist movement gradually turned to fight for women's right to access abortion and the right to divorce; it also challenged sexism in both the bourgeois society and within socialist movements (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006; Munro, 2013; Cochrane, 2013). Second-wave feminists turned their attention to women's inequality in the broader society by coining the phrase 'the personal is political' (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006; Munro, 2013; Cochrane, 2013). The personal encompasses the nature of the individual, whether it be seen as innate or socially acquired, and highlights the impacts of sexism and patriarchy on every aspect of women's private life (Weedon, 1987; Munro, 2013; Cochrane, 2013). Second-wave feminists championed the fight both "politically and in their own private lives for women's right to abortion, divorce, and non-legislative partnership", as well as against sexism in bourgeois society (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006: 7). Radical second-wave feminism was characterized by a claim of 'sisterhood' and 'solidarity' and by forming women-only 'rap' groups, which used theatrical protests, underground or guerrilla theatre aimed at raising consciousness through which to empower women both collectively and individually (Freeman, 1972; Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006).

Radical second-wave feminism grew out of the "leftist movements in post-war Western societies, among them the student protests, the anti-Vietnam war movement, the lesbian and gay movements, and, in the United States, the civil rights and Black Power movements"

(Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006: 8). However, second-wave feminism is criticized for having treated women as a homogenous group, "without paying attention to the many axes that cleave apart the singular category of 'woman'" (Munro, 2013: 23). This gave rise to "difference second-wave feminism", which formed a foundation for "identity politics" (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006).

Identity second-wave feminism was marked by growing criticism from black (Bell Hooks, 1981), working-class (Angela Y. Davis, 1981) and lesbian (Audre Lorde, 1984) feminists, who challenged hierarchies of power in what they saw as a predominantly white, middle-class, heterosexual feminist agenda (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). This led to the issue of "differentiated-identity politics based on the contingent and diversified but less decisive intersections of gender, class, race/ethnicity and sexuality" (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006: 12-13). American lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 coined the term 'intersectionality', to describe the ways race and gender interact to shape the experiences of black women. She argues that "black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and anti-racist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interactions of race and gender" (Crenshaw, 1989: 140). Crenshaw rightly argued that attending to gender or race separately cannot capture their experiences, as they were not either black or women at any given time, but black women (Crenshaw, 1989).

The historical overview of the first and second wave of feminist movements has shown that the theorization of 'feminism' was not inclusive and did not cater to all women's needs. The next two sections will focus on the changes in feminism due to this exclusion, before returning to third- and fourth-wave feminist movements.

3.5.3 Intersectionality

Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality to describe how race and gender interact to shape the experiences of black women in employment. In her paper, 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', she highlights the shortcomings of anti-discrimination laws in the United States using the case of General Motors. General Motors' hiring policy was that manufacturing jobs were the preserve of men and secretarial jobs were for white women. Black women had no case to sue either as black people or as women (Crenshaw, 1989). Similarly, sociologist Patricia Hill Collins took up the idea of intersectionality and applied it to all women using what she calls the "matrix of domination", arguing that gender is always interrelated with other cultural patterns of oppression (Collins,

2000). Collins argues that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, but all (gender, race, class) work together to produce injustice (Collins, 2000).

Messerschmidt (2018) provides a conceptual framework of understanding intersectionality in contemporary studies. Messerschmidt argues that the "salience of gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and nationality relations is important because each form of inequality is ubiquitous, only its significance shifts from context to context" (2018: 98). In other words, "gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and nationality are not absolutes and are not always equally significant in every social setting in which individuals construct unequal gender relations—they can co-exist in differing ways depending upon particular social situations" (Messerschmidt, 2018: 99). Similarly, Meekosha (2006) observes that much attention was paid to the intersections of gender, race and class in feminist studies while paying little attention to disability. For Meekosha, disability is not just a characteristic of individuals with physical impairments but rather a social relationship that operates at the levels of cultural meaning, social status and power, political citizenship and the overarching discourse of exclusion/ inclusion (Meekosha, 2006: 162). She argues that if gendered, racialized, and disabled bodies are all part of a broader exclusion process, then similar strategies must be employed for inclusion (Meekosha, 2006). At its best, intersectionality enables us to see how power structures based on gender, race, ethnicity, ability and class do not function independently of one another but must be understood together (Orgeret, 2018).

These identity-politics critiques of second-wave feminism led to the emergence of other feminist voices marginalised in the history of feminism: black, working-class, lesbian, disabled and African feminisms.

3.5.4 African feminism(s)

African feminism is the melting pot for a myriad of gender relations, practices and identities, a fusion of diverse discourses and courses of action. Far from being constructed in simple opposition to Western feminism, feminism on the African continent constitutes a myriad of heterogeneous experiences and departure points (Ahikire, 2014; Lewis, 2001). African feminism developed in response to Western feminism, criticized for being prescriptive, western-centric, middle-class, and dominated by white middle-class women's concerns. Black feminism, first formulated in the United States, emerged to differentiate itself from hegemonic (white) feminism. The Black feminist movement intended to "open up space for the exploration of black women's lives and the creation of consciously black woman-identified art" (Hendricks and Lewis, 1994: 65). However, while the Black feminist theory is seen as useful and necessary

for expressivism, consciousness-raising, and psychological empowerment, the essentialising of 'black experience' has been seen as problematic when it assumes "that black women automatically have insight into their experiences by their socioeconomic, cultural or biological heritage" (Hendricks and Lewis, 1994: 66).

Many African women rejected the labels 'feminist' and 'feminism' because of their Euro-American origins, preferring the term 'womanism' as more accurately referring to the struggles of 'Black' or 'African' women (Mekgwe, 2008). Womanism was used to identify a strand of black feminism that incorporated "racial, cultural, national, economic and political considerations" and was "conscious of black impotence in the context of white patriarchal culture and that empowers the black man" (Hendricks and Lewis, 1994: 66). African-American feminist Alice Walker coined womanism to denote "A black feminist or feminist of colour who loves other women, sexually or nonsexual" (Mekgwe, 2008: 18; Hendricks and Lewis, 1994: 67). African feminism is similar to womanism, emphasising "female autonomy and co-operation; nature over culture; the centrality of children; multiple mothering and kinship" (Mekgwe, 2008: 16). It also includes men, as it "recognizes a common struggle with African men to remove the yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation" (Mekgwe, 2008: 17).

African feminists often concentrate on reconstructing pre-colonial history as a period—frequently characterised by matrilineal relationships—in which black women exercised considerable political and social power (Hendricks and Lewis, 1994: 68). Black feminism, Womanism and African feminism attempt to challenge coloniality of power and knowledge regarding the forging of new identities. Contrarily, African-American critic Clenora Hudson-Weems espouses 'Africana womanism' as the terminology to best define and identify women of African descent, as it addresses the 'problems' of both African Feminism and Black Feminism (both linked to Euro/American naming) (Mekgwe, 2008: 20). She argues that "the ideology of Africana womanism and its agenda are unique and separate from both white feminism and Black feminism" (Mekgwe, 2008: 20). Additionally, other feminist movements have emerged on the African continent. While most of them are predominantly located in West Africa (Nigeria), they represent a range of continental feminisms; Motherism (Acholonu, 1995), Nego-feminism (Nnaemeka, 2003), Snail-sense feminism (Ezeigbo, 2012), Stiwanism (Social Transformation Including Women Africa) (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994), and African Womanism (Kolawole, 1997).

These indigenous feminist theorizations were formulated in response to Western feminisms' inequalities and exclusion (Nkealah, 2006). These exclusionary practices exist at two levels: based on gender where men are obliterated from feminist spaces and dubbed "the enemy", and based on race where African women are classified as "women of colour" and their historical trajectories are repressed in feminist theorizing (Nkealah, 2006: 62). Nkealah explains that these indigenous feminist models aim to speak feminism from three perspectives; an African cultural perspective, an African geopolitical location and an African point of view (Nkealah, 2006: 62). Ahikire (2014: 8) proposes that "various theoretical perspectives emanate from the complexities and specifics of the different material conditions and identities of women and are informed by the many diverse and creative ways in which we contest power in our private and public lives".

As a movement, feminism in Africa comprises multiple currents and undercurrents that defy simple, homogenising descriptions. Nkealah (2016: 63) maintains that these feminisms have several things in common: First, they resist the label "feminism" in its Western definition. Second, they are theorized on indigenous models and are based on (local) histories and cultures, drawing from them appropriate tools to empower women and enlighten men. Third, they are underpinned by an ideology of gender inclusion, collaboration, and accommodation to ensure that both women and men contribute (even if not equally) to improving women's material conditions (Nkealah, 2016: 63). The point to emphasize here is that the feminist struggle on the African continent represents a critical stance against the mainstream of patriarchal power. Most of these feminisms are conceptualized with African women in mind, acknowledging their diverse cultural experiences and embracing the commonalities in their encounters with patriarchy. This discussion of African feminisms provides a background for understanding feminism in different African social contexts. In the case of Lusaka it provides a critical and normative background for what "counts" as "feminism" in the Zambian context.

3.5.5 Third-wave feminism – Grrrls

Third-wave feminism began in the mid-1990s and is associated with the rebellion of younger women against what was perceived as the prescriptive, pushy, and sex-negative approach of older feminists (Barker and Jane, 2016). Third-wave feminism is theoretically rooted in post-colonial, intersectional and post-feminist influences and emphasizes differences among women's interest as the theme of this heterogeneous wave (Schuster, 2013). Queer theory is associated with third-wave feminism, which understands gender and sexuality as fluid

categories that do not easily map into the binary understandings of 'male' and 'female'. Queer theory also includes an account of bisexual and trans identities (Munro, 2013).

Another significant perspective that has influenced third-wave feminism is technological advancements. Dona Haraway's (1985) "cyborg" manifesto inspired the development of "cyberfeminism", "cybergrrrls or netgrrrls". Third-wave feminism has been characterized by assertively changing the pejorative, infant overtones associated with the word "Girl" to a confident and naughty slang "Grrrl", meant to attract the young at heart, not only limiting it to the under 18s (Garrison, 2000; Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). Also associated with third-wave feminism is reclaiming formerly derogatory labels such as 'slut' and 'bitch' for liberatory purposes and the politics of DIY feminism (Do It Yourself) as opposed to collectivist politics.

Contrary to assumptions that third-wave feminists have forgotten the strides made by earlier feminists, "younger feminists honour the work of earlier feminists while criticizing earlier feminisms", at the same time that they "strive to bridge contradictions that they experience in their own lives" (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006: 16). Thus, feminists who identify with the third wave take diverse approaches, but they often critique how "Western feminism failed to address differences between women appropriately and seek to overcome such failures by applying self-reflection to their own work" (Schuster, 2013: 12). However, third-wave feminism has not fallen short of criticisms itself. Munro (2013) has critiqued third-wave feminism for its focus on individual emancipation, in contrast to the collective 'personal is political' debates of the second wave. Similarly, Schuster (2013) critiques third-wave feminism for using online platforms for organizing and networking, as it excludes second-wave feminist representatives. This, she argues, goes against the central theme of third-wave feminism, which is inclusiveness.

Although the awareness of diversity and the intersection of gender fuelled much of the feminism of the Third Wave, it is important to note that in the Zambian context, gender is still perceived as a binary between 'male' and 'female'. This ideal of inclusivity provides a background for understanding how feminists in this social context negotiate the intersection of LGBTIQ politics and "feminism". The next section focuses on how the Internet has enabled a shift from third-wave to what is now called "fourth-wave" feminism (Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013).

3.5.6 Fourth- wave feminism?

The Internet has facilitated the creation of a global community of feminists who use the Internet for discussion and activism (Munro, 2013). Scholars and commentators argue that the Internet has enabled a shift from the 'third-wave' to 'fourth-wave' feminism (Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013). This 'fourth-wave' feminism is defined by access to technology tools and social media platforms such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter campaigns that support women to build strong popular online movements (Cochrane, 2013). These digital technology tools have been used to connect with other women worldwide and create campaigns on various issues that affect women (Cochrane, 2013). Munro (2013: 23) suggests that "the Internet has created a 'call-out' culture in which sexism or misogyny can be 'called out' and challenged". Drawing on the principles of first-wave feminists who took their struggles to the streets, second-wave feminists' collectivist struggle of 'the personal is political', and third-wave feminist cyberfeminism, fourth-wave feminism is revamping feminist movements by taking the struggle to the web and the streets.

Fourth-wave feminism's central feature is the reliance on social media technology tools that allow women worldwide to build strong, popular, reactive movements online. For example, British feminist Laura Bates's *Everyday Sexism Project* is a collection of websites and Twitter feeds, which collate day-to-day instances of sexism to show the falseness of the idea that modern society has achieved gender equality (Barker and Jane, 2016). Tens of thousands of women worldwide wrote about street harassment, sexual harassment, workplace discrimination and body-shaming that they encounter (Cochrane, 2013). This is an example of a consciousness-raising exercise that aimed at showing women how inequality affects them, proving that these problems are not individual but collective, and might, therefore, have political solutions (Cochrane, 2013). Feminist campaigns garner massive support online. Campaigns like No More Page 3, #MeToo, #YesAllWomen, SlutWalk, FEMEN and Muslima Pride have attracted thousands of supporters who used the Internet both as forums for discussion and a route for activism (Munro, 2013).

The effectiveness of feminist online activism is hotly debated, and Munro (2013) argues that the online discussions that characterise online feminism are divorced from real-world conflicts. He uses the term 'slacktivism' to describe "'feel-good' campaigns that garner plenty of public support—such as a petition circulated via Facebook—but do not necessarily address pressing issues" (Munro, 2013: 22). Schuster (2013) adds that digital activism is a preserve of the young, and due to the closed nature of social networking sites, feminist discussions are

often hidden from those who are not connected. For Schuster, the "hidden" nature of feminist discussion moves away from third-wave feminism's notion of inclusiveness. While this inclusiveness may originally have referred to ethnic diversity, sexual identities and class, the use of online platforms may be creating a divide between young feminists and old feminists (Schuster, 2013).

Like third-wave feminism, one of the key concerns of fourth-wave feminism is intersectionality, the idea that different axes of oppression intersect and often produce complex, contradictory results (Munro, 2013). In a bid to draw attention to these axes of difference, fourth-wave feminists employ tactics such as 'privilege-checking', which serves as a reminder to someone that they cannot and should not speak for others (Munro, 2013). Munro argues that "the emergence of 'privilege-checking' reflects the reality that mainstream feminism remains dominated by straight white middle-classes" (Munro, 2013: 25). The realization that women are not a homogeneous group has led to a set of new terminologies such as 'cis' (a neologism referring to those individuals whose gender and sexual identities map cleanly on to one another) to 'WoC' ('women of colour') and 'TERF' ('trans-exclusionary radical feminists')" to ensure that those who hold a given identity are not spoken for or pigeonholed (Munro, 2013: 25).

It is important to note that contemporary fourth-wave feminism is characterised by popular online reactive campaigns that garner massive attention online and attract women from different social and geographical spaces. This is central to my analysis, which takes into account how global campaigns like #MeToo have influenced the creation of feminist movements in different locales, specifically in Zambia, with the creation of the *Zambian Feminists* page.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has made an attempt to review the different waves of feminism and other non-Western feminist movements such as African feminisms, and developments such as intersectionality that have shaped the feminist movements. The chapter has revealed that feminism is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society (Weedon, 1987). As a movement, it challenges power relations that structure all facets of life. Feminist movements, particularly in Africa, seek to challenge patriarchy, which is culturally institutionalised as a norm. Feminism has evolved and changed to cater to all women regardless of age, sex, race, ethnicity and class. The discourse around patriarchy focuses on what is perceived as 'normal' or expected of women based on societal constructions of gender. In this chapter, I highlighted that our gender identities – what it means to be a man

or a woman – are constructed within and shaped by particular social and cultural contexts. What is interesting so far is the emergence of the Internet, which has revamped feminist movements and revolutionized it from a third-wave to what may be considered a fourth-wave feminist movement. The Internet has enabled women worldwide to connect and collectively work towards challenging patriarchal norms. It is important, however, to underline the fact that these ideas remain contested.

The next chapter presents the second half of the literature review, which includes a discussion on the Habermasian concept of the public sphere and the theorising of the Internet as a space for debate.

CHAPTER 4

LITERATURE REVIEW

> The Internet has become an important emerging public sphere for democratic deliberation where rights are contested and defended. This is especially so for sections of society who have little access to other kinds of publics due to multiple forms of exclusion and discrimination they face - based on gender, age, economic status and sexual identity (Erotics, 2011).
>
> "Being safe online is not only about protecting ourselves against governments and corporates but we need to secure our activism and identities from individual users, who mainly use social media as the main for attacks" (Radloff, 2013:149).

4. Introduction

This chapter gives a broad overview of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, and the theorisation of the Internet as an alternative space for debate; it also discusses the online safety of activists. It builds on debates from the previous chapter, which presented feminism as politics aimed at challenging power relations between men and women. This chapter acknowledges that the public sphere has, in many cases, excluded subordinate voices—women, LGBTIQ communities and people of colour—as discussed by authors like Fraser (1990). Fraser (1990) argues that these subordinate social groups create alternative public spheres or counterpublics to discuss their cause. It explores how the Internet is not only a haven for activists but also serves as an avenue in which misogyny, harassment, hate speech, and vitriol can be perpetuated. Finally, the chapter discusses how feminist and digital activists use the metaphor of 'safe space' to curate discussions on online platforms and ensure that the marginalised are not marginalised any further but are instead given a voice.

4.1 The Habermasian concept of the Public sphere

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas introduced the concept of the public sphere in his most famous work, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* translated into English as 'The Structural Function of the Public Sphere' (Habermas et al., 1974). It is here that he introduces for the first time the notion of 'the public sphere' as *Öffentlichkeit* in German. Although as a phenomenon it has been in existence historically, Habermas is credited for developing the notion of 'public sphere' as an essential social-scientific concept. Habermas built his approach on the classical Frankfurt school and at the same time worked out a communication rationality that went beyond the classical traditional (Habermas et al., 1974; Fuchs, 2014). Although the Habermasian model of the public sphere is accepted and praised by many as a realm of life in

which public opinion can be formed, it is not free of criticism (Fraser, 1990; Calhoun, 1992; Benhabib, 1993). Since Habermas conceived the public sphere idea, the concept has undergone several developments and updates (not least by himself) to take into account several different concerns, such as the inclusion of women's voices and the ongoing transformation from the single public sphere to a multiplicity of public spheres (Fraser, 1990; Bruns and Highfield, 2016).

For Habermas, the public sphere is a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed (Habermas et al., 1974: 49). It is a body of "private persons" assembled to discuss matters of "public concern" or "common interest" (Fraser, 1990: 58). It is a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organises itself as the bearer of public opinion (Habermas et al., 1974). Unlike the direct English translation of the public sphere, which suggests a public's spatial notion, the German word Öffentlichkeit encompasses various meanings (Delanty, 2007). It implies a spatial concept, or social sites or arenas where meanings are articulated, distributed and negotiated (Negt and Kluge, 1993). Delanty describes it as conveying a stronger motion of a realm of communication, suggesting a discursive notion of "publicness" (Delanty, 2007: 3721). It designates a theatre in modern societies where political participation is enacted through the medium of talk and a space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized arena of discursive interactions (Fraser, 1990).

Habermas's early theory of the public sphere was characteristically associated with the European Enlightenment's political and cultural world. Using the phrase 'the structural transformation', Habermas describes the transformation of ideas of a rational debate that came into existence in the post-renaissance era. With the advent of industrialization and the corresponding sociological changes that characterized the contemporary capitalist societies, the normative power of the notion of critical deliberation actualized through the public spheres started declining, allowing a reintegration of public and private domains (Delanty, 2007). So 'the structural transformation' occurred when the culture of the Enlightenment declined, and the public sphere was absorbed and modified by capitalism (Delanty, 2007). The bourgeois public sphere eventually eroded due to the economic and structural changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. It was paving the way for what Habermas calls the modern mass society of the social welfare state - where the critical debates channelled through rationality have gradually been replaced by leisure (Habermas et al., 1974).

With the de-politicization of the economy and increasing centralization of power during the eighties, a vibrant urban culture arose to offer a new space to the new public's emerging self-consciousness (Johnson, 2006). This new space of the public took the form of salons, coffee houses, public parks, theatres, lecture halls, a free press, public libraries and wherever public debate took place outside formal institutions (Delanty, 2007; Johnson, 2006; Calhoun, 1992). Habermas et al. (1974) argues that a portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private bodies assemble to form a public opinion. The hope was that the private individuals in the emergent politicized public could communicate their opinions and points of view via a discursive process that would respect their individuality while being ready to persuade and be open to persuasion (Johnson, 2006).

Calhoun maintains that a public sphere adequate to a democratic polity depends upon both the quality of discourse and quantity of participation (Calhoun, 1992). Though public spheres differed in quality and quantity, the majority upheld this criterion. First, reasoned argumentation, not the speaker's status or authority, was the sole arbiter in the debate. In principle, the public sphere disregarded status and was disinterested in any appeal to rank and position (Johnson, 2006; Fraser, 1990). Habermas admitted that this expectation was not fully realised in actuality in the coffee houses, the salons, and the societies (Habermas et al., 1974; Johnson, 2006; Fraser, 1990). Second, nothing was to be protected from criticism, as areas previously unquestioned became problematised (Johnson, 2006; Fraser, 1990). Finally, these social spaces were open spaces - meaning anyone could participate (Habermas et al., 1974; Johnson, 2006; Fraser, 1990). The result of such discussions would be "public opinion" in the strong sense of a consensus about the common good (Fraser, 1990: 59).

The bourgeois conception of the public sphere's full ideal potential was never realized in practice (Fraser, 1990). Although the initial proclamation concerned the inclusivity and participation of all citizens (Habermas et al., 1974), the claim of open practice was not made good (Fraser, 1990). Magalhães argues that it eventually ended up excluding subordinate forms of expression (Magalhães et al., 2012). Drawing back to the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the early bourgeois public spheres composed of narrow segments of the European population, mainly educated, propertied men. They conducted a discourse not only exclusive of others but also prejudicial to the interests of those excluded (Calhoun, 1992: 3). The bourgeois public sphere's major function became the preservation and protection of individuality of its members, and privacy became the norm that governed the manner in which the public interacted (Johnson, 2006).

4.1.1 The feminist critique of the public sphere concept

Feminist scholars (Fraser, 1990; Calhoun, 1992; Benhabib, 1993) have been among the most vocal, vigorous and useful critics of Habermas's first conception of the public sphere. The feminist critique of Habermas's bourgeois public sphere comes from the recognition of women's, as well as other specific social groups', exclusion from figuring in society and from having an active part, therefore excluding them from democratic citizenships (Magalhães et al., 2012; Calhoun, 1992). They contend that the dominant male capitalist class was privileged in this access. This cultural homogenization and intention of consensus in a plural society implied a hierarchy of values that ultimately generates domination, power inequalities and exclusion (Magalhães et al., 2012; Calhoun, 1992). In Benhabib's view, issues related to female spheres such as housework, reproduction and nurture were relegated to what Arendt terms the 'shadowy interiors of the household' (Arendt, 1973 in Benhabib, 1993: 101). They have never been brought forward to the so-called critical spaces of public deliberation until very recently but have been treated as natural and immutable aspects of human relations (Benhabib, 1993).

Nancy Fraser's 1990 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critic of Actually Existing Democracy', draws heavily from the revolutionist histography and launches her attack on four of Habermas's central conceptions of his masculinist bourgeois public sphere (Fraser, 1990). Firstly, she criticises the idea that the public sphere was open to all. To some extent, she agrees that open access is one of the crucial aspects of the norm of publicity. However, the model was not fully actualised (Fraser, 1990). Fraser argues that "women of all classes and ethnicities were excluded from official political participation based on ascribed gender status, while Plebeian men were formally excluded by property qualifications" (Fraser, 1990: 63). Additionally, women and men of racialized ethnicities of all classes were excluded on racial grounds (Fraser, 1990).

Secondly, central to Habermas's account is the assumption that public spheres should be restricted to deliberations about the common good and that private interests and concerns are not welcome (Fraser, 1990). Fraser then asks what constitutes a public matter and what is regarded as private (Fraser, 1990). She contends that since it is difficult to differentiate between a public matter and a private one, discursive contestation becomes the only way of deciding (Fraser, 1990). With this, she argues that no topic should be ruled off-limits—as worthy or not worthy of public deliberation—in advance of such contestation (Fraser, 1990). This then gives minority sections of society opportunities to convince others that "what in the past was not public in the sense of being a matter of concern should now become so" (Fraser, 1990: 71).

Thirdly, Fraser contests the assumption that a functioning democratic public sphere requires a sharp separation of civil society and the state (Fraser, 1990). The claim here is that a government intervention system is a necessary precondition for a well-functioning public sphere (Fraser, 1990). For Fraser, inclusivity and participation are essential to a democratic public sphere. Since socio-economic equality is a precondition of participation and laissez-faire capitalism does not foster socio-economic equality, she argues that it cannot be a precondition for an effective public sphere. She then proposes a form of politically regulated economic reorganization and redistribution to achieve this end (Fraser, 1990: 74).

Lastly, Fraser contends that Habermas's account stresses the singularity of the bourgeois conception of the public sphere and its claim to be the arena in the singular (Fraser, 1990). She disposes of this claim by scrutinizing this normative assumption. In so doing, she outlines the merits of single comprehensive public versus multiple publics in two types of modern societies, 'stratified' and 'egalitarian' societies (Fraser, 1990). Structural relations of dominance and subordination characterize stratified societies. In contrast, egalitarian societies have a non-stratified multicultural system (Fraser, 1990). In stratified societies, Fraser argues that deliberative processes tend to operate to the dominant groups' advantage and the disadvantage of subordinate groups (Fraser, 1990). She further adds that "members of the subordinated groups would have no arenas for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies" (Fraser, 1990: 66).

As a result, the single public sphere would "absorb the less powerful into a false 'we' that reflects the more powerful" (Fraser, 1990: 66). With added support from revisionist histography, Fraser argues that members of subordinate social groups—women, LGBTIQ communities, workers and the people of colour—have found multiple alternative public spheres more advantageous to their cause. Thus, in stratified societies, multiple publics— what Fraser calls the 'counterpublics' of subaltern groups—are more appropriate for participatory parity than a singular bourgeois public as Habermas describes it (Fraser, 1990: 67). On the other hand, since egalitarian societies are culturally diverse, they too require multiple public spheres to construct and express their cultural identity and speak in their own voice, rather than a single public sphere that would be unsuccessful in accommodating the aspirations of different cultural groups (Fraser, 1990).

4.1.2 The Internet and the public sphere

The public sphere provides a framework for understanding the discursive formations of public opinion. Applied to contemporary society, it enables us to know how public opinion is formed

among different actors, the public, and on different platforms, especially online (Bruns and Highfield, 2016). The term Internet refers to all the digital devices (such as computers and smartphones) connected by networks, and all the content, communication and information sharing that occurs through these networks (Flew, 2008). Media scholars are divided between those who claim the existence of a 'digital public sphere' (see Bruns and Highfield, 2016) and those who insist that the Internet is not a public sphere but rather a public space in which discourse is had (see Papacharissi, 2002). As such, several labels have been proposed for the "digital", "virtual" or "online" public sphere, each of them tied to a somewhat different understanding of the phenomenon in question (Schäfer, 2015). Researchers who argue the existence of a 'digital public sphere' envision a communicative sphere provided or supported by online or social media where participation is open and freely available to anybody interested, where matters of common concern can be discussed, and where proceedings are visible to all (Schäfer, 2015: 1).

Against this backdrop, some scholars have interpreted the advent of online media and information availability as a second structural transformation on the public sphere (Schäfer, 2015). Papacharissi argues that the Internet as a new public sphere can facilitate the discussion that promotes exchanging new ideas and opinions (Papacharissi, 2002). Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have enabled the exchange of ideas and interactions between individuals (Fuchs, 2014; Cela, 2015). Users of these platforms can communicate freely and, consequently, come together for a certain theme or common cause (Fuchs, 2014; Cela, 2015). For Fuchs, published content on social media is reachable to everyone, eliminating the physical and infrastructural barriers (Fuchs, 2014; Cela, 2015). Cela maintains that it was never as easy as it is now for people to express their criticism collectively or to contradict a matter that concerns a particular sect of society (Cela, 2015).

It is important to note that while the utopian vision of the Internet envisages civic participation online and access to information, there are also dystopian views concerning its efficacy as a public sphere. Papacharissi argues that while the Internet and surrounding digital technologies provide a public space, they do not necessarily provide a public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002). Cyber-pessimists have identified primary conditions that inhibit the transition from public space to public sphere. The first limitation is access to information. While the Internet provides greater access to information, it does not directly lead to increased online participation (Papacharissi, 2002). Papacharissi identifies three major digital divides: access to the Internet; the ability to fully utilize the Internet; and the capacity to transform the

digital benefits into social benefits (Papacharissi, 2002; Schäfer, 2015). Also, online conversations can be as easily dominated by elites as offline ones, and for Papacharissi "access to information does not guarantee that information will be accessed" (Papacharissi, 2002: 9).

The second limitation is the reciprocity of communication. Online media enables communication that transcends geographical barriers and allows for relative anonymity in personal expression, leading to empowered and uninhibited public opinion (Papacharissi, 2002). Schäfer argues that the clear sense of the other and his or her identity, and accompanying social obligations stemming from face-to-face meetings, are absent, making rational debates unlikely (Schäfer, 2015). For example, emotional and confrontational debates, as well as 'trolling', would make participation undesirable from a deliberative standpoint (Schäfer, 2015).

Furthermore, Internet conversations might transcend geographic boundaries. Still, the technological potential for global communication does not ensure that people from different cultural backgrounds will also understand each other (Papacharissi, 2002). Consequently, the deliberative model may either be globalized or tribalized (Papacharissi, 2002).

The diversity in discussions sums up the list of limitations. Many of the tools we use to extract meaningful information from the Internet's enormity are ruthlessly efficient. They shield us from 'flotsam' and 'jetsam' and important diversity in viewpoints and information (Barker and Jane, 2016). Even among those who do not participate, there is a danger of fragmentation into small communities of like-minded people (Schäfer, 2015). From a technological perspective, the search engine algorithms, and other websites, provide users with information that is deemed suitable based on additional information about, for example past online activity (Schäfer, 2015; Barker and Jane, 2016; Bruns and Highfield, 2016). In turn, they hide other information, producing what Eli Pariser calls 'filter bubbles' (Pariser, 2011; Schäfer, 2015; Barker and Jane, 2016; Bruns and Highfield, 2016). Pariser uses the term "filter bubbles" to describe how the personalization strategies employed by corporates such as Facebook and Google are dramatically changing our experiences of the Internet (Pariser, 2011). The rise of social media has given this phenomenon an inherently social component too. It allows users to decide who to follow or what content to receive, and, accordingly, may filter out perspectives that seem foreign to them (Schäfer, 2015). Schäfer adds that this shaping of content has been hypothesized to lead to an "echo chamber" (Schäfer, 2015). An echo chamber comes into being when a group of Internet users choose to preferentially connect to the exclusion of outsiders (Sunstein, 2009; Bruns, 2017). This results in a closed system where users only encounter opinions or information that reflect and reinforce their own (Sunstein, 2009; Bruns, 2017).

Individuals would then not be exposed to different positions and might be less motivated to reflect on their perspectives (Sunstein, 2009). Furthermore, Pariser argues filter bubbles and echo chambers impact the democratic potential of the Internet because democracy requires us to see things from one another's view and to rely on shared facts (Pariser, 2011).

Therefore, scholarly examinations of the Internet as a public sphere all point to the conclusion that online digital technologies create a public space, but do not inevitably enable a public sphere (Papacharissi, 2002; Pariser, 2011; Fuchs, 2014; Cela, 2015; Schäfer, 2015; Bruns and Highfield, 2016). Research so far has shown that access to information, reciprocity of communication, and diversity of views are some of the primary conditions that prohibit the transition from public space to public sphere. Papacharissi maintains that a new public space is not synonymous with a new public sphere, in that a virtual space enhances discussion; a virtual sphere should enhance democracy (Papacharissi, 2002:12).

Therefore, it remains highly contestable whether the Internet is indeed the second structural transformation of the public sphere. We can ask if the Internet has the potential to fundamentally change societal communication and revive the public sphere, despite the contesting view that it is a public space, not a public sphere, as suggested by Papacharissi (2002) and media scholars, cited above.

4.2 Digital activism versus online safety

This study seeks to discover if women contributors of the *Zambian Feminists* feel supported in expressing their views on this platform, given Zambia's patriarchal context, as well as to understand how feminist actions online translate to participants' day-to-day lives. Chapter three (see section 3.6.4) discussed how fourth-wave feminism is mostly digital activism (Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013), and the previous section (4.1.2) posited the Internet as an alternative space for debate (Papacharissi, 2002). This section will focus on the safety of feminists and digital activists on online platforms.

Feminists and queer activists are guided by strong visions of social change in which digital and network communications feature prominently (Fotopoulou, 2016). These digital platforms offer great potential for disseminating feminist ideas, shaping new modes of discourse about gender and sexism, connecting to different constituencies and allowing creative ways of protest to emerge (Baer, 2016; Mendes and Carter, 2008). Digital feminism is viewed as engaging substantively and self-reflexively with issues of privilege, difference, and access (Baer, 2016; Fotopoulou, 2016). Thelandersson (2014: 529) suggests that "the Internet provides a space where feminists can learn from each other about why things some feminists

see as harmless can be hurtful and offensive to others. Most feminists know about intersectionality, but far from all of us know every way in which intersectional oppression works". The Internet is not a feminist haven. Studies have shown that the Internet and digital tools are spheres for perpetuating misogyny, sexual harassment, hate speech and sexism (Mendes and Carter, 2008; Radloff, 2013; Baer, 2016; Fotopoulou, 2016; Orgeret, 2018). Gendered cyberhate in the form of rape threats and sexualized vitriol have become part of everyday experience for female Internet users (Barker and Jane, 2016). Radloff argues that attacks against women's rights activists are found online just as they are offline (Radloff, 2013). The combinations of online digital threats and offline issues compromise women's rights activists' freedom of expression and association and their right to participate actively as citizens (Radloff, 2013). Digital attacks range from monitoring of the Internet and email traffic, virus and spyware attacks, filtering, censorship, content blocking, trolling, cyberbullying or e-bile, and 'doxxing' (the publishing of personally identifying information to incite Internet antagonists to hunt targets in offline domains) (Radloff, 2013; Barker and Jane, 2016). For instance, journalist Amanda Hess in "Why Women Aren't Welcome on the Internet" (2017) explains her harrowing experience of death and rape threats from a "serial cyberstalker" and argues that online harassment needs to be addressed as a civil rights issue. Similarly, feminist campaigner Caroline Cariado-Perez received online rape and death threats after petitioning the British government to put more female faces on banknotes (Hess, 2017).

The tensions and contradictions that exist online and offline are the centres of Fotopoulou's (2016) argument concerning empowerment and vulnerability among activists in the digital era. She contends that these tensions and contradictions are prescribed by how all aspects of our lives increasingly take place in digitally saturated environments. In essence, widespread digital saturation coupled with media ubiquity in everyday life makes it hard to escape the tensions and contradictions that occur in online spaces and offline spaces. Fotopoulou (2016) argues that we need to resist the myth that the Internet is democratic, and instead focus on embodied, lived material and socially situated aspects of feminism and queer activism in which age, class, race and disability in specific social and cultural contexts are addressed (Fotopoulou, 2016).

It is against this background of ubiquitous violence of online misogyny, harassment and hate speech that feminists have developed strategies like creating 'safe spaces' to reappropriate social media platforms. The next section attempts to examine the extent to which the idea of 'safe spaces' protects women from online harassment.

4.2.1 Online Safe Spaces

Online safety for both digital activists and members of online communities has led to an increase in the use of the metaphor of 'safe space'. The meaning of safe space is highly contested, overused and under-theorised (The Roestone Collective, 2014; Clark-Parsons, 2017; Gibson, 2019). In her book "Mapping Gay L.A: The intersection of place and politics", Moira Kenny (2001) traces the origins and development of the 'safe space' discourse to the radical feminist consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s and 1970s. For her, the "notion of safe space implies a certain license to speak and act freely, form collective strength, and generate strategies for resistance" (Kenny, 2001: 24). Safe spaces also have a history in black feminist thought where they were designated as spaces for black women only (Collins, 2000). Collins describes safe spaces as "social spaces where black women can speak freely", express their ideas, share experiences and learn from one another (Collins, 2000: 100). Similarly, Kenny (2001: 111) in her book argues that the construction of separate communities for lesbians was partly about "creating places of refuge and celebrating autonomy in a heterosexist world". These spaces enabled participants to form a culturally and politically independent identity, foregrounding marginalized characteristics in mainstream society (The Roestone Collective, 2014). Linking these meetings to the concept of 'safe space' is used in online communities and critical classrooms today. 'Safe space' is a term used to refer to a place—physical, digital or symbolic—where specific rules have been put in place regarding discourse and interaction, and where certain people or modes of conduct are excluded from making the space as inclusionary as possible (Gibson, 2017; 2019).

Gibson (2017) argues that safe spaces are premised on the idea that power relations are inherent within all structures, including speech interactions. To prevent the marginalization of voices already hurt by dominant power relations, safe space policies are implemented to avoid excluding those groups (Gibson, 2017: 2351). Within these safe spaces, the marginalized can speak freely, seek support and organise action against injustice experienced (Gibson, 2019). Thus, safe spaces have a strict no-tolerance policy of hate speech or other discussions that would undermine the political project assumed in the space or community (Gibson, 2017; 2019). In practice, this often means that people can be censored or ejected from the space for not correctly observing standards of speech, style or tone (Clark-Parsons, 2017). This applies to hurtful statements and ignorantly prejudiced or unintentionally traumatizing topics posted without giving notice to readers in the form of a trigger or content warning.

To ensure that all safe space policies are upheld, online communities have moderation policies (Gibson, 2017). Gibson argues that like other spaces for debate, online forums also use moderators - usually a computer program or a person - to determine baseline rules for discussion (Gibson, 2017). Moderators play an essential role in preventing disruptive users like trolls or spam from taking over forums. However, moderators can just as easily act as censors of opinions and ideas. Due to how online forums are structured, forum moderators can remove users' posts from the forum or even ban users entirely (Gibson, 2017: 2351). Consequently, moderators have much more power to affect online forums' discussion than other users (Gibson, 2017). Therefore, it is important to fully understand moderators' forum policies and their effects on the discussion. However, safe space critics contend that such censorship results in echo chambers, intolerant of outside ideas and quick to ban those who disagree with the locally established party line (Gibson, 2017: 2351). These critics argue that censorship can consequently endanger real, productive conversations (Gibson, 2017). Importantly to this study, the concept of safe online spaces helps us understand how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page administrator curates discussion and regulates commentary on this platform.

4.3 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has discussed the Habermasian concept of the public sphere, demonstrating that scholars like Fraser (1990) have revised the concept to include subordinate voices that may have been excluded from the public sphere's original conception. The chapter also presented the divergence of views among scholars regarding the Internet being considered the second structural transformation of the public sphere. This divergence of views has led to the theorizing of the Internet as an alternative space for debate (Papacharissi, 2002). On the one hand, the Internet has enabled feminists and digital activists to advocate for the marginalized women, LGBTIQ communities, workers and people of colour in society. On the other hand, the Internet serves as an avenue for gendered cyberhate in which sexual harassment, misogyny, sexism, rape and death threats towards women are perpetuated. Finally, the chapter discussed how feminists and digital activists are taking control of online platforms' discussions by creating safe spaces where they regulate commentary and ensure that the marginalized are given a voice.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

> "If we, as academic researchers, are interested in understanding how people experience media content, we have to use a research approach that enables us to explore the process through which people actualize media meaning and incorporate it in meaningful ways into their daily lives" (Schrøder et al., 2003: 122).

5.1 Introduction

This chapter's focus is to discuss the choices I have made concerning the methodology, research design, sampling techniques, and data collection and analysis methods for this research project. As my study aims at understanding how prolific Lusaka women fans of the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page contest, negotiate and appropriate meanings from the representations they encounter on the page into their daily lives as self-proclaimed feminists, I draw on Schroder's advice, in the above quotation, to employ those approaches and methods most appropriate for understanding how people actualize meaning. This section begins with the choice of an appropriate paradigm, the theoretical frameworks, or ways of perceiving and understanding the world (Kuhn, 1962). In simple terms, it is an approach to thinking about and doing research (Kuhn, 1962).

There are currently two main social research paradigms through which researchers perceive the world and understand its different phenomena. These are quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. Bryman (2012) defines qualitative research as a research method that uses words rather than quantification to collect and analyse data.

5.2 Research Methodology: Qualitative Research

The qualitative research methodology is characterized as an inductive approach (Bryman 2012). An inductive research approach involves developing a theory as a result of the observations of empirical data (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2007). Techniques used in qualitative studies include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and reception studies. Samples are not meant to represent large populations (Bryman, 2012; Deacon et al., 1999). Rather, small, purposeful samples of respondents are selected using sampling techniques such as purposive, snowball or theoretical sampling to provide valuable information, and not because they are representative of a larger group (Bryman, 2012; Deacon et al., 1999)

Epistemology refers to what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2007). Epistemologically, qualitative research is based on interpretivism (Bryman, 2012; Saunders et al., 2007). Interpretivism is an "epistemology that

advocates that the researcher must understand differences between humans in our role as social actors" (Saunders et al., 2007: 106). The term 'social actors' is used metaphorically to refer to theatrical productions; it suggests that we play a part on the stage of life as humans. On the stage, actors play a role which they interpret in a particular way (which may be their own or that of the director) and act out their part by this interpretation (Saunders et al., 2007). Similarly, we interpret our everyday social roles by the meaning we give to these roles as social actors, and interpret others' social roles according to their own set of meanings (Saunders et al., 2007). This epistemological position emphasizes the difference between researching people and objects.

As noted earlier, epistemology concerns what constitutes acceptable knowledge in the field of study. On the other hand, ontology is concerned with the nature of reality (Saunders et al., 2007; Bryman, 2012). Ontologically, qualitative research tends to be associated with the idea or views that social life is the product of social actors' social interactions and beliefs. This idea is called subjectivism. The subjectivist view is that "social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors" (Saunders et al., 2007: 108). This can be considered as a continual process. Subjectivism is usually associated with constructionism or social constructionism (Saunders et al., 2007; Bryman, 2012). The concentration on meaning-making reflects an emphasis on the subjective and constructed nature of events as subjectivism or constructionism places a greater emphasis on micro-interactions as the source from which to gain information about creating social life (Bryman, 2012).

The appropriateness, for this study, of the methods discussed in section 5.2.1 below is therefore closely hinged on the epistemological and ontological foundations of qualitative research methods. I have chosen interpretivism and subjectivism as my philosophical positions for this study for the following reasons. Firstly, my research focuses on my research participants' lived experiences and social processes and how these have influenced their consumption and interpretation of media texts presented on the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page. This is in line with the interpretivist interest of understanding humans in their roles as 'social actors' (Saunders et al., 2007). Secondly, the research methods and strategies employed in this research are in line with the subjectivists' focus on micro-interactions as the source from which to gain information about creating social life (Bryman, 2012). Lastly, my research is social in nature. I want to explore, understand and analyse the responses from women fans of the *Zambian Feminists* page and how their social context has influenced their readings of media text shared on the platform. The need to study the consumption of media or social

behaviour within a social context, as underlined in qualitative research, is fundamental for this study's success.

5.2.1 Reception Analysis

A reception analysis is a qualitative approach that recognizes media recipients as co-producers of meaning (Jensen, 1988). Reception analysis interrogates the meanings that people make in their encounter with media content (Jensen, 1988; Schrøder et al., 2003). Both Jensen (1988) and Schrøder et al. (2003) explain that, first, in reception analysis, mass communication constitutes a construction rather than a mirror of reality and, second, the audiences contribute to the meaning of the text.

Stuart Hall's encoding/ decoding model of communication provides a theoretical framework for understanding the audience's reception of media texts (Hall, 1980). Hall posits that in analysing media texts we are not dealing with a fixed structure of meaning, but with a dynamic interpretation resulting from the cultural codes at the disposal of both producers and the recipients of the text (Schrøder et al., 2003: 128). In his model, Hall offers three ways in which audiences respond to media texts: first, a dominant (or hegemonic) reading, in which the preferred meaning of the text, if accepted, ratifies particular ways of seeing the world (Hall, 1980). Second, an oppositional reading, where the audience understands, but altogether rejects the text's preferred meaning (Hall, 1980). Finally, the negotiated reading, in which the texts dominant "code" is broadly accepted, but the reader makes an exception based on personal experience, position and interests (Hall, 1980). Hall's model assumes that the audience is active and will react in different ways contingent on their lived experiences, including readers' cultural backgrounds and other factors like gender, race and class (Hall, 1980).

Jensen (1988) further suggests that two aspects of reception must be taken into account. First, reception is a relatively open activity of making sense of the meaning of the text, so that the audience formulates, or perhaps opposes, what is arguably the dominant meaning of the media text. Drawing on their own experiences, the recipients may establish links between media discourse and the discourses they encounter in everyday life, from politics to culture, revealing and moving beyond the universes immanent in the text. Second, reception can be characterized by an on-going and complex process of affirming or reformulating categories of understanding (Jensen, 1988). Schrøder et al. (2003) explain that, unlike other methods such as media ethnography or survey research, reception research explores media experiences through the medium of extended talk. In reception research, both the data and findings are seen

as discursive constructions produced jointly by researchers and informants as they interact in the research encounter (Schrøder et al., 2003).

Reception research is also popular in gender research as a tool to study the ways in which various groups of women acquiesce to or oppose patriarchal portrayals of gender relations (Schrøder et al., 2003). Reception analysis has brought about many ground-breaking studies, such as Ien Ang's *Watching Dallas* (1985), Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984), and Joke Hermes's *Reading Women's Magazines* (1995). These studies generated important understandings of how media content relates to gendered audiences and support my argument that reception analysis is a well-suited method for studying women's receptions of gender representations on the *Zambian Feminists* page.

Although reception analysis has been used in many groundbreaking studies, it is not without limitations. Ang (1995:216) argues that in their emphasis on interpretation and production of textual meaning, reception researchers still tend to isolate the text-audience relationship from the larger context in which people consume the media – the context of everyday life, which is the cornerstone of ethnographic approaches to audiences, whose object is to analyse how the media are integrated into people's everyday lives (Ang 1995: 216). It is, however, not the object of this chapter to discuss ethnographic approaches.

The following section discusses and gives justification for each of the research techniques that I used. They are discussed in the order in which they were applied.

5.3 Preliminary Analysis of Posts

The *Zambian Feminists* page posts on a wide variety of topics. To select specific posts that fit the study's objectives, I conducted a thematic analysis of specific posts that directly affect women. Thematic analysis is an approach used to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes within the qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Ryan and Bernard, 2003; Bryman, 2012). Themes are patterns that capture something important about the data in relation to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Without thematic categories, investigators have nothing to describe, nothing to compare and nothing to capture (Ryan and Bernard, 2003: 86). The thematic analysis helped me familiarise myself with the content on the page, what topics enhanced discussion, the different writing styles, humour, debates, and the prolific women contributors who actively engage on the page.

Given that the *Zambian Feminists* page does not have a specific pattern (daily, weekly, monthly) or specific days when posts are shared on the page, I had to code each post that was shared on the page to identify the topic and construct the themes and sub-themes (Bryman,

2012). Once all the posts were arranged in themes, I purposively selected the posts that had the most reactions (likes, comments and shares) for analysis and discussion. I chose those posts because they seemed to best illustrate the topic and its response.

The sampling frame constituted 19 posts from the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page between 4th January and 29th December 2019. This period was significant because, over this year, the *Zambian Feminists* page administrator actively organized programs to raise awareness on feminism and gender issues affecting women in Zambia. For example, the Lusaka Women's march (19th January 2019) and the Yaka feminist festival (25th-27th April 2019) was organised in collaboration with feminists from Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa, to share experiences. These events were held in Lusaka and women fans, including this study's participants, from different walks of life were in attendance. This was also the period wherein #AmINext? reached its peak, in September 2019, after the rise in femicides in South Africa (Lyster, 2019). The #AmINext? movement brought attention to the number of femicide cases in Zambia, as women took to social media to share their experiences. During this period, a media frenzy regarding LGBTIQ polarised the country after US Ambassador Daniel Foote's remarks (I explain this in detail in Chapter two, see section 2.3.1). During this period, followers of the page actively debated and defended their views on the platform. As a researcher, I actively followed these discussions by reading all the posts and their associated comments on the page.

5.3.1 Focus group interviews

Focus groups are small group discussions focussed on a particular topic and facilitated by a researcher (Tonkiss, 2004; Wilkinson, 1999; Bryman, 2012; Morgan, 1996). In communication research, focus groups are synonymous with reception analysis because they investigate the social construction of meaning during the decoding process (Schrøder et al., 2003). In feminist studies, focus groups are an established method that enables "participants to speak in their own voice - to express their own thoughts and feelings and to determine their own agendas" (Wilkinson, 1999: 232). Focus groups offer a distinctive method of generating qualitative data-based group interactions; this interactive quality is the key feature of focus group research (Tonkiss, 2004; Bryman, 2012). Tonkiss (2004: 194) describes focus groups as not simply a means of interviewing several people at the same time; rather, they are concerned with exploring the formation and negotiation of accounts within a group context - how people define, discuss and contest issues through social interactions. Similarly, Lunt and Livingstone (1996: 90) argue that the underlying approach of focus group discussion is an assumption that

opinions, attitudes and accounts are socially produced and shaped by interactions with others, rather than being discreetly formed at the level of the individual.

For this study, I used focus group discussions to see how Lusaka women fans of the *Zambian Feminists* negotiate and contest within a group setting, the different gender representations they encounter on the page. To do this, I used 3-5 participants for each focus group discussion to stimulate debate and ensure full participation. Morgan (1996) recommends smaller groups for emotionally charged topics that generate high levels of participant involvement. Smaller groups give each participant enough time to discuss their views and experiences on topics in which they are highly involved (Morgan, 1996). Scholars (Wilkinson, 1999; Oakley, 1998) argue that small sizes enable "participants to fully speak in their own 'voice' by allowing them to define what is relevant and important in order to understand their experience" (Wilkinson, 1999: 232).

A standard concern within focus group methods literature is whether and how to ensure homogeneity within the groups. Lunt and Livingstone (1996) argue that focus group participants must be homogenous in terms of social characteristics but unfamiliar to each other. This avoids established relations of power, disagreement or consensus being brought into the research setting, where assertive voices are more likely to direct the group discussions (Tonkiss, 2004). Focus groups also enable the researcher to directly observe the social production of meaning as participants negotiate their readings of media material in an environment with strong consensual constraints (Schrøder et al., 2003). For this reason, participants were purposively selected using convenience and snowball sampling (see Deacon et al., 1999; Byrne, 2004), placing particular emphasis on their residence in Lusaka; they also shared cultural characteristics and their symbolic connection of being fans of the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page (Schrøder et al., 2003). For a purposive sample, informants are selected non-randomly because they possess a particular common characteristic (Frey et al., 1991). In this case, the shared characteristics were that the participants had to be women fans of the *Zambian Feminists* and reside in Lusaka.

I purposively selected women identified as top fans of the page, as I presumed these women would be good key informants. This was indeed the case as these women participants led me to other Lusaka women fans of the page who I could approach and ask to be a part of the study. Deacon et al. (1999) equates snowball sampling to a snowball rolling down the mountain in the sense that the initial contacts propose other people for the researcher to approach. While I was recruiting participants from the *Zambian Feminists* page, I noticed that

among the list of top fans was a Zambian student whom I knew from Rhodes University. When I contacted her, she told me about four other Zambian students at Rhodes University who were also fans of the page and from Lusaka. Initially, I planned to conduct all my focus groups in Lusaka, but since all six of us could not travel home and the five of them fit the participation criteria, I included them in the study. Deacon et al. (1999: 54) refers to this as convenience sampling, in that the sampling selection is "less preconceived and directed, more the product of expediency, chance and opportunity than of deliberate intent". Of considerable importance, however, in the sampling was to ensure the participants felt comfortable with each other by ensuring homogeneity in the groups.

5.3.2 Online focus group interviews

One important factor in conducting focus group interviews is selecting a neutral and convenient interview setting where every participant feels comfortable (Bryman, 2012). However, for this study, the interview location was online. With my supervisor's guidance, I had to take into consideration the challenges that come with online studies: digital divides, time constraints, the high costs of airtime/data and connectivity (Bryman, 2012). To address the digital divides barrier, we had to select the most user-friendly telecommunication application that would encompass all the participants' different Internet proficiency levels. I presented all the research participants with a list of possible applications we could use: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and Skype. The majority expressed concerns with regards to their proficiency with and the accessibility of these applications. After informing my supervisor about participant concerns, we presented the participants with another option, that of using social networking platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Participants settled for WhatsApp video calling as it was both easily accessible and convenient for them. WhatsApp is a free-of-charge (data charges may apply), advertisement-free, yet commercial, messaging service with more than two billion users in over 180 worldwide (WhatsApp, 2020). WhatsApp is one of the most widely used messaging apps because it offers simple, secure, reliable messaging and calling features available on most phones worldwide (WhatsApp, 2020).

With WhatsApp as our data collection and participant interaction tool, I had to find convenient times and dates that worked for all the participants. I conducted five focus group discussions on five different days and different times based on the participants' preferences. Since the groups consisted of women from different walks of life, their time and date preferences were influenced by work, house chores, studies and family commitments. Also, participants came from different parts of Lusaka, and each one had a different power outage

(load shedding) schedule. It is important to note that even the 5 participants who were in Grahamstown also had different power outage schedules to consider before selecting a convenient time and date. The first focus group was held on Monday 13th July 2020 at 3 pm, followed by Wednesday 15th July 2020 at 3 pm, Thursday16th July 2022 at 8 pm, Saturday 19th July 2020 at 3:30 pm, and the last group interview was on Sunday 20th July at 7 pm.

Once the dates and times were agreed upon, I had to address the high data costs challenge. It is worth mentioning that while WhatsApp is a free messaging app, data charges do apply (WhatsApp, 2020). I resolved this by providing one Gigabyte (1 GB) of data worth R50 (ZKW50) for each participant based in Lusaka. It is noteworthy that participants based in Grahamstown used the mobile data provided by Rhodes University. Tonkiss (2004: 204) notes that it is good practice for researchers to pay the travel, and where relevant childcare, costs of participants, and to offer refreshments. In this case, the data served as a means of cushioning participants' data costs as this study was not part of their data budgets and as a token of appreciation for participants' availability. The token was not meant to influence the study's findings, but rather to facilitate participants' availability as all focus groups were conducted online.

I followed the rule of thumb and continued conducting focus groups until scant new information emerged (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Morgan, 1996). For this study, I conducted 5 focus groups, with 19 participants in total. By the time I was conducting the fifth interview, I was already predicting what participants would say as they were repeating what was discussed in previous sessions.

5.3.3 My role as a researcher, moderator and facilitator

Since the study was online, one of my roles as moderator was to ensure that I managed disruptions, as it was easier for dominant characters to talk over and interrupt others (Lunt and Livingstone 1996; Tonkiss, 2004). I ensured that everyone had a chance to speak, in some instances I requested that all microphones be muted to ensure that participants were not interrupted halfway but instead given a chance to air their views in full. Besides the interruption, everyone talking at once created noise which interfered with the recording. I received my ethical clearance from Rhodes University and written consent from the participants to record the sessions. To record the focus group proceedings, I employed the use of a voice recorder. I still privately asked each participant if they were comfortable being recorded, and at the beginning of each session, I reminded them that I was recording (Tonkiss, 2004). Additionally, it was my role to ensure that I observed other problematic social dynamics

in the groups (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Tonkiss, 2004). Since the focus groups were held online, I paid much attention to facial expressions, hand gestures and tone of voice. Days before each focus group, I shared links of selected posts for discussion with the participants.

During each focus group, I would still describe the posts we were analysing to ensure that everyone knew what post was being discussed at what point. To stimulate debate and keep the group interactions' energy and momentum, I worked with a broad list of questions in my interview schedule/guide. These questions revolved around the study's research objectives, as highlighted in Chapter one (refer to Appendix 11). I used the interview guide to ensure that the focus groups covered topics necessary for this research, thereby maintaining consistency across all focus groups (Bryman, 2012). The interview guide questions were not set in stone, and the focus group discussions generated 'new' questions that required further investigations. The interview guide was written in English, and all focus group interviews were conducted in English, a language spoken by all participants, but participants were free to use either Bemba or Chinyaja to emphasise their points.

During the focus groups I ensured that I was stimulating discussion on a wide range of issues based on the respondents' lived experiences. I employed the use of the "funnel technique" (Matsumotho et al., 2015), starting with the more general questions before proceeding to more specific questions that had to deal with participants' understanding of the content on the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page in relation to their everyday lived experience. During one of my focus groups, one participant made me aware of how much I didn't want to influence their responses. She mentioned how I only asked them to share their experiences and took notes, but I never shared mine, not even one. I realised that I was approaching this as a detective and had to balance my role. I was not just there to elicit information but also share some of my experiences. Feminist researchers like Ann Oakley (1998) and Bridget Byrne (2004) have critiqued the traditional standardized interviews based on the detached and neutral researcher who maintains control of the interview. Instead, Oakley (1998) argues that to find out about people, the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee must be non-hierarchical, which means that the interviewer must be prepared to invest their identity in the relationship (Oakley, 1998; Byrne, 2004). When I shared some of my experiences with participants in the focus groups, I later realized that they were also more inclined to share theirs openly. Both Oakley (1998) and Byrne (2004) argue that personal involvement is more than just dangerous bias—it is the condition under which people come to know each other and admit others into their lives. Even as I shared experiences, I made sure I exercised reflexivity.

Reflexivity involves moving away from the idea of a "neutral detached observer implied in classical work. It involves acknowledging that the researcher approaches the research from a specific position, and this affects the approach taken and questions asked and analysis produced" (Byrne, 2004: 184).

As the facilitator, I had to ensure that participants were at ease with me as the researcher (Bryman, 2012). It is worth mentioning that despite all the participants being members of the feminist page, some participants didn't know each other, while others only knew each other from the page. To ensure everyone felt comfortable, we started every focus group with each participant briefly introducing themselves. Since this was an online study, some participants had never met me before and may have had initial reservations of sharing their personal experiences with a total stranger. I used the weeks before the focus groups to build rapport (Bryman, 2012) by explaining to them why I had decided to conduct this study and how they were selected as participants (Ali and Kelly, 2004; Deacon et al., 1999). I gladly shared my contact details weeks before the focus groups for participants to share any concerns they may have had.

I was also aware that some participants might have initially viewed me as a privileged woman writing about a social context that was not part of her lived experience as a Rhodes University student living in South Africa. To break this barrier, I decided to explain that I was born and bred in Lusaka, and the only reason I was unable to travel back home and physically meet everyone was because of COVID-19. While explaining and interacting with them I employed the use of WhatsApp voice messaging in which I would switch between perfect *Bemba* and *Chinyaja* which are the lingua franca in Lusaka. By the time we were getting to the focus group discussions, most participants were comfortable and felt free to talk to me. I only realised this when they stopped calling me Chishimba and started using nicknames like 'Chichi' or 'Chishi'. The established rapport enabled me to contact participants individually and schedule follow-up interviews to clarify and understand interesting issues that had arisen during the focus groups.

5.3.4 Individual in-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are a useful method for clarifying points that arise during focus group discussions, or if potentially sensitive or contentious issues are at sake (Bryman, 2012; Tonkiss, 2004). Interviews are ideal for accessing individuals' attitudes and values, especially regarding things that cannot be observed (Bryman, 2012). Schrøder et al. (2003) argue that individual in-

depth interviews are valuable for clarifying different perspectives that emerge from focus group discussions.

In-depth interviews are mainly used by researchers whose ontological self believes that people's knowledge, values and experiences are meaningful and worthy of exploration (Byrne, 2004). From an epistemological point of view, the qualitative interview takes an idealist approach of seeing interview data as presenting one of many representations of the world (Byrne, 2004). This approach tends to view the interview as a data generation process rather than data collection (Tonkiss, 2004). What an interview produces is a particular representation or an account of an individual's view or opinions. Bryman (2012) refers to this as the emic perspective. This means that the findings cannot be generalised to represent a whole, but are contextualised to that particular context.

I conducted six individual in-depth interviews. The first interview was with the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page administrator. I first made contact with her on 23rd September 2019, through the Facebook page. I introduced myself and my intentions to use her page as a field of study. I made sure to emphasise the point that I was a follower of the page, and this research was a partial fulfilment of my master's program. At first, she agreed and was enthusiastic about the study, but when I later contacted her on 26th November 2019 and asked for her written consent, she was hesitant to give access. I realised that she might have had reservations because she did not know who I was, what I wanted to use the data for or who I was working with. I decided to travel to Zambia on 28th November 2019 and meet her in person to put her concerns at ease. It is worth mentioning that after she expressed her concerns about using her page, I stopped contacting her to give her space and not seem as though I was pestering her. She was not aware of my trip to Zambia or my plans to meet her. When I got to Zambia, I learned that she does not live in Lusaka anymore and I took a twelve-hour bus ride to the area where she was working. Upon meeting her, she insisted that a persuasive phone call would have sufficed, but I emphasised that it was important for us to meet face-to-face not only to build rapport but address any concerns she might have. Once I had answered all her questions to her satisfaction, she gave both oral and written consent. On 4th December 2019, I conducted the individual interview with her around 5 pm, after she had finished work.

The other five individual interviews were conducted through the phone. Telephone interviewing is a useful data collection method for dispersed groups, and when the interviewer's safety is in consideration (Bryman, 2012). This method was ideal for this research because at the time of data collection COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, participants

were geographically displaced, and it was for everyone's safety that we did not gather (WHO, 2020).

In terms of sampling, I purposively selected candidates, who met specific criteria, for individual interviews. I was looking for participants from the focus group interviews who expressed interesting opinions in which I needed to gain more insight. Also, I was looking for participants who were both articulate and enthusiastic. Apart from getting clarity, I also used in-depth interviews to discuss how participants' gender views have shifted over time and the role that the page has played in this.

To get meaningful data out of the interviewees, I used an interview guide (see Appendix 12). The interview guide was a list of open-ended questions that covered specific topics that were to be discussed (Bryman, 2012; Byrne, 2004). However, I was not rigid in following the questions precisely as outlined in the guide, and some of the questions I asked were picked from what the interviewees had said.

Bryman (2012) highlights flexibility as being one significant advantage of in-depth interviewing. "In-depth interviews tend to be flexible, responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphases in the research as a result of significant issues that emerge in the course of the interview" (Bryman, 2012: 470). All interviews were conducted in English, but participants incorporated local languages *Bemba* and *Chinyanja* to express themselves freely.

5.4 Limitations of the study

For this study, it is critical to highlight the limitations encountered during the data collection process. Firstly, the study was conducted online. Unfortunately, this method takes away the richness of observing while interviewing face-to-face. For example, during the last focus group held in the evening, three participants experienced an unplanned power outage, making it practically impossible to observe their facial expressions. It is argued that face to face enables the researcher to notice nonverbal cues, gestures and body posture (Bryman, 2012). Where I could, I tried to mitigate this by paying attention to participants' change in voice, hand gestures and facial reactions; however, there may have been cues that were missed. Video-recording the sessions would have been the best possible option as it provides the opportunity to playback, but participants were not comfortable and only consented to an audio recording. Secondly, some participants experienced intermittent internet connection despite providing data, which led to wasting time reconnecting and losing connection. As a result, in some focus groups, not all themes were discussed in full.

5.5 Ethical Consideration

Since the research involved human subjects, I adhered to the stipulated ethical guidelines in dealing with human subjects as stipulated by the Rhodes University Ethics Standards Committee. In line with Ali and Kelly (2004) privacy, confidentiality and data protection, I ensured that all the respondents were above the age of 18 and could give both oral and written consent to participate in the study. I explained to the respondents' their rights during the study, emphasising that they could withdraw at any time during the research (Ali and Kelly, 2004; Deacon et al., 1999). I considered confidentiality and anonymity; from the outset, I explained that the information provided was only to be used for academic purposes. For this reason, I employed the use of pseudonyms that will not directly identify them to ensure participants' confidentiality. I also sought permission from the respondents regarding using voice recording devices (Ali and Kelly, 2004; Deacon et al., 1999).

As explained by Deacon et al. (1999) consent for research may need to be acquired formally by bodies with authority over the research situation; these bodies, in turn, perform the role of gatekeepers granting access to respondents. During this process, my gatekeeper was the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page administrator. To gain access, I used a written introductory letter from the Journalism and Media Studies department at Rhodes University, expressing my intentions to use their page as a field of study for my research. The letter sought permission to interview the page administrator and willing women fans who served as research respondents. Both Deacon et al. (1999: 374) and Ali and Kelly (2004: 120) describe this as "informed consent", whereby people being researched should both know about the research and be willing to take part in it, having been fully informed about the purpose and consequences insofar as these are predictable. It should be noted that when I sought consent from the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook administrator late last year (4th December 2019), I physically travelled to where she is based and explained the purpose of the research, why I had chosen her page as a field of study, and that she could stop participating in the study at any time for any reason.

I replicated the same procedure with the other participants. Although I could not physically travel to meet them, I emailed them the consent form and gave them time to read it thoroughly and formulate questions or concerns they might have. After a few days, I called them, and we went through the consent form step by step addressing all issues arising, and only after they were completely satisfied did they sign and email the form. Upon receipt I too signed the form and returned it to them to ensure we both had signed copies.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I mapped out the research design, methods and techniques applied in the study. This study's methodological approach was qualitative, as qualitative studies are often associated with reception analysis. I also highlighted the three data collection methods: thematic analysis, focus group interviews and individual in-depth interviews. The chapter also highlighted the sampling procedures employed in the study. The next chapter analyses the findings of the research.

CHAPTER SIX

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF GENDER FINDINGS

Winnie: "Something that I like about the *Zambian Feminist* page is her boldness in talking about uncomfortable topics. Things that are very much uncomfortable for people to talk about in the natural sense, in the Zambian sense. Zambians do not like talking about uncomfortable things all in the name of religion and culture".
Chanda: "I am very openly gay, and I know that when I am asked how big the gay community is, I will tell you it is probably half of our population. It is just that people are closeted, people don't want to come out because they are afraid of the Christian nation declaration".
Judy: "Our lives aren't ours, our bodies aren't ours, people would really want to push their agendas on how you dress, when you marry, when you have children, almost every aspect of your life is trying to be controlled and it is a very sad thing to think about it".

6. Introduction

The main objective of this study is to understand how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity. It seeks to unearth how prolific Lusaka women contributors of the page contest, negotiate and appropriate the meanings they make from the posts and their associated comments into their daily lives as self-proclaimed feminists. The study also seeks to understand the role the page has played in participants' understandings of local gender politics and their roles as "everyday feminists"; in the home or at work or in town, "doing" feminism in small ways. The objective of the study is to understand the ways in which this online participation translates into feminist action in the research participants' day-to-day lives. This chapter presents the findings from the focus group discussions, interpretations, analysis and discussions rooted in the study objectives and informed by the theoretical frameworks and literature reviews in Chapters three and four. This chapter combines the findings from the qualitative focus groups discussions and individual in-depth interviews.

The structure of this chapter is inspired by the outcomes of both the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions. Bryman (2012: 580) states that a repetition and recurrence within a data source is one of the most common criteria to establish that "a pattern within the data warrants being considered a theme." During data analysis, a pattern became apparent as all the participants kept making particular reference to eight of the posts selected for discussion. I also noticed that there was a pattern to how participants reacted to these selected posts. These eight posts touch on a variety of topics from women's dress, cultural and traditional practices,

womanhood, sexuality, body types, Christianity, LGBTIQ rights, men and masculinity. These posts and their associated themes are central to my analysis because taken together they offer a broad overview of the different gender struggles and frustrations that Zambian women face on a daily basis. I have accordingly arranged my discussion of the findings around these posts. Using the pseudonym *Zambian Feminists* to identify the page administrator, I will begin by giving a brief synopsis of each Facebook post before launching into the discussions they inspire.

6.1 Miniskirt lands girl in court

In this post, *Zambian Feminists* shared an excerpt from the *Zambia Daily Mail* newspaper titled "Miniskirt lands girl in court," dated 4th January 2019 (Musika, 2019). This news story is about a 28-year-old Mirriam Mwanza and her 16-year-old niece who were appearing before the Lusaka Magistrate court after being charged with behaviour likely to breach the peace (Musika, 2019). The two women were arrested after Mwanza allegedly rudely answered a policeman who questioned why her niece was wearing a mini skirt (Musika, 2019). In her Facebook post, *Zambian Feminists* calls on more women to be outraged by the arrest, and she challenges the silence of female politicians and the media on this issue (see Appendix 1). She also admonishes women who were making light of the situation. She says further that the arrest was not based on the miniskirt, but the fact that the duo talked back, a form of resistance to male authority that bruised the policeman's ego and fragile masculinity (Appendix 1).

6.1.1 Discussion: Policing women's dress

The story of the two arrested women is symbolic as it shows how women's bodies are sexualised and seen through a patriarchal male gaze. It demonstrates how policing women's bodies puts women in a position to be treated disrespectfully and whatever happens to them is excused, based on what they are wearing (Roberts, 2018). This story is an exemplar of Walby's (1990) third patriarchal structure, the State (I explain this in detail in Chapter three), as it highlights the power the policeman had over these women and the systematic bias of the Lusaka magistrates court towards patriarchal interests (Walby, 1990). The systematic institutional bias directly reflects Zambia's "gender order" (Connell, 2009). This systematic bias also extends to other social institutions, such as that for higher learning, a fact that the research participants were quick to point out. For example one of my participants, Judy, a 24-year-old University of Zambia (UNZA) graduate, shared an experience of how the University issued a memorandum

with regards to how female students should dress so as not to cause a disruption. "…at UNZA there was even a notice that you cannot go to the library if you are not dressed a certain way because you are going to disturb the male students…". The case of the two women is an example of the daily struggles Zambian women face when they try to assert agency over their bodies.

Women in Zambia are generally catcalled, harassed and even publicly stripped in order to shame them for wearing anything that men deem 'indecent' or 'immoral'. This particular post evoked intense emotions of anger among participants who openly expressed their displeasure with the behaviour of the policeman. One outraged respondent remarked: "I was so angry, honestly these people wasted court time all because a policeman was harassing, literally harassing this child because she was wearing a mini skirt". Similarly, 35-year-old Chanda could not hide her displeasure: "this is ridiculous, my first emotion is like 'what the fuck?'" Such occurrences are not just hearsay: 27-year-old Moono remembered how a policeman once harassed and threatened to charge her friend for wearing something short. "When I read that post it reminded me of something that had happened to me and my friend. We were walking past a police station near my place, when a police officer stopped my friend and told her she could be charged for indecent exposure or something like that...". In fact, 25-year-old activist Winnie was among the women who went to court in solidarity with the two women: "…In Zambia I feel the police and all these lawmakers are given so much power in this patriarchal belief system that we have grown up in. I didn't support that I agree with what the *Zambian Feminists* page had written. I was actually at the magistrate court when the hearing was going on and I was there in solidarity with other activists".

Mutinta and Rebecca shared their experiences with being harassed by taxi drivers and "call boys" (street hawkers) because of what they were wearing. This excerpt succinctly captured this scenario:

> **Mutinta:** I was in *Northmead* wearing a dress slightly above the knees when a taxi driver told me *nizakuvulakavale* (I will undress you, go and dress up). I was shamed by a taxi driver, a taxi driver was the one who can be threatening me. I just don't get it like it is very traumatising imagine taxi drivers shouting *Kavale! Kavale! Tizakuvula!* (Go dress up! Go dress up! We will undress you!) Am just like, 'am dressed what can you see?'
> **Rebecca:** There was this one time I went to town, I have had to learn that you can't go to town in anything that is not jeans. Naturally I have big breasts unfortunately they are a D cup, I wore a vest and leggings did I not get harassed by the call boys (hawkers), like it was so bad and am just like but why? Like no woman will ever go to a man like 'your shorts are too tight you are enticing me,'

> yes we do look and see like ok this man's legs look nice I can see his dick (penis) print, its enticing me but you will never see a woman who will go and jump on him, like we see these things it's not like we are blind we do see these things we do get attracted but those thoughts never cross our minds.

Rebecca and Mutinta's experiences of being harassed by taxi drivers and hawkers in Lusaka is something 8 out of 18 participants talked about as either having happened to them or been witnessed. This behaviour perpetuated by hawkers in Lusaka has been widely reported and has not gone unnoticed. Zambia police spokesperson Esther Katongo once urged call boys to stop stripping allegedly indecently dressed women as Zambia has no dress code (Lusaka Times, 2018). Katongo called this behaviour nonsense, and encouraged victims to report such instances to the police (Lusaka Times, 2018). She wondered why no-one undresses boys or men who opt to wear trousers below their thighs (Lusaka Times, 2018). This statement issued by police spokesperson Esther Katongo is ironic because she says Zambia has no dress code, while a policeman arrested and charged two women with conduct likely to breach peace over a mini skirt. One of the respondents, Nomsa, a 26-year-old lawyer, challenged this arrest from a legal perspective:

> "even from a legal standpoint, feminism aside, it didn't make sense to me. I kind of understand the incompetence of the police and how they are likely to charge people without knowing, but as a woman that annoyed me very much because men are allowed to dress any type of way. Men even urinate in public spaces and nobody charges them with anything, they are literally removing their privates out there and nobody charges them for that. It was very annoying, and my heart was with her and I stood with every woman who fought for her to be released and to be acquitted."

It can be argued that this is perhaps why *Zambian Feminists* said the arrest had nothing to do with the skirt but the ego and fragile masculinity of the policeman. In Chapter three, I use Connell to introduce the concept of hegemonic or dominant masculinity and compliant masculinity as its supportive version (Connell, 2005: 79). Fragile masculinity refers to the anxiety men feel when they fail to meet cultural standards of masculinity (DiMuccio and Knowles, 2019). In this sense, fragile masculinity is the counterpart of the culturally dominant or hegemonic masculinity. In the Zambian context, culture dictates that the man has the last say, and having these two women talk back to him was equivalent to disrespecting his manhood. In order to get the respect he demands, he opted to use the law.

An important point of contestation which participants highlighted is the need to know which parts of town to go to and what to wear in those places. One respondent argued that women need a sense of what is appropriate in terms of place in order to avoid such harassment:

"We can wear those things at the mall but we definitely can't go to Soweto market dressed like that, definitely." However, other participants like Beauty rejected this notion, and called for a need to challenge the status quo, which in this case includes not marking certain places like markets, bus stations and taxi ranks as no-go areas for allegedly indecently dressed women, and shopping malls as accepted places.

> "I agree it is important to keep safe and not go to certain spaces dressed in certain ways if I can put it in those words, but I also feel like as long as people don't do it, the status quo will remain. The place needs to be destabilised in some way, certain things have to be shaken it is going to be uncomfortable, but I feel like it has to be an uncomfortable move for the misogynistic people that are taking advantage of the system."

The underlying theme of this discussion is that Zambian men act without fear of the law when it comes to "disciplining" women - and at the same time they use the law as a weapon when they do not get their way.

6.2 Cultural practices: labia minora elongation

In this Facebook post, *Zambian Feminists* shares a picture of a group of women who seem to be eavesdropping, captioned "how your aunties and grandmother look at you when you tell them you don't have *malepe* (elongated labia)" (see Appendix 2). The post she writes to accompany this picture is in the form of a dialogue between an older female relative and a girl who hasn't yet elongated her labia minora "*malepe"*. She writes a list of potential questions such a girl would be asked by family matriarchs, for example, "Are you an animal?", "Why are you stubborn?", "Are you a white woman?" and "You won't get married", just to mention a few (refer to Appendix 2). In this post, *Zambian Feminists* speaks openly about a social taboo that is rarely discussed in public as it is shrouded in myths and mystery and encoded in deep cultural secrecy.

Labia minora elongation is a procedure that consists of stretching the inner of the external genitalia with the help of herbs, oils, creams and other instruments (Rasing, 2001; Mwenda, 2006). Labia elongation is a common traditional practice among women in Zambia, and it is the first instruction girls receive in a socialisation process that in many cases concludes with their attendance at initiation rituals into womanhood (Rasing, 2001; Mwenda, 2006). Rasing (2001: 14) records that for some women, only those "who have actively prolonged their labia qualify to be called real women". The motivation behind this practice is to enhance the sexual pleasure of their male partners, and the repercussion for not having them is that a woman

might lose her partner to a competitor who has them (Rasing, 2001; Mwenda, 2006; Katongo, 2013).

6.2.1 Discussion: is labia elongation even beneficial?

This post exemplifies how women's bodies exist primarily to please men. It illustrates how women living in patriarchal societies such as Zambia, see their natural bodies as not being good enough and having to be changed to accommodate the desires of men. What is interesting in the works of Rasing (2001), Mwenda (2006) and Katongo (2013), is that society blames women whose labia are not stretched for ending up with an unfaithful husband or boyfriend. My respondents rejected the idea that elongated labia are what can keep a man satisfied, as Rebecca explained. "They tell us "your husband is going to leave you if you don't have those things". For me what is problematic in that statement is that men will leave you regardless, you can have the longest *malepe* in this world, he will still cheat..."

The main discussion however rotated around the age at which girls start labia elongation and the forcefulness that matriarchs exert on girls. The age at which a girl starts elongating her labia varies, but generally it is before the onset of her first menses. This can be problematic, as most girls are pressured into the practice without fully knowing why they are doing it. Girls are only told the essence of this practice during initiation or pre-marital counselling (Rasing, 2001; Mwenda, 2006). To my respondents, this post reminded them of how young and naive they were when they first learnt about this practice. Harriet, a 26-year-old marketing executive, shares her experience:

> "The first time someone told me about that, I didn't even know what periods were, I was really young, like 6 or 7. That is when I started hearing this from older female relatives, and I feel it is very unfair. To begin with, we are not just letting the girl child be a girl, you are preparing the young girl for marriage. I actually feel very betrayed because I was young. So, I am the 6-7-year-old Harriet, being told to mutilate my own body for the pleasure of a man. What is a 6-7-year-old boy doing? They are just out there being small children, being boys".

In line with Harriet's comment many of my respondents were against this practice, and they drew attention to the fact that it is introduced to girls at a tender age when they have no say in it. In Chapter two (section 2.3), I mentioned how girls are still taught to aspire to marriage while still very young. Participants mentioned not having a problem with the practice provided a girl is informed about the significance of it and she is old enough to give consent.

> "You have no business teaching a child how to become a sexual being like I think, at the end of the day I believe in choice. If an adult woman wants to do

> that 100% that is her business not mine, like I have no say over that, but you have no business telling a child, like pretty much priming a child to be an object of a man's sexual pleasure and I just don't agree with that whole thing."

Whether or not the practice of labia elongation is beneficial to a woman's sexual pleasure is a topic that continues to attract intellectual debate. Studies such as Guillermo Martínez-Pérez's *Becoming and being a woman: Meanings and values of labia elongation for Zambians in Cape Town* (Martínez-Pérez et al., 2016), highlights how labia elongation is a form of culture preservation among Zambian women. Their findings also show that there is no general consensus among women as to whether elongated labia are beneficial or not. In my study however, my respondents equate this practice of culture preservation to female genital mutilation and abuse. Some participants even mentioned not encouraging their children to participate in this practice. Chanda best describes this point:

> "For me personally am very hurt that am a child that went through that labia elongation, like fuck I want my proper vagina back! I know how hurt I am about it, I gave my kids the option not to, I told them you don't have to unless you want to, but you don't have to. They don't serve any purpose apart from at the end of the day your vagina starts looking like deformed *chikanda (*Zambian delicacy also known as African polony)".

My findings may have been different from Martínez-Pérez et al., 2016 for three reasons: firstly, my research respondents identify as feminists and feminism is about women having agency over their bodies. Secondly, my participants are women who are challenging patriarchy and who consciously disrupt the status quo in their day-to-day lives. Lastly, in the study by Martínez-Pérez et al., the respondents were between 23 and 54, while my respondents are between 21 and 36. This generational gap, with all that it implies with respect to digital literacy and online participation, may have contributed to the very different readings of this cultural practice.

An interesting theme that emerged from the data is how all the 18 participants learned of labia elongation from their aunts, grandmothers, friends and school, but never from their own mothers. Mwenda (2006: 348) explains that within the Zambian nuclear family, a mother or elder sisters seldom share information with a young girl with regards to stretching her labia. The normal channel for such an explanation is through the grandmother or one of the aunties, because in Zambian culture, it is considered respectful for a mother not to talk directly to her daughter about such issues. This is similar to Martínez-Pérez et al. (2016) who found in their study that their participants noted that their mothers could not talk to them due to the sensitivity

of the topic. Martínez-Pérez et al. (2016) argue that the aunts, grandmothers and other elders held responsibility for the instruction of the girls. My participants generally wished that they had heard it directly from their mothers:

> "I think mothers should warn us that there is this, you don't have to do it, if my mum had told me that I didn't have too, I mean I wouldn't have. I would have been like guys no, but I mean we didn't have that conversation".

In addition to family matriarchs, some participants said they learned about this cultural practice while at school. In Chapter three (section 3.4), I mentioned that Walby's sixth patriarchal structure is cultural institutions (Walby, 1990). The school, especially single-sex schools, are among the institutions that Walby proposes benefit from the subordination of women (Walby, 1990). This is because the patriarchal gender order is characterized by the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity and shaped by society and institutions in which individuals find themselves (Connell, 2009: 73-74). Yvonne, a 29-year-old research participant, recalls how she learned about the practice from friends in school:

> "When I was in primary school I remember the older girls could convince the younger ones to tell us we should pull these things or else you won't have children. There we were naive, we started to pull and after the holiday we forgot about the pulling, thank goodness ".

Yvonne's comment brings to light the fact that young girls do not fully understand the reasons behind the practice of labia elongation. It also reveals how the young girls are already conditioned to understand childbearing as their responsibility. In this instance, the young girls associate labia elongation with childbirth and use that as a means to scare their friends into the practice. More importantly, it shows that even if it were older girls convincing younger ones, they were all still children in primary school.

In the Zambian context, dominant culture dictates that the practice of labia elongation is dependent on the husbands' tradition. Mwenda (2006) highlights that: "some women are sent back to their parent's home by their husband so they can stretch their labia before entering their matrimonial home" (Mwenda, 2006: 349). Some participants like Beauty spoke about how she was told to wait till marriage to know if her husband wants them. "My aunt said she would rather I wait, and I got married to figure out if my husband really wanted *malepe* because once you get them, they can't shrink back". Other participants like Yvonne sought the advice of medical personnel but was told it is still dependent on the husbands' tradition. "There has been no reason anyone has given me to justify labia elongation. I have asked my gynaecologist what the medical reason is, she said none. It is just tradition, like whatever your husbands' tradition

will be". Married participants who were not comfortable with this practice mentioned negotiating with their partners before marriage and with their marriage counsellors during their traditional marriage counselling. Natasha, a 26-year-old married woman, explains how she managed to navigate this terrain:

> "...I used to tell my husband about these things. They say you don't tell anybody, but I used to tell him. [I] am like, they made me undress! I have no idea why I think marriage is really not the thing. I don't understand why they do these things. So the women who taught me asked, " how is the situation down there?" They are not even that straight to talk about it. "Have you pulled?" I said no, they said, "you have to start". By then I couldn't even ask why, I said ok, by the time we come and check we have to find them as long as ¾ of my pinky make sure, they said. Why? Who wants them that long? On social media, I had seen people who had commented "my husband or my lover says they are too long" and it is not like they can shrink once they are elongated when they are long, they are long! I think if they were meant to be or supposed to be that important God would have, like how long could it have taken him to just make them slightly longer on our bodies everybody just born like that you know. So, I never did it. When they asked me to check, I just told them bluntly that I was not comfortable showing them my naked body, I said it in English, and they didn't understand, that is how they left me alone."

Natasha's comment shows how women have to place themselves outside the terrain of "culture" in order for them to gain agency of their body. Firstly, she defies the orders of her teachers by sharing what she is taught with her husband-to-be. Not only is she leaking "confidential", "sacred", "women only" information outside the training house, but she is also sharing it with a man. Secondly, she uses English to silence her teachers who do not understand what she is saying, and because of the language barrier her teachers leave her alone. Another interesting component of Natasha's comment is how she defends herself by invoking God to justify her actions: if God intended for her to have elongated labia he could have done so himself.

The practice of labia elongation is one shrouded in secrecy and myths, unlike male circumcision which is often deemed public knowledge. Girls are never told either the scientific or cultural reasons behind the practice, instead matriarchs and friends attach the significance of the practice to marriage stability, childbirth and a sign of being a true Zambian woman. As a Zambian woman with a vagina I may never know what sex with stretched labia feels like. But an important takeaway from the data set is that my respondents feel the policing of patriarchal cultural practices by older women should be done to adult women and not young girls. Women should have a choice in this matter, otherwise it is a violation of their body and dignity.

6.3 Traditional marriage practice: *Ichilanga Mulilo*

In this post, *Zambian Feminists* shares a picture taken during *ichilanga mulilo,* showing a woman surrounded by other women, kneeling before a fire with her hands behind her back and head inside a pot (see Appendix 3). *Ichilanga mulilo,* loosely translated as "showing the fire," is a marriage ceremony that takes place before the wedding (Rasing, 2001). The bride's family prepares traditional foods and drinks which are then taken to the groom's family. The ceremony is held to show the groom what type of food he is likely to eat in his new home. *Ichilanga Mulilo* is more than a feast. It's a symbolic gesture granting the groom freedom to have meals with the bride's family because traditionally, the groom cannot have meals with the bride's family at any time, during courtship.

To accompany this picture, *Zambian Feminist*s posts the caption: "*vikwati"* (marriages) with laughing emojis (see Appendix A3).

6.3.1 Discussion: suffering as a rite of passage into marriage

This post is a perfect example of how gender-unequal Zambian cultural practices are, in the sense that men are not subject to such labour-intensive rites. It shows to what length women must go in order to be validated as "cultured women," and how marriage teachings place greater emphasis on the woman than the man (Rasing, 2001). This post sparked mixed reactions among the participants, at least one member of each focus group mentioned wishing *Zambian Feminists* explained what the post was about rather than just saying *vikwati*, while others said that picture alone was enough to put the message across. The excerpts from Lusungu, Njavwa and Harriet best summarise how participants generally reacted to this post:

> **Njavwa**: "I was there laughing with the person who posted because I remember a lot of us shared that picture. The picture itself was loaded, I don't think she even needed to write anything more, essentially just saying *vikwati (*marriages) tells you that this is what you are signing up for when you go into these marriages with these men, and if you marry under these patriarchal standards this is what is happening. I was there laughing like this is a ridiculous thing I have ever seen."
>
> **Harriet**: "I feel on this post maybe the admin should have tried to go deeper rather than try to sort of make a joke or mockery about it. Anyway, when I saw it, I felt bad because that is borderline oppression".
>
> **Lusungu**: "How do you get a random picture, caption it as *vikwati,* post it on a Facebook page and expect women to have a clear understanding? There is a way in which vernacular sounds when used on social media, I may get this wrong, but there is a certain tone it takes. Like v*ikwati* and laughing emojis,

> what are you trying to say? Are you trying to *jade* (scare or demoralise) some young people? Are you trying to teach somebody, or are you making a mockery of something that may be a little bit beneficial or what? I am one of those that fell victim to getting *jaded* about the whole marriage idea because of this."

Chapter five, section (5.2.1) introduced Stuart Hall's encoding/ decoding model to understanding audience's reception to media text (Hall, 1980). Hall offers three ways in which audiences respond to media texts: first, a dominant (or hegemonic) reading, in which the preferred meaning of the text, if accepted, ratifies particular ways of seeing the world (Hall, 1980). Second, an oppositional reading, where the audience understands, but altogether rejects the text's preferred meaning (Hall, 1980). Finally, the negotiated reading, in which the text's dominant "code" is broadly accepted, but the reader makes an exception based on personal experience, position and interests.

In this instance, Njavwa offers a hegemonic reading: the hegemonic reading agrees entirely with the post's intention to foreground and satirize the burdensome customary marriage rituals (a strongly "feminist" reading, in which it can almost be said that the institution of marriage as a whole is repudiated along with the rituals that validate/ mark it: "these men"). The second, Harriet's reaction agrees that the rituals are burdensome but gets a bit upset that custom is mocked; the third, Lusungu's reaction rejects the reading altogether - for her the post's intention is to scare women by portraying customary marriage rituals as burdensome.

This post is also an exemplar of how Zambian women negotiate the tensions of, and move between, their modern and traditional practices. It also teases out debate around the importance of culture in a changing society. As indicated in Chapter two (see section 2.3), present-day Zambia provides fertile ground for the competing discourses of Western modernity and traditional Zambian practices (Gifford, 1998; Taylor, 2006). This post draws attention to both discourses; on the one hand, participants want to preserve these cultural practices; on the other hand, they want to modernise these practices. Most importantly, it touches on a kind of femininity that a woman who is about to get married must possess. The following exemplifies these tensions:

> **Nomsa: "**When it comes to cultural practices personally, I don't think culture is bad or was bad. I think culture serves a purpose, but certain cultural practices are outdated, and I think that certain cultural practices have outlived their purpose. They had a purpose then, they don't have a purpose now. So certain things at kitchen parties are very unnecessary because people are using stoves

now, nobody needs to light a fire with the mouth, we have firelighters for crying out loud[1]."

Lusungu: My sister recently got married. I asked her what exactly were you taught in that house? She told me I am an educated woman; they are certain things that they teach you that are entirely irrelevant, for example, having a chamber pot in the bedroom, for what?
Interviewer: Lusungu, please explain about the chamber pot?
Lusungu: Those plastic toilets babies use while being potty trained, you are supposed to have one for your husband to ease himself in the middle of the night, but nowadays most houses have self-contained master bedrooms.

In these two extracts, we see participants negotiating traditional practices in the light of modern-day ideas and amenities. In Nomsa's comment, she finds it unnecessary to start a fire using the mouth when there are firelighters. Lusungu talks of the irrelevance of a plastic toilet in the bedroom when modern houses have self-contained bathrooms. Both Nomsa and Lusungu do not think traditional practices are bad, but they want to modernise traditional practices to move with the times.

Customary marriage teachings continue to attract debate and their relevance is contested amongst modern-day Zambian women. As seen in Lusungu's and Nomsa's comments, some teachings are no longer seen as applicable to modern settings. My respondents do not necessarily reject the importance of these lessons, but rather how these teachings are conducted. Participants who have undergone these marriage teachings negotiated their importance among each other. While some women mentioned having gone through these teachings and having lenient *banachimbusa* (teachers), others described the process as a "nightmare." The exchange between Nosiku and Natasha during their focus group eloquently captures the experience of two women who went through marriage teachings.

Nosiku: At my *chezela* (marriage teaching) oh my God! Oh, my God! It was hell. Literally, they wanted me to suffer, and my aunt, who was representing my mother; she can't cry while they are doing all this shit to me she needs to be strong. Anyway, they have some good lessons, for instance, there is one where they put something heavy on your head, and you go around asking people to take it off your head without the help of your relatives, when your parents or your mother have thrown enough money then you put it down. The lesson is that no matter what burden or problem you have, you can always go back to your family and they will lighten the load. It was cute, but eish! Hey! You really have to go through so much, hey! I think it is unnecessary. I really think it is unnecessary. No! no!

[1] During a kitchen party the bride is taught traditional ways of keeping her home including how to start a fire with the mouth.

> **Natasha**: A verbal explanation would have sufficed, like "listen, my daughter, you can come to us for anything", for me no. The good thing is I didn't have to do that stuff during my *chilanga mulilo*. I had lenient women, so to say. They were Christian, they said "we are Christian, some beliefs we don't follow, they are not necessary to this generation", they are 'woke' women, they are old, but they were 'woke'. I had a good session with them, so when I saw that post, and I still see that, I ask myself, why does it entail a black woman to suffer, you don't see other women do anything to prove they are marriage material or qualify to have passed those traditional practices or teachings?

The above exchange suggests that a woman's experience of the teachings depends on the quality of the teachers. Nosiku and Natasha had two different experiences. On the one hand, Nosiku equates her experience to "hell" because of the *banachimbusa* or *alangizi* (marriage teachers) she had, while Nosiku tries to comprehend her dreadful experience and justify its relevance in line with the meanings behind the teachings; she fails and concludes that they were unnecessary. In contrast, Natasha talks of having Christian *banachimbusa* who did not force her to undergo all the horrendous exercises Nosiku underwent because it was against their Christian beliefs. Interestingly, here we see an example of Christianity moderating custom. Although both remain patriarchal, Christianity makes both custom and patriarchy more bearable.

It is in these instances that the *banachimbusa* and *alangizi* become relevant. Traditionally they are tasked with the role of essentially preserving culture and moulding the gender relations among Zambian women. They are charged with the responsibility of teaching women during pre-marriage preparations on a wide range of topics from taking care of the homes, relations with in-laws, reproduction and erotic instructions (Rasing, 2001). However, the bulk of the *banachimbusa* and *alangizi's* teachings focus on how women should be equipped to endure the hardships that come in marriage. During these teachings, the *banachimbusa* and *alangizi* also use this time as a chance to subdue what they deem as arrogance in young women and instil a sense of humility and respect. Using different teaching techniques and illustrations, they aim to produce a well-rounded, cultured woman. However, my respondent Chanda views this idea of a cultured woman as glorifying suffering:

> "I don't know if it makes you a cultured woman, but for me really it is just bullshit. I have daughters, and none of my daughters does that labia elongation even for *chilanga mulilo* am seated here and thinking I can teach them what they need to know about life and marriage. If I need other people to teach them, I will call a bunch of feminist friends that are married, and maybe they can teach them".

Noticeable is that Chanda is an unconventional mother, one who rejects cultural practices like labia elongation and will reinvent *ichilanga mulilo* to suite her belief system and the time. In her comment, she highlights how she will teach her children herself and if need be call on married feminist friends, who believe what she believes and will not make her daughters suffer. Her comment suggests that while there may be room to reject custom, this space is limited, and must take place at an individualised level in solidarity with like-minded women.

The downside of *ichilanga mulilo*, labia elongation and all the other traditional practices for my respondents is that they can't talk back or openly challenge them out of respect for the *banachimbusa* (teachers), culture and their families. As Mutinta eloquently put it:

> "The thing about our culture the minute you have a difference of opinion you are disrespectful you are bad. It is almost like it is a cult you don't question anything you just follow like headless chickens all of you. For me, the only reason why I ended up not doing most of those things during my initiation ceremony is that I asked why and half of the time the minute you ask why those things started to fall apart".

Custom unravels in the face of questions: its resilience relies on obedience and compliance. Mutinta's experience evokes a strong point about questioning the importance of certain traditional practices, especially in Zambian culture which dictates that young women and girls are only supposed to speak when spoken to (Rasing, 2001). As the researcher, I wanted to understand if participants who had undergone these teachings would do them again. When I asked Nosiku if she would undergo her teachings again, she said, "I would say no. Fuck you, am not doing this".

Meanwhile, other participants expressed concern about how to make the *banachimbusa* understand that times have changed. Mwanji wonders how women could go about contesting cultural practices with their feminist beliefs:

> "You are knowledgeable, you know this is what feminism is, and this is what I don't want to do. However, the person who will be hired to train you, your *banachimbusa* does not even agree with half of these things, maybe because all she has heard is "these days they refuse to do these things they say we are feminist! We are feminist"!... You are sensitising us at this age but when we go enter that house or training centre, the person training you doesn't know, or she knows but she thinks you were born yesterday what do you know this thing has been working for many years. We have to strike a balance. If the *banachimbusa* is not sensitised we will keep doing the same thing".

Mwanji's comment brings to light some of the critiques levelled against online feminism and digital activism. Particularly notable here is the generational gap between young activists and the older generation of women who are not tech-savvy (Schuster, 2013; Munro,

2013). In this instance, the *Zambian Feminists* puts cultural practices under the spotlight and provides a platform for women to discuss them, but the traditional teachers - the *banachimbusa's* and *alangizi's* - may not be on Facebook. Since they are not part of such conversations, they label women who reject their teachings as disrespectful and uncultured.

6.4 Women's sexuality

"Climax; coming into your now" is a post about women owning their sexuality (see Appendix 4). *Zambian Feminists* uses an art illustration of a naked black Goddess spreading her cape and writes about how women should take ownership of their sexuality and their vagina, and muster the courage to demand what they want (see Appendix 4). This post brings to light the contestations around women's sexuality. It shows the unequal power in sexual relationships and the need for more women to own their sexuality proudly. It also highlights Walby's fifth patriarchal structure; patriarchal relations in sexuality (Walby, 1990). In Chapter three, I explain that in patriarchal societies sexuality is often organised on a gender binary with an absence of women's eroticism and imagination (Irigaray, 1985; Connell, 2009; Walby, 1990). Essentially, cultural gender constructions have made sexual pleasure a preserve for men, and women the vehicles to drive this pleasure but not necessarily to enjoy it. The main focus of this debate, however, revolved around women's ability to openly talk about sex both on Facebook and in their day-to-day lives.

6.4.1 Discussion: Normalising conversations around sex and orgasms

In all the five focus groups, each time I used this post to prompt discussion, participants would either burst into giggles or keep silent, waiting for someone else to start the conversation. As a researcher, I was interested in these reactions and wanted to understand what motivated this response. An excerpt from my second focus group explains this best:

> **Nomsa**: I think those things are little personal for people and I will speak for myself and a few friends I have spoken to about this. Two things are hard for us to generally talk about or for me to talk about, sex and finances. It is just difficult. It is just hard for me, not that I don't know, not that am not aware, but it is just hard for me to talk about it. Maybe also it has cultural attachments which I am also still unlearning, remember feminism is also a journey, it is a journey of learning, unlearning the toxic things.
> **Winnie**: That is very true, very, very true I also wouldn't, like it is unfortunate that this is what we go through this is the censorship that we experience. I will see such posts and be like oh no, I will just react, but I can't share that because people will judge me. I think the African setup or Zambian culture sort of

> removes that human aspect of us and just lets sex be a bedroom matter. You don't share what happens, and as a result that is why certain people are abused, others don't even climax, there all these scenarios it is because people are so ashamed, it is such a stigmatised topic.
> **Mwaka**: I agree with the both of you it is very hard especially in our Zambian setting it is tough to come out especially on a public platform and start talking about sex, not knowing who is looking at it who is judging you, it is very hard to do so. *Zambian Feminists* is very brave, and all those people who comment also are quite brave also putting their faces out there because it is the struggle for most of us.

This conversation is significant because the women touch on a wide range of factors that inform their uneasiness around talking about sex. Among the things they bring to light are social norms, culture, self-restraint, censorship, shame and the stereotypes attached to sex. Independent as these factors seem, they all intersect and fall into a broader gender order in which sexual relations in patriarchal societies are still a preserve for men (Connell, 2009; Walby, 1990). This dialogue also highlights how *Zambian Feminists* challenges the status quo by posting a topic that society deems as private on a public platform like Facebook. It also demonstrates how women are aware of the importance of such conversations around sex but do not feel able to participate in discussions on a public forum like Facebook. My analysis shows that 13 out of 18 participants highlighted the need to keep their sexual lives private and only discussed among friends in private chats on WhatsApp, Facebook messenger or other private social media accounts where they have control over who sees their content. This excerpt from the first focus group best captures participants' concerns about keeping sex private:

> **Mwanji**: I feel there certain things that need to be private, why post about sex? Even if I had sex, why should I be out there publishing my orgasms or how I feel about it. There are forums like WhatsApp groups, where you can chat about it with your friends.
> **Lusungu**: Yes! You even get to wonder where they get some of the content they even share and post on Facebook. For instance orgasms, I am not saying they shouldn't talk about them but maybe a different channel of communication like encouraging the women to talk to their partners not necessarily to air out their laundry in public. Because Facebook is public, talking about such is an invasion of privacy. Up to date parents are on Facebook, and your comments are reflecting on the page, we have forgotten this is Africa, we have our traditions and cultures, in as much as we encourage people to talk about sex and all it is quite awkward to talk about it knowing that your mother and father will see that. She should encourage people to talk about it with their partners and leave it at that.
> **Chilombo**: I wouldn't comment because I am a very private person and wouldn't post about sex. But then again, I feel people must be able to. I know in Zambia sex is such a taboo like you can't talk about it freely in the home.

> Even children shouldn't be learning about sex and orgasms from the Internet it should start from the home they shouldn't leave it up to the schools and all.

This contention between what can be discussed in public and what cannot is one of the feminist critiques of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere (Benhabib, 1993; Fraser, 1990). In Chapter 4, I introduced and discussed the public sphere, and its critiques (refer to section 4.1.1). One significant critique is the exclusion of women's voices and the relegating of issues relating to women, such as reproduction, to the private sphere (Benhabib, 1993; Fraser, 1990). Fraser proposes that no topic should be ruled off-limits as worthy or not worthy of public deliberation (Fraser, 1990). Since it is difficult to differentiate what counts as a public matter and what is private, she proposes discursive contestation as one way of deciding (Fraser, 1990). In contemporary societies, the Internet serves as the modern-day public sphere in which issues are deliberated (Papacharissi, 2002; Fuchs, 2014; Cela, 2015). In this instance, *Zambian Feminist*s is using Facebook a public platform to discuss an issue that society deems as private. This post illustrates how women do not deem issues about their sexuality as worthy of public deliberation. It also highlights how conversations around sex are still taboo in Zambian society. This is apparent in the remarks made by Mwanji and Lusungu, who repeatedly highlight how such conversations go against cultural norms and family values. This is because in patriarchal societies men continue to dominate discussions, and they decide what is worth public deliberation and what is not. A fear of such patriarchal authority is recognisable in the comments about "parents" on Facebook, and the criticism of the admin for posting discussions about sex in such a public arena.

For other participants, however, this post ignited a desire to start having open conversations around sex and a chance to introspect on why women's sexuality is shunned. This is what participants had to say:

> **Rebecca:** Why do we shun women's sexuality more? It is so common for a man to talk about cumming (ejaculating) 10 times on Facebook, and we are going to be applauding him. But the moment a woman says I just had the best orgasm of my life, then you are going to see a backlash on some "why are you talking about sex like that?" Why is there a double standard, he can talk about it, and I cannot talk about it? This double standard is what has led to the perception that I am going to have sex just to please a man, and he owes me nothing in return. Sex is a two-way street no ways am I going to break my back for you not to give me any form of satisfaction.

> **Njavwa:** Oh! I am also a champion of women getting their orgasms, so I am sharing, I am reposting, I am liking, I am retweeting like everything. I want us to normalise all these conversations. I want a woman to be able to wake up and talk about sex and not have weird comments, don't have to delete or like it in

> the self-mode where she is like I agree but am going to scroll past because my aunty is here or my sisters-in-law are here.
>
> **Nosiku:** I think we should be having conversations like this. It is our bodies, and it is our sexual what what we should have these conversations we must say what makes us feel good. We must be able to tell men what makes us feel good. Some women have never orgasmed, and I just can't fathom that idea. There are women out there having sex and not orgasming! Can you believe that and they don't know how to you know, we should have such conversations our friends are out there having sex and not getting an orgasm it is sad we must talk about this.

In these instances, what participants highlight is how patriarchy as a system gives men power and excludes women. Translating this to sex shows how women are excluded from such conversations (Connell, 2009; Walby, 1990). It also shows how the culturally social construction of gender is to blame for sexual passivity in women (Connell, 2009; Walby, 1990). The idea that men are assertive or dominant, and women are passive leads to masculine dominance in sexual relations. The findings show that women still do not have the language or the confidence to use the language and become active participants in sex. Participants also highlighted the need for safe spaces, albeit WhatsApp or private chats, where they can freely have such conversations, but having closed-door conversations perpetuates the cycle. Until women reject their passive acceptance and start having a dialogue with their partners and normalising conversations around sex, patriarchy will continue to dominate sexual relationships.

6.5 Zambia as a Christian nation and LGBTIQ+ rights

In this post, *Zambian Feminists* discusses the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and the debate surrounding LGBTIQ+ rights (Appendix 5). Using a picture from the 2018 national day of prayer commemoration, *Zambian Feminist*s launches an attack on the Christian nation declaration, noting how issues of corruption, abuse, defilement and theft are swept under the carpet while people are up in arms on LGBTIQ issues (Appendix 5). She argues that in Zambia breaking all the ten commandments is fine provided one is not gay, and that Zambians are proud of their morals but don't be gay because God hates those (Appendix 5).

This post illustrates how intertwined yet antithetical these two topics are in Zambia: upholding one is seen as threatening the existence of the other. In Chapter 2 (see section 2.3.1), I described how Zambia was declared a Christian nation, and how this declaration has been enshrined in the constitution (Gifford, 1998; Phiri, 2003; Sida, 2014). The discussion highlights

how this declaration had been used against members of the LGBTIQ community and their supporters, both locally and internationally (BBC, 2013; van Klinken, 2017; Foote, 2019), a dichotomy that underpins the legislation that criminalises homosexuality, a punishable offence with a penalty of up to 14 years in prison (Chabala, 2018b).

6.5.1 Discussion: Negotiating a Christian and Feminist identity

The post on Zambia as a Christian nation is an exemplar of a society in which the patriarchal state attempts to regulate sexuality by promoting anti-gay ideologies and enforcing laws that criminalise homosexuality (Walby, 1990; Connell, 1987; 2009). My respondents, in line with criticisms levelled against this declaration, accuse the government of focusing all its energy on criminalising homosexuality and turning a blind eye on other offences like corruption (Foote, 2019; van Klinken, 2015; 2017). However, the main discussion that follows this post was characterised by participants trying to align their feminist beliefs and Christian values. Gender non-conforming participants in particular struggled to negotiate their sexual identity.

As stated in Chapter two, about 80-90% of the population is Christian (CSO, 2015). Interestingly, both Christianity and feminism are products of Western influences, but unlike Christianity which is widely accepted, feminism remains a contentious topic in Zambia. To my participants, however, identifying as feminists means having to balance their feminist beliefs against their Christian values. For Nomsa, this clash in beliefs is worth a TED Talk. "Today I just posted something on my status; I said been an unconventional African, who is a feminist, who loves boys and who is pro-choice is hard. Who is hosting TEDx Lusaka? I have a lot to explain to people. People don't understand that you can be Christian and you can be a feminist, so you spark a lot of argument." Like Nomsa, many participants grapple with negotiating a feminist and Christian identity, as the followings excerpts show:

> **Winnie:** For me, I believe before anyone is anything they are human, and God loves them. Whether they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, they are human first. How I will treat them will be based on the fact that they are human. For me being a Christian and having my beliefs about the LGBTIQ community that is my decision and how I believe that they are human first, that is my decision whether I believe what they are doing is right or wrong that is my decision. If people are choosing to take a Christian route, then let them not undermine other things, and that is what she was trying to say, and I agree with her. I may have my belief system about the LGBTIQ community that is mine, and she also has hers, and they also have theirs. I agree it is double standards and with what she was saying about how hypocritical Zambia is true.

> **Nomsa:** I am pro-choice because even as a Christian, I feel God is a respecter of choice, it is in his word that he has put before us life, and we must choose life. He doesn't say oh chose this, but he doesn't force us to choose whatever it is. So, I am pro-choice, and I feel people should have the right to choose whatever it is that they want concerning their body and concerning how they want to live their lives. So, I feel that even people in power should let people be people the best way they know how.
>
> **Beauty:** Disclaimer, first of all, I identify as Christian and am also very involved in the Christian community that said, I do think that religion any religion, Christianity or Islam. It is easy to make them ways in which people are oppressed. People easily misconstrue it for their benefit because they are uncomfortable with something they then decide that the whole bible is anti-gay, for example. When it comes to LGBTIQ, I won't lie growing up in Zambia, I didn't understand that much about it, but after getting exposed, they are things you begin to understand. At some point, my neighbour was gay imagine my confusion when that happened when they said I am 'they' they don't align with pronouns 'he' 'she' but 'they'. At some point, it just comes to a matter of respecting the other person's orientation choice".

For these respondents, both feminism and religion are crucial aspects of their personal identity and subjectivity; my interest was in how both apparently conflicting aspects are negotiated and held in tension with each other (Hall, 1997; Weedon, 1987). The examples above succinctly capture how participants grapple with two important belief systems, Christianity and Feminism. They try to cope with the contradictions by separating Christianity and "what God would do" from society and "what people ought to do". It also shows how participants struggle to uphold aspects of feminism like sexuality - especially living in a Christian nation, where anything that goes against the gender binary is socially unacceptable and punishable by law.

Other participants, however, were not as accommodating. Some demanded to have the declaration removed, as they felt this declaration is hypocritical and meant to silence people. Participants drew on the discourse of constitutionalism and the law to justify why they thought the declaration should be removed:

> **Nomsa:** On Zambia been a Christian nation in one of the law classes, I remember us talking about how Zambia is not a Christian nation. Because we felt that the governing law of Zambia it is the constitution, not the bible, so if Zambia should be a Christian nation, then the governing law of the country should be the bible. Since the bible is not the governing law of Zambia, I think people at the top have used Christianity to abuse people at the political bottom for lack of a better word. I feel Zambia is not a Christian nation even though I am a Christian I am for the fact that it should be removed from the whole constitution because it has caused more harm than good if you ask me.

> **Winnie:** I just wanted to say that this Christian nation ideology reminds me of philosophy classes about separating the church and state. That is something that Zambia needs to really really do, not separating has caused so many problems.
>
> **Harriet:** In Zambia, I have seen that we are so compassionate, and we protect rapists. There is a difference in the way we treat rapists and gay people. Those people are living their lives; it's not like they are gay to us; they are gay to themselves. Look at defilement the conviction rate is just somewhere roughly around 10%, but every quarter you are getting figures like over 700. There is no way many such cases and you are telling me that in these families have never heard rumours of uncles and neighbours been inappropriate. These people are still accepted, and they are still affecting us, now look at how we treat gay people that are not even affecting us in any way they are just living their lives. We are really really hypocrites, I feel we need to do better if possible, remove it entirely because the way we apply it is just selective.

Nomsa draws on a discourse of constitutionalism and the law in order to argue for a separation of the state and religion. In her opinion, Christianity has become a weapon used by those in power to "abuse people" on the margins of the state, "people at the political bottom" as she puts it. Winnie agrees with her, drawing on what she has learned at University to argue that the lack of separation between church and state has caused "problems". Harriet is less euphemistic; she angrily comments on the contradiction between the "difference in the way we treat rapists and gay people". This contrast is visible in the low conviction rate of rapists - "uncles and neighbours" who are known to "affect us" - and the attacks on gay people who "are not even affecting us in any way they are just living their lives". Sarcastically, she remarks that Zambia is "so compassionate... we protect rapists" the truth, for her, is that "We are really really hypocrites," and that "we need to do better if possible".

In line with the above sentiments, participants widely acknowledged these points; other comments reflected a sense of unfairness, injustice and othering of sexual minorities. However, some participants defended the declaration as they feel there is nothing wrong with identifying as a Christian nation and living up to Christian standards. It is in this context that focus groups allow participants to negotiate, contest and defend their views in a group setting (Tonkiss, 2004). The following exchange between two participants highlights this:

> **Zion:** For me**,** I don't know why people tend to have an issue with Zambia being a Christian nation because there are other countries which are Islamic states and I don't see people complaining much about that. For me, I don't get it when people start to talk about a Christian nation and bring issues of saying why are we a Christian nation when there is adultery. I think even when people read the bible all that stuff still used to happen, God chose David, David was an

adulterer, but God still went and picked him. So, on the aspect of the Christian nation, I don't get the linkage between saying that. I don't get why people make it seem as if Zambia been a Christian nation, means people will not error and stuff like that. On the issue of the LGBTIQ community, the issue is just more of our perception of things, if it is a girl and a girl it is ok if it is a guy and guy it is not ok. I think why people think that two guys are a problem probably comes back to the whole Christianity issue of saying that it is ungodly. Maybe because people are going to have anal sex and when you look at it in terms of being gay it's a guy and a guy that's anal sex or something.

Lombe: For me, my problem and hopefully this is also answering your question, but my problem with it is the selective application of morality. I think that in of itself the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation is not necessarily a problem. I think the problem is when you use that to oppress certain people, and you have this sense of morality that only applies when you decide it applies. So, it can be applied to LGBTIQ people, but we don't apply it to politicians stealing money that is meant for medical supplies to poor communities. We apply it when it comes to a woman walking in the street in some tight shorts, but we don't apply it when a prominent person is accused of rape. That is where the issue is, that selective morality, it can't be wrong only when you decide it is wrong. I think that is where many people have an issue with it. Personally, I can't take it seriously; the same culture that permits men to commit adultery because they are men is also saying that we are Christians. This is how we do it, no! I think it is just another excuse to push beliefs the way that you want them to control certain people in society, especially those that are marginalised.

Zion draws on the discourse of religious nationalism in order to argue why Zambia should maintain the Christian nation declaration. In her opinion Zambia being declared a Christian nation does not mean that "people will not error" and there will be no "adultery". Lombe's rebuttal is based on morality, for her the declaration in itself is not a problem, but what she problematizes is its "selective application". In her opinion Zambia's morality only applies when "you decide" meaning those in power decide what is deemed as moral and immoral. She compares how this morality is applied to LGBTIQ people and not politicians misappropriating funds targeted for uplifting people's livelihoods. Sarcastically she remarks how she can't take the declaration "seriously", for her the declaration is just another excuse to "control certain people in society, especially those that are marginalised".

In line with Zion's views above about homosexuality been ungodly, van Klinken (2015) argues that in Zambia and elsewhere, homosexuality is politicised in religious discourse. However what is rather unique in the Zambian case is the specific way in which religion comes in: in the form of a Christian nationalism which has direct consequences for the politics of sexuality and LGBTIQ rights (van Klinken, 2015). This can be seen in the exchange between Zion and Lombe, where Zion justifies adultery by saying even David in the bible was an adulterer, but God still chose him. She however quickly glosses over the LGBTIQ issue by

speculating that people might be against gays because they have anal sex which is biblically considered ungodly. Her response is a representation of how in Zambia homosexuality is politicised in religious discourse. Lombe's rebuttal on the other hand rejects normalising adultery as part of "culture", especially blaming it on the fact that "they are men". In her opinion a "culture" that claims to uphold morals cannot allow "men to commit adultery because they are men". The following section discusses how members of the LGBTIQ community negotiate their identity in Zambia's highly heteronormative society.

6.5.2 Discussion: Gender non-conformity in Zambia's heteronormative society

The post "on Zambia being a Christian nation" (see Appendix 5) was a window into how participants who identify as members of the LGBTIQ community feel about this declaration. In Chapter two, I highlighted that there is a Zambian LGBTIQ community, whose members are far from able to express their sexuality openly (van Klinken, 2013; 2015; Sida, 2014). An excerpt from focus group interviews with gender non-conforming women fans provides insight into how these participants navigate this terrain.

> **Chanda:** I am very openly gay, and I know that when I am asked how big the gay community is I will tell you it is probably half of our population. It is just that people are closeted because they are afraid of the Christian nation declaration. For me a woman I can go out there and say am openly gay no one will hurt me, no one will ostracise me, but if a gay man comes and says they are gay of course this is when we start pulling out Romans 1: 27. We are so fixated on the act of homosexuality than we are on the greatest commandment that Jesus left you Christians with, which was to love your neighbour that is all he said love your neighbour as you love yourself. He didn't say love the straight neighbour or love the Christian neighbour he just said love your neighbour. This Christian nation business is just a scam; it is just a way of furthering injustice, especially to the LGBTIQ community. It's simply telling people it is ok you can hate them, you can harm them because the bible says so because God doesn't like them. I have asked people many times over to show me where Jesus said he hates gay people, Jesus himself just Christ show me, no one has ever come forth and shown me. So, it is just a weapon used to harm the gay community.
>
> **Nosiku**: I will speak from a personal perspective; my mother was one of the first advocates for gays in Zambia. She was the representative for LEGATRA it was one of the first gay organisations in Zambia. She used to talk to us a lot about it, what her work involves and as a family we are very open about that. Zambians resist learning about anything that has to do with anyone different; they don't want to learn. So this whole Christian thing is just used to bully people, and when convenient, meanwhile there are so many unchristian things.

What emerges from the above extract is that participants who identify as members of the LGBTIQ community, view the declaration as a weapon meant to silence them and a tool to

rally people to hate them. Chanda's comment highlights the disparities in the treatment of gender non-conforming women and men. For Chanda, this difference in attitude is because, in patriarchal societies like Zambia, women despite their sexual orientation are still at the mercy of men, while non-conforming men are deviating from the norm of hegemonic masculinity. Nosiku agrees with her and draws on her personal experience growing up with a mother who served as an advocate for LEGATRA, the first Zambian gay non-governmental organisation, that was formed in 1998 but was denied official registration. In Nosiku's opinion her mother's job impacted her upbringing and her family's view of LGBTIQ issues. She notes the resistance to the recognition of LGBTIQ people, "Zambians to resisting learning about anything that has to do with anyone different".

As a researcher, my interest was in understanding how the participants respond to the ideas that homosexuality and other non-conforming gender sexualities are ungodly, un-Zambian, and punishable by law. I also wanted to understand how each of them negotiates their identity in a highly heteronormative space. The following extract from an individual interview with Nosiku shows how she navigates this space:

> **Interviewer:** During the focus group I noticed that when Chanda opened up about being lesbian, you said "pansexual holla" do you identify as pansexual?
> **Nosiku:** Yes, I am, am pansexual; I have had experiences with both men and women I had to search for what I feel and what that means so pansexual was the one that was like yes, that is me. I wasn't just hyping them up in the focus group, but of course, I am scared to go out there and be like "hey am pansexual"! I don't think I am confident enough to say that. Zambians, as you know, are not, I hate to say it but they are not that "woke", so they will be dismissive. So, it is something for me, something I know on my own, and that is fine by me. I don't feel like I have to go out and force it down people's throats.
> **Interviewer:** During the focus group, you mentioned that your mum was an activist for LEGATRA. Do you think this has influenced how you perceive LGBTIQ issues?
> **Nosiku:** Absolutely! Absolutely! The first gay person I ever saw was in 1998 *ba* Chomba. I had never seen a man who acted like a woman in my life, and this was one of my mum's friends. I would ask my mum, why does that man talk like a woman? Why does he dress like a woman? I used to find it so odd, I feel like what helped me understand was my mum took time to explain to me, she was not part of their community, but she was a huge activist for them. It played a massive part for me. I think I was lucky in that sense, I had somebody whom I could ask all these questions, and she had all the answers mostly.
> **Interviewer:** You met him in 1998, and this was before the advent of the Internet in Zambia. There is debate around the internet influencing people's sexuality.
> **Nosiku**: No! no! no! it didn't we didn't even have phones, who could have taught him to be gay and *ba* Chomba was not exposed, he hadn't left Zambia he

could not speak English. So, no! no! it didn't come with the Internet, homosexuality didn't start now.

It is important to note that during the focus group Nosiku did not openly identify as pansexual, but instead showed enthusiasm and spoke passionately about other gender non-conforming identities apart from the two common ones, gay and lesbian. As a researcher, I wanted to understand what informs her passion. In our interview, she talks about being pansexual but not being open about it because she lacks confidence and is afraid of being ostracised in social settings. This fear emanates from the Christian nation declaration and the consequences that may come from openly identifying one's sexual orientation. Nosiku's choice to remain closeted is the decision many people choose as it is a safer option, especially living in a social and political environment that does not accommodate other gender identities. She also acknowledges the role that her mother, an LGBTIQ activist, played in her understanding of sexual orientations and gender politics in Zambia. More importantly, she talks about meeting the first gay person in 1998 before the widespread use of the Internet in Zambia, which is contrary to popular commentary that the Internet and Western ideas are what have influenced people's sexuality in Zambia.

To gain more insight into how participants navigate the terrain of identity politics and safety, I conducted an individual interview with Chanda, who openly identified as lesbian during the focus group. I wanted to understand how her children respond to this and if she fears arrest.

Interviewer: During the focus group, you mentioned that you openly identify as lesbian, do you ever fear arrest?
Chanda: I do identify, and no, I don't fear arrest. I am not a criminal, my orientation is not a crime, so I can publicly say who I am and what I am, and no one will arrest me.
Interviewer: Do you think maybe it is because you are female, like what you had mentioned in the focus group?
Chanda: No no no even men should not and will not be arrested for being gay. It is not a crime to be gay what is considered a crime in Zambia is being caught in the act of homosexuality when they catch you having sex then you are going to be arrested. Not because you are walking down the road
Interviewer: How do your children react to this?
Chanda: It is none of their things to feel; it is my life, but we have spoken about it, they are cool they are really really cool with it. I have told them this is who I am this is who I have always been. They are cool with my partner they are cool they think am Ellen DeGeneres but without the money.
Interviewer: I asked about your children because they are young and growing up in a society where being lesbian is considered ungodly?
Chanda: I understand that, but then, funny enough my kids are Christian they are Jehovah's Witnesses am Atheist.

> **Interviewer**: How about social media, how do you negotiate your identity there?
> **Chanda:** I don't have trolls on my wall, if they talk about me, they probably go and talk about me on other people's walls, not on my wall. On my list, everybody knows who I am, and I really don't give a fuck if people are ok with me or not the trash can take itself out. Accepting yourself in such a society takes very hard work, so I don't allow anybody to make me feel any type of way, never! I have gotten to a point where I don't allow that. It took a long time; it has been a long journey to get here. So, I don't allow anyone to come and mess with that.

Chanda's comments show that she has done much work in accepting her identity, enlightening her children and understanding the broader politics around her orientation. This can be seen in how she begins by first reaffirming her identity and then explains what warrants arrest and who can be arrested. This understanding and belief that sexual orientation is not a crime is what gives her the confidence to identify openly, even on social media.

In light of the two extracts, it is noticeable that Nosiku and Chanda have different experiences. During the focus group, Nosiku does not openly identify as being pansexual, but during the individual interview, she openly discloses her sexual identity. She alludes to this as a lack of confidence and fear of being ostracised if she opened up. This finding is similar to van Klinken's (2015) findings in his study of Zambian gay men. Van Klinken suggests that this ambivalence might reflect an element of internalised heteronormativity, which may be necessitated by a fear of becoming a subject of ridicule (Van Klinken, 2015: 952).

On the other hand, Chanda openly identifies as lesbian both online on social media and offline with her family, community and strangers in the focus group. Unlike Nosiku, Chanda does not care about how she is perceived; she acknowledges that getting to this level of self-acceptance required much work, especially living in a heteronormative society like Zambia. Interestingly, unlike van Klinken's findings, in which all his gay participants identified as Christian (van Klinken, 2015: 955), Chanda does not identify as Christian but as an atheist. This difference in findings can be because van Klinken's participants do not openly identify as gay. In contrast, Chanda is open about her sexual orientation, often deemed as ungodly and unchristian in Zambia (van Klinken, 2013).

I acknowledge that although my study is relatively small in scope and sample size, it raises questions and opens up perspectives that hopefully will be explored in more detail in further research. I acknowledge the multiplicity, fluidity and complexities of, and the tensions and ambivalence in, identity. As discussed above, in a social-political climate that ostracises

feminism and denies LGBTIQ individuals the possibility of identification, reclaiming these identity aspects appears to become an important personal and political struggle.

6.6 A "Heroic" father

"Heroic" father, is a Facebook post by a renowned Zambian photographer Chellah Tukuta, about a man who put his baby on his back and cycled from the hospital (see Appendix 6). He explains that he felt compelled to contribute money towards the child's treatment because such fathers are rare and that he supports them. He justifies why he helped this man as not necessarily showing off but as an encouragement to us all. He captioned this post as a must share, and as per his request, his post was shared, and among those that shared this post was the *Zambian Feminists* page. Unlike the praises that the photographer sang about the heroic father, however, the *Zambian Feminists* page launched an attack on how men are praised for doing the bare minimum (See Appendix 6).

Zambian Feminists expresses confusion over why this man is being considered a "hero" simply for doing what he is supposed to do. She challenges the idea of assigning individual roles to specific genders and proposes that what the man in question did was because he knows it is his role as a parent. She further challenges the use of the term "rare" by the author, saying rare would be seeing Tyrannosaurus rex, but in Zambia, it is considered rare only because men know what is expected of them but choose not to. She sarcastically rejects the narrative that the author was inspired by this man's actions, but rather maybe by his bravery for being on a bicycle with a child and not in a car. She ends with the fact that maybe this man is just one of those fathers who get it, while others call taking care of their own kids 'babysitting', doing chores as 'helping out'. She writes to say that if men did their share of work, there would not be what she refers to as "Stevie Wonder driving a car miracle" (See Appendix 6).

6.6.1 Discussion: It's called parenting not babysitting

In Chapter two (refer to sections 2.1-2.3), I discussed the Zambian gender order and how different roles have been assigned to different genders from pre-colonial, to colonial and modern-day Zambia (Rasing, 2001; Parpart, 1983; Siwila, 2017). Within this setting dominant customs and traditions dictate that responsibilities such as childcare and home maintenance are a preserve for women (Connell, 2009). Women engage in this type of work in the households because it is culturally associated with them being caring and self-sacrificing and in essence, good mothers. Walby (1990) refers to this as the patriarchal mode of production in the

household; while women engage in this unpaid labour in the home, men go and work for wages. This story prompts discussions around the roles assigned to specific genders, especially in a society where women like my participants want equal opportunities. More importantly, it touches on the kinds of masculinity and the role of men in the home and their children's lives.

My respondents passionately discussed and launched their attacks on the original post and defended *Zambian Feminists* stance on this issue. This excerpt perfectly captures respondents' views:

> **Rebecca**: Why are we applauding a fish for swimming? It is the same thing as a father saying I babysat my child today.
> **Mutinta**: your own child! I babysat what babysitting is there?

Both Rebecca and Mutinta feel there was nothing worth applauding about what the man did. To them, he is just a father doing what is expected of him as a parent. The conversation, however, evolved into the role of men in the household, their children's lives and how domestic labour is a preserve for women. Mutinta and Harriet share their views about this:

> **Mutinta:** Why are we applauding men for doing what they should be doing, I will give you an example, right now during COVID my aunt is the one working in the house, she has two sons both less than ten years old. Her husband is a professional chef like that is his job his trained. She will go to work in the morning come back he has not cooked, the kids have not bathed they have not eaten 16 (mid-day snack eaten at 4 pm). Nothing these are also his kids why must they wait for their mother when they have the other parent to take care of them? They have been with their father the whole day, so this man goes to feed other people for money but cannot feed his own family.
> **Harriet:** Like you have said he feeds people for money, you hear men are the world's best chefs only because they are earning money out of it, but when there is nothing no monetary value it is for women to do.
> **Mutinta**: A man can go to work right now cooking meals every day and come home, and he pretends like he cannot cook. The moment he reaches the gate, the skills have flown out of the window; he will collect them tomorrow at 8 am on his way to work, which is very stupid for me.

Central to this exchange is Walby's first patriarchal mode of production in the household (Walby, 1990). In Chapter three (see section 3.4), I explained how women engage in unpaid domestic labour in the home, while men go to work and earn wages (Connell, 2009; Walby, 1990). In Mutinta's case, the roles are reversed; her uncle, a professional chef is the one staying at home while his wife is working to earn wages. What is striking about this situation is that her uncle does not cook at home; instead, he waits for his wife to come back from work to cook. Harriet's response to Mutinta is cardinal; she highlights how men will only engage in domestic labour such as cooking if it is tied to wages. This exchange shows the

importance placed on wages and not the culinary abilities, to the extent that the children left in his care are not fed until their mother comes back to cook. It also shows how in patriarchal context cooking in the home is a preserve for women, even if the man in the household is a professional chef, he will wait for the woman to cook. For some participants like Rebecca and Mutinta, this contention in ideas has resulted in them thinking that if men want a Victorian woman, then they too need a Victorian man:

> **Rebecca:** I genuinely feel like I have no problems with patriarchy, but if you are going to patriarchy then patriarchy in full. Your money is our money, let us not do this thing where we want to select certain aspects of feminism when it suits you, men will choose aspects of feminism that suit them like financial independence. If you don't want to respect other aspects of feminism then lets patriarchy in full, then my money is mine to enjoy alone yours is for the house. Don't expect financial contributions from me when you are perpetuating misogyny and patriarchy.
> **Mutinta:** Like Rebecca said I have no issues with this patriarchy thing if you want a 1950s wife, by all means, I will do all the things, I will cook, I will bake, I will be at your beck and call, but you better provide to my standards. If tomorrow I want to go to Dubai with my friends, you better have the finances to cough that money because I would have been able to pay for myself. If you want to do this 1950s life, then you better be able to match it up with your finances. Because when you think about it, what incentive do financially independent women need to be married? Because for most women, it is financial issues why they get married other than that what is the essence? There is no love; there is no mental stimulation; there is just nothing.

This exchange shows how women are contesting this patriarchal mode of production in the household. For them, their financial contributions to the household should equate to men helping with household chores. It also brings to light the idea of a post-feminist woman as one who is self-reliant, financially independent, free to enjoy consumer products and other luxuries. Hence them questioning the essence of marriage in the first place as they do not want to be oppressed by unequal gender relations that come with marriages in patriarchal societies like Zambia.

This contestation of roles in the household is exacerbated by the broader gender order in which my participants find themselves. During this discussion, participants drew attention to how society not only praises men but accords them preferential treatment for doing what they are supposed to. Participants also brought to light how men who take their children to the health facilities for regular check-ups are attended to first. Nomsa and Njavwa spoke strongly against the gendered treatment:

> **Nomsa:** I agree with how she put it, and it's not only in that setup even when you go to the clinic. When a man takes a child to under-five (children's clinic), the nurses will let that man go first before the women who have even been waiting there for long because they think oh wow! He is a good dad, and he is very busy he has got other things to do, and he brought the child, but look that is his child that is his responsibility it is not babysitting. If it is your child, it is not heroic you are just a parent.
>
> **Njavwa**: I absolutely agree with the post. Even when you go to the under-five clinic (children's clinic), and the woman is with the baby, she is going to be in a queue, and wait with other women for her turn. But if a man comes in with a baby, he is given priority the nurses will be saying "the father has brought the child let us attend to him so that he can go back to work". What about me, do I not work? Why are we giving special treatment to men for being fathers, raising their own children?

These responses are also indicative of how much participants have to grapple with these traditional gender roles with partners, fellow women and the broader society.

6.7 You are not a woman until you have a child

This post addresses the misconception that every woman needs to have a child, and until then, she is not woman enough (see Appendix 7). *Zambian Feminists* draws attention to the fact that most women and men are not ready to be parents, but have children because society expects them to do so. As a result, broken adults end up raising broken children, a situation she refers to as "shitty parents raising shitty kids" (Appendix 7). She defends her stance on the existence of "shitty" kids, saying they exist only because their mothers wanted to prove their womanhood and their fathers their fatherhood. Meanwhile, these people are not even ready to raise children. She goes on to challenge women to respect other women's decisions not to procreate, saying "my ovaries, my womb and my right to bun or not to bun in my oven" (Appendix 7). She also draws attention to the fact that society does not hate women who are mothers but condemns women who choose not to have children. She also brings to light the misconception that once a woman has a child, her view on motherhood will change. She ends by emphasising that if women choose not to have children, it does not mean they hate children and those who have children are not any better than those who do not.

6.7.1 Discussion: Womanhood and motherhood are not synonymous

This post draws attention to the societal pressure placed on both men and women to have children. In Chapter 2 (section 2.1), I explained that Zambia is a matrilineal society, and in

matrilineal societies, women enjoy high status as they are responsible for reproducing the lineage (Richards, 1940). Within this setting, dominant customs and traditions dictate that at a certain age women should have children and be married (Rasing, 2001). This story sparks debate around using childbirth as both a measure of womanhood and the basis to accord respect to women. It also brings to light how this view affects the respondent's career aspirations. Most importantly, it touches on how patriarchy views women as nothing more than baby-making machines. Participants Lombe and Rebecca express their displeasure about the misconception that womanhood and motherhood are synonymous:

> **Lombe**: There is this idea that as a woman, you are only complete when you are married and have a child, and other than that, society does not respect you. If a woman is succeeding in her career, her education, no matter what she does, the question people ask is "when are you getting married"? When she is married, they ask "when are you going to have a child"? People feel that, in order to be fulfilled, you have to have a child. Honestly, not everyone wants to be a parent, like not everybody is prepared to be a parent and so they do it because society says so.

> **Rebecca:** For me, I hate the narrative that womanhood and motherhood are synonymous. This narrative is why you have mothers who don't like their children; they are bringing human beings that they don't want just because they want to be considered as a person in society. Notice how when they are two 27-year olds one is a mother one is not, the one who is a mother is given more respect, why is my respect attached to having a child?... This pressure has caused this biological clock thing of telling women if you don't have a child by the time you are aged 25-28 then there is a problem with you, then you are looked down upon in society it is very upsetting, to be honest.

For participants who do not have children yet, this post addressed some of their struggles as career-driven women who feel there is more for them to achieve than just being mothers. For instance, Moono, a consultant-project analyst, argues that "I see having children as a huge responsibility and I still want to do other things, and honestly, I feel like having a child might slow me in other areas, and I have seen it happen". Similarly, Beauty, a PhD candidate, shares her experience: "many times I get comments from people telling me I am selfish because I don't want or didn't have kids early or that I am always thinking about myself, but that doesn't bother me you know. Like, does having kids define my womanhood? No! I am a woman either way whether I decide to have them earlier or not. If you want to go on feeling that for you to be validated as a woman, you need to have a child, good and fair enough for you, just don't make me feel the same way". For Judy however, this post brought attention to how much women's bodies do not belong to them:

> "This post made me aware of the pressure that women feel, not when they have maternal instincts necessarily, but you can feel the pressure of society. People are passing small remarks, talking about your biological clock, and it is unfortunately just a small piece of the puzzle about how much our lives aren't ours, our bodies aren't ours, people would really want to push their agendas on how you dress, when you marry, when you have children, almost every aspect of your life is kind of trying to be controlled, and it is an unfortunate thing to think about it".

Central to these discussions is the view that women are seen as vessels to bring life, and responsible for the children they bring into the world. Children do not only play a role in defining, emphasising and legitimising womanhood; they also evoke and define specific kinds of femininity. In Chapters two and three I discussed how in patriarchal societies, men thrive in remunerative work, while women are relegated to work in the household, such as looking after children (Connell, 2009; Connell and Pearse, 2015). Looking after children is often associated with the cultural definition of women as caring, gentle, self-sacrificing and industrious, in other words, as good mothers (Connell, 2009; Connell and Pearse, 2015). This point was validated by participants with children, as they shared how they wish they could go through life without children. The following excerpt captures their views:

> **Chanda:** I have five kids, and my kids know that I didn't want to have kids. Why? Not because I don't love them as I love them to bits and I can kill for my kids. But sometimes I find myself wanting to do things that are, how can I say it, sometimes I don't want to be responsible. I want to be by myself and do whatever. I think you should wait; people need to wait to know themselves before they have kids, find out what trauma you are going to cause your kids.
> **Natasha:** I agree, I agree! There is a quote about kids, "kids are like fart, your own you can stand but others you can't tolerate". Even for me, if I could go through life without having kids I would, I agree with Chanda like I love my baby too she makes me smile, she is a princess, but if I could go through life with one kid or no kid, I would. I would be a good aunt, baby-sitting. I think kids are lovely if they have to go back to their homes eventually**.**

This exchange shows that there is a lot of talk and discussion around the responsibility that children come with. The fathers though seem primarily absent in childrearing, and the burden is solely upon women, perhaps it is for this reason that participants would instead go through life without children. The extract below further validates this view:

> **Mwanji:** My friend had a baby earlier this year, she went around looking for a parenting book for her husband because she is trying to change how he thinks about fatherhood. She is trying to remove the idea that the mother is the one who is supposed to change the baby's nappies and I applaud her for that. I didn't make this child alone, we should both have equal or at least to some extent equal responsibility. Bring the child to me if I have to breastfeed I am the one with

> the boobs, but there have to be certain things that you can also do as a father, it is parenting not helping..."

Participants also drew attention to the fact that women's need to validate their womanhood has shifted from childbirth to how the baby is born. Harriet explains how women who give birth through Caesarean section (C-section) are not regarded as woman enough. "It is so bad it now goes to, "you are not woman enough if you didn't push a baby out of your vagina", not undergoing C-section, that is how far the stigma has gone. I think it is insulting that you reduce a woman to a baby-making machine instead of a human being that deserves respect. Her existence, that is enough, it doesn't have to be through motherhood for someone to experience full womanhood and just be considered as a woman, a human being that is living for me is enough".

In addition participants also discussed how women are blamed for the failure of not having children in marriage, and the pressure put on them to fix this problem. Nomsa succinctly explains this point:

> "Even if it is a man shooting blanks (infertile), it is blamed on the woman in some areas. I have even heard stories of how even if it is a man who shoots blanks, the women will tell the woman to go outside the marriage and get her husband a child. It is his problem why should you solve it as a woman"?

The defining sentiment felt by the respondents in this concluding section is that Zambian women are still viewed as "baby-making machines", and that society tries to confine women to this status quo. Women who attempt to deviate from these societal confines and pursue their dreams are met with severe opposition, and those that succumb may face the reality of actively raising children on their own. While women choosing not to have children remains a hot topic of discussion, the issue of not being able to have children remains a stigmatised topic. As Winnie put it, "it is a stigmatised topic, it is there and then again it is not there, people don't speak out about it, and I think it is something that I like about *Zambian Feminists* is her boldness in talking about uncomfortable topics. Things that are very much uncomfortable for people to talk about in the natural sense, in the Zambian sense, Zambians do not like talking about uncomfortable things all in the name of religion and culture".

6.8 Catherine Phiri Vs Fatuma Zarika

The final example that I explore in this chapter is that of the controversial boxing match between Catherine Phiri, a Zambian professional boxing sensation, and Fatuma Zarika, the Kenyan World champion. They contended for the World Boxing Council (WBC) super

bantamweight title. Much of the controversy stemmed from the fact that Phiri lost the WBC title match to Zarika on technicalities, much to the displeasure of fans who thought Phiri would take the title (Lusaka Times, 2019b). Both Zambian and Kenyan social media were set ablaze with commentaries from fans who thought Phiri had put up a good fight, and that the judges' results were not an accurate reflection of the match.

It is important to note, however, that days before the fight a related controversy was brewing on Zambian social media commentaries. Some fans took to social media to express their concerns over the fact that this was going to be a mismatch as the Kenyan boxer was a "man" (Mwebantu, 2019). These allegations fuelled debate over the Kenyan boxer's gender, as fans called her a "man pretending to be a woman" (Mwebantu, 2019). These allegations, coupled with Phiri's loss, catapulted a myriad of reactions onto social media, which led to the WBC calling for both a rematch and an anti-doping test for Zarika (Zambia Reports, 2019).

Reacting to social media commentaries, *Zambian Feminists* took to her page to address these allegations. In her post, she attaches a photo of the two athletes facing-off during weighing, and calls on both men and women to respect the hard work these athletes put in (see Appendix 8). She writes about how people need to realise that bodies are different and labels all those calling the two athletes 'men' as body shamers (see Appendix 8). She goes on to say both men and women need to stop limiting femininity and that such remarks are a display of both fragile masculinity and ignorance. She concludes by saying "it is not right guys" (Appendix 8).

6.8.1 Discussion: Body-shaming

This story exemplifies how patriarchal societies like Zambia treat people who do not fall into the socially constructed categories of either femininity or masculinity. In Chapter three, we explained that unlike hegemonic masculinity, there is no hegemonic femininity because all forms of femininity are constructed within male domination (Connell, 1987: 183). Connell instead proposes the concept of emphasised femininity as being compliant or complementary to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987). Emphasised femininity is the type of femininity that the media promotes through books, films and television. This idea of emphasised femininity is made worse by dominant culture and traditions that dictate that a woman must be seen and not heard (Rasing, 2001). This story sparked discussions on how patriotism and banter turned into body-shaming. It also brought to light how body-shaming takes different forms,

from weight-shaming to colourism. More importantly, it touches on the fact that femininity is not a product of choice but produced according to preconceived societal standards.

Respondents Chanda and Njavwa spoke against this type of patriotism and banter that demeans others in the process and explained the ripple effects of such actions:

> **Chanda**: That incident made me think about how people are inconsiderate and how they do not sit down and think before they decided to call her a man and shame her body. In my head am like, guys she might be an intersex woman how do we think it is going to make her feel that the only thing you are thinking of is how much she looks like a man. Having the general public say "hey, go fight with your fellow men".

> **Njavwa**: When I look at such comments, I get angry, when you look at it in Zambian context, those kinds of comments sieve into transphobia as well. Firstly, they are mocking trans people. Secondly, it is because men have this notion that a woman has to be feminine, and a man has to be masculine. So when a woman is on the other side, then she is a man. When a man tries to be feminine in any way even just cleaning his nails and wiping his arse believe it or not then he's gay or he behaves like a woman. It is very upsetting because for them it is a meme, they will laugh at that, but it is such a loaded conversation.

These two extracts re-enforce the view that gender in Zambia is binary and does not take into account other non-conforming gender identities. The story of the two women athletes epitomises how women who attempt to challenge these socially constructed ideas of femininity are ridiculed. Chilombo best explains this: "on the whole masculine and feminine thing, I want to say that those are very much social constructs, like they teach us how to act or society wants us to act. I know it has nothing to do with being gay, but I feel even being masculine is something we taught ourselves what masculine is, I feel I can have muscles and look a certain type of way". Similar to Chilombo's views, Beauty explains her thoughts on gender as a social construct, "I think it is just the stereotype that if a woman looks masculine, then she is gay, but some of them are not. The person may be just working out a lot, and the person has that body type, but now everyone wants to have big bums and hips and things like that". Participants also highlighted how culture re-enforces the stereotype of how a woman's body is supposed to look like and be built. This excerpt from Natasha succinctly captures this:

> I think it is an African thing to have big buttocks; that is why you hear songs that have been sung like *matako matako matako matako* (buttocks buttocks buttocks buttocks). It is something that has been inculcated into us. Growing up, you are supposed to have boobs, if you do not have boobs and bums *ahh mwaume alikwata umubili kwati mwaume (*she is male, her body is built like a man's) you know those things the body-shaming that goes on."

This idea of African women being naturally voluptuous is a subject that continues to attract intellectual debates, since colonial times when African women were being paraded as exhibitions in European freak shows for having big buttocks. This objectification of women's bodies has continued even today, more so with the widespread use of media. As explained in Chapter three (see section 3.3.2), media such as films, advertisement, music and TV shows have actively constructed ideas about femininity and how a woman should both act and look (van Zoonen, 1994). My participants drew attention to how the media portray only a particular type of woman and do not show other types of women and women's bodies. The excerpt from Mwanji below captures this:

> "You know why we categorise women; it is because of what we see on social media and what we watch on TV. You are groomed on cartoons like Jasmine and Cinderella, all those they have a certain way they look. So you grow up thinking this is how a woman should be. So maybe to avoid this body-shaming why can't cartoons and movies in general also give roles to people who look like the two boxers or a normal human being, not the small waist big bums. So that our children don't carry on with the same continuous routine of this is what a woman should look like, or a woman's hair should look like, or skin should look like".

For some respondents who do not fall in line with the beauty standards set by society, growing up in a society like Zambia has been a daunting experience as they have been subjects of mockery. As Chanda shares her experience, "I grew up being told I look like a man almost every other day, and you look like your father, in my head, I was like ok I probably look like a man. It is so bad even in my adult life when people told me I am beautiful, or I am pretty; I would be like, no it is a lie, call me something else not pretty, I have been told I look like a man".

Other participants like Lusungu also drew attention to the fact that it is women who uphold these beauty standards and shame those that do not fall into a set category. "When it comes to the issue of body-shaming you find that it is us, women who really pull ourselves down, it won't be a man telling you, you are fat or skinny, or you look like a man, it is women telling you that. I am a recipient of body-shaming because I am plus size. I am comfortable in my skin now imagine somebody starts shaming you for who you are". For other participants like Harriet, women shaming other women is as a result of internalised misogyny among women. "For me, it comes from this internalised misogyny that we learn from the patriarchy. I feel patriarchy has set all these beauty standards, and if we don't meet them, we feel insecure. When we see boxers like Fatuma Zarika we feel better, we compare and say I look more womanly than her and I am closer to the standards than she is."

Mutinta and Harriet also shared their experiences with colourism and the privileges that light-skinned women receive. This exchange from their focus group discussion succinctly captures this scenario:

> **Mutinta:** Also, colourism in Zambia, I feel like it is a topic we gloss over, but colourism in Zambia affects women. Me personally it affects me. Like I know for a fact that when I walk in with certain friends am the last girl, anyone will look at in the room because I am dark.
> **Harriet:** As she said about colourism, a lighter-skinned woman is deemed more beautiful, where she has pretty privileges even during a job interview, she will get the job just because of that. If the panel is comprising of men, they will be more eager to listen to this woman whom they are finding more attractive than you a darker-skinned woman. Even with all this feminism thing we really need to know the levels that we as women are at, we women have similar struggles but there are certain women that will have more struggles worse than us. So, you find a lighter-skinned woman higher than a darker-skinned woman then there is probably a lesbian imagine how bad it is for her? Also, what about the disabled woman. If as we speak for women who probably have to fight for rights, we should just be aware of all the privileges that certain women have and the privileges that other women don't have.

The above extract brings to light the idea that women are not the same and different women face different challenges in society. In Chapter three (see section 3.4.3), I discussed the concept of intersectionality, as understanding that women are not the same and how aspects of their political and social identities like gender, race, age sexuality and disability combine to create modes of discrimination and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; Messerschmidt, 2018). My respondents identifying colourism and physical appearances or "pretty privilege" as the basis on which they experience discrimination is an example of how women face different struggles in different social settings. This validates Messerschmidt's (2018: 99) view that "gender, race, nationality and sexuality are not absolute and are not always equally significant in social settings in which individuals construct unequal gender relations - they constitute each other in differing ways depending upon particular social situations". Furthermore, the above exchange opened up discussions about femininity and beauty. It is essential to note that both femininity and beauty are social constructs and subjective (Connell, 2009). The broader society sets and maintains these standards through reinforcement in the media (magazine covers, music, television) and ridicule for those that go against them.

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the main findings of the research under eight themes, which were in the form of eight Facebook posts or stories, in which women are scrutinised and held to account

as gendered beings. Their experiences and the discussions they evoke present a range of cultural, social and political institutions that work against women's attempt to achieve equality, autonomy or simply agency over their bodies. The issues that are raised and discussed in this chapter are indicative of the various patriarchal societal standards that Zambian women negotiate with, in their day-to-day lives.

The next chapter will focus on the digital studies component of this research, by focusing specifically on the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page and the politics of online activism.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS - DIGITAL MEDIA

> **Njavwa:** I think the *Zambian Feminists* page is a mini revolution on its own.
> **Nosiku:** I don't check the page, instead, I have set it on my Facebook to see first, immediately I log on whatever is there I usually see it in the first 5 mins depending on how quickly I logged on.
> **Harriet:** I feel social media is where I get off all my frustrations, I feel really small and powerless in the real world.

7. Introduction

In previous chapters, I have extensively discussed Zambia's gender politics and the recent development of the *Zambian Feminists* page as a platform for discussion and activism. I have also looked at how the *Zambian Feminists* page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity in Zambia's highly conservative and heteronormative society. In this chapter, I shift the focus to the digital side of this research. I look at *Zambian Feminists* as an online feminist community, its relationship with participants who are identified as top fans of the page, and the page administrator's role as a content creator, moderator and curator. I return to my research objectives as stated in Chapter one (see section 1.4), to understand how the *Zambian Feminists* page administrator selects content and regulates commentary on this platform. Here I posit three main questions: do women contributors to the page feel supported expressing their views on this platform given Zambia's patriarchal context? What role has the page played in participants' understanding of gender politics and their role as feminists in Zambia's gender-unequal context? What "counts" as "feminism" in this social space and lastly, how does this online participation translate into feminist action in participants' day-to-day lives?

To answer these questions, this chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the *Zambian Feminist*s Facebook page - how it was created, the administrator's roles as content creator and participants' views of the page. The second section discusses online activism and safety and how participants negotiate their online/offline feminist identity and digital activism effectiveness. Before I launch into answering these questions I will give a brief background of the *Zambian Feminist*s page. I hope to go beyond the simple explanation of the popularity of the *Zambian Feminists* amongst Lusaka women fans (i.e. if you are a fan of the page you agree with everything that is presented on the page) and tease out the complexities of women fans' identity that resonate, conflict and contradict with what is presented on the *Zambian Feminists* page.

The study thus attempts to contribute to ongoing debates on the growing popularity and effectiveness of digital activism and online feminism in African societies, in this case Zambia. Against this backdrop, this chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. It unfolds by presenting data from qualitative individual in-depth interviews with the *Zambian Feminist*s page administrator, with findings from focus groups and individual interviews with participants.

7.1 History and background of the page

At the time of writing in 2020, the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page had reached over 32,000 followers and was being run by a page administrator who is also the page's founder. When I interviewed the administrator in December 2019, her identity and roles were not known to the public. I interviewed her to understand the inspiration and her intentions behind creating this platform. The page was created after the founder watched the Harvey Weinstein sexual assault accusations and realised that if women in developed countries had struggles speaking up about sexual assault, how much more would Zambian women. This realisation drove her to create a platform where Zambian women from different walks of life could come together and share collective experiences on sexual assault and gain support:

> "One day, while watching documentaries about Harvey Weinstein and famous women in Hollywood who had experienced sexual assault, I realized Zambian women did not have a platform to share their own stories. As a sexual assault survivor, I avoided sharing my story because I did not want the whole pity party bullshit. I thought this was the right time to start a page where I could share my stories. I created the *Zambian Feminists*, it's not the best name in the world, but I thought there were many feminists around. That is how the *Zambian Feminists* started. Initially, it was a platform where people could write in anonymously and share their experiences of sexual violence and abuse".

The sexual assault accusations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein in 2017 was the tipping point for famous women to break their silence around sexual assault in Hollywood, as famous actresses openly shared their sexual abuse and sexual assault experiences on social media using the hashtag Me Too (#MeToo). Women from different walks of life followed suit and turned to their social media accounts to share their own experiences using the #MeToo hashtag. These actions gave rise to the MeToo Movement, which became a popular online global movement that united women from different geographical and social spaces to break the silence and raise awareness on the pervasiveness of sexual assault and abuse in society.

The ripple effects of the movement can be seen in the interview extract with the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page administrator, who founded the page after watching the documentaries and realising the importance of women breaking their silence around sexual abuse in Zambia. As a sexual assault survivor herself, she mentions how she avoided openly sharing her story; this could be due to the victim-blaming and stigma around sexual assault survivors. This can be seen in how she refers to the 'pity party' attached to people who share their experiences as "bullshit" and refers to herself as a "sexual assault survivor", not a victim. Interestingly, the #MeToo movement gave her not only the courage to speak openly about her experience but also to create a platform for other Zambian women to do the same.

What caught my interest is how she referred to the *Zambian Feminists* page as not being "the best name in the world". During our interview, I asked her if she identified as a Feminist and what the Feminist label means to her:

> "I identify fully as a Feminist; I call myself a Feminist AF (as fuck). First thing I had to do was take ownership of that name and not feel embarrassed. I saw something on Twitter saying, "Feminism is not a dirty word." That is my motto by owning up to it and identifying myself like that. I feel it has allowed me to genuinely be my authentic self".

Her comment about taking ownership of the feminist label and not being ashamed about it is important to note. In Zambia and some places globally, feminism is a contentious topic, and the label feminist is often ostracised. By naming the page *Zambian Feminists* and not hiding under a pseudonym, reaffirms the existence of a feminist community in Zambia and allows other women to identify as feminists. Zulu (2017) argues that identifying as a feminist in Zambia risks backlash and isolation in social settings like the community, the workplace and even in relationships. Moreover, in Zambia women grapple with identifying as feminist and Christian (Zulu, 2017). As discussed in Chapter two (see section 2.3), postcolonial Zambia is a collision of forces: globalisation, neoliberalism, nationalism and a conservative culture that reinforces traditional gender norms. However, unlike other widely accepted practices, feminism is still an ostracised topic. By identifying as 'Feminist as fuck', the page administrator claims total ownership of the label and sends a message that she completely - even aggressively - identifies as such.

As the researcher, I was curious to determine how the *Zambian Feminists* page administrator categorises and defines her feminism. This is because feminism is politics, and how one defines one's feminism is influenced by personal, social, political and economic beliefs and ideologies. The extract below captures how she defines her feminist stance:

> "My type of feminism is 100% African feminism. I subscribe to African black feminism; I lean greatly towards intersectionality. If we don't have intersectionality in our feminism we are going nowhere. We have to encompass people in rural areas, whatever we talk about our white sisters will never experience, they are at a level that we can't attain, they are fighting for things that they deserve, but we are fighting just to be heard. They have acquired certain privileges in their workplaces while we just want to be considered equal. Our feminism is basic, basic because it's never been done, and we are trying to break these barriers".

As indicated in Chapter 3 (see section 3.4.4), African feminism developed in response to Western feminism. It is not in opposition to Western feminism, but is feminism that is context-specific and constitutes many heterogeneous experiences and points of departure (Ahikire, 2014; Lewis, 2001). This is best illustrated in the *Zambian Feminists* page administrator's comment - for her, feminism in the West is different from feminism in Africa because while white women are fighting for what they "deserve", African women and more specifically Zambian women are fighting to be "heard". She attributes this difference to the fact that feminism in Zambia is only just beginning to take root and has a long way to go before Zambian women can enjoy the privileges afforded to women in Western countries. The understanding that women have different experiences based on race, gender, class and sexuality is the birthplace of intersectionality. Chapter 3 (see section 3.4.3) explains that intersectionality was born after recognizing that the theorization of first- and second-wave feminist movements was not inclusive and did not cater to all women's needs (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000; Messerschmidt, 2018). *Zambian Feminists* further explains how she ensures that her feminism is intersectional and caters to all women's needs:

> One year in running the *Zambian Feminists* someone wrote to me in my inbox, she said our biggest flaw was that we catered for the *apamwamba* (upper-class) woman and not the lower-class woman. That was a turning point in my life. I realized that I was also a victim of privilege. I had a privilege that others did not have because of where I was raised and which schools I attended, and that was a flaw. I have privileges, but the moment I think the next woman from *Kaunda square* (peri-urban lower-income township)sees the world the same way I do, then I am failing them. That's how I ended up in the village, it is helping me understand the rural woman, rural feminism, how do we bring feminism to a woman who has no idea of what it means to be equal.

In her comment, *Zambian Feminists* exercises self-reflexivity by acknowledging that she only catered for a particular class of women when she began running the page. This awareness of her privileges makes her conscious of the blind spots in her approach and how best she can improve to encompass the needs of different Zambian women regardless of their

class, social or geographical location. As discussed in Chapter four (see section 4.2), the Internet provides feminists with a space to engage substantively and self-reflexively with issues of privilege, difference, and access (Baer, 2016; Fotopoulou, 2016). This is seen in how *Zambian Feminists* speaks of taking her feminism to the "rural areas", to women who do not have access to her page and do not even know what feminism and equality are.

One of the criticisms levelled against online activism is that it only caters to certain women. Chapter 3 (see section 3.4.6) highlights how scholars like Julia Schuster (2013) argue that online platforms create new divides among women as digital activism is a preserve of the young and feminist discussions are often hidden from those who are not connected. Schuster (2013) is concerned with the divides, created by online platforms, between young feminist and old feminist, writing from a New Zealand perspective. However, my focus is on the digital divides that online platforms create and how they exclude certain Zambian women. In Chapter four (see section 4.1.2) I explained that the three major digital divides are access to the Internet, the ability to fully utilize the Internet and the capacity to transform the digital benefits into social benefits (Papacharissi, 2002; Schäfer, 2015). As the researcher, I was interested in finding out what type of women the page targets and what measures are put in place to ensure that the *Zambian Feminists* page is inclusive and caters to different women's needs. During our interview, the page administrator explained that her approach is not to cater to a specific type of woman but to post stories that touch on a broad range of topics that affect different Zambian women:

> "I target victims of the patriarchy, by victims, it means anyone who has been hurt by patriarchal practices, and it is so diverse because we have all been hurt in different ways. I target women who are too scared to speak up, too embarrassed, too nervous about things. Any woman who is a victim of the patriarchy that makes it quite broad, it is something I am passionate about because I have a lot of topics to choose from, I know I am shooting in the dark, but there is someone who is going to get the message".

Her comment highlights how she uses her platform to touch on various topics and speak for women who may otherwise not have the platform and courage to express themselves openly. However, like Schuster's (2013) criticism of the closed nature of digital activism, these online discussions exclude women who do not have access to the Internet. In this case, some of the women *Zambian Feminists* is targeting may not have access to the Internet; thus, they may not be aware of the conversations held online.

This section gave a brief overview of the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page, using interview extracts with the page administrator/ founder. It explained how the page was created, the type of feminism the founder subscribes to, the women the page targets and some of the shortcomings of digital activism. The next section will focus on the page content and how research participants react to what is presented on the page.

7.2 Page administrator's role as content creator and women fans' consumption preferences

This section discusses the content presented on the *Zambian Feminists* page. It presents how research participants negotiate, contest and resonate with the content in line with their personal beliefs and feminist values. From the interviews conducted, it emerged that the *Zambian Feminists* women fans are conscious of what content to appropriate into their daily lives. Their preferences and consumption habits are influenced and structured by their religious beliefs, socio-cultural aspects, and personal relationships to the broader politics around feminism, which constitute the context within which they consume *Zambian Feminists*.

In terms of women fans' consumption habits and content preferences, *Zambian Feminists* fans can be divided into three closely related categories. Avid followers of the page who agree with almost everything; avid followers who contradict, contest and negotiate the content presented; and those who follow the page from a distance, perhaps they used to like the page, but due to some content shared that they do not agree with, they have unliked the page but frequently check it and follow the discussion online. What unifies these women fans' categories is that they all follow the page and selectively consume *Zambian Feminists*.

The women fans attribute their selective consumption of *Zambian Feminist* to the page administrator being too aggressive, or lacking objectivity, partiality and intolerance to different opinions. The page posts important topics for them, but how some of the content is presented has led them to be selective in their consumption. Beauty, a University student, points out the need to have more content contributors to avoid turning the page into a personal blog where women fans only read the page administrator's thoughts:

> **Beauty**: The page is personal, it's like a personal blog, but if that page admin aims to build a community of feminists there needs to be room for some conversation where we are not just reading your opinions. I would want to see more authors and more collaborators to get a much richer diverse opinion.

For participants like Beauty, having one person as the content creator makes the page content opinionated and lacking in a diversity of opinions. For her, the *Zambian Feminists* page is currently run like a personal blog where fans read only the administrator's opinions, and not a community of feminists with different women contributors to the page. During my interview with the page administrator, she acknowledged the need for more content creators and talked about how she has now opened up the *Zambian Feminists* page to other women to share their stories:

> "Once in a while, I open the page for people to contribute though I edit and share to make sure it is legally correct. We give women a space to share their stories and come out whether it is anonymous or not, and it does not matter provided they have a release form of some sort. That is one of the things that I like, and I encourage if someone messages me saying they have something to share, I say go ahead because one of the things I was scared of was making it all about me. Up to date, I don't want it to be all about me, am just one voice in an ocean of many, I want more women to share their views because am not writing a playbook on feminism. Am scared of people saying what *Zambian Feminists* says is golden it is not. No, it's not!"

In her comment above, *Zambian Feminists* acknowledges how easy it is to make the page all about her views and opinions, "all about me". She insists that her opinion is simply "one voice in an ocean", one approach in an enormous diversity of opinion. In this way she denies that she has any special role to play, and disavows any charge that she has the "answer" to feminism in Zambia - she is "not writing a playbook on Feminism". By opening the page up to other contributors, she tries to create a platform with diverse views, stories and experiences that resonate with other women fans. Opening up the page also allows her to learn from others, as she does not know everything about feminism and issues affecting women in Zambia. Despite the page administrator's attempts to make the content diverse (as we see above from the interview with her), the readers see a form of bias in the content.

Apart from the need for more diverse opinions, voices and views, participants also attributed their selective consumption of the *Zambian Feminists* to the aggressive manner in which the messages are presented on the page. Participants Zion and Moono explain how they used to follow the page, but the aggression in the message drove them away from liking the page. However, they still follow it:

> **Zion**: I liked the page when it was first created, but I don't agree with some things so I unliked it, but I still visit it. I don't think the content is a problem. The problem is the way the content is shared. I feel as though the content is shared in a somewhat

> aggressive manner; I feel that they may be sharing a good message, but how the message is shared for me is what I feel has driven me from not liking the page again.
>
> **Moono**: From the posts I have read, I agree with some, and some not so much. I don't know who runs the page, if it is one person or a group of people or an organisation, I have no idea, but the posts are very opinionated. I feel there is a misconception of what feminism is in Zambia and that has somewhat affected the content on that page, it is like an attack, it is aggressive.

These extracts clearly show that women fans' selective consumption of the *Zambian Feminists* is closely tied to how they view the page administrator's roles. The page administrator is viewed as "aggressive" in her approach, and for participants like Zion and Moono, her aggression has led them to consume the *Zambian Feminists* selectively. What is interesting about Moono's and Zion's comments is that despite them saying the page administrator is aggressive in her approach, they still follow the page's discussions. One can then assume that the 32000 plus followers of the *Zambian Feminists* page is not an accurate representation of follower numbers, as there may be other women fans who have since unliked the page but still avidly follow the discussions.

Participants' comments about the page administrator being aggressive is a critical point in understanding women fans' consumption preferences of the *Zambian Feminists.* It is important to note that the page's tagline is "of course we are angry". In Chapter two (see section 2.5.2), I explained that this anger emanates from Zambian women not "being heard" and not having space where women can listen to each other and "share a voice". What is interesting is that this anger/ aggression in the messaging has polarised the women fans. But, if some participants have been drawn away from the page due to the aggressiveness in the messages, others are drawn towards the page because they feel there is a need for Zambian women to be more aggressive in their feminism. Women fans who resonate with the tagline and have no problem with the messages' aggression justify their preferences in line with the current gender-unequal landscape. The following individual interview extracts from participants Njavwa and Harriet succinctly capture how women fans justify their anger and aggression in their feminism:

> **Njavwa**: When I hear people say, "I am a feminist, but I am not angry, or you can be feminist and not be bitter", I go back and ask these people, why are you not angry? Why are you not bitter? Because you just have to step outside to get harassed or see someone get harassed. You only have to open the news to hear of a woman being killed. There is something I read in one of her posts [*Zambian Feminists*] which says, "a woman breathing is the fires in itself". The very thought of me leaving my house and the potential of it being the last time. I am angry all the time

> because there is nothing for me to calm down over, there is nothing for me to relax over, we are in danger at any given moment so yes, I am angry.
>
> **Harriet**: I do resonate with the tagline. I am very angry because every time I wake up, all I see are stats about women and children being raped. I experience catcalling and sexism like every other day. In everything that I do I see how everything is about gender, how men are treated differently from women, how men earn more than women despite putting in the same work and how women do most of the work. So, I am angry about all these things, and I feel it is ok because I feel once you get angry, you get things done. Sometimes I feel you need to be more radical when it comes to dismantling these systems set up to oppress us.

These comments show how patriarchal behaviour like rape, abuse, sexism, catcalling and harassment anger participants. It also shows why Njavwa and Harriet have no problem with how messages are presented on the page because it reflects their truth. While it may seem as if women fans are on two ends of the spectrum, there is a mid-section where participants negotiate this aggression. For 25-year-old activist Winnie, the page administrator's aggression is only a reflection of her passion for feminism and social change:

> "We have different approaches to feminism like she is very passionate, so she comes out a bit rough sometimes. According to how I see it, she is a bit rough around the edges she will say things, but that shows her passion for feminism, she is very passionate."

Participants' perception of the page administrator as being aggressive in her approach is critical in understanding what passes for an acceptable public expression of anger among women and the expectation that women need to manage anger. It provides a basis for understanding how women in patriarchal societies like Zambia have been socialised to view the public expression of anger as undesirable. Studies on anger and gender suggest that women and men both experience and express anger, but women are socialised to view this anger expression as unfeminine or somehow undesirable (Lerner, 1997; Miller, 1991; Shields, 1987; Klein, 2011). Lerner (1997) argues that women have social and internal prohibitions against anger expression, especially the expression of anger towards men. She also suggests that women feel this prohibition so strongly that they may not even acknowledge their anger (Lerner, 1997; Klein, 2011).

On the other hand, men appear to be more comfortable expressing anger, and societal norms exist endorsing male expression of anger (Lewis, 2000; Shields, 1987). Aggression, a form of anger expression, is a masculine trait, and people expect men to be aggressive in certain circumstances (Hess, 2017). Studies like Larrisa Tiedens' 2001 *Anger and advancement versus sadness and subjugation* suggest that anger can heighten the status of a man, while Victoria

Brescoll and Eric Uhlmann's 2008 study on status *Conferral, gender, and expression of emotion in the workplace* shows that angry women have lower status than men. A double standard in the expression of anger between men and women is present in our culture.

The interviews revealed that while participants are angry about the continued status quo, patriarchy, gender inequality, and gender biases, they acknowledge their failure to express this anger publicly. Of interest was the fact that while the participants that critiqued the *Zambian Feminists* page as being too aggressive, when interrogated explained that they too are angry but find public expression of anger as undesirable. This excerpt from an individual interview with Chilombo, a university student, succinctly captures why some women fans fail to express their anger publicly:

> "Personally, I am not a very confrontational person, I am quiet, and I try to be calm. However, inside talking about feminist issues being told that "no, equality won't happen tomorrow" by men or women, which makes it even worse just boils inside me. I can't do anything about it because I feel like I will sound too angry and I don't like that statement coming out of my mouth because we are expected to act a certain way by society. Women shouldn't be loud and angry, but definitely, we should be angry, and we have every right to be because we are definitely being taken for a ride".

Chilombo's comment about letting the anger "boil" inside her reaffirms Lerner's (1997) suggestion that women have a social and internal prohibition against anger expression. Her comment also shows a sense of powerlessness as she does not have an outlet for her anger and must just let it boil inside her. Strikingly, she also affirms women's need to be angry and rejects the societal norms that women should not be too loud or too angry. In this way, one notes that *Zambian Feminists* is popular because (among other reasons) it publicly expresses anger, an emotion many Zambian women feel but fail to express publicly. Adding "of course we are angry" to their tagline, *Zambian Feminists* gives Zambian women a platform and permission to express their anger and be heard publicly.

For the most part, this section has discussed why women fans are drawn to the *Zambian Feminists.* It explained how some fans see the page as being too opinionated and aggressive. For many, though, the aggression in the messages on the page reflects their truth. Many fail to express their anger because of Zambian societal norms around women and public expression of anger. The next section explores what counts as feminism in Zambia and how participants negotiate their online feminist identity and offline identities as women living in a patriarchal society.

7.3 What "counts" as "feminism" in Zambia?

Although no questions overtly asked what counts as feminism in the interviews, some views on feminism in Zambia did emerge. Most women fans claimed that feminism in Africa is different from the feminism practised in the West. They referred to their feminism not as African feminism (see section 3.5.4) but as a "Zambian feminism". Chapter three (section 3.5.4) discussed how African feminism developed in response to Western feminism, which is criticised for being prescriptive, western-centric, middle-class, and dominated by white middle-class women's concerns. Many of the women fans who discussed what counts as feminism in Zambia expressed a strong rejection of Western feminism; some even expressed concern that the *Zambian Feminists* page shares content that is not relevant to the Zambian social context. Mwanji explains the difference between "Zambian feminism" and Western feminism:

> **Mwanji**: I feel feminism is different for different people, rather for different women. I believe that the page admin writes very interesting stories, but let me say feminism in Zambia and feminism in the Western world are two different kinds of feminism. For us, it is more about equal pay or equal jobs, the fact that we can go to school; it is feminism in those lines. But feminism in America is about women who do not want to get married or elongate their labia. Here you can be a feminist, but when you come back home, you are a wife and still cook for your husband, but feminism in the western world is, if I do the dishes, you do the laundry. At the end of the road, if you get married to a Zambian man, we have to tone down our levels of feminism, not as we see them in the Western world.

Mwanji draws on the discourse of traditionalism to differentiate "Zambian feminism" from Western feminism. In her opinion, feminism in Zambia is advocating for equal employment and education opportunities while still upholding traditional patriarchal norms that dictate that household chores are the preserve of women. Contrary to feminism in the West which she describes as a "rejection" of "tradition", Western feminists do not want to elongate their labia or get married, and if they get married, they expect to share household chores with their partners equally. She remarks that to get married to a Zambian man, women will have to "tone down" their "levels of feminism", not like it is in the Western world. For her, "toning down the levels of feminism" means upholding some aspects of patriarchy like the patriarchal modes of production in the household, as they embody how a "good woman", "wife", and ultimately a "cultured Zambian woman" is supposed to behave in marriage. Mwanji's comment shows how, on the one hand, feminists in Zambia are expected to disrupt the status

quo, demanding equal opportunities in employment and education, while on the other hand, maintaining the status quo with regards to patriarchy in the household.

In line with the above sentiments, many other comments reflected a need for a context-specific type of feminism and not simply adopting Western feminism. There are more pressing issues for them, and some of the content shared on the *Zambian Feminists* page are not necessary or irrelevant to the Zambian context. This view was generally pervasive among women fans who felt a need to address context-specific issues before taking on the issues that Western feminists are advocating for, like the wage gap. The need for context-specific feminism was implied in some readers' responses as follows:

> **Judy:** Sometimes I wonder if they [*Zambian Feminists*] are addressing the right audience, I feel like there is feminism for every part of the world, and I feel like there issues that we might be facing here. They [*Zambian Feminists*] have picked on aspects that the West is pushing, like the wage gap and representation in the media, when those are not the pressing issues for the women in our society. For us, it is things to do with sexual abuse and things like that, but I feel there are more important issues we are behind, like what is happening in Europe and the US. We need to reach a certain level before we can address those issues.

> **Lusungu:** I feel there are many forms of feminism, and I applaud the pioneers of feminism. They took a more radical approach to feminism; they came off as strong, but as the world evolves, you see that different dynamics are coming in, like fighting for equal rights and bridging the gender pay gap. In Zambia, I don't think we have such issues because the pay is tied to qualifications, the papers you have and the kind of experience you have. You don't find that a male teacher is getting more than a female teacher with a degree. They all get paid the same.

Judy and Lusungu's comments reflect a sense of alienation in what Western feminists are advocating for; for them, issues of wage gap and representation are not pertinent issues for their social context. This is seen in how Judy views sexual abuse as a more important issue than the wage gap. For them, the gender pay gap issues are more prevalent to women in the West than for Zambian women. Lusungu's comment about "gender pay gap being non-existent in Zambia" reveals that the respondents have not understood the different facets to bridging the gap. Having a female teacher who gets the same pay as a male teacher is not bridging the gender pay gap, especially in Zambia, where women earn less than their male counterparts and are generally undervalued in the workplace (Sida, 2014).

In light of these comments, one can draw on African feminism, which argues that Western feminism views women's struggles as homogeneous (Nkealah, 2006). Chapter three (section 3.5.4) discussed how African feminism is not singular, but feminism(s) that are

context-specific and constitute many heterogeneous experiences and points of departure (Ahikire, 2014; Lewis, 2001). Ahikire argues that "various theoretical perspectives of African feminism emanate from the complexities and specifics of the different material conditions and identities of women and informed by the many diverse and creative ways in which we contest power in our private and public lives" (Ahikire, 2014: 8). However, it is important to note that this context-specific approach to feminism does not mean turning a blind eye to other issues that affect women because they are not as prevalent in this social context. This view finds support on one of the women fan's explanations of how issues that are not considered prevalent in Zambia still affect women and have the potential to become prevalent:

> **Lombe:** I don't think there is feminism for the US and Zambia or any other African country. I think that there is definitely a sense of wanting to prioritise certain issues because those are prevalent issues in a specific society. But I don't live on defining feminism based on what a certain group wants. I tend to think of things at an individual level, me as a woman, what is important to me, the injustices I am facing, and how will I push the message to end those injustices? As women worldwide, we face all kinds of different issues, so that wage gap might be an issue in the US, but that doesn't mean it will not be an issue in Zambia, just because there are other issues. I believe that we need to be aware and sensitive to all the different issues that women are going through, and I do agree with the point of wanting to raise voices on things that are major issues like child marriages is still a major issue in Zambia. I 100% believe we should be raising our voices on those things, but that does not mean no one should talk about the wage gap and does that mean no one should talk about sexuality? I don't think so; I see feminism as a choice, so women must be free to speak out about the things that affect them.

Lombe's comment highlights the need to prioritise context-specific issues without ignoring other issues that affect women in Zambia and the world. Like Lombe's view, Moono argues that feminism is the same everywhere, but for her, the problem lies in not knowing which feminist wave we are in and what that wave entails:

> **Moono**: For me, I don't think there are different feminisms in the US or Africa or Zambia. There obviously have been waves of feminism, the first wave was all about, I can't quite recall, but women's rights, and there was a feminism of voting rights, and there was a feminism of women giving birth or something like that. I think there have been different waves of feminism, but in Zambia, we view feminism as an attack on men. I think that is where the problem is; it is not a different definition of feminisms, but knowing what wave we are in.

Moono uses the different feminist waves, first-wave (The suffragette movement) and second-wave (The personal is political) of feminism, to explain the different evolutions the feminist movement has undergone (see Chapter three, section 3.5). In her opinion, feminists in Zambia do not know what wave we are currently in, and hence they view feminism as an attack

on men. Her rejection of feminism as an attack on men legitimises the ideology of gender inclusion that underpins African feminism (Nkealah, 2006); for her, feminism also involves men. This view finds support in women fans who spoke of the need to include men in the fight for equality. As Lusungu puts it:

> **Lusungu**: Should these feminist actions we are talking about only benefit women or everyone? Even if we are fighting for equality, we will end up leaving the men behind. Must they also start a movement of their own fighting for men's rights? Why not fight for equal treatment for everyone, not just women?

In support of the views above on including men and not leaving them behind, Nkealah (2016: 63) argues that African feminism(s) are underpinned by an ideology of gender inclusion, collaboration, and accommodation to ensure that both women and men contribute (even if not equally) to improving women's material conditions. For Nkealah (2016: 63), the focus on male inclusion is meant to enlighten men and empower women, and this is one of the ways that African feminism differs from Western feminism, which is criticised for excluding men. However, not all participants agree with this view. For others like Njavwa and Harriet, men cannot understand their struggle, and hence they don't see the need to include them in their feminism:

> **Njavwa**: I identify as a radical feminist. I have no interest in having my feminism placeable to men or the patriarchy. I have no interest in being a nice feminist or going to men and saying, "let us have the conversation", "come and join us, let us talk about this", "men, you have to help us". Like I shouldn't even be a radical feminist, but I am here fighting for my rights and the rights of other women. It is radical because I feel that men are not included in my fight because they do not know what I am going through. I am radical because I talk about sex without shame. I am radical because I call out people that are much older than me whom I am supposed to respect and agree with even if their opinions make no sense. It is the basic things; I will talk about all these things, just like the admin [*Zambian Feminists*] does. People would say she is a radical feminist because she is talking about things that we should all be talking about, but nobody wants to talk about.

> **Harriet:** I used to think men could be like true allies, but they benefit from this system at the end of the day. Inasmuch as they can understand how women are oppressed and how it affects them, they can never go to the extent that someone in the situation, like us, the women, would go. Because men have the whole "bro code" and fear of being deemed "weak". We need them, but at the end of the day, all I see is we are all on our own because even the most progressive of men, the ones that call themselves allies; in the long run, it starts to show that they are just men who enjoy what patriarchy accords them. We need them to unlearn that I don't know, maybe giving them more time, but I feel the key is us, the women mostly.

Njavwa draws on second-wave feminism associated with radical feminist activism to categorise and define her feminism. Similar to the radical second-wave feminists who are characterized by a claim of 'sisterhood and solidarity' and forming women-only 'rap' groups (Freeman, 1972; Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006), Njavwa bluntly rejects the idea of including men in the struggle for her and other women's rights. In her opinion, men do not understand her struggle. Hence she does not see the need for them to be included in her feminism. In the Zambian social context, she is deemed radical because she openly talks about sex without shame, challenges tradition and "calls out" the elderly who perpetuate patriarchal practices, things most women wouldn't say or do. She equates her radical feminism to that of the *Zambian Feminists* page administrator, whom she recognises as a fellow radical for talking about the things no one wants to talk about in Zambian society.

On the other hand, Harriet dismisses the idea that men can be allies in the fight for equality because they are the patriarchal system's beneficiaries. In her opinion, men can never fully comprehend what women go through and even as they call themselves "allies", hegemonic masculinity in the form of a "bro code" does not allow them to be deemed as "weak" for supporting women. These benefits that men have for not necessarily perpetuating patriarchal norms are what Connell (2005: 79) terms the "patriarchal dividend". For Connell (2005: 79), patriarchal dividends are the benefits men accrue from the patriarchal bargain. In her view, complicit masculinity does not challenge the gender systems but instead benefits from it by being male (Connell, 2005: 79). This is why Harriet thinks men should unlearn these dividends, but in the end, she reverts to her initial idea that women are the key to fighting for equality.

It also emerged that there was a misconception of who a feminist is in the Zambian social context. From the interviews, women fans spoke of how they did not want to be deemed as "man haters" because they identify as feminist. For them, identifying as feminists does not mean they don't want to enjoy affection from men. To correct this misconception, participants called on the *Zambian Feminists* to shed more light on the origins of feminism and who is a feminist. Two interviewees, Nomsa and Mutinta, aptly captured this scenario, reflecting on how they are considered man-haters because of their feminist identity:

> **Nomsa**: I think she [*Zambian Feminists*] needs to add the difference between feminism and femininity. Somehow the world thinks just because you are a feminist, you don't associate yourself with certain feminine things, and I think the world needs to be educated on that. Look, I am a feminist, but I still love men, I still want to get married someday, but I also have thoughts about what womanhood is, what culture for a woman should be and what is wrong. It is ok

> to bring me flowers, and it is ok to bring me chocolate. Most Zambian men think, oh ", you are a feminist", "a feminism", as some of them have called me. Just because I am a feminist, it doesn't mean that I don't like the door being opened for me, I don't like roses, and I don't want to split the bill on the first date. People have many misconceptions about feminism and femininity. I think she [*Zambian Feminists*] should look into that, like being a feminist doesn't take away your feminine nature.
>
> **Mutinta:** I think men only think about toxic radical feminism when they hear feminism. Maybe they [*Zambian Feminists*] should have a dialogue on the origins of feminism and what it stands for. Feminism doesn't preach hatred of men. We need men the same way men need women. There is a need to discuss what being a feminist is and what it entails because everyone thinks that when you say you are a feminist, you hate men, and you are crazy and radical. That is not what it is, and those are not the roots of feminism.

In Nomsa's and Mutinta's views, there seems to be a misconception in Zambian society regarding loving men and wanting equality for women. Nomsa draws on the distinction between femininity and feminism to clarify how, as a feminist, she does not hate men and enjoys chivalry. Equating feminism to femininity shows a false equivalency since loving men is not the same as not being a feminist. Mutinta, on the other hand, speaks of the need to understand the origins of feminism. She rejects associating with the radical feminists of the second-wave by how she refers to them as "toxic radical feminists". This rebellion of younger women against what was perceived as a prescriptive, pushy, sex-negative approach of second-wave feminists led to the emergence of the third-wave (Barker and Jane, 2016). Third-wave feminism is theoretically rooted in post-colonial, intersectional and post-feminist influences (Schuster, 2013). Post-feminism critiques the second-wave for their perceptions of relationships between feminism and femininity. This can be seen in how Nomsa and Mutinta want to be regarded as "feminine man-loving feminists".

In the same line of thought, other participants spoke of the need to explain what feminism is as they do not fully understand what being a feminist entails. As participant Nosiku put it, "I don't really know much about feminism, I can lie, all I know is that feminism is making sure that women get a fair share and are treated fairly. I don't know all the nooks and crannies of feminism, but I feel like that is one thing that she [*Zambian Feminists*] needs to talk about.

It is important to reiterate that what "counts" as "feminism" in Zambia is based on the social, cultural and political context these women find themselves in. As seen in Chapter three, feminisms on the African continent are theorized on indigenous models and are based on (local) histories and cultures, drawing from them appropriate tools to empower women and enlighten

men (Nkealah, 2016). By highlighting the need to enlighten men on feminism, this section has discussed debates around male inclusion in feminism. While male inclusion remains a contentious topic, participants spoke about being feminists who love men, want to be married and want to be "good wives". One can safely say that feminism in Zambia is not different from other African feminism(s) that resist the Western definition of feminism and are underpinned by an ideology of gender inclusion (Nkealah, 2016: 63). What then counts as feminism in Zambia is speaking out against issues that affect women, although priority is given to this social space's pertinent issues. The next section explores how women fans negotiate an online and an offline feminist identity.

7.4 Online feminist identity versus Offline feminist identity

This section discusses how the *Zambian Feminists* page administrator and women fans of the page negotiate their identity as brave feminists online and their offline identities as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters living in a patriarchal society.

From the interviews conducted, it became apparent that some women fans of the page have two identities: an online and an offline identity. Of interest was that all the women fans boldly identified as feminists and spoke up against patriarchal practices perpetuated in Zambia, but when probed further, some women mentioned having rejected the label feminist in offline social settings. Instead, they attributed this rejection to a fear of being attacked or ostracised in social settings and not necessarily a rejection of their feminist identity. The women fans explained that identifying as a feminist in Zambia attracts debate as feminism remains a contentious topic, and feminists are often perceived as bitter and angry, and men-haters. Leaning on Radloff's (2013) ideas as explained in Chapter four (see section 4.2), women activists are met with a combination of online digital threats and offline issues that hinder them from publicly expressing, associating and actively participating as citizens. This is particularly so because attacks against women activists are online as they are offline (Radloff, 2013). This is clearly articulated, particularly in the personal interview with Nosiku:

> **Interviewer:** Do you openly identify as a feminist?
> **Nosiku:** I do! I do! Although I feel like a fraud sometimes. When somebody asks me, are you a feminist? I have refused that I am a feminist when deep down, I know I am. You find yourself somewhere with a group of friends at a party, and some people are bashing feminists, and then they ask, "do we have any feminists here"? I am just quiet, I feel like I should raise my hand, but they say things like "feminists are bitter hahaha, these feminists they are so angry they just need to get laid (slang for sex) blah blah blah". Would you be the only one

> who says, “I am here, right over here”? I don’t know if I could do that, but I know deep down in my heart that I am. I will just be quiet, but when I get home, I am a feminist.
> **Interviewer:** If this situation was online, how would you have reacted?
> **Nosiku:** Online am powerful; we can go head-to-head. Online! We can go even for the whole night. I am very powerful.

In this way one notes that publicly identifying as a feminist in Zambian social settings risks being subject to mockery and scorn, and Nosiku, by rejecting the feminist label, protects herself from attacks. This can be seen in how she keeps quiet during a party and waits until she is in the safety of her home to declare that she is a feminist openly, in contrast to how she would react if this scenario happened online; she considers herself powerful in online settings and can go head-to-head arguing her point. However, this makes her feel like a fraud because offline, she has denied being a feminist. Nosiku’s comment shows how feminists are generally perceived as bitter, angry and sexually deprived females. Nosiku’s failure to openly identify as a feminist is not a rejection of who she is but a safety measure from attacks targeted at feminists.

Generally, women fans spoke about how they have to negotiate their online-offline feminist identity in different social settings. They talked about how difficult it is to be a strong feminist offline while living in a society where cultural practices perpetuate patriarchy. They explained how on the one hand they are calling out certain practices online, and on the other hand, they still want to uphold culture as a form of respect and maintain relationships with the different men in their lives. Chilombo’s explanation succinctly captures these different dimensions of negotiating an online-offline identity:

> “It is easier to talk online than to do it offline. I mean talking and execution is two very different things. For example, I hate kneeling, especially for men who are not my dad, and the only reason I do it for my dad is that I respect him as my father. I guess that is some ‘patriarchalness’ that am negotiating. I am calmer with the men in my life, but I try not to negotiate too much. When online, I am screaming men are trash! Men are trash! But when I am talking to my boyfriend am like “nah baby, you are the greatest”. It is a bit let me say hypocritical but if someone asked me “is your father also trash?” I would say yes, because he is helping the system continue but, I do tone down my feminism offline”.

Chilombo’s comment shows the many different layers that she has to consider when upholding her feminist beliefs offline. On the one hand, culture dictates that she must kneel before men, and whilst she acknowledges hating this aspect of culture she admits that she still has to kneel for her father out of respect. These conflicting circumstances lead her to say she is “calmer” with the men in her life, meaning she is not “screaming men are trash” at them. On the other hand, she talks about how she uses social media to call out men using #menaretrash,

whilst she reassures her boyfriend that he is not trash. Fascinatingly, she defends herself by saying if asked whether her father is trash, she would say yes. In this sense, it can be seen that Chilombo is aware of the fact that the men in her life (her father and her partner) are perpetuating a system that oppresses women, but she will not directly confront them because she wants to maintain the relationship of daughter and girlfriend with them. Chilombo's predicament best captures how women fans tone down their feminism offline to uphold the culture and maintain relationships in their different roles as wives, daughters, sisters, girlfriends, and mothers living in Zambia's patriarchal society.

In support of the view above on negotiating an online and an offline feminist identity, Boyd (2007) argues that the Internet offers users the possibility to forge completely new online identities, which can be multiple, or to reshape their offline identity, carefully choosing "what information to put forward, thereby eliminating visceral reactions that might have seeped out in everyday communication" (Boyd, 2007: 12). Greijdanus et al. (2020) argues that people enact different personae online versus offline. Relatively anonymous online environments free people from concerns to be positively evaluated and consequent social restrictions to their behaviour (Greijdanus et al., 2020). This facilitates online activism without fear of social repercussions.

Another dimension to participants negotiating their online-offline feminist identity is employment. Employment emerged as one of the main reasons why participants have to negotiate their online-offline feminist identities. Women fans spoke about how they have to continually weigh the benefits of speaking up against the risk of being unemployed. Participants said they fail to tackle issues head-on in the offline space as they would online because in offline spaces like their workplaces, they risk being fired. As a result, participants have had to tone down their feminism at work. Harriet, a marketing executive, explains how she posts about sexism online but fails to address it head-on offline because she fears losing her job. This extract from the individual interview best captures this scenario:

> "I feel social media is where I get off all my frustrations. I feel really small in the real world and powerless, I talk about sexism in the workplace online, but I fail to tackle head-on offline because I am afraid if I speak out, I might lose my job. I might be seen as been insubordinate and everything I feel like I betray myself at the end of the day because I feel I am not as strong as I should be."

Harriet's comments recall Nosiku's earlier statement of feeling like a fraud. Harriet feels she betrays herself because while she openly castigates sexism online, she does not speak out offline for fear of losing her job. This can be seen in how she views herself as "small" and

"powerless" in the real world compared to social media, where she can bravely speak her mind without fear of losing her job. Harriet's experience legitimizes Connell's (2009) observation that institutions such as workplaces also have regimes of patriarchal gender relations.

While some participants spoke about their fear of losing their jobs if they were to be as vocal offline as online, others fear being vocal online due to the guidelines put in place by their institution regarding what they can post or say on social media. Moono, a consultant, shares her experience regarding employment guidelines on what she can post and not post online:

> "I don't post anything controversial or anything. We have all these guidelines at my workplace of what we can post. Even if it is on my accounts on social media, there are still all these guidelines on what you can post and what you can't. If it is anything political, anything that has to do with feminism, all these guidelines limit you on what you can post and what you can share".

Moono's comment provides a twist to participants negotiating their online-offline feminist identity, because unlike other participants who are more expressive online, she has an institutional guideline that limits what she can post or share on her social media platforms. Her comment underscores how contentious feminism is as a topic in Zambia, one dangerous enough to the general social order to warrant specific guidelines on what can be said or not.

Participants also fear not being employed because of their online activism. Some women fans spoke about how long it has taken them to be formally employed because of their content on social media, which some employers may find controversial. Njavwa, a gender consultant, shares her experience:

> "For many of us, we can't say everything we want to say because you think what if a potential employer searches for this and they find this would this increase my chances of being employed? I feel like this is why I have taken long to get into formal employment the 9-5 because I am not going to let the patriarchy close my mouth so that I can get a salary".

Njavwa's comment is a glimpse into how women fans searching for formal employment fear sharing controversial topics because they do not want to decrease their chances of being employed. It shows how being too vocal online may affect employment chances offline. As a result, there is a limit to what can be said online. Intriguingly, Njavwa speaks boldly about not letting the patriarchy close her mouth in order to get a salary. A resolve that she will continue to post and speak out, even if it takes her longer to get into full-time employment.

Despite the tension and consequences that follow on this conscious separation between online and offline feminist identity, participants spoke about how they have learnt to integrate

these “sides” of their identity. An extract from an interview with Njavwa best describes this evolution:

> “I have now grown into one person, but in the beginning, I was there on social media as the angry feminist, and then there were spaces where I sort of didn’t want to be connected to that persona. Let’s say groups that are non-feminists, dates with men and even with relatives. I wouldn’t want to get into the whole feminism topic for fear of being ostracised and being shut down. I moved from just taking out that anger on social media to real life. There was this one time when I was with a group of friends that I even flipped a table because people were intentionally obtuse. I was explaining something, and they were just trying to antagonise me. I decided I could no longer be this one person here and another there. I just have to be a feminist and activist in every space. Now it has gotten to a point where I don’t know if people are biting their tongues around me or they are really with my politics now, but whatever it is I am done with my closet I no longer have to fight”.

Njavwa’s comment highlights the importance of a unified identity, and having the people around you know what you believe and stand for. This can best be seen in how she used to hide her feminism in specific social settings until she found herself in a situation where she had to defend her feminist values against a group of non-feminists that were being deliberately obtuse. This altercation resulted in her flipping a table, an outward symbol of the frustration and anger she had been harbouring inside her, and this action made her realise the need to have one identity. That way, her friends and family know she is a feminist and will either understand and respect what she stands for or hold their tongues and not say anything that goes against her beliefs, a situation she best describes as being done with a closeted life and no longer fighting with herself.

While other participants still have a long way to go before having a single feminist identity, those that embraced a single feminist identity both online and offline, are a testament to the fact that it can be done. For instance, Chanda is a participant who claims to be the same person everywhere, be it online, or offline with her children. “The Chanda you get online is the Chanda you get everywhere, whether I am with my kids or at work. I am feminist everywhere am this strong woman everywhere”, meaning she has grown into one person be it online or offline.

Having attempted to discuss how women fans negotiate their online and offline feminist identity, the next section delves into how the *Zambian Feminists* administrator and women fans navigate the thin line between activism and online safety.

7.5 Online activism versus online safety

The *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page posts on various topics that are deemed contentious within the Zambian context; I wanted to understand how the page administrator ensures women contributors' safety on the platform, taking into account the fact that the page is public. A public page means anyone with access to Facebook can see the platform's discussions, and as such, Internet trolls may take advantage of this feature to attack the page administrator and women contributors to the page. During an interview with the page administrator, she explained how she ensures safety on this platform by moderating the comments:

> How I ensure safety is by regulating the comments. If someone says something negative, hurtful or demeaning, I instantly ban, block and delete, because I don't want people to get on the page and feel scared to talk about issues. I do not tolerate trolls; I go through all the comments and read everything, if I am not happy, I ban. Sometimes I use humour to tackle trolls, I clap and talkback, for example when a troll says something, I say "your mother". When I started, I had so many trolls, now am almost down to zero. I just say it as it is, I don't sugar coat it, if someone is not happy male or female I block. Firstly, it is my page. Secondly, I want to create a safe space and encourage vulnerability, and thirdly conversations have to be led with facts and understanding from parties. Others may think we are unfair, but the truth is we are trying to serve a purpose, and by serving a purpose, we must not limit the freedom of minorities that may need the protection.

From the comments above, it is evident that the page administrator takes her page followers' safety seriously. This can be seen in how she does not entertain trolls on her platform; she bans, deletes and blocks anyone who posts anything she deems inappropriate. All this is done to ensure that the page is a safe space for women to share experiences and freely express themselves. In Chapter four (see section 4.2.1), I explained that safe space is a term used to refer to a place - physical, digital or symbolic - where specific rules have been put in place regarding discourse and interactions, and where certain people or modes of conduct are excluded in order to make the space as inclusionary as possible (Gibson, 2017; 2019). Leaning on Gibson's (2017; 2019) definition of safe space, one may say that the page administrator's approach is necessary, more so in Zambia's patriarchal social context. She acknowledges that her approach may be viewed as one that is intolerant to different opinions. Still, she justifies her actions by re-emphasising the need to offer protection to minorities on her page.

Another dimension to activism and online safety is that of the page administrator's personal safety. It is important to note that some of the topics she shares on the platform are deemed uncultured, indecent or immoral, for instance, posts that advocate for the recognition

and rights of the LGBTIQ community in Zambia. In Chapter two (see section 2.3.1), I explained an existing LGBTIQ community in Zambia that is not free to express themselves, due to the existing laws that do not permit homosexuality (Sida, 2014). By publicly advocating for their recognition and rights on a public forum like Facebook, the *Zambian Feminists* administrator risks being attacked and arrested. Chapter two (see section 2.3.1) mentioned the public outcry from Zambians against activists and sympathisers of the LGBTIQ community, both local and international, to the extent where some local activists have even been arrested (BBC, 2013). With the country's current state of affairs, I wanted to understand how the *Zambian Feminists* page administrator ensures her safety online and offline.

> "I was once intimidated with prison; it was the case of two girls kissing (I explain this in detail in Chapter two, see section 2.3.1), I thought the search for them was so stupid. I spoke up about it, and they were people calling for my arrest. I had to hide, take leave from work for three days, and call my friend to ask for the number for Amnesty International. That is the one time I knew I had crossed the line, but it had to be done. Homophobia has the power to bring people who hate each other together. That was the biggest intimidation, others had been personal attacks on me, my looks or my weight. It takes so long to build confidence, but it is easy for trolls to tear it down. It's a form of intimidation, personal attacks on me, from people who know me, who want to challenge me and hold me accountable because I said this, or they think I did that. Personal attacks, people were trying to rally up against me, and homophobic attacks.

The above comment shows the different forms of intimidation Zambian activists face, from threats of imprisonment, personal attacks and character assassination. The seriousness of these threats can be seen from her turning to Amnesty International on one occasion for protection. She also mentions how some haters find it easy to attack her based on her appearance and character, a situation she terms an attack on her self-esteem. Her comments also highlight how homophobia is a magnet in rallying people against anyone who threatens to challenge the status quo.

During the interview with the page administrator, what stood out was her reference to Facebook as the biggest hindrance to her activism. This is interesting because unlike popular opinion that the internet is a free space where people can express themselves openly, there are guidelines regarding what can be said on the platform. This interview extract with *Zambian Feminists* succinctly captures how Facebook acts as a stumbling block in her activism:

> "Facebook themselves they drive me crazy they are very restrictive. I have had more than ten posts banned because they do not meet Facebook standards, bullshit. It is things like "men are trash", that statement gets you into Facebook jail for 48 hours without even blinking. For example, I wrote a post about

> the men are trash movement, and how people do not understand it, it is not bashing all men, it was brought up because the majority of men are the ones who perpetrate crimes against women. When women stand up against this, of course they are not referring to all men, but the whole it's not all men argument is brought up. I made a comparison between the men are trash movement and the xenophobic attacks in South Africa. My argument was that not all South Africans attack foreigners, but you know that if you hold them to account collectively, they will make a change, and that is what feminists do. That post was really good, but I was put in Facebook jail for 48 hours and, they banned me from my page and personal account. As much as Facebook gives us a platform to share our ideas, it restricts how and what we can talk about. It is the most restrictive part that drives me crazy".

This comment reinforces what I explained in Chapter two (see section 2.5.1): Facebook has regulations that govern what type of information can be shared on the platform. According to Facebook, these regulations are known as community standards, and they are enforced to create a place of expression and give people a voice (Facebook Newsroom, 2019). Interestingly, Facebook instantly bans anyone who uses the phrase "men are trash", while comments targeted towards feminists take longer to be taken down and at times are never removed (Curtis, 2018; Newton, 2019). Even though Facebook has admitted that the world is too diverse to take into consideration all the forms of hate speech (Zuylen-Wood, 2019), the currently existing policies, however, pose a challenge for feminists who may want to use the phrase to raise awareness on issues that affect women or educate the public on what the phrase means.

Although Facebook is not a haven for feminists, it has given women fans of the *Zambian Feminists* a platform to air their views. I still wanted to find out if they feel safe expressing themselves on this platform considering Zambia's patriarchal context and the existence of trolls on Facebook. It became apparent from the interviews that women fans feel supported expressing themselves on the feminist page. Nosiku explained how she had not received any personal attacks based on opinions expressed on the feminist page. "To be honest, I feel supported on the feminist page; I haven't gotten any opposing views, where someone comes to oppose me personally, I haven't gotten that". Nosiku's comment succinctly captures the sentiments of women fans.

However, what emerged is that inasmuch as women fans feel supported expressing themselves on the Facebook page, they find Twitter a better feminist platform for advocacy. This preference is because Twitter has a louder feminist voice and supportive community compared to Facebook. For them, Twitter has not been fully embraced in Zambia, meaning they do not have their families and employers on the platform, enabling them to express

themselves freely. They also attributed this to the Twitter demographic as one that is more open to different opinions and beliefs than Facebook, which Zambians have taken to with alacrity but is intolerant of different opinions and beliefs. The following individual interview extracts succinctly capture women fans' preferences for Twitter:

> **Njavwa:** I like Facebook, I used to be a regular, but when I got vocal about my feminism this closed-mindedness is just infuriating, and the community is just small there. There are more women opposed to feminism on Facebook than the ones supporting. So, I went to Twitter, started my feminism there and found women from all over the world who would agree, and we have just formed a strong community, and it is quite amazing there. Also, it is easier to connect on a global level.

> **Harriet:** On Facebook, I never felt supported. I feel that is why I reduced my usage and went to Twitter. I feel supported there, the Feminist voice is louder, and people have diverse views compared to Facebook. On Twitter, I have had a chance to engage with other feminists from Nigeria and Ghana, and it is just easier to interact with them there than it is for me on Facebook. For Facebook we have to be friends, we have to be connected, but the Twitter setup makes it easier to interact, someone's tweet can pop up on my feed, and I can easily comment if their account is not private.

From Harriet's comments above, it is clear that the way Twitter is set up influences the richness and diversity of feminist discussions on the platform. The default Twitter setting is public, meaning anyone can see and interact with tweets whether they have a Twitter account or not, unless the user decides to protect their tweets and limits who can see (Twitter, 2021). This setting is what allows participants to interact and connect with other feminists from around the globe. This situation is not possible on Facebook because Facebook requires users to be connected to interact and see each other's posts (Boyd and Ellison, 2007: 211).

One may conclude this section by arguing that social media is not a feminist haven, as internet trolls exist on various platforms. The *Zambian Feminists* page administrator is aware of this and tries to make her page a safe space where contributors can be vulnerable and express themselves. For many women fans though, the page is a space to express themselves and find support; however, some participants prefer Twitter as it provides diverse views and has a stronger feminist community. The next section explores the effectiveness of digital activism.

7.6 The effectiveness of digital activism

This section discusses the effectiveness of digital activism. One of the criticisms levelled against digital activism is that it does not translate into tangible actions offline (Munro, 2013:

22). In this sense, digital activists are considered keyboard warriors hiding behind a screen (Schuster, 2013; Munro, 2013).

Most of the participants claimed that digital activism is effective; in fact, they follow the page to advocate for women's issues. In the interviews, women fans made comments that showed a certain doubt about the effectiveness of digital activism in Zambia. Many of those who said digital activism is effective, referred to popular international online movements like #MeToo, the Arab spring and #AmINext? However, little or no reference is made to Zambian online movements that have yielded results. Some even expressed concern about what tangible results come out of all the noise they make online:

> **Interviewer:** Do you think digital activism is effective?
> **Njavwa:** Yes! I think it is very powerful because I have witnessed so much that #Metoo shifted a culture of abuse and harassment. Men are trash, Am I Next? These made us learn just how high the levels of femicide and sexual assault in South Africa and consecutively other countries. They have been other movements in Nigeria, recently a musician D'banj was accused of sexually assaulting somebody withing a few days Nigerian feminists had raised money for legal fees. They got D'banj to lose some of his major contracts and sponsorship deals just out of online activism, so I think it is a very powerful tool.
> **Interviewer:** Do you think digital activism is effective in Zambia?
> **Njavwa:** No, unfortunately not. We try, but you have to be persistent; you get a little bit of attention for 2-3 days max and everyone will move on. When it comes to action, I feel that is the difference in Zambia, I feel in these other countries, even outside social media, it will correlate with the hype online. However, here [Zambia] maybe the hype will be high online, and the turnout will be low. The only thing I can say that brings numbers is when we do the annual women's march, the hype is there, and the numbers come, but they leave it up to the feminists with everything else.

Many comments reflected a sense of disappointment in the type of online activism in Zambian, the kind that does not translate into offline actions. This view was widely expressed by women fans who claimed that digital activism work is left up to feminists and not the entire online populace.

Given the feeling of disappointment and a general lack of confidence in Zambia's digital activism effectiveness among women fans, it is arguable that the shift from third-wave to fourth-wave feminism represents challenges in different geographical spaces. More so in the Zambian context where feminism is still contentious and online activism remains a preserve of the elite, those with access to technology and social media tools (Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013). With these inherent hindrances posed against online activism, there is reasonable ground

to argue that the Internet falls short of its goal of providing a public space that can transition into a public sphere for critical discussion (Papacharissi, 2002). In Chapter four (see section 4.1.2), I explained that the Internet has failed to transition to a public sphere because access to information does not directly lead to participation. Papacharissi (2002) identifies access to the Internet, the ability to utilize the Internet and transformation of digital benefits into social benefits as the three major digital divides that hinder full participation in discussions on the Internet. However, this does not imply that *Zambian Feminists* and digital activism have little to contribute to women fans' lives. In fact, from the women fans' views, it emerged that the page has played a critical role in their understanding of Zambian gender politics and offline day-to-day feminist actions. The role the page plays in participants' lives was implied in some women fans' responses as follows:

> **Njavwa:** The page has helped me realise how much of a patriarchal society we are, I have always known, but when I look at comments on that page, I think oh my God! Is this a real person saying these things? But the positive is also that I have gotten to know allies from the males, I have gotten to see that some men understand this and women who have learned over the years as well. From the conversations on the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page, I have seen people speaking against feminism a few years ago suddenly change and say, "I believe you, am on your side, yes! this is too much". I feel that page has started a mini revolution, am glad that more women will experience it and they are going to have their misogynistic and patriarchal conditioning questioned. It is not everybody going to come out of it, but it is doing its work.

> **Nosiku:** The page admin once made a video explaining that we mustn't think that women can only speak something intelligently or positive especially feminists about men because they got a good dick and I agree with that. I don't think it is right for men to say that men have this idea that feminists are bitter, angry women, but some feminists are happily married. Some are in happy relationships with men. The page has also highlighted that women can do well, and many people think that for women to have these nice things, they have to be sleeping with a rich guy. I used to think like that too. But there are some women out there who are working hard, making moves and doing all sorts of things. The page made me realise that we mustn't accept when a man says oh "you are happy today you must have gotten good sex", "you look happy you got laid". I have made that joke before as well, I now realise it's a stupid joke, people can just be happy, in a happy mood, they don't have to have gotten laid. That is one thing I have learnt from the page.

These comments point to the importance of digital activism as forums for discussion and consciousness-raising to change people's perceptions. The comments above highlight the effectiveness of the page in changing men's perceptions and those of women. Njavwa considers the page as a mini-revolution because as an avid follower, she has witnessed a change in both

men and women's attitudes towards feminist issues in Zambia. Nosiku's comments, on the other hand, explain how her perceptions about gender stereotypes have been challenged and changed by following the page. In this sense, digital activism is not limited to popular online movements that lead to governments' arrests or change offline. In this way, one can argue that in different geographical and social contexts, Zambia in this case, digital activism is considered effective when people challenge their patriarchal conditioning.

Furthermore, an important aspect that emerged from the women fans of the page about digital activism's effectiveness is how they take it upon themselves to apply what is shared on the page to their daily lives. One of the research participants, Nomsa, shared how she has taken it upon herself to normalise menstruation at her workplace. This extract succinctly captures this scenario:

> "When it comes to menstruation it is something that needs to be normalised. I actively try to have these conversations offline, even with my boss. I tell him I am on my periods because the women at my workplace have really terrible cramps. He has since invested in hot water bottles for us to use at the office so that when we are on our periods, we are still comfortable. Menstruation is something that really needs to be normalised both online and offline".

Menstruation is still one of the topics that are considered taboo in the Zambian context. In Chapter two (see section 2.5.2), I explained that *Zambian Feminists* posts topics that are considered taboo on a public forum like Facebook. One can then argue that, by discussing such topics online, women fans are being equipped with the language to normalise menstruation in their different settings. Nomsa's comment above exemplifies how a woman fan is helping break the stigma around menstruation at her workplace. In this way, there is a sense in which it can be argued that women fans appropriating what is presented on the feminist page into their day-to-day lives is a reflection of the effectiveness of digital activism.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the main findings of the digital part of this study. It is presented in two parts; the first focuses on the *Zambian Feminists page*, its history and background, page content and women fans' consumption preferences. The second section discusses digital activism, online feminist identity versus offline feminist identity, online safety vs digital activism, and digital activism effectiveness. The discussions are underpinned by the theoretical and methodological framework informing the study. This chapter has highlighted the effectiveness of digital activism and how women fans negotiate their online-offline feminist

identity, particularly how they negotiate their safety in Zambia's highly patriarchal society. The next chapter gives a broad conclusion to the whole study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8. Introduction

This chapter sums up the key issues that arose out of this study. This study's primary purpose was to understand how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity. It specifically sought to investigate how frequent Lusaka women contributors to the *Zambian Feminists* page contest, negotiate and appropriate the meanings they make from the posts and their associated comments into their day-to-day lives as self-proclaimed feminists. It also examined how the page administrator selects content and regulates commentary on this platform and analysed the role the page plays in participants' understandings of gender politics and their role as feminists in Zambia's gender- unequal context.

In order to explore these issues, the study has primarily drawn on a qualitative research methodology with qualitative focus group discussions and in-depth interviews constituting the primary research tools. Taking an interpretivist approach, the interviews (both group and individual) have led to an understanding of how Lusaka women fans of the page translate their online participation into feminist action in their day-to-day lives as "everyday feminists". The transcriptions from these discussions and interviews were used for data analysis.

My research contributes to the studies and analysis of social media's role in challenging sexism, misogyny, rape culture, and patriarchy in African societies. It analyses explicitly how Zambian women challenge patriarchy in online and offline spaces as self-proclaimed feminists. My research further contributes to the understanding of the popularity and effectiveness of digital activism in African societies and how popular international online movements can be an influence for positive social change. This focus argues that popular global online movements like #MeToo and #AmINext garner massive support online and offline, attracting tens of thousands of women in diverse social and geographical spaces, who use the internet as a forum for discussion and a route for activism. Especially for young African women who belong to a generation with more access to a broader range of social networking sites, seeing the effectiveness of digital activism in other locales and growing up in patriarchal social contexts are arguably all factors in how my participants respond and make sense of the media text they consume, specifically *Zambian Feminists* texts.

8.1 Findings

In my interactions with participants, it became clear that the popularity of the *Zambian Feminists* stems from the boldness to share content that is deemed "women only", "sacred" and "taboo" on Facebook. Its use of "everyday life" scenarios centres around sexual assault, patriarchal traditional and cultural practices, the roles of men and women in society and in the home, touching on Zambian women's lived experiences and sparking debate in the comment section. This makes the page lively and relatable. Ironically, even though participants argue that the page is aggressive in its approach, and that it lacks objectivity, partiality and diversity of opinions, they continue to avidly follow the discussions on the page and advocate for more contributors to the page, so as to avoid turning the page into a personal blog.

It is also apparent that the *Zambian Feminists* is consumed in a complex environment where contesting notions of traditionalism, modernity and Christianity are at play, particularly in Lusaka, which for a long time now has been at the crossroads of new ways of life, new intersections in the ways of thinking, and of cultural transformation. Debates about feminism, conducted on a globally-connected media platform, are simply the latest in these ways of thinking and cultural transformation in this cosmopolitan space. While the *Zambian Feminists* is consumed within the cosmopolitan city Lusaka, the issues that arise are interpreted and understood within my respondents' understandings of traditional demands and Christian values, such as the case of *ichilanga Mulilo,* a customary marriage practice. This post's reaction shows how Christianity can be used to escape the terrain of "culture" to gain agency over one's body. I argue that tradition, modernity, and Christian identities, values, and behaviours co-exist and struggle for dominance in specific social and cultural spaces.

The study also established that participants negotiate their feminist identity against their Christian values and beliefs. The prevailing Christian nationalism discourse has legitimised and naturalised patriarchy to the extent that respondents have to balance their feminist ideas against their Christian values. Hence women fans are continually asking themselves if one can be both a Christian and a feminist. Nevertheless, these two seemingly conflicting belief systems are crucial aspects of their identity and subjectivity, because while these women seek to disrupt the "natural" gender order, they construct themselves as subjects to the hegemonic pattern that encourages heterosexual over same-sex relations. Yet, in contradictory ways, moments of contestation emerge from the discussion concerning heterosexual relations; some like Chanda and Nosiku, protest the idea that being gender non-conforming is "bad", "unchristian" or "unlawful". For them, it is merely living their truth; to perhaps be able to finally be who they

are, without fear of being ostracised or arrested. My respondents are evidently by no means women who follow blindly; they challenge, ask and practice self-reflexivity in issues concerning sexuality, aware of how the state uses Christianity and the law to perpetuate patriarchy, for example through the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation and criminalising homosexuality.

Considering Zambia's gender-unequal context, it was unsurprising that participants had both an online and offline feminist identity. In some cases, the relation between their online and offline feminist identity were mutually exclusive and in other instances, complementary of each other. Their reasons for the two identities range from fear of being socially ostracised in offline spaces by friends and family, to fear of surveillance by current and potential employers online. It became evident that participants negotiating an online and offline identity is a safety measure, as feminism remains a contentious topic in Zambia. However, my respondents kept referring to how they, at times, feel like they are "frauds", "hypocrites" or "betraying" their feminism, when they deny being feminists in offline spaces. This rejection must not be considered a double standard, but as safety for these women seeking to disrupt a society's status quo that has thrived on their silence.

Although the *Zambian Feminists* is a Facebook page, it has created an online community of feminists who share experiences and offer support both online and offline. Internet scholars (Cochrane, 2013; Munro, 2013) emphasise the role of digital media in providing empowering tools that enable women to "call out" oppressive gender norms in the offline world. Against this backdrop, the study finds that the *Zambian Feminists* page administrator curates discussion on the platform to ensure women fans' safety as they openly share their experiences. The fact finds support in how women fans who actively engage in the comment section speak of not experiencing personal attacks on the page. To dismiss the *Zambian Feminists* as a Facebook page that only makes noise online, remains highly contestable, as the page is empowering Zambian women with the language and skills necessary to "call out" oppressive gender norms in their day-to-day lives.

This research has demonstrated the different feminist influences that have informed what "counts" as "feminism" in Zambian. Different feminist movements on the continent influence feminism in Zambia. Although African feminism(s) are predominantly in West Africa, feminism in Zambia has drawn on some of their principles to formulate what is being called "Zambian feminism". Principles such as gender inclusion, collaboration, and accommodation of both men and women underpin feminism in this social space, as women do

not perceive their feminism and male inclusion as mutually exclusive. Feminism in Zambia also draws on the principles of inclusivity as propagated by third-wave feminists. Feminists in Zambia are aware of the intersection of LGBTIQ politics and feminism, as seen in how they advocate for the recognition of LGBTIQ rights in this highly conservative and patriarchal social context. The most recent influence stems from the emergence of fourth-wave feminism, characterised by popular online reactive campaigns that garner massive attention online and attract women from different social and geographical spaces. The fourth-wave feminist is central to my analysis because popular online movements like #MeToo have led to feminist movements in different social spaces, specifically creating the *Zambian Feminists* in Zambia. Zambian women's use of the Internet to "call out" patriarchy is one of the many innovative ways Zambian women are using to overcome patriarchal control. Throughout Zambia's history, women have devised ways of overcoming patriarchal control, such as leaving their homesteads and arranging for temporal marriages in search of economic stability during the colonial era. With online activism across all the discussions and engagements, one thing is clear: the Internet is the latest medium in their quest for equality. Zambian women are constantly reinventing new ways to overcome patriarchal control, but one thing that doesn't change is their resolve to challenge patriarchy.

8.2 Scope for further studies

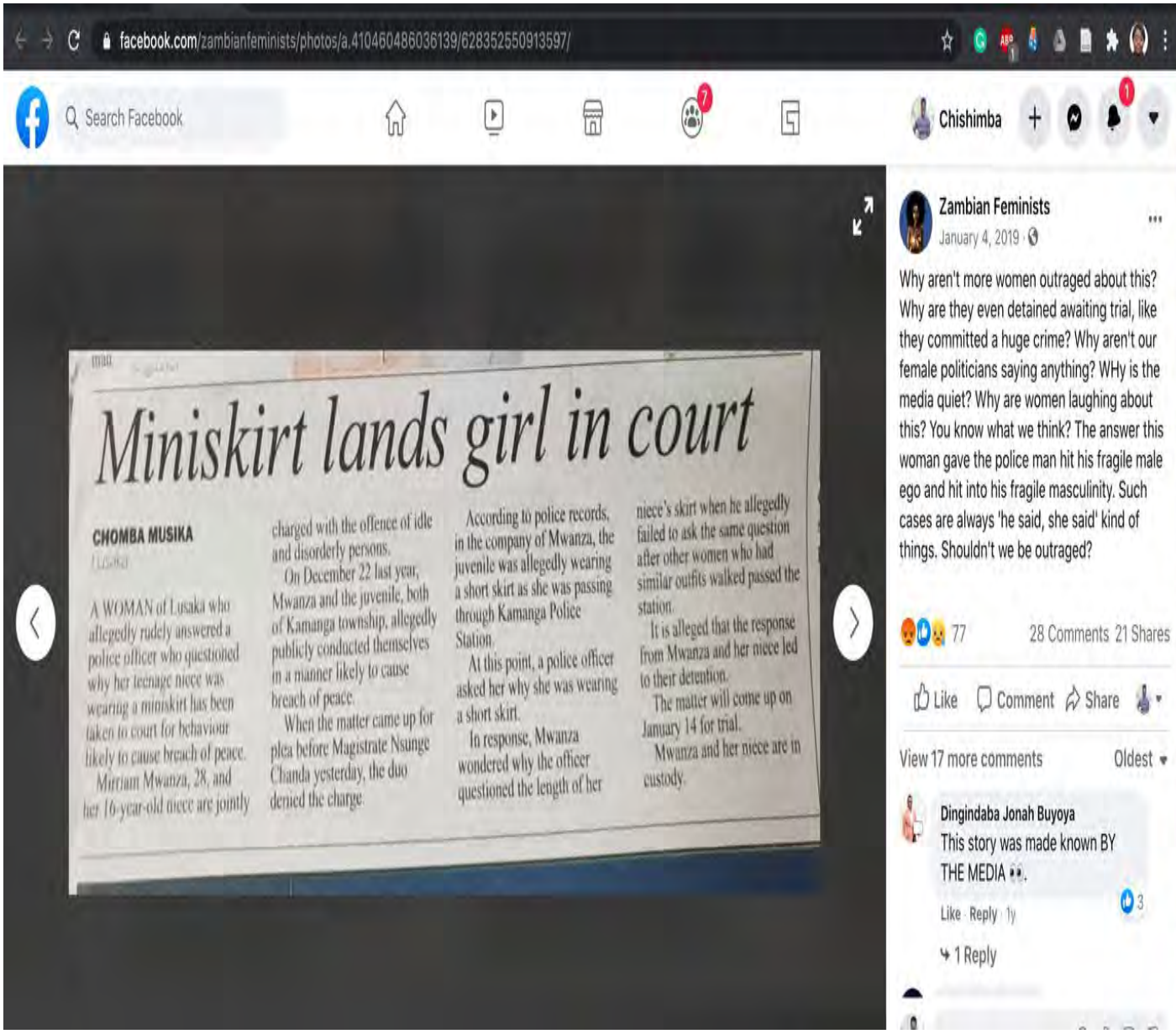
While this study was exploratory in several ways, it could lead to further investigation in the roles of Facebook Feminist pages in specific social, cultural and political contexts. As indicated above, this study took a broad approach to understand how the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page challenges patriarchy and gender non-conformity. This reception analysis with a gendered focus is but one of many ways of investigating the popularity of *Zambian Feminists* among women fans. The research has revealed new possible areas of inquiry. Perhaps a more intrepid study will have to explore how male followers of the page react to the gendered representations they encounter on the page, how these representations challenge them to "unlearn" traditional norms that perpetuate toxic masculinity. My study was also a window into how members of the LGBTIQ community are far from expressing their sexuality openly. However, a more rigorous investigation into the roles of social networking platforms in gender and identity formation of sexual minorities could add more nuances to this area.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Miniskirt lands girl in court

Why aren't more women outraged about this? Why are they even detained awaiting trial, like they committed a huge crime? Why aren't our female politicians saying anything? Why is the media quiet? Why are women laughing about this? You know what we think? The answer this woman gave the police man hit his fragile male ego and hit into his fragile masculinity. Such cases are always 'he said, she said' kind of things. Shouldn't we be outraged?



APPENDIX 2

Cultural practices, Labia minora elongation

Are you an animal?

Are you mad?

Why are you stubborn?

You won't get married.

You will be easy

We will pull them for you.

No one will want you.

All your *tuma*friends have them.

Your friends are leading you on but them they have pulled.

Stop acting like a child.

You have to be serious.

You are missing out.

Should we show you ours?

They will pinch you on your kitchen party.

When you want them it will be too late.

Listen to your elders.

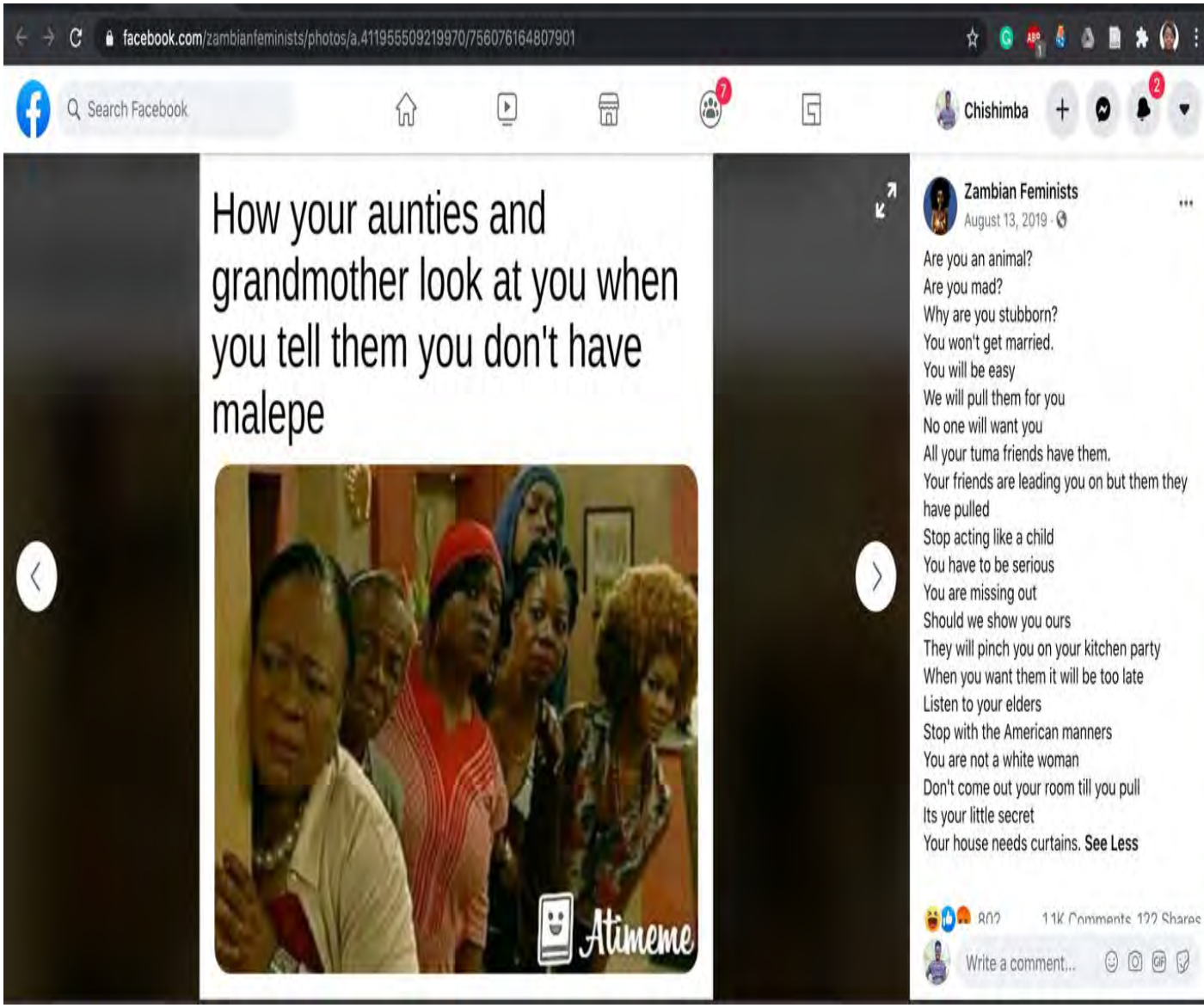
Stop with the American manner.

You are not a white woman.

Don't come out your room till you pull.

It’s your little secret.

Your house needs curtains.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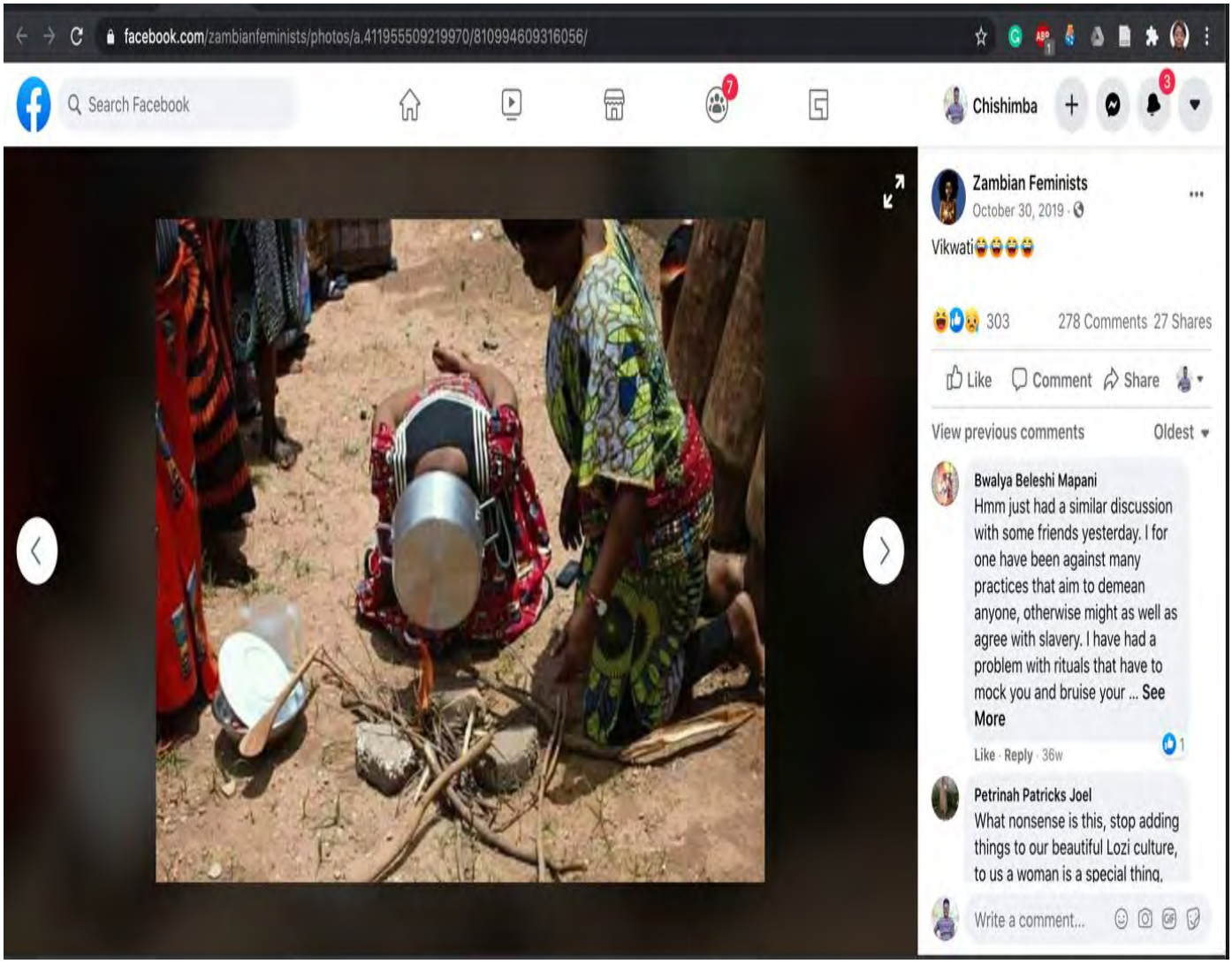
How your aunties and grandmother look at you when you tell them you don't have malepe
Atimeme
Zambian Feminists
August 13, 2019
Are you an animal?
Are you mad?
Why are you stubborn?
You won't get married.
You will be easy
We will pull them for you
No one will want you
All your tuma friends have them.
Your friends are leading you on but them they have pulled
Stop acting like a child
You have to be serious
You are missing out
Should we show you ours
They will pinch you on your kitchen party
When you want them it will be too late
Listen to your elders
Stop with the American manners
You are not a white woman
Don't come out your room till you pull
Its your little secret
Your house needs curtains. See Less
802
11K Comments 122 Shares
Write a comment...

APPENDIX 3

Traditional marriage practice: *Ichilanga Mulilo*

Vikwati😂😂😂😂



APPENDIX 4

Women's sexuality

Climax: coming into your now

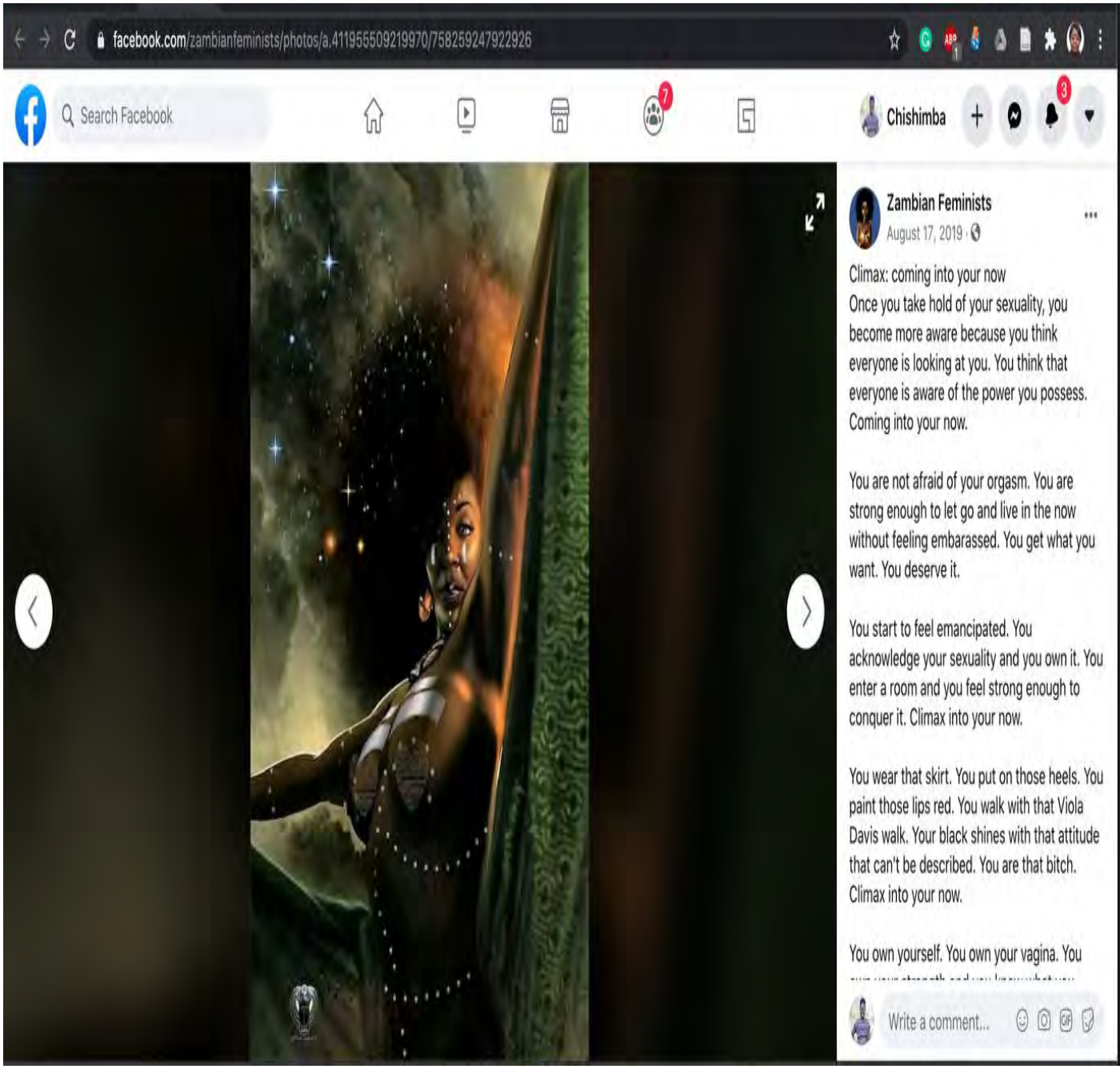
Once you take hold of your sexuality, you become more aware because you think everyone is looking at you. You think that everyone is aware of the power you possess. Coming into your now.

You are not afraid of your orgasm. You are strong enough to let go and live in the now without feeling embarrassed. You get what you want. You deserve it. You start to feel emancipated. You acknowledge your sexuality and you own it. You enter a room and you feel strong enough to conquer it.

Climax into your now. You wear that skirt. You put on those heels. You paint those lips red. You walk with that Viola Davis walk. Your black shines with that attitude that can't be described. You are that bitch. Climax into your now.

You own yourself. You own your vagina. You own your strength and you know what you want. You are confident. Through the cracks of your brokenness, light shines through.

You are sexy. Does my sexiness upset you? Does it come as a surprise? That I dance like I've got diamonds At the meeting of my thighs?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Chishimba
Zambian Feminists
August 17, 2019
Climax: coming into your now
Once you take hold of your sexuality, you become more aware because you think everyone is looking at you. You think that everyone is aware of the power you possess. Coming into your now.
You are not afraid of your orgasm. You are strong enough to let go and live in the now without feeling embarassed. You get what you want. You deserve it.
You start to feel emancipated. You acknowledge your sexuality and you own it. You enter a room and you feel strong enough to conquer it. Climax into your now.
You wear that skirt. You put on those heels. You paint those lips red. You walk with that Viola Davis walk. Your black shines with that attitude that can't be described. You are that bitch. Climax into your now.
You own yourself. You own your vagina. You
Write a comment...

APPENDIX 5

Zambia as a Christian nation and LGBTIQ+ rights

Zambia is a chreesian nation. Don't you dare forget it! We are a christian nation and we shall abide by our christian standards! Oh, just don't be gay for the love of God! We will probably burn you at the stake and switch off our chreesian button to condemn you and spit in your face. A man and the man sleeping with his wife will literally agree on this because it is 'unbiblical!'. A woman will literally drop the penis of another's woman's husband from her mouth and tell you why homos are going to hell. A man who gives his woman anal will constantly tell you why homos practice unnatural sex.

- We let men cheat and have as many girlfriends as they want but we still say nothing

-Majority of HIV infections in the home are brought in by unfaithful male partners but we still say nothing

- Men walk around with their girlfriends in public but no one says anything

-Pastors are touching little girls and no one says anything

- Our children are still pulling their malepe for a man's sexual enjoyment but we are saying nothing

-We are being robbed by people in power but we still say nothing

- Bandros of joy are coming into the house from all over the place and we say nothing

-People put new born babies in plastic bags and throw them down the latrine and people say nothing

-Young girls are defiled in the church and we say nothing

- Women are almost burning their faces for the sake of vikwati and we say nothing

- Women are being beaten in their homes in front of their kids and we say nothing

-Women are still treated like property in their homes and we say nothing

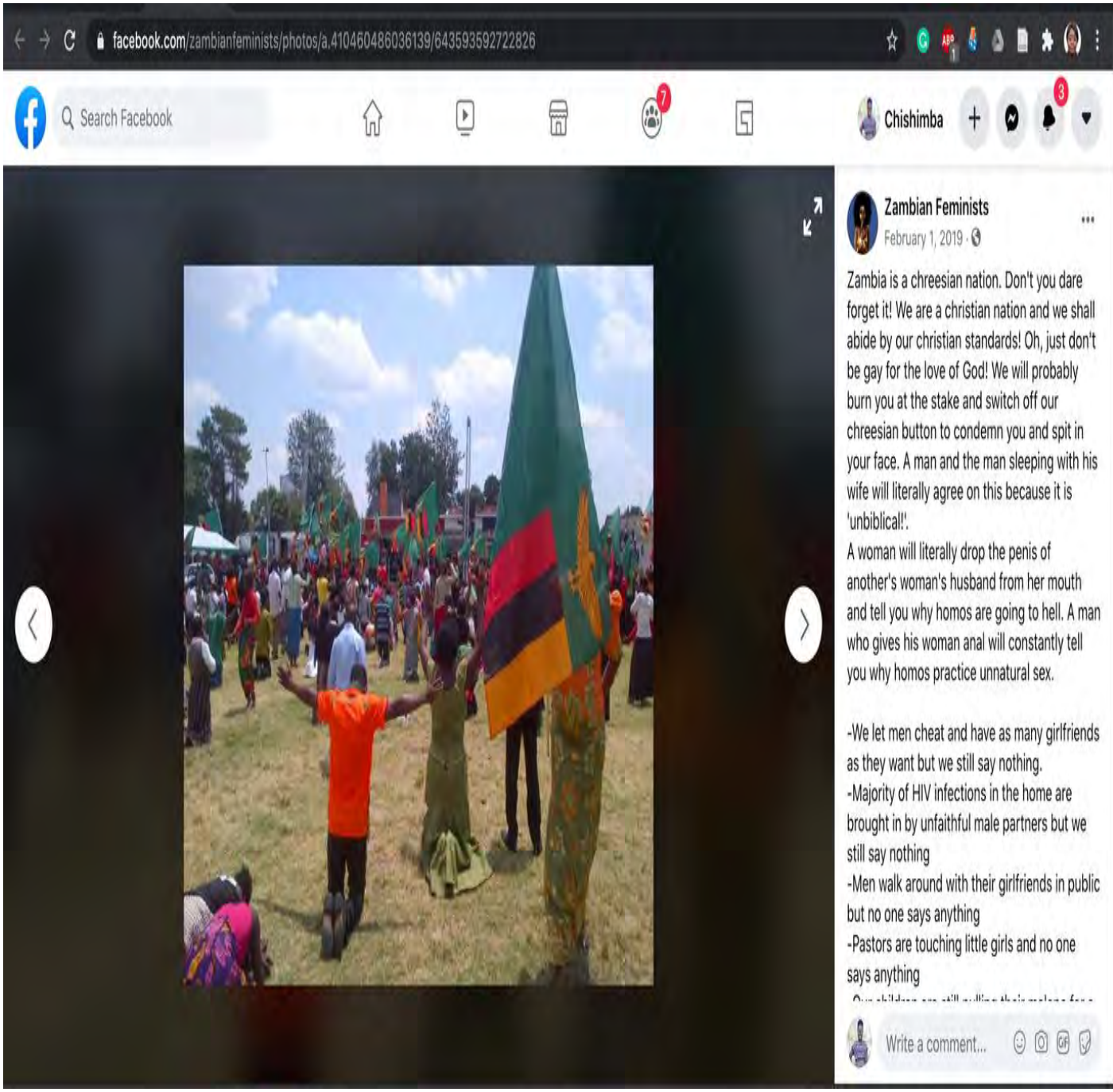
-Street children are molested in the road by motorists and other street kids but we choose to ignore and say nothing

- Ubuchende left right and centre but we say nothing

- Most of us have 'half siblings' we got while our parents were married and we still say nothing

-We all look the other way when our friend is being abused and we say nothing.

We are proud of our morals just don't be gay. God hates those. But feel free to lie, steal, cheat and break all ten commandments like you are playing a game of chato.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Chishimba
Zambian Feminists
February 1, 2019
Zambia is a chreesian nation. Don't you dare forget it! We are a christian nation and we shall abide by our christian standards! Oh, just don't be gay for the love of God! We will probably burn you at the stake and switch off our chreesian button to condemn you and spit in your face. A man and the man sleeping with his wife will literally agree on this because it is 'unbiblical!'.
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-We let men cheat and have as many girlfriends as they want but we still say nothing.
-Majority of HIV infections in the home are brought in by unfaithful male partners but we still say nothing
-Men walk around with their girlfriends in public but no one says anything
-Pastors are touching little girls and no one says anything
Write a comment...

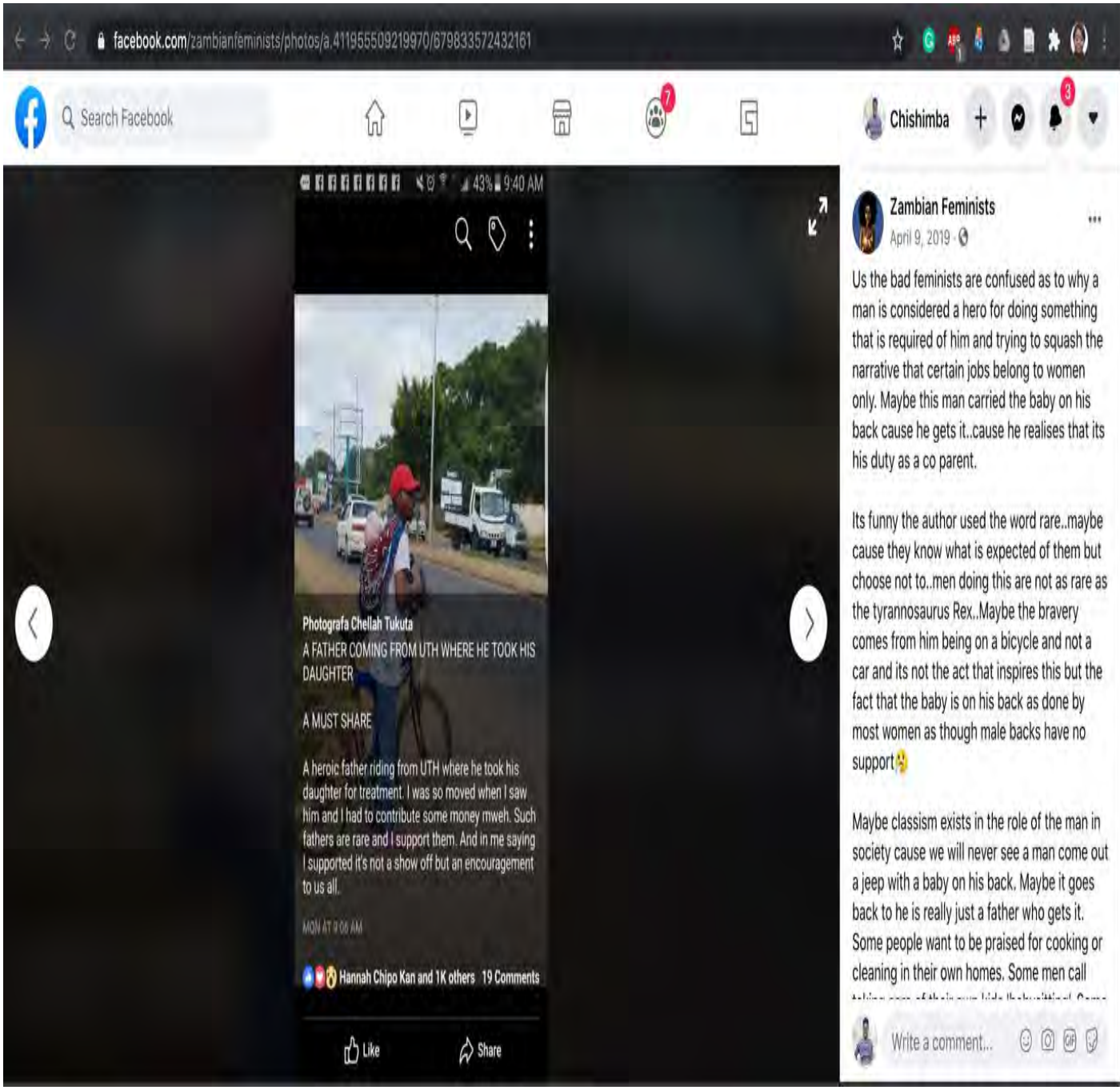
APPENDIX 6

A “Heroic” father

Us the bad feminists are confused as to why a man is considered a hero for doing something that is required of him and trying to squash the narrative that certain jobs belong to women only. Maybe this man carried the baby on his back cause he gets it. Cause he realises that its his duty as a co parent.

It’s funny the author used the word rare…maybe cause they know what is expected of them but choose not to…men doing this are not as rare as the tyrannosaurus Rex…Maybe the bravery comes from him being on a bicycle and not a car and its not the act that inspires this but the fact that the baby is on his back as done by most women as though male backs have no support 🤔

Maybe classism exists in the role of the man in society cause we will never see a man come out a jeep with a baby on his back. Maybe it goes back to he is really just a father who gets it. Some people want to be praised for cooking or cleaning in their own homes. Some men call taking care of their own kids 'babysitting'. Some men call doing chores 'helping out'. Maybe if men regularized doing these things, an actual MAN doing his share of the work will not be a Stevie Wonder driving a car kinddamiracle, no?


facebook.com/zambianfeminists/photos/a.411955509219970/679833572432161
Search Facebook
Chishimba
43% 9:40 AM
Photografa Chellah Tukuta
A FATHER COMING FROM UTH WHERE HE TOOK HIS DAUGHTER
A MUST SHARE
A heroic father riding from UTH where he took his daughter for treatment. I was so moved when I saw him and I had to contribute some money mweh. Such fathers are rare and I support them. And in me saying I supported it's not a show off but an encouragement to us all.
MON AT 9:06 AM
Hannah Chipo Kan and 1K others 19 Comments
Like
Share
Zambian Feminists
April 9, 2019
Us the bad feminists are confused as to why a man is considered a hero for doing something that is required of him and trying to squash the narrative that certain jobs belong to women only. Maybe this man carried the baby on his back cause he gets it..cause he realises that its his duty as a co parent.
Its funny the author used the word rare..maybe cause they know what is expected of them but choose not to..men doing this are not as rare as the tyrannosaurus Rex..Maybe the bravery comes from him being on a bicycle and not a car and its not the act that inspires this but the fact that the baby is on his back as done by most women as though male backs have no support
Maybe classism exists in the role of the man in society cause we will never see a man come out a jeep with a baby on his back. Maybe it goes back to he is really just a father who gets it. Some people want to be praised for cooking or cleaning in their own homes. Some men call
Write a comment...

APPENDIX 7

You are not a woman until you have a child

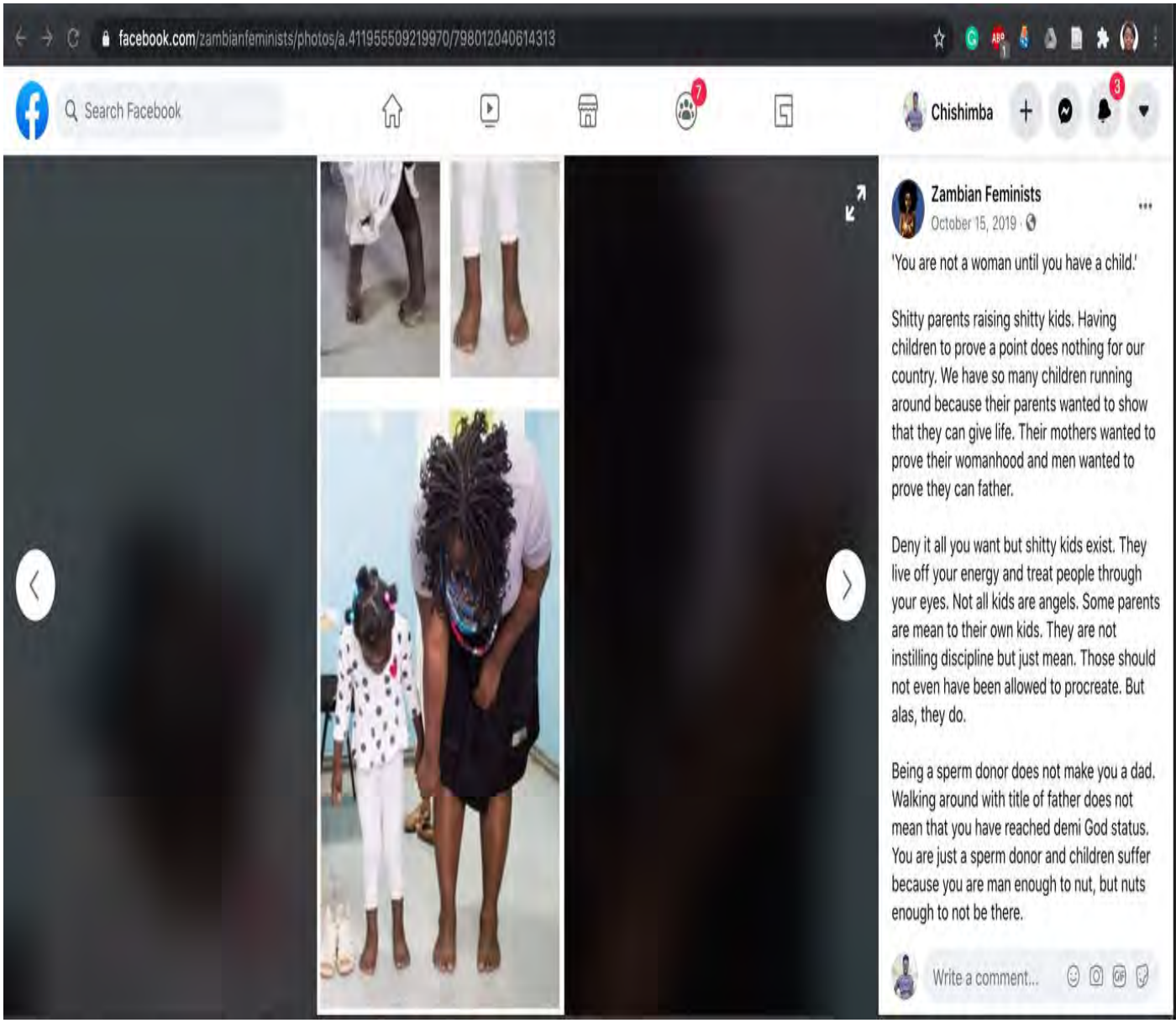
You are not a woman until you have a child. Shitty parents raising shitty kids. Having children to prove a point does nothing for our country. We have so many children running around because their parents wanted to show that they can give life. Their mothers wanted to prove their womanhood and men wanted to prove they can father.

Deny it all you want but shitty kids exist. They live off your energy and treat people through your eyes. Not all kids are angels. Some parents are mean to their own kids. They are not instilling discipline but just mean. Those should not even have been allowed to procreate. But alas, they do.

Being a sperm donor does not make you a dad. Walking around with title of father does not mean that you have reached demi God status. You are just a sperm donor and children suffer because you are man enough to nut, but nuts enough to not be there.

A woman not wanting children does not mean she hates kids. She just doesnt want them and there should be no explanation provided. My ovaries, my womb and my right to bun or not to bun in my oven. We do not hate women who are mothers. It must be nice. We respect this womanhood affirmation and this feeling of accomplishment and yes mami, you brought life into this world. Its a big thing. But that does not mean you are better than. There are women who have spent thousands of kwachas to fall pregnant. Others as we speak bath in special water every night and cry out to Nyambe. We all have reasons.

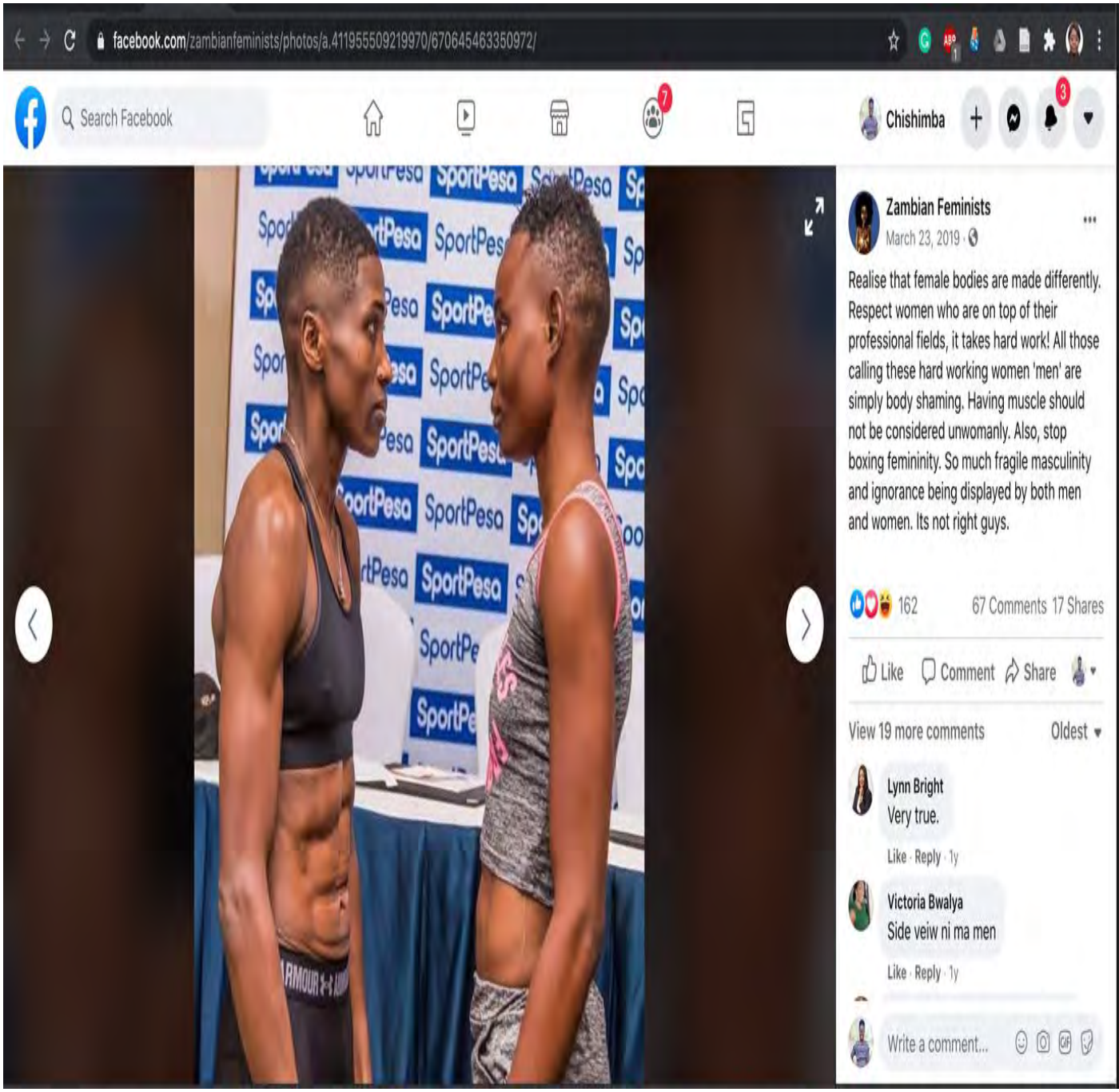
So, no, a woman who chooses not to have kids does not hate kids. She just may not want them. Telling someone they may change their mind after they have kids is not good either... We need to address the fact that some of yall may not want to admit you dont want kids but have them and create toxic and nasty environments and leave kids to fend for themselves. You may have birthed life but ill treat the orphans in your homes. Being a mother or a father does not make you a good person. How you treat others matters


facebook.com/zambianfeminists/photos/a.411955509219970/798012040614313
Search Facebook
Chishimba
Zambian Feminists
October 15, 2019
'You are not a woman until you have a child.'
Shitty parents raising shitty kids. Having children to prove a point does nothing for our country. We have so many children running around because their parents wanted to show that they can give life. Their mothers wanted to prove their womanhood and men wanted to prove they can father.
Deny it all you want but shitty kids exist. They live off your energy and treat people through your eyes. Not all kids are angels. Some parents are mean to their own kids. They are not instilling discipline but just mean. Those should not even have been allowed to procreate. But alas, they do.
Being a sperm donor does not make you a dad. Walking around with title of father does not mean that you have reached demi God status. You are just a sperm donor and children suffer because you are man enough to nut, but nuts enough to not be there.
Write a comment...

APPENDIX 8

Catherine Phiri Vs Fatuma Zarika

Realise that female bodies are made differently. Respect women who are on top of their professional fields, it takes hard work! All those calling these hard working women 'men' are simply body shaming. Having muscle should not be considered unwomanly. Also, stop boxing femininity. So much fragile masculinity and ignorance being displayed by both men and women. Its not right guys.

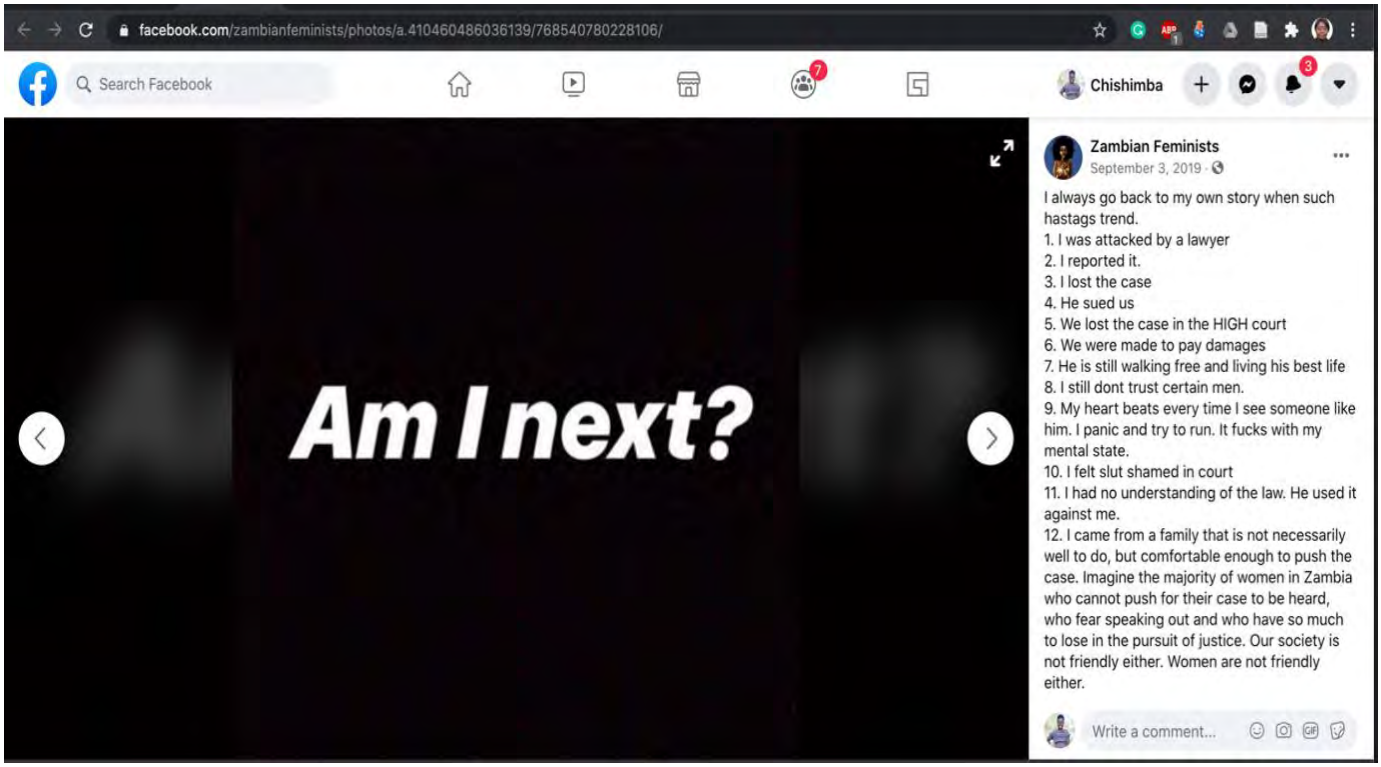


APPENDIX 9

AM I NEXT?

I always go back to my own story when such hashtags trend.

1. I was attacked by a lawyer
2. I reported it.
3. I lost the case
4. He sued us
5. We lost the case in the HIGH court
6. We were made to pay damages
7. He is still walking free and living his best life
8. I still don't trust certain men.
9. My heart beats every time I see someone like him. I panic and try to run. It fucks with my mental state.
10. I felt slut shamed in court
11. I had no understanding of the law. He used it against me.
12. I came from a family that is not necessarily well to do, but comfortable enough to push the case. Imagine the majority of women in Zambia who cannot push for their case to be heard, who fear speaking out and who have so much to lose in the pursuit of justice. Our society is not friendly either. Women are not friendly either.



APPENDIX 10

Interview guide: *Zambian Feminists* page administrator

Section A: About the page

1) Tell me about the *Zambian Feminists* Facebook page?
2) Do you identify as a feminist?
3) How do you define and categories your feminism?
4) What kind of women do you target?
5) Why Facebook as a platform?
6) How often do you post?

Section B: Page content

7) How do you as the page administrator moderate and regulate negative commentaries posted on this platform?
8) Do you ever face intimidation or threats to have the page closed down?
9) Do you think women feel supported expressing their views?
10) How do you select what content to share on the platform?
11) Does the ideology of Zambia being a Christian nation have an impact on what you can and cannot post?
12) How do you negotiate being a strong feminist online, and offline being a woman living in a patriarchal society?
13) What role do you think the page has played in women's understanding of gender politics?
14) Is there any other information you would like to share?

Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX 11

Interview guide (Focus group schedule)

Section A: Reading of the *Zambian Feminists*

1. Please introduce yourself to the group
2. How did you find out about *Zambian Feminists*?
3. How long have you been active on the page?
4. What do you like most about *Zambian Feminists*?
5. Is there anything you don't like about it?
6. We are now going to look at some examples of posts that you might recognize
7. What is your opinion about this post?
8. Why did you decide to participate or not in the conversation about this post?
9. If you could comment now what would you say?

Section B: Participants lived experience vs *Zambian Feminists* content

10. In what ways does this post's topic bring up gender issues for you?
11. Do the stories on the *Zambian Feminists* page relate to your own lived experience?
12. Do you find the stories of any importance in terms of informing you on specific issues that relate to your day-to-day lived experiences?
13. What meanings do you attach to the stories?
14. How important do you think these stories are?
15. Do the stories have a link with other aspects of your life?
16. Do you share/ discuss the content of stories you read with colleagues, friends or relatives?
17. What other issues do you think the administrator could post about?

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX 12

Interview guide (individual participants' in-depth interview)

Section A: Personal information and social/cultural background

1) Age
2) Occupation
3) Married/ single
4) Siblings
5) School
6) Qualifications
7) Languages spoken
8) Originally from Lusaka/elsewhere

Section B: Social media consumption

9) Which one is your favourite social networking site?
10) Why that particular site?
11) How do you rank your social media usage: very active, moderately active or passive.
12) What do you use social media for: news, pictures, reconnecting with friends and family?
13) Do you think digital activism is effective?

Section C: *Zambian Feminists*

1) When did you start following the *Zambian Feminists* page?
2) What do you think about the page?
3) How often do you check the page for new content?
4) How do you understand the content of the page?
5) What meanings do you make of the posts?
6) In what ways does this Facebook page support your struggle for gender equality in your daily life?
7) How do you negotiate your online feminism and offline real life as a woman living in Zambia?
8) Do you feel supported expressing your views?
9) Do you ever fear that what you post online may be used against you offline e.g. husband, family, friends, church etc.
10) What kind of topics do you enjoy reading the most?
11) Why do you find them fascinating?

12) Are there any topics posted on the page which you do not relate to?
13) Why is that so?
14) What role has belonging to this page played in your understanding of gender politics in Zambia?
15) Do you identify as a feminist?
16) Is there anything else you would like me to know?

Thank you so much for your time.

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