

**UNDERSTANDING DEFIANT IDENTITIES:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF GAYS AND LESBIANS
IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

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Abstract

Over the years, western and local media have mediated a narrative of a thoroughly homophobic Zimbabwe, not the least emanating from the former president Robert Mugabe's ongoing homocritical utterances which recurrently generated global news stories. The country does indeed have a protracted history characterised by various forms of attacks on Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, its membership, and the general lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. A dominant discourse has framed homosexual identities as on or beyond the border of what is acceptable, giving the clear message that they should not be tolerated.

However, the narrative needs a more nuanced analysis than what has been popularised. That homophobia has played a significant role in Zimbabwe is of great import, but it is not and cannot be all there is to say about LGBT lives in the country. And, while scholarship on Zimbabwean homosexualities has engaged with debates about its indigeneity, morality and acceptability, it has as of yet not significantly explored the lived realities of non-heterosexual individuals from their own point of view. This thesis aims to begin doing exactly that, addressing the experiences of same-sex loving and attracted individuals in Harare. Drawing on ethnographic sociology, the thesis focuses on understanding how gay and lesbian identities are constructed, negotiated and experienced within an environment that is in many ways overtly homophobic, where, for example, the risk for social exclusion is considerable. It explores what characterises and shapes gay and lesbian identities in Harare in an attempt to interrogate how they reinforce, modify and challenge dominant social categories and relate to globally circulating queer identity categories. The thesis demonstrates that the construction of identities among same sex loving people in Harare variously draws on both locally and globally circulating ideas and insights.

The thesis reveals that beyond the considerable attacks on homosexual identities in Zimbabwe, the intersection of local and international discourses on gay and lesbian identities produces identities that are to varying degrees emergent, fluid and perhaps fragmented. Despite attempts to expunge non-heterosexuals from Zimbabwean citizenry by drawing borders on the basis of sexual orientation, same sex loving individuals in Harare have defiantly expressed, negotiated and managed their sexual identities. The thesis describes and analyses things like dating patterns, decision making in same sex relations as well as family and religious experiences.

Invoking Goffman's concept of self-presentation enables one to understand how participants expressed themselves in the midst of like-minded or homo-tolerant individuals and how they deployed themselves in 'spaces' considered homophobic or where resentment was likely to be provoked by them openly expressing their sexual orientation. Crucially, same-sex loving and attracted individuals are agentic individuals who have variously stretched the traditional meanings associated with gender and sexuality in a context characterised by heteronormativity.

This thesis usefully deploys Giddens' (1991, 1992) theorisation of late modernity as characterised by conditions allowing a profusion of competing and sometimes contradictory identity discourses which offers the opportunity for self-reflexivity and identity negotiation. This helps us to understand the defiant identities.

Whereas western circulating identity politics tout 'coming out of the closet', for most of the participants overt indiscriminate disclosure was to be avoided with participants therein deploying strategies that would help them to remain closeted to some family members as well as in religious circles. The consequences of 'outing' or disclosure are ostensibly not straightforward but complex, thus requiring a nuanced analysis that goes beyond the binary categories framed as either negative or positive. The thesis shows that experiences of same sex loving people in their families are complex rather than simply situated on the polar ends of either rejection or acceptance.

Whilst dominant discourse has depicted religion as fuelling homophobia as it depicts a Christian identity and queer identities as incompatible, the thesis also explores how some participants challenge the borders drawn in religious circles and maintain a relatively active religious life but not always without conflict.

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List of Acronyms

ART	-	Anti Retroviral Therapy
CBD	-	Central Business District
CHOGM	-	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
COPAC	-	Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee
GALZ	-	Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe
LGBTI	-	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex.
MSM	-	Men who have sex with men
NGO	-	Non- governmental organisations
UDI	-	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
WCC	-	World Council of Churches
UZ	-	University of Zimbabwe
ZANU (PF)	-	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZCC	-	Zimbabwe Council of Churches
ZIBF	-	Zimbabwe International Book Fair
ZICOSU	-	Zimbabwe Congress of Students' Unions
ZINASU	-	Zimbabwe National Students' Union

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In the last two decades, Zimbabwe has attracted international attention due to a coalescence of socio-economic and political factors. In addition, Zimbabwe has been identified by some analysts as a failed state. This assessment derives from the happenings inside the country, including unprecedented economic decline characterised by hyperinflation (between the 2000 and 2008) and accusations of human rights violations. In this same matrix, both local and international media headlined many of their stories with cries for democratisation of the political space and also called for an end to human rights violations. The state was accused of stifling the democratisation process and failing to guarantee civil rights and liberties.

One such area in which Zimbabwe attracted the attention of the international community has been her treatment of sexually diverse populations. In recent years, issues of homosexuality have frequently emerged as a subject of public and political debate in Zimbabwe. The former President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, famously denigrated homosexual people as being worse than pigs and dogs¹. The analogy between pigs and dogs on the one hand, and human beings on the other, as expressed through Zimbabwe's lexicon, indicates the most condescending categorisation that can be assigned to a human being. The implication was that homosexuality was an epitome of cultural decay that should not be tolerated.

Following the former president's homophobic and homocritical utterances, much of the public discourse on the subject of homosexuality has been characterised by the castigation, vilification and demonization of people who identify themselves as homosexuals. Hostility has also been aimed at voices that have been tolerant of the claims and rights of the LGBTI community. Demagogic attacks were launched through print and electronic media, whose editorial stance generally has upheld the position taken by the former president. Public and national events – such as the Independence and Heroes Day celebrations – where a large audience is guaranteed,

¹ Robert Mugabe was the head of state and government for 37 years. Much of the data collection and thesis writing took place when he was still the leader of the country. He stepped down on the 21st of November 2017. He has since been replaced by his former deputy Cde Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. In this work when reference is made to the president of Zimbabwe it is directed to the former president and not the incumbent who is yet to make his position on the LGBTI community public.

have also been used to bring homophobic rhetoric to the fore, often denouncing homosexuality in strong language and at times calling for its criminalization².

At the same time, in the period from the early 1990s to date, there has hardly been any open discussion on the subject regarding who gays and lesbians *are*, apart from the recurrent one-sided attacks coming from those with the power to set the agenda for discussion. There is hardly a voice that has been heard from individuals who self-identify as gay or lesbian. Accordingly, the public discourse on homosexuals and homosexuality in Zimbabwe has been dominated by individuals who control the country's state apparatus. In this discourse, the idea that homosexuality is un-African has been prominent, thus representing same-sex relations and practices as alien. There has been little room for voices that would provide other takes on the topic, and gays and lesbians have been marginalised as a result, and subject to much stigma and discrimination.

Despite this marginalisation, historical and contemporary evidence points to the existence of local indigenous variants of homosexualities. However, there has been a lack of focus, in the general public as well as in academia, on who gays and lesbians *are* and how they may cope with the 'homophobic' environment in which they subsist. It was this glaring lack that gave the impetus to this study. The study focuses on understanding how gay and lesbian identities are constructed, negotiated and experienced within an overtly 'homophobic' environment that has often worked to exclude them from many social contexts and spaces.

1.2 The problem of homosexuality in the Zimbabwean context

Little, if anything about homosexuality was in the public domain in Zimbabwe prior to the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF). Goddard (2003:76) notes that Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) in the first half of 1995 was a small, unknown group of homosexuals. Similar to the colonial era where a culture of intolerance against homosexuality prevailed, much of the activities involving the LGBTI community in post-colonial Zimbabwe were closeted. Despite this, the gay and lesbian activities on the social scene were significant enough to provide

² The country celebrates some significant dates in its history. The celebrations are held countrywide but the main event is in Harare which is graced by people from all over the country. In the past, the events drew Zimbabweans from diverse backgrounds but of late they had been turned into ZANU PF gatherings where the opposition and the western world (assumed to be propagating regime change) are disparaged. The President would use this platform to enunciate government policy.

opportunities for meeting and to eventually lead to the birth of the organisation GALZ to advance LGBTI rights and interests.³ Although GALZ was formed in 1990, Goddard (2003:86) attests that “the organization was almost entirely unknown outside a limited circle of white, professional, middle-class lesbians and gay men”. Efforts were made to use the media to advertise the services of the organisation. This recorded minimal success as the radio slots they had been allocated were cancelled without explanation after briefly airing in 1993 (Goddard, 2003). Government control over the country’s electronic media was also extended to the print media with gay-themed messages only appearing in the letters to the editor sections, whilst applications to place advertisements about the services on offer by GALZ were rejected on the grounds that the Herald and Sunday Mail (which had the largest readership) were family papers (Goddard, 2003:87). Significantly, state homophobia was so institutionalised that it was difficult for the organisation to expand its services and reach those who were supposed to benefit from it. Goddard (2003:90) notes that the decision to exhibit at ZIBF came as a last resort as the government had effectively silenced their efforts. The decision was reached amidst fear and cautious self-censorship within the committee and it also caused a division between members who saw this as a sensible move towards being more open and public and others who did not wish GALZ to rock the boat (Goddard 2003:90).

Whilst there were internal splits within GALZ due to the decision to participate at the fair, interestingly, it is the series of events associated with its determination to participate at the Book Fair (1995 & 1996) that culminated in the outbursts that led to the emergence of public comments on homosexuality in Zimbabwe (Gunda, 2015; Epprecht, 1998; Campbell, 2002; Dunton and Palmberg, 1996). The vehement backlash characterised by demagogic attacks on gays and lesbians by the then incumbent President, Robert Mugabe, spurred issues of homosexuality into the public domain (Epprecht, 1999; Goddard, 2004). The 1995 ZIBF theme entitled ‘Human Rights and Justice’ presented an opportunity for various human rights organisations to exhibit. In 1995, when the exhibition was about to open, GALZ was barred from exhibiting by a government order although the organisation had earlier on been given permission by the Book Fair Trustees (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996). The following year (1996), GALZ

³ Goddard (2003) explores the social scene, the club life, the fashion industry, the media publications and how all this laid the foundation for the emergence of GALZ as an organisation.

applied for a stand and the Book Fair trustees promised to resist Government pressure. However, a week before the exhibition was to open, the Ministry of Information announced a Government order barring GALZ from taking part in order to protect and guarantee the cultural health of the country from possible erosion (Long, 2003). The contestation was finally resolved by the Harare High Court which set aside the government's ban that had been effected through the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act. Despite the legal permission to exhibit in 1996, hostile crowds menaced the event as they were demonstrating before and during the exhibition. Some quarters of Zimbabwean society argued that homosexuality was immoral, 'un-African', and, certainly, not a lifestyle choice that should be represented at the nation's premier cultural event (Engelke, 1999: 289). Philips (2003: 163) notes that "the belief that homosexuality is extrinsic to Zimbabwean culture was amplified through repeated use of the metaphor of homosexuality as a white man's disease infecting the African nation's virtuous heterosexual inclination".

Apart from the controversy surrounding GALZ's thwarted 1995 exhibition and the 1996 partial exhibition, the lodging of sodomy charges against the first president of post-colonial Zimbabwe, Reverend Canaan Sodindo⁴ Banana, in 1997, forcefully brought the existence of homosexual behaviours to the public's attention. Then incumbent president, Robert Mugabe, embarked on a series of disparaging speeches, denouncing homosexuals as perverts that offend 'the law of nature and the morals of religious beliefs espoused by our society'. He became an outspoken opponent of same-sex relationships and was not shy to denounce homosexuality, not only in Zimbabwe, but internationally as well (Campbell, 2002; Epprecht, 1998). The series of stinging attacks on homosexuals from Robert Mugabe publicly commenced when he officially opened the 1995 Book Fair. He addressed an audience consisting of "local and international news agencies, foreign dignitaries and distinguished guests with the following speech" (Engelke, 1999: 299):

I find it extremely outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizations, like those of homosexuals who offend both against the law of nature and the morals of religious beliefs espoused by our society, should have any

⁴ Canaan Sodindo Banana served as the first President of Zimbabwe between 1980 and 1987. The position however did not have executive powers. During his tenure as president, Robert Mugabe was the Prime Minister who had executive powers. Men who have sex with men in Zimbabwe are also referred to as *anaSodindo* stemming from the conviction of Canaan Sodindo Banana on sodomy charges. His conviction was a high profile case involving sexual acts between a man and man, thus when one wants to spike gay people, they may just call them Sodindo which however is not welcome within the LGBTI community.

advocates in our midst and even elsewhere in the world. (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 14, Engelke, 1999).

Thus, Mr. Mugabe characterised the act of tolerating homosexuals as being offensive and obnoxious. Through his statement, President Mugabe was not only attacking people identifying as homosexuals but was also trying to silence the voice of those tolerant of the gay cause and struggles. The above statement by Mr Mugabe essentially creates boundaries regarding what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Thus, anyone seen to be tolerant of gay struggles would not only be perceived as betraying 'Zimbabwean culture,' but also of opposing the president which by that time was not something that could easily be publicly done. Therefore, Robert Mugabe was using the trump card of the 'immorality' of homosexuality and was ostensibly taking a stance to safeguard the society from moral decay. He effectively set an agenda characterising homosexuality as a threat to Zimbabwean culture and the country's national values, hence any attempt to represent homosexual interests became an attack on Zimbabwe. He further categorised homosexuals and GALZ as an organisation of sodomites and perverts.

If we accept homosexuality as a right, as is being argued by the association of sodomites and sexual perverts, what moral fibre shall our society ever have to deny organized drug addicts, or even those given to bestiality, the rights they may claim and allege they possess under the rubrics of individual freedom and human rights, including the freedom of the press to write, publish and publicise their literature (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 14, Engelke, 1999).

Tolerating homosexuality was thus associated with eroding human dignity and creating a highly permissive society without moral boundaries. The former president's argument was that a society which allows gay rights had no moral standing to stop criminal elements. In effect, he assigned homosexuality not only a status of immorality but an element of criminality as well as it was juxtaposed with criminal activities, bestiality and illicit drugs. Mugabe continued to invoke the morality trump card by coding homosexuality as immoral and consequently asserting that it should not be tolerated as it is un-Zimbabwean and un-African. In 1995 on the 11th of August during Heroes' Day commemorations Mugabe reiterated his attacks on homosexuality as a threat to the moral fabric of Zimbabwean society and thereby cast it as being unacceptable. He encouraged churches and other organisations not to be distracted from maintaining traditional values. Mugabe said:

“It degrades human dignity. It’s unnatural and there is no question ever of allowing these people to behave worse than dogs and pigs... What we are being persuaded to accept is sub-animal behaviour and we will never allow it here. (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 18).

Through the above statement, the then head of state and government was essentially asserting that those practising homosexuality were exhibiting an unacceptably high level of moral deficiency. Thus, according to Mugabe’s espoused logic, homosexuals were not human, hardly even as good as animals, given that they were behaving in a manner that neither dogs nor pigs exhibit. Mugabe argued that pigs and dogs were able to differentiate between male and female and could therefore never violate the laws of nature. Engelke (1999:299) describes the former president’s stance as one that classifies homosexuals as falling outside the accepted norms of nature (‘the laws of nature’) and culture (‘the morals of religious beliefs of our society’).

The former president not only appealed to morality issues but went on to associate homosexuality with Western countries. In this way he was able to drum up support from those who have fears that the country’s erstwhile colonisers might launch a comeback to dominate African societies through introducing their ideologies and behaviours. Zimbabwe went through a protracted liberation war and memories of this are often invoked by leaders when they want to create a rallying point to drum up support for their ideas. Thus, if an idea or activity is given the ‘Western tag’ with imperialistic undertones it will potentially give the masses adequate ground to oppose it and vehemently denounce it. Mr Mugabe manipulated this by depicting a ‘pure’ African culture of heterosexuality that was being corrupted by Western decadence. Homosexuality was thus characterised as "white man's disease" (Philips, 2003:162) which was integral to the colonialist corruption of “traditional” African society. When significant opposition was coming from the regional and international groups (such as South African gay activists and U.S Congress) that bemoaned the violation of human rights Mugabe assigned homosexuality to the West. Nyanzi (2013:956) asserts that Mugabe candidly assigned homosexuality to the West, dissociating it from Zimbabwe.

Let the Americans keep their sodomy, bestiality, stupid and foolish ways to themselves, out of Zimbabwe. Let them be gay in US, Europe and elsewhere... They shall be sad people here (Robert Mugabe, 09 September, 1995; quoted in Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 19; Reddy, 2002; Nyanzi, 2013).

Besides portraying homosexuals as a 'scourge' that goes against Christian teachings and African traditions (Reddy, 2002), President Mugabe extirpated homosexuals from the national polity in Zimbabwe (Phillips, 2003:163). President Mugabe was thus solidifying the mantra that homosexuality is not indigenous to Africa and that it is a western import. In his view, homosexuality being thus of the Western world, it could not be tolerated in Zimbabwe. In this regard, there are some schools of thought according to which Robert Mugabe as President was, in fact, defending Zimbabwe from the corrupting influence of the West. Looked at this way Mugabe was, therefore, a true patriot defending his country against western machinations threatening the sovereignty and purity of the nation. Mangezvo (2013:167) corroborates this view when he observes that the state framed homosexuality as a foreign, white practice that came with European settler colonialism and is perpetuated in modern times by white people who use money to lure locals into same-sex sexual acts. On the 28th of September in 2015, while speaking in his capacity as African Chair at the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly, Robert Mugabe reiterated his homocritical position and distanced the African community from homosexuality. "We reject attempts to prescribe new rights that are contrary to our values, norms, traditions and beliefs. We are not gays".⁵ Thus, the president consolidated the idea that homosexuality was alien to Africa, and that the voice that is tolerant of homosexuality is consistent with a western agenda which Africans should unequivocally reject.

1.2.1 Constitution-making process and homosexuality

The homosexuality controversies in Zimbabwe were also witnessed in the constitution-making process in which the state media often sensationalised and presented gays as the biggest threat to Zimbabweans (see Epprecht 2012). From 2009 to 2013 Zimbabwe was in the process of drafting a new constitution which subsequently superseded the much-amended 1979 Lancaster House Constitution. Mangezvo (2013) notes that the state was not inclined to seriously engage the citizenry on matters pertaining to sexualities as it preferred to assume that everyone was heterosexual. Such a stance enabled the state to disqualify the subject of homosexuality from the agenda, thereby effectively removing it from the processes of constitution-making. However, despite the imposed silence the subject of homosexuality simmered throughout the constitution-making process (Mangezvo, 2013, Epprecht, 2012) and political parties were under pressure to

⁵ R.G. Mugabe 28 September 2015, United Nations General Assembly.

declare their positions on homosexuality. Mangezvo (2013: 162) argues that it remains a curious paradox that even though it was largely circumvented in the formal public hearings, homosexuality still emerged as one of the key talking points in the constitution-making process. Political parties realised that a lot of political ‘capital’ depended on their positions on the matter of homosexuality; endorsing homosexuality ran the risk of inviting ridicule and stereotyping as harbingers of 'Western' values or agendas (Mangezvo 2013:165). With political capital at stake, most of the political parties, with the exception of Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), were flip-flopping and issuing conflicting statements depending on the audiences they had to interact with. On the matter of homosexuality, the political parties chose the path of expediency. Thus, no party was prepared to align itself outright with efforts to guarantee non-discrimination to sexual minorities. Not even the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T) was openly prepared to commit itself to such an undertaking. Epprecht (2012) states that it came as a surprise to many when, in 2011, MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai sided with Mugabe in excluding sexual orientation as a category requiring constitutional protection on the grounds that it would be against Zimbabwean culture. Tsvangirai classified sexual minority rights as an extremely low priority for his party. Morgan Tsvangirai, then Prime Minister in the Government of National Unity (GNU), when confronted by a Zimbabwean journalist recanted an earlier position that he had stated in an interview with the BBC News during his tour of Western capitals. On that occasion, Tsvangirai had pledged to protect gay rights. During the constitution-making process, President Mugabe continued to reiterate his anti-gay position and accused other sectors of smuggling gay issues into the constitution. At his birthday celebrations in 2012, Mugabe alleged that supporters of gay rights were attempting to insert a clause protecting same-sex marriage into the draft constitution. Epprecht (2012) notes that Jonathan Moyo, denounced the Constitutional Parliamentary Select Committee (COPAC) (despite having ZANU-PF members on it!) for using “trickery and deceit” to sneak gay rights into the constitution against the democratic wishes of the mass of the population.

1.2.2. ZANU (PF)’s Women League backing of Mugabe on homosexuality

Over the years Robert Mugabe was supported in his vitriolic attacks against GALZ and homosexuality by his political party, state-controlled media, traditional pressure groups (Sanganu Munhumutapa) and Christian leaders (Campbell, 2002; Engelke, 1999; Epprecht, 1998; Dunton and Palmberg, 1996). One group that openly supported the homophobic position taken by

President Mugabe was ZANU(PF)'s Women's League, which is one of the populous and readily willing wings to put their heads on the block in support of the president. A few weeks after the 1995 book fair, the women's league of ZANU (PF) publicly expressed their support by demonstrating and making a statement in solidarity with the president:

We are Zimbabweans and we have a culture for Zimbabweans to preserve. As mothers and custodians of our heritage, we stand solidly behind our president and leader on his unflinching stand against homosexuality. Human rights should not be allowed to dehumanize us. Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexuals nor the greedy nor drunkards will inherit the kingdom of God. (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:17-18; Engelke, 1999)

Through their statement, the demonstrators on this occasion were suggesting that by denouncing homosexuality they were acting as vanguards of 'African culture'. In this regard they came across as being in unison with the incumbent president on the matter of non-recognition of gay rights. The stance of the protesters was that they were acting in defence of Zimbabwe's sovereignty and that they had the nation at heart. In addition they held that it was their duty as patriots to preserve Zimbabwe's culture. The women's league did not only invoke cultural heritage but also borrowed Christian beliefs on realised eschatology in terms of which sinners are expunged from existence as they cannot enter into God's kingdom.

1.2.3 Traditional pressure groups support Mugabe's stance on homosexuality

The political leaders were proficiently supported not only by the ZANU (PF) machinery but also by cultural pressure groups purporting to defend 'cultural purity'. In support of the President's overt opposition to homosexuality, a traditional cultural pressure group named Sangano Munhumutapa threatened to unleash havoc and violence against gays and lesbians at the 1996 Book Fair if they were allowed to exhibit (Campbell H, 2002:3; Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:18). Lawrence Chakaredza, the leader of the group, is reported to have said they were prepared to go to jail for their actions in defence of what they called their values and culture:

We are ready to raze down the stands and go to jail. Our actions will be for a noble cause. We want to protect the values of our culture. The essence of the fair should be exhibiting what the country has achieved and can offer in literal [literary] arts and absolutely not homosexuality (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:25)

The threats helped to galvanise support for the government's homophobic position. Coverage by state-owned media gave prominence to the threats by Sangano Munhumutapa, an organisation that, significantly, was in solidarity with the government's position to deny GALZ the opportunity to exhibit. The coverage in state-owned media was meant to galvanise support for the government by a portrayal that gave the impression that there were Zimbabweans ready to sacrifice their freedom and go behind bars to resist the 'western decadence' epitomised by homosexuality. This served the government's objective of creating a 'fixed essence' of a homophobic nation. Even when GALZ had legally been cleared to participate attempts were made to ban the group using all possible avenues, there still were individuals and groups who wanted to override the law and stop GALZ from participating. It is reported that a group led by the public prosecutor Herbert Ushewokunze calling themselves the 'People's Court' which did not care about the High Court's ruling forcibly prevented GALZ from exhibiting on the second day (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:30).

1.2.4 Student leaders in solidarity with Mugabe's position on homosexuality

In 1996, the University of Zimbabwe's Student Representative Council (SRC) expressed its solidarity with the government by condemning the trustees of the book fair for allowing GALZ to participate. The militant language of the leaders of the student body incited violence against homosexuals. They are reported having said:

...let it be known to ZIBF management that their uncultural behaviour may prove detrimental to the book fair and may see the gays and lesbians face public genocide unceremoniously. (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:29).

The University of Zimbabwe student body has over the years been known to be a critical group to win support from. It is not surprising that the country's political parties compete to have them on their side. However, in most circumstances when they were still a united body under the national students group, Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU), before the formation of Zimbabwe Congress of Students' Unions (ZICOSU), a rival national student body, they have generally not been known to side with the government. The students had in the past demonstrated against government on many issues, for example, against perceived government extravagancies during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) summit

1991⁶. Thus, their voice during the Book Fair ‘saga’ was greatly welcomed by state-sponsored media houses. The coming in of the students’ body was seen as demonstrating that even learners at the liberal institution are against GALZ and what it stood for. Therefore, the agenda that was being propagated was that if students who are perceived to be ‘liberal’ are against such practices, who, in society, could be tolerant of them?

1.2.5 Religious clerics and homosexuality

Another significant community to compound the position of homosexuals was the religious community which publicly denounced homosexuality. Christian leaders joined the bandwagon of chanting homophobic slogans thus making themselves formidable accomplices of the government in waging war against homosexuals. The majority of churches either aligned themselves with the President or avoided commenting publicly on the subject. The eighth general assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), which was held in Zimbabwe, provided an opportunity for gay-bashing in Zimbabwe and also internationally. The assembly had public space for discussions and exhibitions by accredited groups and NGOs known as ‘Padare’ (Long, 2003) in which GALZ applied to participate. Whilst local churches had vowed to oppose GALZ’s presence (Long, 2003), Archbishop Tutu had claimed that WCC should take a positive stand on homosexuality if it were to remain credible (Campbell, 2002). In the build-up to the assembly, many churches in Zimbabwe denounced homosexuality. In 1996 Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema (President of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches; ZCC) used a press conference to denounce homosexuality. Siyachitema announced that, “We are not going to allow, as a Christian body, gays in our council and destroy that which we cherish: our culture” (Long, 2003). The issue was contentious for the Christian community globally. A few individual churches from the United States and Europe, and the Ecumenical Support Services (a lay body within the Anglican Church), opposed the President’s stance and supported GALZ’s bid to participate (Long, 2003; Campbell, 2002). However, the issue became sensationalised by the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, which said that “the WCC is putting us to shame, when our politicians are the ones who have to preach to the church that homosexuality is wrong” (Long, 2003). Despite having approved GALZ participation earlier, WCC decided to exclude the

⁶ CHOGM is a gathering for the Commonwealth member states, which are mostly formerly controlled British colonies and territories. Zimbabwe used to be a member before its unceremonious exit in 2003 when its conflict with Britain escalated. The country pulled out of the grouping after its suspension had not been lifted on allegations of human rights abuses.

organisation on the basis that they did not have a bonafide church supporting them, as Ecumenical Services was just a lay group. Christian morality was thus not simply instrumentalised by Mugabe and ZANU/PF; it was evoked by Church leaders themselves to condemn the activities of GALZ and homosexuals in Zimbabwe (Connor, 2011:865).

Campbell (2002) observes that Reverend Canaan Banana, an influential religious and political leader, openly castigated homosexuality in the Financial Gazette in 1999 when he claimed that 'Homosexuality is deviant, abominable and wrong according to the scriptures and according to Zimbabwean culture'. Such utterings depicted the homophobic inclination characterising much of the Christian community in Zimbabwe. Ironically, Canaan Banana was arrested on charges of sodomy, and public campaigns against sexual perverts (defined as homosexuals and rapists) were launched. Dr Michael Mahwema (a preacher with the African Reformed Church) launched attacks on homosexuals using biblical images calling for public lynching, flogging and stoning of homosexuals (Campbell, 2002; Epprecht, 1998).

In recent years the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe has courted controversy which had to be resolved through a series of legal battles in Zimbabwe. Media reports claim that controversy in Zimbabwe began when Archbishop Nolbert Kunonga, who was later (in 2007) excommunicated from the Anglican Church, attempted to withdraw the Diocese of Harare from the Anglican Church of the Province of Central Africa (Kwon, 2010). Kunonga's allegations were that the Province of Central Africa was "pro-gay". Emmanuel Makandiwa, a prominent prophet, has also made headlines through gay bashing. In the build-up to 'Judgment Night 2', Makandiwa launched a scathing attack on homosexuals by describing them as mentally ill. GALZ responded to Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa's statement, which in their view perpetuated hate and communicated wrong perceptions about LGBTI people. GALZ protested and maintained that it was unfortunate that such statements were coming from a church leader of his calibre. As a man of the church, one would expect Prophet Makandiwa to do his gospel duty by standing alongside the marginalised and the social outcast.

Religion was thus evidently a trump card in denouncing homosexuality and this worked well in favour of the government's position. Mangezvo (2013: 167) argues that "where the state

constructed homosexuality as 'foreign' and 'alien' to Zimbabwe, the church argued that homosexuality was, very simply, a sin". The mainstream churches were quick to express their 'solidarity with his Excellency the President of Zimbabwe' (Maxwell 2000:263). Christian 'morality' was used by various actors to justify discrimination and oppression of non-heterosexuals (Connor, 2011). Thus religious groups have been accomplices in perpetuating and supporting the fixed national essence of homophobia. Only rarely have there been voices encouraging tolerance, which has prompted Campbell (2002) to claim that in a climate of intimidation and violence, most church leaders chose to remain silent and by so doing have in effect been challenging the principles of Christian charity, love and tolerance.

1.3 The rare voice

If one reads into what was widely published in Zimbabwe and the official pronouncements from the government officials, Zimbabwe would appear to be predominantly homophobic as the former President and ZANU (PF) crafted what can be called 'a fixed national essence' (Handler, 1988: 44) in which there was no room for a Zimbabwean homosexuality (Engelke, 1999: 298). However amidst the homocritical and homophobic utterances there were rare voices of tolerance locally, regionally and internationally to the gay struggles in Zimbabwe. To date there is no nationally significant cross-sectional survey that has been taken with the aim to establish how homophobic or homotolerant the Zimbabwean society may be. Despite the political and religious crusades against homosexuality in Zimbabwe there seems to be no coherent 'national attitude' on the issue. One needs to draw a distinction between the state's position and that of the Zimbabwean people who may not be, as a whole, more or less 'homophobic' than those in any other nation (Engelke, 1999: 308). The state's opinion is not necessarily the people's opinions. Epprecht (1998:2) notes that "many Zimbabweans actually seemed to be sincerely baffled by the 'anti-homo' campaign of 1995 and have, since then, responded with a curiosity and essential tolerance that belies the homophobic label". Thus it is also prudent that one should caution that the views expressed by influential people should not be conflated with the society's views as this misrepresents the attitude and perceptions of people on homosexuality in Zimbabwe. Dunton and Palmberg (1996:16) make reference to a local journalist who reported that gay bashing goes on only at the highest political level but there's a good deal of tolerance on the ground. Epprecht (1998:2) argues that, "without denying that homophobia does exist in Zimbabwe, even GALZ

members readily agree that in day to day life, gay-bashing is rarely as violent or pervasive as it is in many Western countries”.

Engelke (1999:298) points out that immediately after the decision in 1995 to bar GALZ from exhibiting at the Book Fair, a number of groups and prominent activist intellectuals rallied behind GALZ in the name of human rights. They challenged the hypocrisy of flying the human rights banner while at the same time another group had been barred from exercising their right. Nadine Gordimer, a Nobel Prize winner, said:

I am appalled. It is very strange to be standing under the banner of freedom of expression while a group has been denied the very right to express themselves at the book fair ... we are saying that human rights are universal rights but it seems there is a double standard. (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:14)

Some Zimbabweans who could not find space to express their views resorted to publishing their ideas in regional papers which accommodated their views challenging the discrimination of homosexuals. Some critics such as the late John Makumbe argued that the President’s outburst against gays in Zimbabwe served to distract attention from focus on his personal life in which he had married his former secretary (see Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 17). However, the overwhelming influence of the homophobic press, and political and religious leaders made the pro-homosexual discourse invisible.

1.4 The problem statement and significance of thesis

Zimbabwean scholarship has not engaged in extensive exploration and theorisation on the subject of homosexuality and this lack has contributed to perpetuating a vague understanding of gays and lesbians. Epprecht (1998:648) notes that even though “few intellectuals in Zimbabwe publicly embraced homophobia articulated by political and church elites, they have also contributed to the unsaying or pathologisation of African homosexualities by a subtle, pervasive set of heterosexist assumptions. Heterosexism refers to an intellectual blind spot which chooses not to see that which lies before its eyes, feelings or struggles that exist outside exclusively heterosexual masculinity and femininity” (Epprecht, 1998:649). For example anthropologists Michael Gelfand's (1979) and Dianna Jeater’s (1995) studies exhibit de facto denial of the existence of indigenous homosexuality which unfortunately helps to perpetuate the influential

myth that Zimbabwean Africans are exclusively heterosexual by nature (Epprecht, 2004:8; Epprecht 1998:650). Thus according to Epprecht (1998) discussing and investigating alternative sexualities becomes a perverse (dirty work) and prurient intellectual sideshow not warranting real concern among academics. Accordingly, researching homosexuality casts doubt not only on the research but also on the motive and character of the researcher. This doubt is even expressed among academics at some universities as well. In my own work for this thesis, I was often perturbed by the attention that my line of research attracted at the University of Zimbabwe, where some fellow academics either queried my sexuality or asked me whether they were no better areas to focus on and a few daring ones would take me through theological lessons on how God abhors homosexuals. Some senior academics tried to dissuade me from this topic highlighting that Zimbabwe has more relevant sociological problems that I could contribute to. Mabvurira et al. (2012:218) acknowledge that it takes gallantry to write about homosexuality without prejudice in Zimbabwe. This helps to explain why despite so much noise that has been made about homosexuality, there is hardly any significant research that has focused on gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe. The resultant problem is that Zimbabweans in general have only the vaguest notion of what being gay and lesbian constitutes, due the dearth of empirical research focusing on the experiences of same sex attracted and loving people in Zimbabwe.

The limited academic literature (Gunda, 2010; Shoko, 2010; Epprecht, 2004, 1999, 1998; Phillips, 2003; Campbell H, 2002; Dunton and Palmberg, 1996) either concentrates on rejecting the claim that homosexuality is foreign (given that former President Mugabe had declared that homosexuality was unAfrican) or explores the ‘homophobic’ utterances of the society without delving into the lived experiences of the actors they pertain to. Regardless of the vilification and marginalisation of same sex loving people and the attempts to censure their identity in Zimbabwe, they still remain actors that should not be marginalised from sociological and anthropological theorisation.

The dearth of scholarship on homosexuality in Zimbabwe led to the crediting of Marc Epprecht, a Canadian scholar who was a visiting lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe between 1995 and 1998, as an authority on the subject in Zimbabwe (Gunda, 2010:48). However Epprecht’s main interest was to falsify the claim that homosexuality was foreign and not necessarily to understand

the experiences of homosexuals in Zimbabwe. Shoko (2010) focuses on analysing attitudes towards homosexual practice in Zimbabwe and concludes that “generally Shona traditional culture, Biblical scriptures, and much of Christian tradition join in vehemently condemning homosexuality castigating homosexuals as social deviants and sinners who do not conform to social norms and the dictates of the Bible” (Shoko, 2010:648). Gunda (2010) and Mudavanhu (2010) engage in the subject of homosexuality from a religious perspective in relation to how it shapes the attitudes and perceptions of Zimbabweans on homosexuality. One of the recent publications edited by Chitando (2015), probes same sex relationships in pre-colonial Zimbabwe as they seek to address the paucity of research in that area given that much work has demonstrated the existence of the practice in colonial and postcolonial era. Significantly much of the available literature focuses on the im/morality and addressing the misconception that same sex relations are alien to Zimbabwe. Therefore, it is pertinent to conduct research that moves away from the tired polemical debates on the indigeneity and lack thereof as well as the morality or immorality of homosexuality, to consider the lived experiences of gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe.

Attempts to understand the experiences of same sex loving people have been made mainly by students pursuing their dissertations in the discipline of Sociology. Kuyala (2013) and Chimbidzikai (2004) are notable attempts to understand experiences of gays and lesbians. Kuyala (2013) concentrates on exploring the experiences of gays with their families, but does not delve much into situating the gay identities in Zimbabwe and how they are subjectively experienced. The study does however give some insights on the rejection and relative acceptance of the participants by their families. Chimbidzikai (2004) explores the experience of black gays in Harare as he disavows the misperception that homosexuality is a white man’s practice. The study gives some insights into the challenges experienced by gays and how they cope with them. However these studies, though relevant, do not contain profound contributions for understanding what it means to be gay in Zimbabwe, how the relations are constructed and performed, the self-perception of gays, the varied experiences and how ‘space’ is created for being gay in Zimbabwe. Thus my ethnographic based thesis seeks to make a seminal contribution to the needed nuanced scholarship on homosexuality in Zimbabwe.

My thesis focuses on understanding how the gay and lesbian identities are constructed, negotiated and experienced within an overtly ‘homophobic’ environment where they suffer from social exclusion. It explores what characterises and shapes the gay and lesbian identities in Zimbabwe in an attempt to interrogate how it reinforces, modifies and challenges dominant social categories informed by the ‘global gay culture’. This opens up possibilities and opportunities for same sex loving people to define themselves in relation to local realities and not only internationalised gayness. It also explores how gays and lesbians in light of prominent discourse which views homosexuality as ‘un-African’, negotiate, question and challenge prevailing perceptions and attitudes of Zimbabwean society. The study has been motivated by the desire to bring to the fore experiences of members of a community that have been castigated and marginalised. Thus this study acknowledges that need to give a voice to the subjects of homophobic and homocritical utterances and sometimes attacks.

1.5 Goals of the Research

The main goal of this thesis is to explore how the gay and lesbian identities are constructed, negotiated and experienced in Zimbabwe.

Secondary goals include:

- i. Identify and describe how same-sex relations, subjectivities and identities are understood, performed and constructed among same-sex attracted males and females in Zimbabwe
- ii. Analyse how same-sex attracted men and women perceive how they are interpreted and understood in the wider community, and compare such views with their self-understandings.
- iii. Investigate the range of experiences (positive, negative, and all those in-between) that same-sex attracted men and women have in the context of daily life (such as in friendships, family life, religion, media).
- iv. Examine how lesbians and gays manage their sexual orientation and create ‘space’ for themselves in a hetero-normative environment.

1.6 The discipline of sociology, homosexuality and sexuality

Risman and Schwartz (1988:126) bemoaned the fact that the study of homosexuality intentionally has been isolated from general sociological discourse. Initial views of

homosexuality within academic discourse were predominantly medical and pathological models (Rothmann, 2012). Amongst sexologists, homosexual individuals were labelled sexual ‘inverts’, as they were perceived to contradict their biological sex and socially constructed gender expectations (Rothmann, 2012). For “psychiatrists homosexuality was described as a mental disorder, an abnormality. It was lumped together with other sexual perversions, including masochism, fetishism and sadism, thus an abnormal congenital manifestation ... to the extent of horror” (Rothmann, 2012: 43; Risman and Schwartz, 1988). Thus some early writers explained homosexuality as a personality disorder.

As the academic engagement with homosexuality shifted from the pathological frameworks, it came to focus on the etiology of homosexual orientation (Risman and Schwartz, 1988). Risman and Schwartz (1988) contend that the etiological debates focus on predispositions rather than causes and central to the debate are essentialist versus constructionist arguments. Halwani (1998:25) attests that “essentialism is the view that homosexuality is an essential feature of human beings and that it could be found, in principle at least, in any culture and in any time”. Thus homosexuality is categorised as an aspect of the human psyche that includes both erotic preference and gender-nonconformity. Therefore each individual is perceived as having a true, or essential, sexual core self which does not change, implying that sexual identity is fixed and the individual merely discovers it. Horowitz & Newcomb (2002: 10) note that the “essentialist perspective holds that sexual orientation is established early in life and defines the real or true sexual being; sexual identity involves learning what one really is; and that homosexuality is a form of being”. Therefore essentialists claim that homosexuality is both ahistorical and acultural, a part of human civilization for all time (Sullivan, 2004:3)

“There are three distinct essentialist theories of causation: early family experiences, adult hormonal imbalances, and prenatal hormone imbalance” (Risman and Schwartz, 1988:127). However significant research has challenged these claims as evidence for causality has been weak. Risman and Schwartz, (1988: 127) note that a few small studies (Newcomb 1985, Apperson & McAdoo, 1968) have supported the causal importance of early family factors, but most studies (e.g. Bell et al. 1981; Siegelman 1981, Robinson et al. 1982; Brown's 1986) have not. Studies with larger sample sizes of both homosexual and heterosexual participants such as Bell et al's. (1981) study have rebutted that early family relationships create sexual preferences.

Significantly researchers also concur that the evidence for adult hormonal differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals is weak. The biological explanations gained currency among essentialists as they claim that the cross-cultural consistency of gay culture is strong evidence that sexual orientation has a biological basis. Besides the rebuttal that is based on weak causality and in the vain search for the gay gene, much research to augment biological claims is based on experiments in animals which, on the other hand, have to deal with the objection that animals hardly have as complex sexual relations as humans do.

My thesis is not however in any way interested in the 'elusive' search for etiological explanations though study participants often 'naturalised' their sexual identity. Thus the thesis is not concerned about the search for the causal pathways either biological and/or social sources. Let me also mention that at times, discussions of etiology have blended into and been used to fuel discourses which perceive homosexuality as abnormal, through the binary categorisation of heterosexuality (as norm) and homosexuality (as pathology). This consequently reinforces the existing stigma and marginalisation directed towards homosexuals in some communities.

Plummer (2003: 515) argues that in contrast to thinking about sexuality as biological, "natural" with the prime goal of reproduction, constructionists have aimed to show the myriad ways in which human sexualities are always organized through economic, religious, political, familial and social conditions. Thus there is no essential sexuality with a strictly biological base divorced from the social. Social Constructionists contend that homosexuality needs to be understood as social considering how variable it is across time and context. Thus it is not an 'atemporal and acultural' phenomenon as perceived by essentialists (Halwani, 1998: 25). Therefore sexuality is considered a product of complex experiences, a consequence of social structure and societal values. According to Halwani (1998: 25) for social constructivists homosexuality exists only within certain cultures and within certain time periods, most obviously Europe and North America after the nineteenth century. Terminologically, 'homosexual,' was an invention of Western science in the nineteenth century therefore the concept 'homosexual' did not exist prior to a certain time and outside certain cultures (Halwani, 1998: 27). Generally it is argued that, before Victorian time, people did not perceive homosexuality as a distinct identity, but rather thought of all sexuality within the framework of heterosexuality (Sullivan, 2004). The term homosexual was coined in 1869, and before this homosexuality was not thought to be a separate

orientation. Risman and Schwartz, (1988: 130) observe that constructionists are primarily interested in how homosexuality develops in contemporary society and do study how individuals come to identify themselves and label themselves as gay men or lesbians. My thesis will also interrogate how in Zimbabwe one develops a gay and lesbian identity in relation to existent social structures and social values which are widely perceived as inimical to the development of such an identity.

Laud Humphreys' *Tearoom Trade* (1970) marked a seminal but highly influential sociological engagement with the subject of homosexuality in sociology. Galliher, Brekhus and Keys (2004: 6) note that the marginalisation of Laud Humphreys helped to increase our understanding of the symbolic and moral boundaries in sociology and the academia as a whole. Laud Humphreys was marginalised because of his sympathetic study of men who engaged in intimate behaviour with other men. He suffered persecution within and outside the discipline for his study. Mainly the criticism focused on his motive, the subjects and the methodology used. Laud Humphreys was accused of aiding and abetting criminal sex acts during his study, some accused that the "salacious content of his thesis made it little more than pornography" (Galliher, Brekhus and Keys, 2004:41). Generally the study attracted a lot of ridicule and few sympathetic voices. Decades after Humphreys' study there still seems to be lack of encouragement in Zimbabwe for sexuality researchers in the academia particularly those concentrating on 'sexual minorities'.

Interestingly classical sociological canons have been undergoing some significant criticism from queer, postmodern, and poststructuralist theories on sexuality from the 1980s to date altering the way sexuality is perceived in Sociology. Green (2007:26) notes that "old school sociological approaches to sexuality and gender, are heterosexist, patriarchal, riddled with race-blind assumptions and are hopelessly mired in the antiquated Enlightenment subject". Scholarship on human sexuality has also significantly increased showing how sociologically complex this form of human conduct can be (Williams, Weinberg and Rosenberger, 2013). For instance one consistent theme that has appeared is how the taken-for-granted combinations of biological sex, gender, and sexual behaviors do not hold for certain groups. Green (2007:27) observes that "for the most part, in sociology and the humanities, social constructionists could declare intellectual victory insofar as these fields churned out scholarship premised on a decidedly anti-essentialist conception of the sexual subject". Thus, a historically specific system of sexual classification

came to define possibilities for sexual subjectivity that were rendered unintelligible when psychiatric, socio-biological and sexological discourse gained a foothold. Green (2007: 28) further notes that as a totality social constructionist literatures gelled into a corpus of what became “Lesbian and Gay Studies,” with lesbian and gay subjects, identities, and communities as objects of research.

Significantly Michel Foucault’s (1990 [1976]) work helped in challenging essentialist explanations of sexuality by providing scholars of sexuality with the conceptual tools to analyse how people are subjected to social conditions and knowledge about sexuality (Spronk, 2014: 6). This analysis of how the social context generates the self as an object of domination illustrates how subjects embody social structures and how sexuality is a discursive reality. Green (2007: 29) notes that Foucault pursued how “sexuality,” broadly conceived, has been used in the service of the formation of the modern self whereby expert discourses came to constitute the sexual subject and his and her desires. In Foucauldian understanding as expert discourse serves as an insidious form of social control, as consequential, or more, for shaping human experience than any invading battalion under the charge of the premodern “Old Regime” (Green, 2007:29). In that vein, “knowledge” and “power” are inseparable, as the identities, practices, and desires of the modern subject are constituted through discourse. For example, if homosexual practices in the Middle Ages represented the sinful behavior of sodomy, the same practices in modern times constituted a homosexual “personage”—a new kind of “species”—requiring its own taxonomic formulation and attendant judicial and medical intervention (Foucault, 1980; Green, 2007).

Another approach that has challenged sociological canons and is increasingly gaining momentum on studying sexualities is queer theory. Green (2007) notes that queer theory emerged in the late 1980s (Seidman 1993, 1996) at a time in Western scholarship when debates around the ontology of sexual orientation and gender had reached a tired impasse. Queer theory represents a theoretical vanguard to many scholars of sexuality as it “troubles” the heterosexist, patriarchal, and race-blind assumptions built into sociological renderings of the subject and provides a far more nimble understanding of the complexity of subject position (Green, 2007: 26). Globally, studies on the LGBTI community have been predominantly conceived within the framework of queer theory. “Queer theory is rooted in an activist and theoretical tradition that celebrates sexual autonomy and the proliferation of sexual difference, in opposition to the

repressive conformity of heteronormativity” (Portwood-Stacer, 2010:480). In Chapter three I shall delve into unpacking these theories discussed above in detail in order to provide a suitable theoretical framework for this study.

1.7 Heterosexual Identities and homosexual Identities

Generally the two terms heterosexuality and homosexuality have been juxtaposed in sexuality discourses. Fischer (2013) observes that in academic discussions, the term “heterosexuality” encompasses a variety of meanings. Heterosexuality can best be analysed along four social dimensions: as an institution, as meaning (discourse), as social practices, and as identities (Fischer, 2013; Jackson, 2006). Heterosexuality is not a natural, universal, or an ahistorical phenomenon but socially constructed (Fischer, 2013:502). Common-sense understandings define heterosexuality by erotic attraction to the “opposite” sex (Fischer 2013), thus implying complementarity between men and women as beings. Institutionally heterosexuality is a structural element that positions bodies and selves into particular sexual hierarchies (Fischer, 2013:502). Heterosexuality is organised according to the principle of heteronormativity, which describes how heterosexuality is the dominant sexual category against which all other sexual identities and social practices are judged. Heteronormativity entails the everyday practices that reinforce the privileges and status that heterosexuals accrue over homosexuals as they are regarded as “natural,” “normal,” and “morally superior,”(Fischer, 2013:502). Generally early distinctions made between homosexuality and heterosexuality were arbitrary and stigmatizing to homosexuals. Compulsory heterosexuality meant alternatives to heterosexuality were not culturally available as alternative expressions of desire, affection, and ways of organizing relationships. Significantly heterosexuality shapes gendered identities. Fischer (2013) notes that what it means to be a man or what it means to be a woman are defined in terms of what it means to be a *straight* man or *straight* woman. Thus homophobia is used to shape projections of heterosexual identities. Heterosexuality influences the construction of dominant masculinities and the basis of claiming power, status, and authority over others (Dean 2013, Fischer 2013). Heterosexual masculinity as Dean (2013) shows, demonstrates how straight men mark their identities.

The study appreciates that identities are historical and contested, thus they are informed and influenced by particular discourses which are context and time specific and mediated by existing

power relations. One would therefore expect that as situations change, identities also change. As early as 1977 and 1980 Foucault observed a form of modern power found in the capacity of discourse to constitute identities, desires and practices. As much as discourses have the power to constitute identities it is important to note that there is no automatic relationship between social categorisation and individual sense of self or identity (Weeks, 1989:117). Sociological accounts of identity increasingly show that identities are becoming less fixed and stable. “Giddens sees in late modernity an efflorescence of identity discourses that serve as resources which individuals may draw on in the reflexive creation of a self” (Green, 2010:327). Thus the individual/self has the capacity to develop own consciousness and identity amidst the discursive struggles over its definition. Indeed, Giddens (1992:198) argues “that the individual is ‘obliged’ to ask of him or herself: ‘who shall I be?’ and ‘how shall I live?’” (Green, 2010:329). As Giddens (1992) argues, in late modernity the project of cultivating the self is anchored to reflexivity as individuals scrutinize their identities, regarding them as objects of analysis and transformation. Late modernity enables increasing choice between discursive systems and a modicum of self-fashioning (Green, 2010:329).

1.8 The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis comprises ten chapters, including this introductory chapter presented above. The second chapter reviews relevant literature from the African context on the general debates associated with homosexuality. It explores and interrogates the commonly held but not unproblematic depiction of a monolithically ‘homophobic’ Africa. Without downplaying the prevalence of homocritical campaigns, the chapter also attempts to show voices of tolerance which have been there but have not been popularised. Despite claims by vocal groups that homosexuality is foreign, increasing evidence shows the existence of same sex practices in traditional African societies and the relative degree of tolerance as long as these practices did not challenge heterosexual arrangements. Whereas denying existence of same sex practice in traditional Africa is becoming a futile argument, what can be questioned is whether a homosexual identity existed as its antecedent is unsubstantiated. The chapter also shows how homophobia is not detached from the socio-historical process that Africa has gone through, such as missionisation and colonisation. Lastly the chapter explores some of the lived experiences of

same sex practising people in a bid to create space for their existence which is denied by some political and religious leaders.

The third chapter discusses the various debates around the concept of identity which is central to this study as well as the theoretical concerns of this study. It deploys Giddens' characterisation of late modernity, Goffman's self-presentation concepts as well as Halberstam's border war theorisation in analysing the experiences of same sex loving people in Harare. These theoretical frameworks and concepts will help in understanding how participants experience and negotiate identities that are considered dissident in a heteronormative environment. With these frameworks, I do not attempt to denounce other theories such as 'queer' theory but instead I try to show that through the use of Giddens, Halberstam as well as Goffman's work, we can have a context based understanding of 'gay and lesbian' identities that apply in the global south.

The fourth chapter situates the study in an academic context of knowledge creation. It shows a series of steps taken to produce knowledge on non-normative sexualities. These steps were not immune to the several political, social and scientific concerns informing knowledge production. The chapter describes how ethnographic sociology was adopted to explore the lived realities of same sex loving people. Qualitative methodology was adopted to elicit rich, in-depth and detailed experiences of same sex loving people in Harare. The chapter questions the widely circulated unqualified hard-to-reach mantra on sexual minorities in Africa as well as ethical absolutism which may hinder the pursuit of knowledge in some contexts. The chapter also chronicles the fieldwork experiences of the researcher.

The fifth chapter is the first of the empirical chapters that identifies and describe how same-sex relations, subjectivities and identities are understood, performed and constructed among same-sex attracted males and females in Harare. It explores how the globally circulated identity labels in dominant queer discourse are adopted and modified by the participants to suit local realities. It examines how the emergent identities are not necessarily neatly coherent but complex, fluid and fragmented. By exploring local peculiarities or specificities the chapter calls for a nuanced understanding of gay identities in the global south. Apart from globally circulated identity labels, the chapter identifies and analyses the adoption and use of locally circulated labels with their varying levels of acceptance among participants.

The sixth chapter builds on the issues raised in Chapter 5. The chapter explores the nature and dating patterns of same sex loving people in Harare. Whereas popular discourse in the global north portrays an egalitarian modern gay identity which is not solely reliant on homosexual behaviour, the chapter seeks to show how the local same sex identities mirror, modify or challenge widely circulated notions on being a 'real gay'. It also explores how the subjective preferences of the participants demonstrate complexity in how the relations are constructed and how they are structured. The chapter unpacks how relationships and intimate actions among the participants do significantly influence how they perceive themselves and their perception of how 'authentic' their lesbian and gay identities are.

The seventh chapter explores how same sex loving people perceive how the society categorises and perceives them. The chapter analyses the relationship or lack thereof between social categorisation of gays and lesbians and their self-perception. It explores how dominant discourse on homosexuality as unAfrican, unwanted and unacceptable impacts on the participants' experiences. Identities are not shaped and experienced in a vacuum, thus the chapter explores how the various views impact on how the participants reflect on their identities. Some of the views are expressed across the board through media pronouncements generally characterised by castigating the LGBTI community whilst some views have been experienced at a personal level with individuals being exposed to varying insults. The chapter explores how participants have managed to develop, cope and create space for their existence.

The eighth chapter explores a range of family experiences which have significantly impacted on gays and lesbians in Harare. The family is perceived as an arena where identities are informed, affirmed or renounced. Significant western literature has hailed the role of disclosure of one's sexual orientation to family in sexual identity development and management. Whereas disclosure is accepted in some contexts (though not without difficulty), the local context may or may not reflect it as a necessary thing to do. The chapter explores a range of experiences of participants in the presence and absence of affirmation of their sexual identity by the family.

Chapter 9 explores the participants' experiences within religious circles. Religious views significantly shape and influence public opinion as well as individuals' self-perceptions of their

subjective identities. Significantly popular discourse has portrayed gay and lesbian identities as conflictual with religious identities. Religion has been mostly used to denounce alternative sexualities which are seen as threatening to heterosexuality. The chapter analyses the varied participants' experiences within religious circles. It explores how they have been impacted by popular categorisation which frames them as sinful and demon possessed.

Chapter 10 is the last chapter of the thesis which reflects on the key issues of the study. In the chapter I reflect on the main ideas, findings and conclusions drawn from the entire thesis. I attempt to connect empirical findings to the theoretical concepts that have been used in the study. I discuss the theoretical and empirical contributions of my thesis as well as further areas of research.

Chapter 2: Homosexuality Controversies in Africa! Beyond the tired debates

2.1 Introduction

African scholarship has had limited interest in homosexuality as an area of anthropological and sociological enquiry. Campbell (2002:7) observes that literature on gays and lesbians continues to be outside the academic mainstream, especially in Africa (with the exception of South Africa). Engelke (1999:295) observes that “perhaps more than any other subject, research and writings on homosexuality in Africa are practically non-existent”. However, the situation is changing as Africa is witnessing a “new generation of African and African-based scholars, journalists and activists taking up the challenge to undertake research on sexual diversity” (Epprecht, 2014:662). The systematic marginalisation of studies on homosexuality in the past contributed to an obscure understanding of the nature and experiences of gays and lesbians. Many of the studies conducted in the area of homosexuality have predominantly been epidemiological with an HIV and AIDS focus; the studies also explored the vulnerabilities of men who have sex with men. The lack of knowledge on who gays and lesbians are in Africa and particularly in Zimbabwe is a consequence of their imposed invisibility as social actors. Apart from the lack of knowledge about gays and lesbians the existing debates have predominantly been about the morality/immorality and the existence or non-existence of indigenous homosexuality. Debates that have unfolded within homosexuality studies in Zimbabwe have ignored the everyday dynamics of gays and lesbians. Focus has tended to be on questioning how same-sex partners subvert heteronormativity whilst neglecting their experiences and how they manage their identities in an environment where citizenship is ‘mistakenly’ associated with being heterosexual given that homosexuality is labelled ‘un-African’. In this chapter I shall explore the general debates surrounding homosexuality in Africa and the justifications used to back the debates. I shall start by highlighting the problematic depiction of Africa as being monolithically homophobic. The chapter then proceeds to unpack the arguments used to exclude homosexual beings from African citizenry as well as the impact of colonialism on homophobia. The chapter concludes by exploring some of the lived experiences of same-sex loving people in contemporary Africa.

2.2 ‘Homophobic’ Africa

In this section I attempt to problematize and interrogate the phrase ‘homophobic Africa’ and also demonstrate how the issue has become a global concern which has both positive and negative impact for the LGBTI situation in Africa. “The persecution of people in Africa on the basis of homosexual orientation or practices whether admitted or simply alleged has received disproportionate coverage globally” (Epprecht, 2013:1). Some highly publicised controversies around the question of anti-homosexuality politics, apart from the cases in Zimbabwe discussed in the introductory chapter, include but are not limited to the following: the conviction of Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga in Malawi on ‘gross indecency and unnatural acts’; Nigeria’s Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill; and the infamous Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Bill which became a powerful magnet for newshounds and sexual activists (Van Klinken and Chitando, 2016:1; Epprecht, 2013:2). These incidents and many other cases galvanized an unprecedented level of diplomatic intervention and global protest on behalf of LGBTI populations (Epprecht, 2013). This has consequently led some commentators to claim that the ‘inconvenient truth’ is that Africa ‘is the most homophobic continent on Earth’ (Van Klinken and Chitando, 2016:1). A fixed essence of a homophobic Africa has been created. However, this monolithic view of a homophobic Africa is not very useful particularly as it contrasts Africa and the Western world at polar ends on intolerance and tolerance respectively. Recent scholarship has started to problematize that view. Awondo, Geschiere, and Reid (2012:145) challenge the commonly held view of a “stereotypical image of one homophobic Africa, often placed in opposition to a tolerant or depraved West”. The monolithic homophobic perception of Africa fails to acknowledge the “existence of internal debate and disagreements among Africans on the subject of homosexuality” (Awondo et al. 2012:145). Thoreson problematized the narrative of ‘a wave of homophobia in Africa’ and in doing so questioned the utility of the concept ‘homophobia’ and the resultant narrative that lumps “disparate incidents together homogenises complex responses to sexual acts, identities, and politics, and elides local specificity” (Thoreson 2014:24). The effect of an uncritical narrative of ‘African homophobia’ is the reinforcement of racist and colonialist perceptions of ‘the black continent’ as being inherently hostile to sexual minorities (Epprecht, 2012; Thoreson, 2014). Thoreson (2014:24) contends that “emphasizing a horizontal flood of homophobia across a region obscures the ways that homophobia bubbles up vertically from within a nation-state, and how that infuses anti-queer animus with particular

memories, anxieties, and resonances”. Accordingly, categorising all of Africa as being monolithically homophobic misses the mark, as it neglects some experiences where there has been support whether veiled or covert. Epprecht (2005:254) also notes that the real issue behind the denunciations of homosexuality by public leaders seems not to be the sexual choices of the men and women involved, but their lack of discretion.

Although Southern Africa has had a long history of homosexuality controversies, the first decade of this century brought a sudden propulsion of “homosexuality as a burning issue in the public arena in many parts of Africa” (Awondo et al. 2012:147). Due to the incidences highlighted above various media outlets around the world bemoaned the deteriorating situation for queer populations in Africa. Thoreson (2014: 24) attests that the “imagery used to describe this spreading homophobia was vivid and striking”. Media outlets published articles sensationalising the wave of homophobia rolling across Africa whilst others pointed out that ‘homophobia was spreading like a contagion from country to country in Africa’⁷. Even though these claims are devoid of interrogation of what it means to say homophobia is ‘rising’ in Africa (Thoreson, 2014) they unwittingly assisted in the development of global conversations on the situation of LGBTI in Africa. International bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Council were drawn to explicitly commit to principles that protect against discrimination on sexual orientation. Sarpong (2012) notes that Britain, the US and Canada, have all determined that the issue of homosexuality lies at the heart of human rights while conversely, many African countries stress that it boils down to cultural values and social norms. Nyanzi (2014) in her article, ‘The Paradoxical Geopolitics of Recriminalizing Homosexuality in Uganda: One of Three Ugly Sisters,’ notes that many pro-homosexuality activists in Uganda base their campaigns solely upon the need to protect the human rights of sexual minorities. Such activists become the objects of the stereotypical caricature of LGBTIQ advocates as colonized agents of westernization and neo-imperialism. Nyanzi (2014) observes that this approach is widely attacked by opponents within the anti-homosexuality camps because they argue that human rights are based on Western ideologies which prize individual freedoms and liberties over communal responsibility which is

⁷ British Broadcasting Corporation - Homophobia ‘sweeping Southern Africa.’
The New York Times- Americans’ role seen in Uganda anti-gay push.
Pambazuka News, The Associated Press, Washington Post, Voice of America (See Thoreson 2014:24).

an African principle. Many western governments are thus accused of failure to appreciate and respect 'African' values.

The then British Prime Minister, David Cameron, during the Commonwealth meeting in Perth, Australia, in 2011, indicated that Britain intends to withhold aid from governments that do not reform legislation banning homosexuality (Sarpong 2012: 242). This threat to cut certain forms of bilateral development aid if countries did not decriminalize homosexual behaviour led to indignation among some African countries. Some African governments released defiant statements accusing Cameron of undermining their sovereignty and culture. Consequently, these governments insisted that they would not sell out their principles in order to safeguard development money (Awondo et al. 2012; Sarpong, 2012). Cameron's position resonated with what had happened when the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill was tabled in October 2009, as several western countries publicly threatened to withdraw bilateral aid from development funds allocated to Uganda whilst international organizations threatened to cut their multilateral donations. Nyanzi & Karamagi (2015:35) noted that "diplomatic, military and economic sanctions were enforced to pressure Uganda's Government to reject anti-homosexuality legislation with countries such as The United Kingdom, United States of America, Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands and Ireland either withdrew or redirected their foreign aid from the public government fund to progressive civil society organisations".

However, the attempt by some Western countries to use development aid as leverage to push African governments to decriminalise homosexual behaviour has fuelled anti-homosexuality politics in some African countries. The question of foreign aid, as it played out within the homosexuality debates, helped to cement arguments by anti – homosexual camps which cited this as evidence of it being a Western agenda which is contrary to the socio-cultural values of Africans. Sarpong (2012:243) notes that in a defiant statement, "President John Mills stated that Ghana will not legalise homosexuality on the say-so of the British leader, especially when such a move has the potential to destroy the social and moral fabric of the Ghanaian society". John Nagenda, a Presidential Adviser in Uganda accused the UK of showing a 'bullying mentality' whilst Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, called Cameron 'satanic' for demanding gay rights (Sarpong 2012:243). In 2015 in his address at the United Nations General Assembly, President

Mugabe said in reference to what he perceived as a Western ploy to arm-twist African governments to accept what he termed ‘new rights’, “We equally reject attempts to prescribe new rights that are contrary to our values, norms, traditions, and beliefs” (timeslive.co.za/africa/2015/09/29). Thus the issue of gay rights has been politicised to feed into contested issues of the sovereignty of developing countries within the wider global politics (see Nyanzi, 2014). It raises critical questions about relative power and powerlessness which then president, Robert Mugabe as the then African Union chair was raising to drum up support for his position. Therefore, all these developments do evoke older debates concerning the issue, especially the question of whether homosexuality was (and is) ‘un-African’. In the following section I review the contestations on whether homosexuality was imported to Africa or not, as the main argument against the incorporation of LGBTI rights centres on the alleged exotic nature of homosexuality.

2.3 Indigenous or imported homosexuality?

The presence of indigenous homosexuality is a subject that generates serious debate among scholars and commentators of different ideological persuasions and has proved the most heated site of contestation within the general discourse on African sexuality (Essien & Aderinto, 2009:122; Oloruntoba-Oju, 2011). Oloruntoba-Oju (2011) argues that the “crux of the contestation has been whether homosexuality existed or was prevalent in pre-contact Africa south of the Sahara or not, and also whether any such occurrence was tolerated and to what degree”. Generally it seems as if two main schools of thought have emerged consisting of one school (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996; Murray and Roscoe, 1998; Epprecht, 1998, 1999, 2004, 2006; Newell ,2007; etc) which argues that homosexuality was not imported to Africa but existed even before contact with Europe whilst the other school of thought (Mokhobo 1989:22; Oloruntoba-Oju 2011; African leaders such as Mugabe, Nujoma, Museveni etc) insists that homosexuality is alien to Africa and became part of Africa’s sexual milieu following sustained interaction with the west. The latter proponents argue that homosexuality was non-existent in African societies, and express that ‘the concept is abhorrent’. This is exacerbated by politically influential African leaders who have popularised the notion that homosexuality is “alien to African culture and an import from the depraved West” (Morgan & Wieringa, 2005:17). Dhlamini (2006: 128) claims that there are several thinkers who are adamant that homosexuality

was non-existent among indigenous Africans, despite the range of available evidence to the contrary. Anderson (2007:123) notes that in 1982 Lamb commented that it was curious by Western standards that homosexuality in Africa is virtually unknown and that Africa's tradition is rigidly heterosexual. Accordingly, Africans were thus exempt from homosexuality before white imperialism. The proponents of this view claim the incompatibility of homosexuality with African culture and cosmology. Amory (1997:5) notes that this refrain is "chanted like a mantra by politicians, scholars, and lay people alike, and is often accompanied by the similarly insidious accusation that homosexuality is a "western perversion" imposed upon or adopted by African populations". Within this "reactionary view, the traditionalist argument perceives homosexuality as an alien assault on African culture" (McAllister, 2013:89). In this regard, homosexuality is perceived as violating African religious and cultural beliefs as the objection hinges on the idea that this practice was perniciously imported.

The dearth of scholarly research on African homosexuality is largely responsible for the well-circulated proposition that same-sex relationships are "exotic" and "un-African" (Essien & Aderinto, 2009:124, Dunton and Palmberg,1996:24). Scholars have contributed to the unsaying or pathologisation of African homosexualities by a subtle, pervasive set of assumptions which amount to heterosexism evident in their work which simply does not see that which exists outside exclusively heterosexual masculinity and femininity (Epprecht, 1998). Essien & Aderinto (2009:122) argue that "contemporary commentators and authors tend to freely borrow from the ideas of earlier counterparts, who saw African sexuality as predominantly heterosexual and devoid of the so-called "negative" influence of homosexual behaviour and fantasies". Campbell (2002:40) observes that the invisibility of same-sex relations in the texts and memories of those who are guardians of 'African traditions' has tended to lead to the conclusion by some nationalists that there was no homosexuality in pre-colonial Africa and that homosexuality was therefore unnatural and not rooted in African culture and history.

Dunton and Palmberg (1996:34) argue that 'tradition' is a word that is commonly invoked in Africa to stigmatise homosexuality, the argument being that homosexual relations are incompatible with traditional African social practice. Various African leaders have vilified homosexuality as a colonial residue, a 'white men's disease' (Philips, 2003:163). Nyanzi (2013:

956) points out that former and current African leaders such as Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Nujoma of Namibia, Museveni of Uganda, Yahya Jammeh of The Gambia, Arap Moi of Kenya and Chiluba of Zambia, Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia have drawn their arguments from “reified traditional African culture, conservative religious interpretations, heteronormative moralities and the pro-natalist assumptions”. Nyanzi (2013:257) further notes that these “leaders belaboured to articulate that homosexuality is antithetical to African-ness on grounds of location, race, origin, religion, culture, tradition, identity or social norms”. The official and widespread opinion is that same-sex practice (homosexuality) is decadence, imposed on Africa from the outside (Arnfred, 2004:20). There is a need to be cautious about the ‘invention of tradition’ which Dunton and Palmberg (1996:34) describe as the “manufacture, or simplification of ideas about traditional practice in order to serve the interests of particular groups or provide a politically convenient and sanitised reading of history and the nature of specific communities”. It is also prudent to challenge the assumed tradition given the diversity of Africa as well as the adoption of western behaviour due to colonisation which informed behaviour that has been incorporated as tradition. However, not all African leaders have openly castigated homosexuals. For example “Festus Mogae, the former president of Botswana argued for tolerance and protection from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, whilst Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa also defended the rights to privacy, self-determination, security and freedom from harm for consenting adults who engage in homosexual practices” (Nyanzi 2013: 957).

Whilst Dunton and Palmberg (1996:24) caution against the ‘invention of tradition’, Oloruntoba-Oju (2011) encourages caution against inventing homosexuality given the agreed absence of reliable pre-contact ethnographic data on the issue. Oloruntoba-Oju (2011) argues that the absence or ambivalence of ethnographic data related to this theme has often fuelled the suspicion that African sexuality, or the associated culture, is being revisioned or re-historicised in these narratives to support ‘factions’ in the ideological contest playing out in Western sexuality controversies. Oloruntoba-Oju (2011:5) says

‘On close examination, there would appear very little basis for some of the conclusions reached in some of the recent better known histories of queer sexuality in Africa, which include works such as Lorde (1983); Dunton and Palmberg (1997); Murray and Roscoe

(1998); Epprecht (2006), Newell (2007). Some of the queer claims of these histories may at best be ascribed to outsider misconception regarding some emerging ethnographic details in some of the African settings discussed in them and, at worst, to sheer hegemonic manipulation.”

The belief that homosexuality is exotic to Africa is reinforced by the works of social anthropologists and earlier commentators on African societies. Essien & Aderinto, (2009:123) argue that the “interconnectivity between homosexuality and cultural “infiltration” and “imperialism” is replete in the works of social anthropologists who visited Africa during the first half of the twentieth century”. Much of anthropological literature on Africa is silent on issues of the existence of homosexuality in Africa and at times absolves Africa from harbouring such sexual “perversion”. Murray and Roscoe (1998) commented that, rather than dispelling the myth of African sexual exceptionalism, anthropologists have often reinforced it by not seriously investigating same-sex patterns, failing to report what they do observe, and discounting what they report. One of the most widely respected authorities on indigenous African culture, Evans-Pritchard (1937), did not make reference to male homosexuality in his classic study, nor did he mention homosexual relations among the Nuer of Southern Sudan in his equally influential monograph on that people (Murray and Roscoe, 1988; Dhlamini, 2006). It was only in 1957, in a relatively obscure journal for which he provided evidence that homosexuality has always existed when he finally reported what he had learned about male homosexuality among the Azande of northern Congo (Murray and Roscoe, 1988; Dhlamini, 2006). Other accounts generated by Edward Gibbon and Sir Richard Burton exonerated Africans from homosexual practices. Edward Gibbon commented that, ‘I believe and hope the Negroes, in their own country, were exempt from this moral pestilence [i.e., homosexual vice]’ (Cited in Murray and Roscoe, 1998). Sir Richard Burton (1864) reported that ‘the negroe race is mostly untainted by sodomy and tribalism’. Epprecht (1998:650) points out that in Zimbabwe, “Michael Gelfand's attempt to explain the infrequency of homosexual behaviour in Shona culture reifies heterosexist assumptions about the basic pathology of homosexuality”. “The traditional Shona have none of the problems associated with homosexuality [so] obviously they must have a valuable method of bringing up children, especially with regard to sex relations, thus avoiding this anomaly so frequent in western society” (Gelfand cited in Murray and Roscoe,1998). Subsequent scholarship

has also not departed from the misleading analysis. Epprecht (1998:650) concludes that “whatever the reasons for such *de facto* denial, the fact remains that it helps to perpetuate the dangerous myth that Zimbabwean Africans are exclusively heterosexual by nature”. Sarpong (2012:247) attests that heterosexuality is reinforced as the original blueprint for interpersonal relations in Africa. Thus, heterosexuality is Africa’s bedrock without which, it is posited, society would no longer function nor exist. Thus, earlier anthropologists in Africa have been accused of having a tendency to deny or dismiss the presence of homosexuality. Homosexuality is thus erroneously exclusively attributed to Western influence (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 25).

Oloruntoba-Oju (2011) argues that the persistent denial of an African homosexuality, or alternatively its frequent placement, or displacement, as a white man’s thing, has led to a search for evidence of African pre-colonial queer agency. The result is that as Oloruntoba-Oju (2011) points out, today Western queer histories focusing on Africa resonate with the theme of abundant toleration of homosexuality in pre-colonial Africa. Recent evidence coming from such scholarship has prompted scholars such as Epprecht, (1998, 1999, and 2004), Campbell H (2002) and Dunton & Palmberg (1996) to conclude that there is very little dispute that same-sex relations existed in pre-colonial African society. Dhlamini (2006) notes that Swidler (1993) concurs with Parrinder (1980) that whilst homosexuality occurred in traditional Africa, its condemnation (homophobia) appears to be unAfrican as it is associated with colonial powers, missionary activities and Islamic influence. Settler expansion impacted on indigenous religious and social relations, as well as indigenous political and economic activities. Some indigenous Africans embraced Christianity, which consequently altered their worldview on matters of sexuality as the religion has set rules on what is acceptable and what constitutes deviant behaviour. Dhlamini (2006:130) observes that while there was homosexual activity in Africa, Africans would rather speak of acts and emotions rather than categorising people. What is evident from various efforts to prove the existence of homosexuality in Africa before contact with the West is that there does not seem to have been a name suggesting a distinct category called ‘homosexual’, but the type of behaviour now commonly known by that term was always present (Dhlamini, 2006). The categorisation of people is inextricably rooted in the experience of colonial rule (Riddinger, 1995; Summers, 1995 cited in Dhlamini, 2006).

Despite concluding that there is little dispute that same-sex relations existed in pre-colonial African society, Campbell (2002) points out that what is disputed are the sexual meanings behind these same-sex relationships and not the existence of same-sex relationships. Murray and Roscoe (1998) insist that the inventory of 'traditional' African same-sex patterns is evidently devoid of an identity and lifestyle in which homosexual relationships are primary rather than sexual behaviour. Campbell (2002:24) concurs with this contention and argues that while in pre-colonial Africa there were examples of same-sex relationships, the clear homosexual identity of the present did not exist, hence the term 'invention of homosexuality'. Therefore, if same-sex erotics in different contexts do not necessarily lead to the emergence of homosexual identities, we also need to be cautious and appreciate that the current expressions may be new to Africa. Dunton and Palmberg (1996:27) argue that a point worth bearing in mind is the importance of children in African societies. Only a few men and women choose not to marry and have children due to the valorisation of heterosexual marriage and procreation. "This could be one possible explanation for why there is an acceptance – not necessarily in words – of same sex intimacy, but less understanding and acceptance of homosexual identity" (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996: 38). In some cases same-sex sexual intimacy was believed to be tolerated and benevolently overlooked, as long as it was not made overt and public. Some degree of toleration was granted as long as there was no risk that it would interfere with a heterosexual marriage and prevent the bearing and rearing of children. Same-sex intimacy was thus tolerated if it remained un-named and was not a threat to or replacement of heterosexuality (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:38). However, of concern to the current study is the emergence of a homosexual identity as a lifestyle which consequently challenges the hegemonic notion of heterosexual assumptions. Ling Li (2009:2) attests that "contemporary gay and lesbian identity operates solely on sexual interest and object choice, which inevitably challenge the traditional institute of marriage and the cultural regime of reproduction; whereas traditional same-sex patterns were not mutually exclusive with heterosexual relations". Thus, it is paramount to acknowledge the impact of Western gay culture and politics on gay and lesbian identities in Africa. Ling Li (2009:2) further asserts that "western imperialism distorted traditional cultural values, gender structures, ethnic relations, and the pre-colonial division of labour". In the following section I shall briefly explore the impact of western missionization and colonisation on African practices and customs.

2.4 Colonial regimes, missionization and homophobia

There has been a growing line of thought suggesting that what was imported to Africa is not homosexuality but homophobia. The virulent homophobia that the African continent has witnessed may be attributed to the processes of colonization and missionization that altered African sexual practice, custom and culture (Amory, 1997; Anderson, 2007). As depicted in preceding sections, the existence of homosexuality as noted by Dhlamini (2006) evokes denials, which has almost become a taboo. However, this position may be based on an imposed morality rather than indigenous African morality. Various authors such as De Vos (1996), Kendall (1996), Murray and Roscoe (1998) and Riddinger (1995) have suggested that the colonialists did not introduce homosexuality to Africa, but rather intolerance of it and systems of surveillance and regulation for expressing it (Dhlamini, 2006:135). I shall attempt to explore how the colonial regime and missionization processes altered the treatment of alternative sexualities in Africa.

Epprecht (2005:254) states that at the time “...of the colonization of Southern Africa by Europeans, Portugal, The Netherlands and Britain all enforced harsh laws couched in religious language against sodomy or ‘unnatural lust’” A dark legacy detrimental towards LGBT rights in former colonial societies was left by the imperial powers (Han & O'Mahoney, 2014). Amory (1997) asserts that evidence suggests that the historical processes of colonization and missionization consistently altered African sexual practices. Many African countries still have colonial-era laws promulgated by the British which have never been repealed (Sarpong, 2012: 244). Thoreson (2014: 28) notes that the “most obvious legacy of colonialism for LGBTI people, is the prohibition of same-sex activity for both men and women under the Penal Code Act, using language which is virtually standardized among former colonies of Britain”. Han & O'Mahoney (2014: 273) note that through its colonial administration, the British managed to enact laws in its colonies criminalizing homosexual practices. African Commonwealth nations are replete with anti-sodomy laws which date back to British colonial era penal codes. Nyanzi (2014) indicates that the “current criminalization of same-sex sexualities points towards the depths of an entrenched colonized mentality replicated within the national psyche and sub-conscience of national legislators, judiciary and executives who nonetheless claim to be anti-colonial, post-colonial and opposed to neo-imperialisms”.

The anti-homosexuality discourse is ironically premised on colonial law, biomedicine and Christianity which are themselves un-African (Nyanzi; 2013:963). Guma (2016:200) notes that, it was an open secret that Mwanga (King of Buganda) was 'gay', and that the royal pages whom had been entrusted into his care by their parents to serve the monarchy were martyred for rejecting the king's sexual demands upon their conversion to Christianity. Guma (2016) articulates how the 1886 martyrdom has been reconstructed to suit various positions. Some have re-read the incident to demonstrate that homosexuality existed in several pre-colonial African societies (Nyanzi, 2014; Guma, 2016). The incident thus serves to insert the oft-hidden and unmentionable queer incidences in pre-colonial Africa. Thus, if the practise was there before adoption of Christianity, missionization is assumed to have influenced the rebellion of the royal pages against their ruler's demands for same-sex intimacies after they converted to Christianity which condemned homosexuality as the 'sin of Sodom and Gomorrah' (Nyanzi, 2014). Thus, queer activists have logical ground to challenge the claim that same-sex intimacies were not African. Guma (2016: 208) points out that it is evident that homophobia and not homosexuality was exported to Africa and legitimised through the codification of Western laws. Moreover, and generally, African traditional religions have not been associated with singling out same-sex relations as sinful or associated with diseases but Christianity and Islam do.

2.4.1 Southern Rhodesia and homosexual surveillance

Goddard (2003:78) notes that Phillips (1999) described extensively how the white Rhodesian state exhibited paranoid fears about African sexuality referring to it as "the black peril." The population of natives in Southern Rhodesia significantly outnumbered the population of white settlers and among the settlers white men outnumbered white women. These population dynamics triggered fears among Southern Rhodesian administrators that there was a need to maintain racial purity by dissuading white people from having sexual relations with black people. Laws were thus put in place to prevent this. For example, it was even forbidden for any black man to gaze upon the naked body of a white woman (Epprecht, 1999). Besides the fear of the 'black peril', homosexuality was also disapproved. Epprecht (2005:257) observes that compared to South Africa, a popular culture of intolerance against homosexuality coalesced in a less explicit but equally repressive form in Southern Rhodesia. Goddard (2003:78) describes how "in the early years of the Southern Rhodesian administration, the British South Africa Company, was preoccupied with three issues, race, land and morality". The first Immigration ordinance of

1903 was drawn up to facilitate the importation of native labour from neighbouring states to work the mines (Goddard, 2003). It did not make specific reference to homosexuality but, “debate took place around guarding against Southern Rhodesia becoming a dumping ground for undesirables who were being deported from other countries” (Goddard, 2003:78).

Homosexuality was unspoken of publicly until 1914 when the newly-enacted Immigration Act included a clause that prohibited persons convicted of sodomy or unnatural offences from settling in the colony (Epprecht, 2005; Goddard, 2003). The Immigration Act of 1914 was revised in 1954 to prohibit anyone deemed to practise ‘homosexualism’ from entering the country even as tourists (Epprecht, 2005; Goddard, 2003). Goddard (2003:78) further notes that “the clause reappeared in the Immigration Acts of 1966 and 1979 and in the last revised version of 1996 (in 1996 it was used by the state in its attempt to prevent GALZ from exhibiting at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair [ZIBF]). Within Southern Rhodesia idealised “masculinity was conceived in stark contrast to what was perceived as socialistic, effeminate, treacherous, liberalism that was presumed to be sapping the morale of the West” (Epprecht, 2005:257). Discourse started to emerge which mocked gender-bending which was beginning to appear in the West (Epprecht, 2005). In 1965 Southern Rhodesia declared unilateral independence (UDI) from Britain. During these years efforts were exerted towards curbing growing African nationalism (Goddard, 2003:79). However, there was a “strong moral tone to laws of the UDI period reflective of an intention to conserve traditional values of Christian morality” (Goddard, 2003:79). It is during the UDI period that the ultimate expression of homophobia was recorded. Epprecht (2005:257) notes that in 1972 two white men, including a police constable, hunted down and beat to death a middle-aged gay white man.

The traditional Shona and Ndebele did not openly approve of homosexual relations but turned a blind eye to sexual transgressions, or by explaining it in spiritual terms (Epprecht, 2005: 258). For example, possession by a respected spirit of the opposite sex could explain a person’s lack of interest in marriage. Christian missionaries made concerted attacks on the perceived Africans’ relative casualness about sexuality. The discourse among missionaries found some practices among African men as morally reprehensible and held that such behaviour was to be discouraged. Epprecht (2005:259) observes that, “where traditionally it had been considered

entirely normal, non-sexual and non-threatening for African men to sleep together under the same blanket in the nude in the early days of urban development (as had been the case in pre-colonial days), by the 1950s state and mission schools had largely ensured that such behaviour be regarded as improper". Epprecht (2005:258) points out that other African men had indicated that they were mine wives (inkotshane) but had stopped it when they learnt from the Bible and missionaries that it was wrong. Thus, Christian missionary propaganda, as well as white Rhodesian 'cowboy' culture impacted on how previously ignored sexual practices in traditional African culture were demonised.

2.5 Post-colonial regimes and the politicization of homosexuality

The presence of homosexuality in Africa today is beyond denial, what seems to be an issue is its antecedents, the evidence of history, of culture, and of language (Oloruntoba-Oju 2011). Homosexuality still remains a controversial issue on the continent with some labelling it "unAfrican". The media is awash with the controversy raised by homosexuality in Africa. Epprecht (2012) observes that Zimbabweans are not alone in this nasty streak, and that from Uganda to Senegal to Burundi, sexual minorities have been a target of increased demagogic attacks and quite explicitly, expansively oppressive legislation in the last few years. In this section I attempt to review what has happened in particular African settings with regard to calls towards recognition of sexual minorities.

Homocritical statements similar to those pronounced in Zimbabwe were also echoed in Namibia. The president and other influential figures castigated homosexuality. The then President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, publicly condemned homosexuality and was ably supported by his political party, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) (Morgan and Reid, 2003; Dunton and Palmberg, 1996). "Calls were made by political figures to 'totally uproot homosexuality as a practice' and to 'revitalize their inherent culture and its moral values which they inherited for many centuries from their forefathers'" (Morgan and Reid, 2003:377). Some ministers likened homosexuality to cancer and HIV signifying that everything should be done to stop its spread. The general depiction of homosexuality was that it was unnatural, alien and a product of Western culture and industrialised societies (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996). Homosexuality was thus identified as a danger threatening the fruits of the liberation struggle, as

some ministers claimed that they did not fight for moral decadence. Consequently, allowing homosexuality was perceived as accepting an immoral society. Influential people also misrepresented homosexual people by describing them as “living antisocial lives, abusers of alcohol, drugs, violent crimes, child abuse and all types of evils” (Dunton and Palmberg, 1996:40). This portrayal of homosexual people was meant to denigrate them and was not founded on any empirical evidence but only meant to create moral panic among the citizens.

Another country that was given popular press attention because of homophobia was Uganda. Awondo et al. (2012:153) claim that Uganda become synonymous with homophobia. This was largely due to the notorious Anti-Homosexuality Bill first proposed by David Bahati in 2009. Amongst some of the contents was prescribing life in prison for anyone who ‘touches another person with the intention of committing the act of homosexuality,’ and the death penalty for aggravated homosexuality. It also had a clause of imprisoning any person such as parents, doctors or priests for failing to report violations of the law within 24 hours (Thoreson 2014:28; Nyanzi & Karamagi 2015; Awondo 2012: 153). Nyanzi & Karamagi (2015:25) state that the “proposed death penalty for aggravated homosexuality earned this bill the name ‘Kill Gay Bill’ and flagged the extremes to which homophobic Ugandan legislators were willing to go in their public fight against homosexuality”. It is noteworthy that the Anti-Homosexuality Bill (2009) was not introducing criminalisation of non-heteronormativity into Uganda but rather, recriminalising same-sex conduct with harsher penalties for newly-framed aspects of homosexuality (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015: 25). Despite chants of ownership of the bill by MPs, evidence shows that it was not only a product of local forces but some U.S. conservative Christian rightists who whipped up hysteria over the supposed scheming of gays to sodomize African children and destroy Ugandan culture (Awondo et al. 2012:153; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015: 25). It is also important that we have a nuanced analysis of ‘homophobic Africa’ even in analysing the Ugandan experience. Thoreson (2014: 28) argues that the “phrasing and timing of the Bill were themselves the products of a specific admixture of domestic and transnational factors”. One cannot deny the impact of conservative evangelicals (such as Scott Lively, Don Schmierer and Caleb Lee Brundidge) with their religious agenda. On the local front these were also aided by religious fundamentalists such as Stephen Langa and Martin Ssempe, who loudly championed the legislation from the pulpit (Thoreson, 2014:29). Locally, the politicization of

homophobia was a welcome distraction from the domestic problems characterising Uganda at that particular time and a respite from scrutiny regarding the inefficiencies of the government in power since 1986. The inefficiencies were becoming glaringly apparent, and social and economic stagnation were now characteristic of Uganda. Anti-homosexuality was thus used as a trump card to drum up support for the elections in 2011 as the Government of Uganda positioned itself as one that asserted the country's moral authority and national autonomy against a neo-colonial west (Thoreson, 2014:28; Awondo et al. 2012: 153).

The politicization of homosexuality in Uganda is also seen in the trajectory through which the bill was introduced and enacted after five years with some adjustments, such as replacing the proposed death sentence with life imprisonment (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015: 25). What is, however, important at this juncture is to analyse the timing of the debates surrounding the bill which at times was characterised by silence then followed by revival of the bill in parliament. Makofane, Beck, Lubensky & Ayala (2014:187) argue that the revival of the bill seemed to coincide with other important and controversial political events. What seems to be the case is that the bill was introduced when the government found it expedient to bring it in. The introduction of the bill was a tactical move designed to distract the people from the critical issues of the time. For example, Makofane et al. (2014: 187-8) note that in May 2011 the bill was reintroduced for public hearings. This came against the backdrop of the arrest of the opposition leader Colonel Kizza Besigye for participating in demonstrations on the rising cost of living in Uganda. In February 2012, it was reintroduced to distract the attention of the people from the abuse of parliamentary procedures by the President who entered into an agreement with Tullow Oil despite a parliamentary moratorium on new oil production-sharing agreements (Makofane et al. (2014: 187-8). Only a few parliamentarians, but none from the ruling party, recommended the rejection of the bill.

Outside parliament there was also significant opposition to the bill by LGBTI movements which forged a diverse network of organizations called the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law. Thoreson (2014:30) notes that opponents promoted their own frames, dubbing the Bill the 'Anti Civil Society Bill,' 'Anti Public Health Bill,' 'Anti Constitution Bill,' and 'Anti Human Rights Bill.' The challengers to the bill highlighted its possible consequences

which included how the bill, if enacted into law, would affect parents, teachers, landlords, politicians doctors, civil society leaders, human rights activists, religious leaders, MPs, journalists, internet cafe' operators, and anyone accused of being LGBTI. Nyanzi (2014) attests that the minority pro-gay rights advocates equally appropriated the othering label of foreignness by highlighting that while homophobia is foreign to Uganda, homosexuality existed in several pre-colonial African societies including prominent kingdoms, chiefdoms and societies that form present-day Uganda. A high profile figure to align himself with Uganda's LGBTIQ movement was Kizza Besigye, the FDC opposition leader who framed the protection of homosexual citizens as a matter of human rights (Nyanzi and Karamagi, 2015:35). However, despite these concerns against the bill, the Ugandan president assented to the Anti-Homosexuality Act in 2014.

Nyanzi & Karamagi (2015: 25) observe that contrary to the existent conflation between the Anti-Homosexuality Bill (2009) and Anti- Homosexuality Act (2014), there are important differences between these two documents. For example, the death penalty was dropped from the enacted law and replaced with life imprisonment as well as mandatory testing for HIV and AIDS (Nyanzi & Karamagi (2015:25). Nyanzi (2014) observes that despite biased methodologies, public opinion polls reveal that an overwhelming majority of Uganda's population supported the Anti-Homosexuality Act which President Yoweri Museveni assented to on 24th February 2014. A jubilant throng participated in a National Parade and Thanksgiving Prayer Rally on the 31st of March 2014 chanting anti-gay slogans interlaced with religious choruses. Many marchers held posters, banners, and placards variously praising Yoweri Museveni and some leading anti-gay campaigners, for saving the future of Uganda's youths by fighting homosexuality (Nyanzi, 2014). However, the Anti-Homosexuality Act (2014) was annulled after a successful challenge had been made by the members of Uganda's LGBTIQ movement, their allies and human rights defenders. This shows how it is problematic to talk of a 'homophobic Africa' as legislators, academic professors and a public media personality allied with same-sex-loving Ugandans and local grassroots organisations to challenge the constitutionality of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (2014) (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015:37). In summary what one can note from the Ugandan experience is how a coalescence of factors informed the anti-queer animus as well as how amidst the anti-gay campaigns there were still victories for the LGBTIQ movement. The president appropriated the anti-homosexuality legislation as his bargaining chip as he was balancing his

popularity among the local Ugandan citizenry. “The mantra of safeguarding Uganda’s sovereignty from neo-imperialism symbolised by the imposed Western decadence of homosexuality was rampantly echoed by local anti-gay leaders” (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015: 33).

In Uganda the situation of same-sex loving people in the midst of the discussion of the bill was characterised by increased vulnerability such as “numerous security violations, including arbitrary arrest and detention; physical violence; blackmail and extortion; and loss of work and stable housing” (Makofane et al.,2014:188). There were several incidences reported where LGBTI people were arrested on allegations of public immorality and homosexuality, numerous raids were also conducted with leading activists being arrested. Sensational reporting from the media worsened the situation for the LGBTIQ people. One such incident widely reported on appeared in a local tabloid in Uganda known as the Rolling Stone, which published the names, photographs, and addresses of one hundred homosexuals under the headline "Hang Them" (Awondo, 2012:154; Makofane et al. 2014:188; Van Klinken and Gunda, 2012). The resultant impact of this publication was that some of the individuals on the list were attacked and others went into hiding. A leading LGBTIQ advocate, David Kato Kisule, was murdered in January 2011, just four months after the publication, under callous circumstances in his home in Kampala after his face and identifying information appeared in Rolling Stone (Makofane et al., 2014:188). Cases of blackmail and extortion were reportedly on the increase in Uganda. Some individuals are also reported to have lost their housing and employment after they were ‘outed’ and some service providers such as medical doctors stopped offering service to LGBTIQ people for fear of victimisation (Makofane et al, 2014:189). After the enactment of the Act the challenges of same-sex loving people continued as ‘outing’ was on the rise. In addition, gay friendly service providers were raided. Gays were displaced from their homes, either through eviction by landlords or being chased out by community members. Consequently, some individuals attempted suicide due to the challenges they were experiencing as a result of their ‘outed’ sexual orientation (Makofane et al. 2014:189). What is evident is that there were different types of insecurities arising from the tabling of the bill and the enactment of the act which range from displacement, economic insecurity and physical injustice. Despite these consequences of the whole saga it is also interesting to note, as observed by Nyanzi (2013), that one unanticipated

effect of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill (2009) in Uganda has been the galvanising and strengthening of a localised grassroots-based social movement of sexual minority rights activists.

The media has been central in shaping people's views on homosexuality in Africa. Awondo (2010: 316) offers an examination of the politicisation of homosexuality in Cameroon, combined with criticism of the state mainly by the press against a background of moral panic. The media significantly created moral panic at the start of 2006 when three independent Cameroonian newspapers published lists of public figures thought to be homosexual. Awondo et al (2012:150) notes that the lists contained familiar names: a former prime minister, some MPs, renowned journalists, and other well-known figures, mostly men as the list included women as well. Though the accusations were murky, a recurrent theme was the manipulation of unemployed youths desperate to get jobs and consequently forced to have sex with the powerful people. Awondo et al. (2012:150) conclude that the implication was that elite persons in Cameroon were taking advantage of the willingness of many unemployed youths to do anything for a job, including subjecting themselves to a homosexual "initiation." In response, some public figures instituted legal proceedings against the publishers. The local media closely followed the proceedings and organised marches in solidarity with the journalists accused of 'defamation' (Awondo, 2010). This situation is akin to that of Zimbabwe where politicians assumed to be sympathetic to the gay cause or are suspected of being gay are subjected to ridicule, in Cameroon the gay movement was politicised and used for political advancement by other sections which wanted to discredit some leaders in the post-colonial state. Colonialism was accused of contributing to moral degeneration of the country and homosexuality was portrayed as an avatar of colonialism. Awondo (2010:317) argues that homosexuality was thus used as a means to politically discredit the state and put it on trial. It also demonstrated the interaction between various actors seeking to assert their right to define public morality, including the contest pitting the press against politicians. Internal politics aided by the religious contestations of secret societies (namely Freemasons and the Rosicrucians) as well as witchcraft practices (see Awondo et al. 2012: 150) fuelled the demonization and shaming of those associated with homosexuality. In this context, "homosexuality" became a convenient outlet for venting the considerable popular dissatisfaction with the regime (Awondo et al. 2012:151). Through its actions the media had successfully made the private sexual lives of men in public life into a political matter for moral

judgment. Interestingly in the Cameroonian experience the President of the Republic did not unleash venom against homosexuals but issued a landmark speech in February 2006, in which he defined the issue as being outside the remit of the public authorities and relegated it to the private sphere (Awondo, 2010). However, in order for the government to distance itself from suspicion of colluding in homosexual practices, the authorities launched a witch hunt, resulting in a long series of trials against people, mostly young men accused of homosexuality (Awondo et al., 2012:151). In Cameroon, during this time any person suspected of homosexual practices would be “denounced by neighbours, and the police would break into their house and arrest them”. (Awondo et al., 2012:152).

The responses to homosexuality varied from section to section with some citizens staging anti-authority protests. In these circumstances, these protests gave a new visibility to gay sexuality, and opened up new possibilities for many organisations such as ADEFHO and Alternatives-Cameroun. The Catholic Church was also a powerful actor in the mobilizing of popular indignation about homosexuality. However, even though there were homocritical responses in Cameroon it is also interesting to note that there were also signs of tolerance that can be seen to challenge the commonly held assumption of a homophobic Africa. Within the media itself there were also contestations as to how ethical this practice was, with the established media houses questioning the journalistic integrity of those who published material that violated the privacy of individuals and that was based solely on rumour (Awondo et al. 2012: 152). However, the most powerful voice speaking out against the wave of homophobia—and acting against it – was Alice Nkom, a lawyer in Douala and the founder of the Cameroonian gay rights organization ADEFHO (Association for the Defense of Homosexuals in Cameroon). She successfully defended people accused of homosexual acts⁸. Her work demonstrates how in a homophobic environment some voices were pleading for more tolerance for alternative sexualities.

The anti-queer animus in Senegal was associated with an “explosive mixture of religious excitement, disappointment with the state, and a feeling that crucial moral values were undermined by an inversion of sexual norms that threatened the very reproduction of society”

⁸ Awondo et al. (2012: 150) note that “since 1972 homosexuality has been a criminal offense under Cameroonian law”.

(Awondo et al. 2012:157). Senegal is identified as the first country in Francophone Africa to implement public health programs that especially addressed men who have sex with men (MSM), thus allowing for greater public acceptance of this minority. Generally before the year 2008 Senegal was known as one of the tolerant countries towards homosexuality in Africa, though for individuals too much visibility was always dangerous. However, homosexuality is criminalized under Senegalese law (Awondo et al. 2012:155). The publication of pictures of young men celebrating a "gay marriage" in a restaurant near Dakar in February 2008 caused a great stir in public opinion and a search for those shown in the pictures (Awondo et al, 2012: 154). After this incident a number of young men were arrested on charges of homosexual activity, but they were released a few days later, apparently due to the intervention of the government. In response to the release of the young men a Member of Parliament organised a march against homosexuality in general and against their release in particular. However, although the march was stopped by the police, it had already succeeded in triggering a whole series of witch hunts by highly vocal groups in Senegal against people accused of same-sex practices (Awondo et al. 2012:156). Muslim religious leaders joined in the fray perceiving the laxity of the government and formed The Islamic Front for the Defense of Ethical Values which called for the death penalty for all the people convicted of homosexuality. Generally there was cooperation between political parties, religious leaders and even younger musicians in denouncing homosexuality. Awondo et al. (2012:156) attest that this anti-queer alliance offers a striking example of the spreading-out effect of 'cultural anger'. 'Cultural anger' entailed a moral critique of disrespect for the institution of marriage which subsequently became a political issue that helped to articulate dissatisfaction with the state and, even more widely, the postcolonial imposition in the context of international pressure to liberate anti-AIDS activists (Awondo 2012:156). The government was also perceived as compromising as it was seemingly backing down from international pressure after releasing people who had been arrested and convicted. The interference of the international community galvanised the argument by those wedging anti-homosexual politics. Religious and political leaders were thus convinced that infiltration of homosexuality is an imposition from outside and it threatened the social order and the integrity of the nation. These arguments reinforce an image of a weak Africa that needs to be watchful of infiltration by the powerful western world. However, unlike the Zimbabwean case, what is interesting is that in Senegal the government played an ambivalent role. Though legislation

criminalizing homosexuality was a postcolonial state initiative the government attempted to play the role of negotiator, arbitrating between the demands of a rising tide of religious orthodoxy and the responsibility to protect a minority that is particularly affected by HIV/AIDS (Awondo et al. 2012; Niang et al. 2003). Thus the Senegalese case helps in interrogating the problematic depiction of state homophobia in Africa.

Denunciations of homosexuality in Malawi were triggered by an incident involving Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga who celebrated their relationship in a traditional ceremony. McNamara (2014:88) points out that Chimbalanga and Monjeza were arrested at the ceremony and, after being found guilty of unnatural acts and gross indecency, were sentenced to 14 years imprisonment using the inherited Penal Code. Thoreson (2014:33) notes that the incident was sensationalised by the media, and the couple pathologized, their homosexuality was linked to gender dysphoria, infidelity, and tragedy. The two were frequently referred to as the ‘gay lovebirds’ and mocked for their ill-fated engagement. The treatment of the couple in the public arena ranged from affection to belittlement and cruelty (Thoreson, 2014). It took the intervention of the visiting UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon for the two to be pardoned through a presidential decree. Thoreson (2014: 31) attests that towards the end of 2009 there was a “great deal of state-sponsored persecution, with officials actively encouraging same-sex practicing people to come out to be arrested, and persistently intimidating defenders of LGBTI rights, and raiding the offices of a pro-LGBTI NGO”. The Malawian trajectory, though not initiated by the state, reignites debates on the practices perceived as foreign to Africa but promoted by the dominant west. The international community and donor community was significantly involved in the Chimbalanga – Monjeza saga, there were threats to withdraw donor aid if the two were not pardoned. NGOs also voiced concerns on violations of human rights. However the Malawian Council of Churches begged the government to stand firm. Despite pardoning the two, in December 2010 the parliament of Malawi passed a bill to amend the Penal Code to penalise relations between two women rather than just male same-sex sexual activity (McNamara, 2014). The successor of Bingu wa Mutharika, Joyce Banda pledged to review the bad laws such as the criminalisation of homosexuality, however she backed down from the move as she was heavily criticised in Malawi for capitulating to donors interest. McNamara (2014:88) notes that Banda “received criticism from powerful religious groups and the opposition linked

her support of gay decriminalisation to the devaluation of the kwacha, claiming both were forced by her deference to international powers”. Thus criticism centred on religious grounds as well as perceived donor dependence.

McNamara’s (2014) study in rural Malawi explored people’s perceptions on homosexuality. The study shows a core difference between western understandings of sexuality and those of people in rural villages. Whilst in the west homosexuality is an identity in rural Malawi it was seen as an act implying that a person was not gay but had ‘done gay’ (McNamara, 2014:90). Thus the acts were viewed as situational and often transactive. The people viewed homosexuality as an act rather than a sexuality as the people who engaged in same-sex acts were inevitably married and had children. In Zimbabwe there are also allegations that those who are in homosexual relations engage in them because of financial reasons. McNamara (2014: 92) notes that respondents were adamant that homosexuality comes from the west and that donor governments are enforcing it on unwilling Africans. Thus there was denial of indigenous homosexuality. The majority of respondents believed that *azungu* (white man) had taught homosexuality to Malawians and that it was common in western countries but not in Africa. Thus homosexuality was perceived as a western import. McNamara (2014: 96) notes that the core objection to the decriminalisation of homosexuality, both in the newspapers and among the rural Malawians was a perceived conflict between traditional Malawian culture and the form of homosexuality they saw as imposed both by the west and by urban Malawians. Some respondents claimed that one could not be gay in the village but in the urban area where they do it for money. However what can be observed from the study is that though there was no open approval of homosexual relations, there was no apparent punishment of those engaging in it, neither were there calls for their expulsion from the village.

Whilst the majority of countries in sub-Saharan Africa are characterised by discriminatory laws towards same sex practising people, South Africa has encouraging legislation. Zway and Boonzaier, (2015:97) contend that the rights of LGBTI people in South Africa are enshrined in the Constitution, which protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation among other varying identities. “Since the transition to democratic majority rule in 1994, victories for gay rights have included the right of same-sex couples to co-adopt children, the recognition of same-

sex partnerships in relation to benefits such as state pensions and other employment benefits and immigration rights for same-sex couples” (Vincent and Howell, 2014:473; Morgan and Reid,2003; Zway and Boonzaier, 2015). Morgan and Reid, (2003:376) note that:

“The South African Constitution adopted in 1996 was the first in the world to include sexual orientation as an expressly protected category. Section 8(3) of the Bill of Rights states that: Neither the state nor any person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth”

Despite having legal protection, and a progressive legislative framework South Africa has had its share of violence against sexual minorities. The protection offered in the Constitution has not necessarily translated into protection in the lives of people on the ground. XinLing Li (2009) explores the disjuncture resulting from the constitutional provisions enunciating freedom yet lesbians and gay men encounter challenges in expressing their sexuality, as there is infringement of their rights as exercising certain rights depends on various factors.

Morgan and Reid (2003:377) observed that while South Africa’s Constitution and legislative framework protects the rights of lesbians and gay men, the idea that homosexuality is un-African and un-Christian is echoed in everyday life, especially by certain political organizations and religious groups. Vincent and Howell (2014:475) attest that the dominant strategies that have been discursively deployed to delegitimise the idea of sexual equality in the context of the post-1994 political dispensation in South Africa include the claim of ‘unnaturalness’, ‘ungodliness’ and ‘unAfricanness. Matebeni (2013: 410) notes that there are “popular claims that to be black and gay is to betray the race and to be less authentically black’ and to ‘collude with whiteness”. This claim unfortunately constructs same-sex couples and intimacy as monoracial. Thus being ‘black’ and ‘gay’ are mistakenly perceived as incompatible which creates problems for black queer persons in their communities. The gulf that exists between law and practice with respect to freedom of sexual orientation has been evidently shown in how influential political-public figures have uttered homophobic comments disregarding the constitutional provisions. President Jacob Zuma has in the past pronounced that same-sex marriage is ‘a disgrace to the nation and to

God', whilst the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, described homosexuality as a form of 'moral decay' (Vincent and Howell, 2014).

2.6 Experiences of same sex loving people

In this section I review the experiences of same- sex loving people beyond the tired polemics of its immorality and its 'unAfricanness' as I explore how individuals have expressed their identities. Nyanzi (2013:952) explored through an ethnographic study the everyday lives of sexual minorities living in rural and urban Uganda, demonstrating how same-sex loving individuals simultaneously claim the two identities of 'African' and 'homosexual'. Nyanzi's study focused on self-identified African homosexuals. The study challenges the claims of the 'unAfricanness' of homosexuality and explores how the same-sex loving people made meaning of their supposedly antithetical identities (Nyanzi, 2013: 958). Nyanzi shows that many respondents in the urban space openly identified themselves as homosexuals. Thus, the participants in this setting whenever discussing in a gay friendly setting openly reclaimed and appropriated the term homosexual for themselves. Nyanzi (2013:958) demonstrates that evidence from Uganda challenges the notion that the term homosexual is disparaged and shunned by same-sex loving people in non-Western societies. Nyanzi (2013:958) further notes that 'Lesbian' and 'gay' labels were commonly used whilst 'bisexual' identity' was less common. Despite bisexual identity not being among the common identity labels, bisexual practice was often reported (Nyanzi, 2013:958). The terms were given further variants among participants and accordingly identified as follows: 'straight lesbian', 'lesbian man', 'gay lesbian', 'gay heterosexual', 'gay man', 'top' for the insertive partner during sex, 'bottom' for the recipient partner during sex, 'chapati' – or 'versatile' for one who played both insertive and recipient roles during sex, 'gay homo', 'trans f-to-m' for individuals born female but expressed a masculine gender, 'trans m-to-f' for those born male but expressing feminine gender, 'bi-lesbian', 'heterosexual with gay feelings', 'accidental heterosexual', 'gay but want to have children', 'transgender man' and 'dyke' (Nyanzi, 2013: 958-9). What is also evident in these terms is gender expression in the identities adopted by same-sex loving people. There are elements of adopting, mimicking or reproducing heterosexual gender structuring in describing the identities. In Nyanzi's study there were also local labels which were not universally circulated and accepted among same-sex loving people. Nyanzi (2013:959) notes that *kuchu* was centralised to Kampala

city and its immediate environs. Some same-sex loving people embraced it as it validated the integrity of black Africans who come out as homosexual. However, few people significantly rejected it as not adequately capturing ‘gay’ lives as it had historical meanings connected to the sex act only. The adoption of the term by the local sexual minority rights movements served to spur same sex loving people to dissociate themselves from it as it was highly politicized and connoted militant activism (see Nyanzi, 2013:959). Not all same-sex loving people want to be openly identified, and are not prepared to associate themselves with openly militant LGBTIQ groups. Nyanzi (2013:960) observed that “generally, most research participants preferred *kuchu* to the alternative Luganda expression *abali b’ebisiyazi* or *abasiyazi* (literally meaning ‘eaters of rubbish’), which was blatantly derogatory and restricted to connoting anal sex/sodomy”.

Whilst many anti-homosexuality advocates claim that the practice is not African and indigenous, Nyanzi’s (2013) study demonstrates how same-sex loving people claimed Ugandan citizenship through birth, ancestry, residence or naturalisation. The majority of participants when discussing their African identity laid claim over place and being born, bred and living in Uganda – an African country (Nyanzi, 2013: 960). Besides the geographic boundaries the participants often resorted to the essentialist and reductionist understanding of race to claim their Africanness. The research participants often claimed that they were black, contrasting themselves with white men thus without factoring in the social construct nature of race they claimed that none can expunge them from being Africans. Nyanzi (2013:960) notes that “clan membership, lineage position, tribal ties, adherence to ethnic rituals, owning cultural insignia, speaking local tongues and successfully mapping kinship genealogies were among the strategies employed to establish individual belonging to an African ethnic group which thus in their view qualified them to be African”. Indigenusness was also framed by the claim that some same-sex loving people were possessed by ancestral spirits. The question must then be asked why if they were not African or if it was against African ethos why would the ancestors communicate through same-sex loving people (Nyanzi, 2013). Therefore, the basis used to deny homosexual people based on the ‘unAfricanness’ claim is riddled with porosity as evidenced by Uganda and South Africa where homosexuals are known to have been cultural conduits of ancestral messages and interventions. In South Africa there are same-sex loving people who also identify themselves as traditional healers popularly known as *sangomas*. This occurrence is an open challenge to the oft-parroted

claim that the practice is alien. What can be concluded from Nyanzi's study is that despite the "homophobic tide experienced in Uganda, self-identified homosexual people actively carve out new spaces and reclaim old terrains in which they enact non-heteronormative sexualities, thereby simultaneously claiming dual identities as African Ugandans and homosexual individuals" (Nyanzi; 2013: 963).

Zway and Boonzaier, (2015: 97) note that "much of the research with lesbian women in South Africa has pointed to the particular struggles that black lesbian women face, especially in townships". The media is awash with stories of masculine dominance, embedded with misogyny and homophobia and what has been referred to as curative/ corrective rape. 'Corrective rape' is term used to describe the violence on black lesbian women who are raped under the guise of attempts to 'correct' or 'cure' them of their homosexual desires. Media attention on 'corrective rape' has increased greater visibility of the lives of black lesbians although in a one-dimensional way only as a special category of victims (Zway and Boonzaier, 2015:97). Without denying the challenges, it is important to go beyond situating black lesbians as victims and also explore female intimacy and pleasure. The painting by Zanele Muholi (Caitlin and I, 2009, Michael Stevenson Gallery) goes beyond popular debates about whether same-sex sexuality is acceptable or tolerable but asserts female intimacy and sexuality that is self-sustaining and self-sufficient (Matebeni, 2013:408). "Muholi changes the representation of the black female 'queer' subject from that of being victim, murdered and rendered invisible to one claiming desire, intimacy and an erotic position" (Matebeni, 2013: 414). Similarly Zway and Boonzaier (2015) moved beyond the tired polemics of the un/Africanness of homosexuality and those of the dominant narratives that portray black lesbians as victims when they discussed the multiple and complex ways in which identity is constructed and negotiated among young black lesbian and bisexual women. Zway and Boonzaier (2015:105) note that although participants did experience victimization and alienation, the experiences did not define them. Thus, the dominant narrative of victimhood could not withstand scrutiny. It is also the intention of the current study to move beyond depicting same-sex loving people in Zimbabwe as mere passive victims. Some of the findings from Zway and Boonzaier's (2015) study include the importance of clothing in constructing lesbian identities. Wearing masculine clothing was an outwardly visible symbol or marker of their identity as lesbians, to themselves and to others. The construction of the identity of many of

the young women in Zway and Boonzaier's (2015) study appeared to be partially shaped through memory and their narratives of childhood. Thus, some respondents identified with the 'born this way' discourse. Constructing positive identities was also enhanced by affirmation from others, as well as the pleasure experienced through embodied activity such as soccer, pantsula dancing, hip-hop dancing, and others (Zway and Boonzaier, 2015: 104). The current study also explores how the 'born this way' discourse influences the self-perception of participants as they naturalize their sexual identity.

Rudwick (2011) explores the proclamations of Zuluness among a sub-group of gay Zulu men in South Africa. This is in light of gay liberation which although endorsed by the legislature may not have the support of the average South African (Rudwick, 2011:90). Kwazulu Natal (KZN), presumably is associated with a higher likelihood of homophobic hate crimes than other provinces due to the patriarchal values believed to be entrenched among the Zulu people in the province (Rudwick, 2011:91). Whilst many Zulu people endorse the myth that homosexuality is un-African, Rudwick (2011) shows that many gay Zulu men have found specific ways to reconcile their same-sex orientation with Zuluness. Rudwick (2011:105) concludes that the participants subscribed to many traditional and hegemonic cultural elements of Zulu culture to claim their Zulu identity. The participants staked their claim on Zuluness through commitment to selected aspects of the Zulu language and culture. This is something which challenges the view that a homosexual identity is 'un-Zulu' or, by extension, 'un-African' (Rudwick, 2011:105). The participants were also defiant of the myth portraying homosexuality as unAfrican through celebrating Zulu consciousness and pride by speaking the isiZulu-based sociolect *isiNgqumo*. Participants also embraced traditional Zulu beliefs and decorum. Rudwick (2011:105) notes that participants expressed their "unshakable belief in *amadlozi* [ancestors], and by their obedience to the traditional laws of *hlonipha* [respect]" (Rudwick, 2011:105). Thus Rudwick's (2011) work challenges the widespread opinions of the anti-gay African proponents who claim that homosexuality is antithetical to African culture as the participants managed to reconcile their gay identity and their Zulu identity.

Teunis (2001) concludes based on his ethnographic study of Senegal that male same-sex sexuality is more prevalent on the African continent than the literature on African sexuality

suggests. Teunis (2001:179) observes that maintaining secrecy is a constant routine in the daily lives of homosexual men. The respondents were not open about their sexual activities. Nevertheless, there were gay spaces such as bars where homosexual men congregated. Niang et al. (2003) recruited participants for their study by visiting bars, cafeterias, restaurants, and public places frequented by men who have sex with men. The study managed to provide important insights about the sexuality of MSM in Dakar, the role of violence and stigma in their lives, and the lack of appropriate services available to meet their health needs (Niang et al. 2003: 509). The findings of Niang et al. (2003) confirm the observations of Teunis (2001) regarding the importance of secrecy and being discrete about one's sexuality. In Niang et al.'s (2003:507) study "numerous men emphasized the importance of keeping one's sexual inclinations and relationships a secret because exposure leads to ostracism, stigmatization, and physical or verbal abuse". Thus the lives of these men were characterised by violence and rejection and in some neighbourhoods stones were thrown at those suspected of being homosexual. Even though the studies from Senegal are primarily and in part driven by the intention to address HIV-related issues they do indeed give some insights into the lived experiences of gay men in an African context which is replete with homophobia even where the practise is not criminalised.

McAllister's (2013) study focuses on self-identifying gay men in Botswana in relation to their reception of Western media imagery of gayness. Media representations of Western gay male culture have had a double-edged impact in that they have mainly tended to drive both the new visibility of sexual minorities in sub-Saharan Africa and the backlash against these communities (McAllister, 2013:89). The study examined local understandings of the relationship between Setswana and Western gay cultures. As with other African cultures such as Shona and Ndebele, the Setswana culture has a deeply-engrained respect for privacy and discretion. Thus, sexual non-conformity could be tolerated in so far as it was kept private. Compared to Uganda and Zimbabwe and other African countries, Botswana has had relative tolerance of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Despite the existence of colonial anti-sodomy laws, there have been no prosecutions since 1995 with former president Festus Mogae and current president Ian Khama encouraging tolerance (McAllister, 2013). However, despite the absence of state-orchestrated persecution of the LGBTI community, individual members still face a share of family and social stigmatisation (McAllister, 2013:92). As argued by Epprecht (2005), the real

concern of those denouncing homosexuality is the perceived lack of discretion of those practising it. Thus the current understanding of homosexual identities which are about expression transgresses the unwritten code of discretion when practising non-conforming sexualities. McAllister (2013:92) states that the traditional form of tolerance depended on discretion, reticence and a certain (mutual) pretence which is significantly challenged by adopting the identity concepts and identity politics of global gayness which is then countered not as sexual non-conformity but as sexual dissidence, thereby feeding into the oft-repeated ‘unAfrican’ argument.

The findings from the study by McAllister (2013) show that the participants believed that the gay culture in Botswana was not significantly different from what is globally circulated. They associated being gay with being modern, trendy and up to date as depicted in contemporary media representations. However, this also brings a challenge as it becomes complex to dismiss the ‘unAfrican’ claim as the lifestyles ‘mirror’ the western world. There is a challenge on the authenticity of contemporary African lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender identities that draw on media imagery (McAllister, 2013:94). Whilst some participants acknowledged the view that “gay culture is the same everywhere, other responses made it clear that the ‘tswanarisation’ of global gay culture is already underway” (McAllister, 2013:95). Thus the global gay culture is localised in innumerable ways such as through the local gay fashion and the use of indigenous language to mark identities. McAllister (2013:96) notes that ‘the diction used to refer to gay people is rooted in Botswana culture. The most common words used to refer to gay people, especially those feminine [ones], are *mosetsanyana*, *mme*, [and] *kgarejwana* [diminutives for young girls]. Although there was some contestation regarding whether or not the terms were intended to be affirming or pejorative, gay men found them useful to mark their identity. The men who equated effeminacy and gayness seemed comfortable, nevertheless, thinking of themselves as gay while implying that they were not ‘fem’ (McAllister, 2013: 96). The implication may be that whilst aware of Western gay culture the local participants are creating their own local, mixed and comfortable accommodation with the Western model. Thus McAllister (2013:96) contends that there are signs of an identifiable “emerging, local sense of identity or community, however tentative or embattled”. However, it is also important to note that in McAllister’s (2013) study participants were university graduates. That very fact meant

that they were among the enlightened members of the LGBTI community who may have exposure to and understanding of global gay politics and identity. In this regard, the participants in my study come from diverse academic backgrounds with a variety of achievements. However, some within my sample barely managed to get basic qualifications while, others have university experience.

Van Klinken's (2013) paper entitled "Queer Lives in a 'Christian Nation': Zambian Gay Men Negotiating Sexual and Religious Identities", demonstrates how self-identified gay men have been able to create space for themselves in a homophobic environment. In Zambia homosexuality is heavily politicised and subject to public debate. In the build-up to the 2011 elections, the opposition leader's political career was attacked on the basis of claims that he was pro-homosexual. Zambia is a declared Christian nation and Pentecostalist Christian discourses on homosexuality are propagated. In Zambia popular discourse portrays homosexuality as 'unAfrican', 'un-cultural' and 'unchristian'. Prominent political and religious leaders have claimed that there is no room for being gay in Zambia. Van Klinken (2013) shows that against the background of a Zambian Christian nationalism that stigmatizes, excludes and criminalizes LGBTI people, gay men have created space for themselves. The participants challenged the claims of an unAfrican (unZambian) identity by interrogating the essentialist understanding of 'Africanness' given that so much in contemporary Zambia are not traditionally 'African' any longer, such as weddings, clothing, and housing, but yet are widely accepted (Van Klinken, 2013). The participants even challenged Christianity itself as being un-African yet ironically this product of Western missionaries along with colonization has become a cudgel against homosexuality, a phenomenon which existed in pre-colonial African societies. Van Klinken (2013) observes that participants "claimed space for themselves as full citizens of Zambia as a Christian nation by resisting discourses of demonization and making claims towards the universal category of love—both their own inclination to loving relationships and their share in God's love". In the current study I also explore how gays and lesbians have created space for themselves in a 'homophobic' environment, not only with regard to religion but also to various facets of life.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter literature on LGBTI practices and movements was explored and it was observed that popular discourse has uncritically portrayed Africa as ‘monolithically homophobic’. In this chapter it has also been shown that while there have been serious attacks on the LGBTI people across Africa, there is also a level of acceptance in certain communities. These nuances are important in providing a sociological understanding of same-sex relationships and lifestyles. Whilst not denying the existent challenges, there is a need to theorise beyond the victimhood of same sex loving individuals and how they negotiate hostile social structures. This deeper level of understanding informs the analysis of same-sex couples under examination in this thesis.

Chapter 3: ‘Identity’ and ‘Sexual Identities’: A theoretical Perspective

3.1 Introduction

The current chapter seeks to discuss the theoretical framework for this study that will help in understanding the experiences of same-sex loving people in Harare. This chapter begins by examining ‘identity’ as a concept, an action premised upon the fact that ‘identity’ is central to this study. Furthermore, the study explores the various debates surrounding the adoption and use of the concept. I trace the conceptualisation of the concept of identity and the various meanings attached to it within social science scholarship. I then introduce Giddens’ characterisation of late modernity, Goffman’s self-presentation concept and Halberstam’s ‘border wars’ metaphor which are used to understand how same sex loving people in Zimbabwe experience and negotiate identities that are considered dissident in the heteronormative context. With these frameworks I endeavour to show how through the use of Giddens, Goffman and Halberstam’s work, we can have a context- based understanding of the ‘gay and lesbian’ identities that obtain in the global south.

3.2 The concept identity

Although identity is central to this study, it is a slippery, elusive and problematic. Lawler (2008) attests that identity is a contested term to which it is impossible to assign a unitary definition. Golubović (2011:25) acknowledges that the “concept of identity is very difficult to explain because of the complexity of its meaning, hence there is often a one-dimensional (incomplete) interpretation of this concept, or a confusion of different terms used to explain the meaning of identity”. The concept identity is riddled with ambiguity and also has contradictory meanings, in addition to being laden with reifying connotations (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:34). This has prompted writers such as Brubaker and Cooper to suggest that the challenge can be addressed by adopting less ambiguous terms unencumbered by the reifying connotations of identity. Brubaker and Cooper’s call to adopt alternative terms is predicated on their understanding that, “identity’ tends to mean too much when understood in a strong sense, too little when understood in a weak sense, or nothing at all because of its sheer ambiguity” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:1). Yuval-Davis (2010: 262) notes that identity can “signify non-instrumental modes of social and political

action; collective groups or categories; core aspects of the self; the development, processual and interactive, of collective self-understanding; or the evanescent products of multiple and competing discourses of self". Alternative terms presumed to be less confusing such as 'location' and 'translocation' have been suggested (Floya Anthias, 2002) to replace identity. This study, whilst acknowledging the relevance of the argument by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) to discard the notion of 'identity' for social analytical purposes, does not adopt that position. It considers 'identity' as an already established tool kit for sociological analysis as 'identity' and 'identification' are still essential concepts if we are to understand the human world (Jenkins 2004:9).

Notwithstanding the slippery nature of the term identity, Hall (1996) argues that there is 'a veritable discursive explosion' around the concept, possibly due to its centrality to the question of agency and politics, including identity politics. Handler (1994:27) contends that identity became a salient scholarly and cultural construct in social scientific scholarship in the mid-twentieth century. Jenkins (2000) points out that in everyday discourse and in social science scholarship, identity is perhaps one of the most widely used words. Despite its elusive and problematic nature the concept 'identity' remains indispensable for the current study. Identity seems to be pervasive, in everyday situations one's identity is called into question (Jenkins 2004:2). Thus, we live in a world where identity matters. Okolie (2003:3) contends that identity is salient because we live in a world in which people are constantly 'otherized' for the purpose of assigning differential rewards and punishment to them. Leve (2011:513) attests that identity is a social fact, a powerful organizing presence in social life today. Identities do provide the bedrock for our most prized social belonging (Weeks 2007:43), hence their centrality in everyday life and social practices. In this chapter I examine the contested nature of identity and how it has been theorised. The chapter then specifically explores the conceptualisation of sexual identities and proposes theoretical concepts for the study to understand gay and lesbian identities in Zimbabwe.

3.3 Identity and Social Sciences

Brubaker and Cooper (2000:2) note that "identity and cognate terms in other languages have a long history as technical terms in Western philosophy, from the ancient Greeks through to contemporary analytical philosophy. It was used to address the perennial philosophical problems

of permanence amidst manifest change, and of unity amidst manifest diversity”. However, its widespread adoption for vernacular and social-analytical purposes is a relatively recent development (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:2). In the 1960s and 1970s identity became diffused and was increasingly pervasive across social and political analyses amongst academics and even in journalistic writing (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000:3; Gilligan, 2007:599). Brubaker and Cooper (2000:2) observe that the work of Erik Erikson was significant in, among other things, coining the term ‘identity crisis’. In sociology the work of symbolic interactionists concerned from the outset with ‘the self is also an important trajectory in the popularisation of the term identity. Brubaker and Cooper (2000:3) argue that Erving Goffman, working on the periphery of the symbolic interactionist tradition, and Peter Berger, working in the social constructionist and phenomenological tradition, were more influential in popularizing the notion of identity. Jenkins (2004:8) observes that ‘identity’ became one of the unifying themes of social science during the 1990s, and shows no signs of going away. He further notes that everybody has something to say: anthropologists, geographers, historians, philosophers, political scientists, psychologists and sociologists. The debates in which identity features in the words of Jenkins (2004:8) include, but are not limited to:

“Debates about the modernity of self-identity to the postmodern and postcolonial fascination with difference, from feminist deconstructions of gendered social conventions to urgent attempts to understand the apparent resurgence of nationalism and ethnic politics, the field is crowded. Identity, it seems, is bound up with everything from political asylum to credit card theft. And the talk is about change, too: about new identities, the return of old ones, the transformation of existing ones. About shape-shifting, on the one hand, and the deep foundations of selfhood, on the other. About new politics of identity.”

3:4 Common uses of identity

Jenkins (2000) outlines how in everyday speech the notion of identity is used. Identity can be used for personal individuality with an emphasis on selfhood, self-actualisation, freedom, and authenticity. Secondly, identity can be used as a lifestyle. In this regard it covers everything from 'subculture' to sexual preference, and encompasses the collective as well as the individual. Thirdly it can imply social position and status. The world is systematically and hierarchically

structured in terms of social identifications such as gender, age, class, religion, marital status, disability, culture and ethnicity, and so on. These serve to differentiate people, individually and collectively, and they also provide bases for the organisation of collective mobilisation and action. Fourthly, identity can also be used in a political sense in terms of voting behaviour and other forms of political action. This can encompass 'identity politics,' a relatively new terrain that is pre-eminently of the new social movements for example those promoting women's rights, gay rights, ethnic civil rights, and so on. The other dimension, as noted by Jenkins, is with regard to bureaucracy and citizenship. In this variant, passports, identity cards, and other forms of personal registration, are an established part of the everyday life of the citizens and inhabitants of all industrialised states. They are bound up with nationality, freedom of movement, citizenship rights, taxation, financial and other economic services, welfare benefits, routine population monitoring, individual surveillance, criminality, and so on. There is hardly any aspect of everyday life that is not in some sense touched by the bureaucratisation of identity (Jenkins, 2000). Despite having separately itemised the variants of identity, Jenkins (2000) notes that in practice, the items do, of course, overlap with each other. For example, the pursuit of 'personal individuality' is likely to involve 'life-style choices'; social status and politics have always been intimately connected; bureaucracy and citizenship are fundamentally political; and so on.

3.5 Identity impasse

Oppong (2013) observes that the concept of identity is used in two different ways in the social sciences. Firstly, as the immutable, or at least the slowly changing, core of personality that manifests in all aspects of an individual's undertakings. Secondly, as transitory and adaptable, thus perceiving the self as individuals in transit from one social milieu to another, potentially providing a somewhat different identity as it were on each occasion (Oppong 2013:13). Thus there is contestation over the variability and fluidity of identity, as opposed to essentialism or primordialism. 'Primordial identity' is conceived as a naturally given and unchangeable entity whilst the fluidity of identity implies that it's a socio-cultural, political or ideologically-constructed collective sense of communal or personal identity (Golubović 2011:26). Golubović (2011:28) however, attempts to discard the idea of perceiving identity as a neutral category, or as an inborn (congenital) trait. Golubović (2011:28) contends that the concept of identity "does not belong to a natural/biological category, but it is socio-culturally impregnated expression of both

individual/personal and collective way of existence and recognition”. Thus, identity can be conceived as a matter of choice, unlike its interpretation as naturally given and biologically inherited ways of understanding and explaining oneself and collective existence. Weeks (1987:43) buttresses an understanding of identity as choice and thereby points out that not all homosexually-inclined people want to identify their ‘minority’ status or even see themselves as homosexual. Thus, sexual identification is essentially strange as empirical evidence demonstrates that there are people who identify themselves as being gay and participate in the gay community but do not experience or wish for homosexual activity. There are, as noted by Weeks (1987), many black homosexuals who prefer to identify primarily as black rather than gay or even align themselves with black rather than gay political positions.

Okolie (2003:1) contends that identities are socially, historically, and politically constructed. The constructivist approach marks vigorous efforts to criticise ‘essentialist’ postulations on identity which reify it and perceive it as primordial. Thus identities are being increasingly theorised as multiple and fragmented. This approach implies recognition of the multiple, fluid and often contradictory nature of identities and departs from perceiving them as ‘fixed or ascribed’, opting instead to perceive identities as entities emerging out of and through people’s social relationships (Evans 2006:110). This position departs from perceiving identity in primordial terms, as something naturally given and unchangeable. However Brubaker and Cooper (2000:1) attest that such a prevailing constructivist approach stipulating that identities are constructed, fluid, and multiple permits proliferation of putative identities. This has the effect of marginalising the hard dynamics and essentialist claims in contemporary identity politics thus making identity to be everywhere yet nowhere. The concern by Brubaker and Cooper (2000:1) is that analytical robustness is lost as fluidity makes it difficult to comprehend the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallize. Therefore, it is not clear whether what is characterized as multiple, fragmented, and fluid qualifies as ‘identity’ at all. Brubaker and Cooper (2000:1) further interrogate the utility of the concepts to allow us to understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications as well as the singularity that is often striven for and sometimes realized by politicians seeking to transform mere categories into unitary and exclusive groups. Brubaker and Cooper (2000:2) argue that “conceptualizing all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness, and

cohesion, all self-understandings and self-identifications in the idiom of ‘identity’ saddles us with a blunt, fat, undifferentiated vocabulary”.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000:4) also contend that identity should be understood as both a category of practice and a category of analysis. When conceived as a category of practice, identity encompasses the actions by actors in everyday settings to make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from others. Within this perspective identity can be manipulated by political entrepreneurs to persuade people to coalesce on the basis of certain characteristics which make them understand the similarities amongst them whilst demarcating the boundaries which make them see others as being different (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:5). Thus identity is understood as a ground or basis of social or political action. It is, therefore, used to underscore the manner in which individual or collective action may be governed by particularistic self-understandings rather than by putatively universal self-interest (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:6). Identity can also be understood as a specifically collective phenomenon, which denotes a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group or category (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:7). This sameness may be subjectively experienced and it manifests in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action such as social movements. Brubaker and Cooper (2000:7) also point out that identity can be understood as a core aspect of individual or collective ‘selfhood’ or as a fundamental condition of social being. Identity can also be understood as a product of social or political action, as it is invoked to highlight the processual, interactive development of the kind of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or ‘groupness’ that can make collective action possible (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000:7). Lastly, Brubaker and Cooper (2000:8) note that identity can be understood as the “evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses, thus invoking the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary self”. From this Brubaker and Cooper (2000) manage to demonstrate the ambivalence and great heterogeneity, multivalent, even contradictory theoretical burden of the term identity.

3:6 Contemporary identities

The troubling and paradoxical nature of identities is further accentuated by Weeks’ conceptualisation of contemporary identities. Weeks (2007:43) holds that “contemporary

identities are hybrid, made of many fragments of history and of social and personal experience”. They have many possible identifications across the boundaries of many potential differences. This heterogeneity challenges the assumption that collective identities imply strong notions of group boundedness and homogeneity (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:10). Weeks (2007:43) indicates how contemporary identities tend to defy the neat categorisation of social policy and social science which evidently challenges the settled power relations. Notwithstanding the complexities of contemporary identities, Weeks (2007:43) claims that they are “personally knitted together into narratives which give coherence to individual lives, support and promote social agency and express certain values, values which we share with those with whom we identify and which differentiate us from countless others with whom we do not, often cannot, identify”. Consistent with the assumption on identity highlighted by Brubaker and Cooper (2000:10), identity is assumed to be something all people have, or ought to have, or are searching for. Thus Weeks (2007:43) contends that we search for them, claim them, assert them and affirm them usually with all the passion and personal conviction we command. Golubović (2011: 25) further contends that the “basic meaning of identity refers to where one (a person or a group) belongs, and what is expressed as self-image or/and common-image, what integrates them within self or a group existence, and what differentiate them vis-à-vis others”. Identity is also something that at least all groups of a certain kind (or instance ethnic, racial, or national) possess, or ought to possess, hence it is something people and groups can have without being aware of it.

Yuval-Davis (2010:266) advocates for a distinction between identity and identity politics, describing the first as an analytical dimension in which belonging needs to be understood, and the second as a specific type of project of the politics of belonging. Belonging assumes boundaries of belonging and is thus exclusive as well as inclusive (Yuval-Davis 2010: 266). Therefore identities determine who does and does not belong in a particular place, thus marking the constructed boundaries between ‘them’ and ‘us’. Thus, identity is about differentiation. Weeks (2007:44) attests that identities embody what we have in common and what separates us. It’s about our sense of self and our recognition of others, about conflicting belongings in a changing history and complex modern world and the possibility of social action in and through our collective identities (Weeks 2007:44). The distinction between identity and identity politics for Yuval-Davis (2010:266) emanates from the claim that belonging tends to be naturalized and

becomes articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way. Whereas the politics of belonging comprises specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities that are, at the same time, themselves being constructed by these projects in very specific ways (Yuval-Davis, 2010:266). Therefore, it follows that within Yuval-Davis' (2010) conception of identity politics, what becomes central is the construction and reproduction of particular boundaries of belonging according to some specific principles that can be of many different kinds, from the phenotypical to the social. Thus, identity politics tends to presume a necessary and homogeneous narrative of primordial or quasi-primordial attachment to social groupings. However, an analytical challenge resulting from identity politics discourses can be that of reductionism where one can equate social categories with social groupings. This tends to assume not only that all those who belong to a certain social category also belong to a specific social grouping, but also that they all have the same attachment and the same understanding of that social category cum identity (Yuval-Davis 2010:267). The consequence is a tendency to essentialize people and their identities by just one social category and claiming it as the determining factor that defines that person's identity, for instance a gay man.

Yuval-Davis (2010:267) proposes that whereas identity politics is conceived as politics of belonging, identities are conceived as narratives, stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to/should be. Whilst some have pointed out that identity narratives provide people with a sense of 'personal order' (Margaret Wetherell) others, such as Yuval-Davis (2010), argue that identities are not just personal. This emanates from the notion that collective identity narratives provide a collective sense of order and meaning (Yuval-Davis 2010:267). The 'order' referred to should, however, not be construed as implying that collective identities narratives are something neatly 'coherent', but rather a sense of agency and continuity that encompasses changes, contestations and even ruptures within the identity boundaries of the individual and/or collective subject (Yuval-Davis 2010:267). Therefore, as noted by Hall (1996), it is particularly important to note that the production of identities is always 'in process', never complete, contingent and multiplex.' Thus Yuval-Davis (2010:267) contends that the "narratives of identities can be more or less stable in different social contexts, more or less coherent, more or less authorized and/or contested by self

and others, depending on the specific situational factors, and can reflect routinized constructions of everyday life or those of significant moments of crisis and transformation”.

Yuval-Davis (2010:269) notes that others have theorised identities as performances and dialogical. The idea is that man is *homo performans* implying that humans are self-performing and the performances are reflexive thus revealing. Classical sociologists such as Talcott Parsons (1950s) emphasise the social roles played by people whilst Goffman (1963, 1959) emphasise theatrical performances in everyday life. This therefore persuades one to conceive identities as performances not because they are “false” but because that is precisely how even truthful forms of identity get to be done (Lawler 2008). In this line on thinking one assumes predetermined narratives of identities which one then fits into. Yuval-Davis (2010:271) notes that the dialogical construction of identity is both reflective and constitutive. The process involves “both in an in-between perpetual state of ‘becoming’ in which processes of identity construction, authorization and contestation take place” (Yuval-Davis 2010:269). Dialogical identity narratives do, however, build on common cultural resources and meanings, as well as common signifiers of identity. Yuval-Davis (2010:272) suggests that although the successful dialogical process is accumulative, it provides its participants with the space for exploring new possibilities, changes and contestations, as well as the utilization of the diverse experiences and resources of the participants in the dialogue. Whichever way one may decide to perceive narrative identities, either as being performance or dialogical, identities should be understood as specific forms of narrative regarding the self and its boundaries. Thus in this sense all identities are exclusive, as well as inclusive.

Kellner (1992:141) contends that anthropological folklore in traditional societies perceived one’s identity as fixed, solid and stable. Thus in pre-modern societies identity was viewed as being less problematic given that it was regarded as being relatively fixed and unchanging. It was predefined as it was a function of social roles for instance one was born in a clan and died in a clan due to relatively fixed kinship systems. The transition from pre-modernity to modernity sees the emergence of an identity that is “more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive and subject to change and innovation” (Kellner 1992:141). However, the enlightenment project conceives identity as something essential, substantial, unitary, fixed and fundamentally unchanging. This

conceptualisation demonstrates the tensions evident in identity theorisation. Golubović (2011:32) acknowledges the potential for identity conflict due to the fact that identity takes plural forms in the modern era, hence it is often difficult to attain harmony of identities, both individually and collectively. The conflict may arise when the main current of an individual's identity does not correspond to the mainstream definition of collective identity, particularly if hierarchical relationships are established between individual members and society. This may be the quagmire that same-sex loving people find themselves in given the mythical hierarchy of sexualities. In circumstances such as these "individuals are thus blocked in searching and defining their own self-identification, because a one-sided collective identification demands a strict adaptation to the habits/customs, symbols and values of the particular tradition" (Golubović 2011:32).

Giddens (1992:30) notes that self-identity becomes particularly problematic in modern social life where the fundamental feature of a society's high reflexivity is the 'open' character of self-identity and the reflexive nature of the body. Kellner (1992:141) points out that in modernity, self-consciousness comes into its own as one engages in reflection on available social roles and possibilities. Thus Giddens (1992) argues that the self today for everyone is a reflexive project – a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future. It is a project carried on amidst a profusion of reflexive resources: therapy and self-help manuals of all kinds, television programmes and magazine articles. In his differentiation of traditional society and modern society, Habermas (1979:87) points out that the former is ruled by habitual norms, while the latter creates their norms based on principles hence the modern man has a plurality of identities that may be freely chosen on disposal. The emerging crisis of identity has catapulted the concept of identity to become a contested topical subject in scientific research today because in the postmodern world one needs to change oneself and the existing conditions as an active participant (i.e. as a subject), to develop new forms of self-identification in order to create autonomy; however, the "New World Order" rather promotes conformity as a preferable type of behaviour, preventing maturity of individuals as self-conscious beings (Bauman 1998:43). Thus in spite of the progression of the society, identities in modern societies have remained relatively circumscribed, fixed and limited, however it's noteworthy that the boundaries of possible identities, of new identities, are continuously expanding (Kellner 1992:141).

3:7 Sexual Identities

Weeks (2007:43) contends that not all identities are harmless and enabling. For that reason, identities can be battle grounds. New political and cultural identities around gender, ethnicity, sexuality and other dynamics have emerged to confirm and promote common human interests challenging frozen hierarchies of power whilst in the process implicitly or explicitly advancing autonomy, diversity and choice (Weeks 2007:43). Some identities tend to generate controversies around ‘identity politics’, ‘political correctness’ and what has been regarded as the threat to the ‘natural order’ of sexuality. Sexual identities are among the few that are paradoxical. Lovaas and Jenkins (2007:2) note that it comes as a great surprise to many that sexuality as a social identity is a recent invention. Same sex and cross-sex sexual behaviours became categories of identity in the late 19th century as prior to that people were hardly identified by sexual practices (Lovaas and Jenkins, 2007:2). Weeks (2007:44) observes that “sexual identities have a special place in the discourse of identity, as they are like relay points for a number of interconnected differences, conflicts and opportunities”.

Weeks (1987:31) notes that the idea of sexual identity is an ambiguous one despite the fact that sexuality has become a constitutive element of contemporary politics (Weeks 2007:41). For instance, to the “sexually marginal it is a fundamental concept offering a sense of personal unity, social location and even at times political commitment” (Weeks 1987:31). Significantly, as noted by Weeks (2007:41), the politics of the right is among other things preoccupied with sex education, abortion, the threat of the ‘gay agenda’ and so on whilst the politics of the left is challenged by the claims of women and erotic minorities for rights. Questions about sexual practices, relationships and lifestyles raised by feminists and gays, and by lesbian politics have permeated through mainstream culture in fashion and media prompting diverse reactions ranging from complete outrage to relative tolerance (Weeks 2007:42). An important question which these developments have raised is the issue of identity, that is, the question of who we are, the ways in which we should live, how we should love and how we should have sex.

Weeks (2007:44) highlights four key issues to demonstrate the paradoxical nature of identities. Firstly Weeks claims that “sexual identity assumes fixity and uniformity while confirming the reality of unfixity, diversity and difference” Weeks (2007:44). For instance, in the Western world

some would like to say they are gay or straight or either female or male which places one in securely recognised discourses, embodying assumptions, beliefs practices and codes of behaviour, yet this is more complex and possibly many-sided (Weeks 2007:45). Identities are often conflicting as one is regularly called upon to decide which aspect of identity to privilege over the other, for instance would sexual identification be more important than ethnicity or class? At the same time Weeks (2007:45) notes that increasingly there is recognition of both the diverse desires, needs and passions of individuals and the diversity of social obligations and belonging pulling in a variety of dimensions. The society often tries to fix identities but there have been cases of known lifelong heterosexuals who come out as gays or lesbians and self-identified gays or lesbians who opt for a heterosexual lifestyle (Weeks 2007:45). There are also some socio-cultural variations which render sexual categorisations irrelevant where sexual identities seem endlessly fluid, taken up and used rather than realised. Weeks (2007:45) notes that since the 19th century, the placing of individuals in clearly demarcated sexual categories has drawn evidence detailing the fluidity and uncertainty of desire and cultural loyalties. Weeks (2007:45) suggests that while the categories 'men' and 'women', 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual', 'normal' and 'perverse' are taken for granted, they in fact provide barriers for understanding the elasticity of complex desires which can allow multiple identifications. However, in contemporary life barriers are often fragile thus permitting a flux of possible ways of being (Weeks 2007:45). Therefore what could have been previously repressed, is becoming liberated and there are some communities in sexualities considered dissident that are being forged and confirmed. Weeks (2007:45) argues that identities are becoming enabling though provisional as the good performance should never be perceived as final or embodying some unique truths about ourselves. Thus the unfixity of sexual identity has become a condition of every social identity.

The second paradox according to Weeks is that identities are deeply personal but tell us of multiple social belongings. Through this paradox, Weeks explores how cultures rely on members having a secure sense of self which is, however, by no reason a reflex product of his/her 'instincts'. Thus Weeks (2007:45) attests that sexual identity is not something that is resultant from the continuities of an individual's life or the fixity and force of his/her desires but something that has to be worked on, invented and reinvented in accord with the changing rhythms, demands, opportunities and closures of the complex world. The body is not immune to

the power of culture and its transforming abilities (Weeks 2007:46). Giddens (1991:189) holds that in late modernity the body becomes increasingly socialised and drawn into the reflexive organisation of social life. Whilst the body is central to our sense of biographical continuity it is important to note also that this is the battleground for conflicting cultural meanings. Weeks (2007:47) points out that the sources that make sense of our individual peculiarities are deeply historical, dependent on social bonds that provide the map for personal meaning and cultural identification. The bonds are also multiple and they are, for example, racial, ethnic, gender, classes and other bonds which consequently provide experience which shape our individual identity. Thus Weeks (2007:47) attests that sexual identity involves perpetual invention and reinvention but on ground fought by many histories.

The third paradox of identity according to Weeks is that sexual identities are simultaneously historical and contingent. Weeks (2007:47) contends that the idea that sexual identities are not simple expressions of bodily truth but a historical phenomenon, thus constantly changing, is relatively recent with origins that were largely political demonstrating historicity and the potential ephemerality of categories we take for granted as being natural and inevitable. In this assertion it is thus assumed that what constitutes identities is power, hence sexual identities embody power relations, products of imposition and agency and are rooted in many histories (Weeks 2007:47). In as much as we are increasingly acknowledging sexuality as a spectrum along which lie many potential sexual desires and a multiplicity of identities, that should not obscure the fact that historically sexual identities have been organised into violent hierarchies where some positions are marked as superior, more natural, healthier and more true to the body than others (Weeks 2007:47). For example the shaping of a distinctive categorisation of 'the homosexual' in the West has been an act of power, whose effect intended or not has been to reinforce the normality of heterosexuality.

Sedgwick (1985:86) demonstrates that the development of institutionalised homophobia and homosexual panic, besides separating men from men, serves to consolidate male heterosexual power not only over other men but over women as well. Thus subsumed in the apparently neutral descriptions of heterosexual men is the intricate play of power of domination and subordination (Weeks 2007:47). The descriptions break the continuum of all women, as some are categorised

as homosexual women whilst others are not, thus in a way consolidating the sexual power of men. Sedgwick (1990, 159) contends that the process of trying to divide people into neat divisions of identities as heterosexual and homosexual groups is a complex one which is radically incomplete given its lack of universal applicability, even in localised contexts. From this complex process Weeks (2007:48) observes that there can be two related points that can be drawn on. The first point is the discursive construction of categories of sexual subjects, which is a constant process that involves a struggle over definitions on a sexual terrain that is ever shifting (Weeks 2007:48). In this process multiple agents of sexual regulation such as the state, church or other institutions such as those of medicine and psychology are involved in a never ending effort due to the fact that sexual identities are profoundly unstable. The outcome of the efforts by the aforementioned agencies is the construction of a class of legal subjects denied certain legal protections in order to delimit their rights and claims in the interest of sustaining heterosexual value systems perceived as being simultaneously natural and inevitable (Weeks 2007:48). This is evident in Zimbabwe where the LGBTI community is seemingly being denied certain legal protections as at times violence is perpetrated on them, yet there seems to be no legal recourse or state protection.

Weeks (2007:48) notes that secondly these categorisations and imposed definitions cannot and do not exhaust the actual lived experiences of sexuality or the proliferation of oppositional identities. The power to define sets the limits on what could be said, done or spoken, however in this process consequently produces resistances and identities. One needs to be cognisant that sexual identities are enmeshed in relations of domination and subordination where many histories rather than a history intertwine to mark distinctions sustaining what is seen as necessary and certainly the dominant order (Weeks 2007:49). Significantly, the emergence of identity politics around sexuality has brought to scrutiny how that power to define combines itself with a multiplicity of powers and hierarchies not only around gender and sexuality but also on race and ethnicity, class and status which have in turn produced new frontiers of sexual politics and new forms of resistance (Weeks 2007:49). Identities should thus be assumed to be determined by contingencies, chances and opportunities of the historic present. Weeks (2007:49) contends that there is no necessary relationship between particular organisation of desire and a social identity. By this Weeks means that there are many who practise various forms of homosexual behaviour

but without necessarily recognising themselves with homosexual labels both in the western context as well as in the global south. Thus, homosexual practices do not necessarily lead to the rise and adoption of Western-style identities. Weeks (2007:49) notes that available identities are taken up because of various reasons as they make sense to individual experiences and give access to communities of meaning and support. However, identities are not automatically chosen as they can be equally refused precisely because they do not make sense to an individual or because they have no cultural purchase. Identities necessarily differentiate (Weeks 2007:49). They have differential weights for individuals and collectives at different times. Thus Weeks (2007:50) claims that the positive assertion of sexualised identities is more likely to be the result of a sense of exclusion, denial or threat than an easy acceptance of one's lot. Thus Weeks contends that by and large the heterosexual majority have not felt it necessary until the challenges of recent years to aggressively assert their heterosexual identity simply because it sets the norm.

The fourth paradox according to Weeks (2007:50) is that sexual identities are fictions but necessary fictions. The argument by Weeks is that sexual identities are historical inventions which change in complex histories, and are imagined in contingent circumstances, they can be taken up and abandoned, and hence to put it polemically, they are fictitious (Weeks 2007:50). However, this should not be taken to imply that this is how they are seen or experienced. Weeks (2007:50) argues that to say that something is a historical fiction does not mean to denigrate it but on the contrary it recognises the impossibility of escaping our history and the need to challenge the apparent iron laws and inexorabilities by constructing narratives of the past in order to imagine the present and future. Weeks (2007:50) notes that oppositional sexual identities in particular provide sources of comfort and support, a sense of belonging, a focus for opposition, a strategy for survival and a cultural and political challenge. This view of identities does help in two significant ways. Firstly, perceiving sexual identities in that frame offers a critical view of all identities, thereby demonstrating their historicity and arbitrariness (Weeks 2007:50), thus it denaturalises them revealing the power that produces them. Secondly, this view makes human agency possible and essential because if sexual identities are made in history and in relations of power they can also be remade. Thus, as argued by Weeks (2007:50), identities can be seen as sites of contestations as they multiply points of resistance and challenge as well as

expanding the potentialities for change. Thus the history of sexualities is ultimately as much a history of contestation, resistance, evasion, and insistent making and remaking as of regulation and effective policing (Weeks 2005:249).

Weeks (2007:51) further argues that identities, which challenge the imposing edifice of nature, history and truth, are a resource for realising human diversity as they provide a means of realising a progressive individualism and a respect of difference. The existent myth portrays dominant heterosexual identities and speaks of an assumed naturalness, eternity and truth which belie their historical and contingent nature. Whereas the radical, oppositional identities which have arisen in and against the hegemonic ones can be seen as fictions which offer narratives of individual life, collective memory and imagined alternatives which provide the motivation and inspiration for change which then makes them necessary fictions. Weeks (2007:51) is of the view that without them we would have no basis to explain our individual needs and desires, nor a sense of collective belonging that provides the agency and means of change. Thus, if we acknowledge the historicity, openness, flexibility and conditional nature of identities it provides the opportunity for thinking about not only who you are but who you want to become. Therefore, it becomes possible to imagine new forms of desire which are not blocked by a sense of powerlessness and inevitability. Weeks (2007:51) posits that oppositional sexual identities in their collective form provide vistas of different futures as they interrogate and challenge normalising and imposed forms of identity which makes it possible to invent oneself anew. Thus in this view identities are less about expressing an essential truth about our sexual beings and more about mapping out different values: the values of autonomy, relationships, of belonging, of difference and diversity (Weeks 2007:51), hence they provide continuous possibilities for invention and reinvention.

3.8 Studying ‘non-normative sexualities’: Insights from the Queer Framework

Valocchi (2005:752) notes that generally sociologists used to think of sex, gender, and sexuality as separate variables with discrete attributes defined in binary terms: bodies were either male or female; our gender presentation, behavioural dispositions, and social roles were either masculine or feminine; our sexuality is either heterosexual or homosexual. Despite acknowledgement

among sociologists that these are social constructions one must realise that these constructions have consequences signalling important social dynamics and analyses. This has consequently influenced assumptions of a person with one sex, one sexuality, and one gender, which are congruent and fixed for life (Valocchi 2005:752) in which a woman is assumed to be a feminine female; a man a masculine male. In this frame heterosexuality is an uninterrogated norm. Valocchi (2005:752) observes that this reinforces the binaries of male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual which are then taken as given with effect of exerting power over individuals, especially for those who do not fit neatly within their normative alignments. Valocchi (2005:752) bemoans that despite the recognition by sociologists that these alignments are ideological and hence a source of power, we still conspire in reproducing this alignment by treating the categories and the normative relationship among them as the starting assumptions on which our research is based and the major lens through which we interpret our data. The disgruntlement with such understanding and conceptualisation of sexuality and identities has contributed to the surge of queer theory as sexuality scholars have been frustrated with the limitations of ‘sexological reductionism’. Green (2007:26) notes that whereas canonical, “old school” sociological approaches to sexuality and gender are hopelessly mired in the antiquated Enlightenment subject, queer theory is seen as promising a more rigorous excavation of subjectivities—a paradigm shift, of sorts, which can only be ignored by contemporary scholars of sexuality at their peril.

Globally, studies on the LGBTI community are increasingly predominantly conceived within the framework of queer theory. Clarke (2013:173) observes that Western queer theory has set itself up as leading theory on the subject of same-sex desiring, homosexuality and queer lifestyle. Halperin (2003:339) attests that “queer is such a simple, unassuming little word, which however has gone beyond the initial meanings of strange/unusual to intimate possibilities so complex and rarified that entire volumes are devoted to spelling them out”. With its ascendancy in academia attempts to define queer may consequently limit its potential, its magical power to usher in a new age of sexual radicalism and fluid gender possibilities (Halperin 2003:339). Queer theory is rooted in an activist and theoretical tradition that celebrates sexual autonomy and the proliferation of sexual difference, in opposition to the repressive conformity of heteronormativity (Portwood-Stacer, 2010:480). Queer theory provides us a framework to understand ways to challenge the normative and dominant sexual culture, establishment, and understandings

(Sullivan 2003:44). Green (2007:26) observes that many accepted queer theory, as “troubling” the heterosexist, patriarchal, and race-blind assumptions built into sociological renderings of the subject and provides a far more nimble understanding of the complexity of subject position. It exerts a formidable influence in the study of sexuality, powerfully reshaping the language, concepts and theoretical concerns of contemporary academic production (Green 2002:521). Valocchi (2005:751) attests that queer theory marks an attempt to involve a different way of understanding the relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality; a focus on the performativity of gender and sexuality in the formation of identities; and a refusal of the easy conflation of sexual identity with the whole range of sexual desires, dispositions, and practices that constitute sexuality. Grace et al (2004: 302) postulate that since the early 1990s, ‘queer’ has been increasingly used as a descriptor to replace ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’; it is often used to signify the total community of otherly gendered or sexual outlaws such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexual people. In the following paragraph I review some of the basic tenets of queer theory in sociology.

3.8.1 Basic tenets of queer theory

Valocchi (2005:253) claims that queer theory deconstructs the constructed binaries, foregrounding the constructed nature of the sex, gender, and sexuality classification systems and resisting the tendency to congeal these categories into social identities. These binaries incompletely or imperfectly represent a broad range of complicated social processes surrounding the meaning of bodies and the social cues, practices, and subjectivities associated with gender and sexuality (Valocchi 2005:253). Thus queer theory focuses on the so-called “deviant” cases, or the anatomies, genders, sexual practices, and identities that do not neatly fit into either category of the binaries or that violate the normative alignment of sex, gender, and sexuality (Corber and Valocchi 2003). Queer theory enables us to understand how the dominant categorisations fail to capture the complexity of individual gender and sexual subjectivities and practices. Queer analysis reveals the instabilities in this hegemonic sexual formation and is sensitive to the ways individuals may subvert the normative alignments of sex, gender, and sexuality in the construction of heterosexuality (Valocchi 2005:753). Therefore, queer theory symbolizes spectral differences disavowed in the face of dominant power that normalizes, legitimizes and privileges heterosexuals (Grace et al.2004: 302). Green (2007:28) points out that queer theory seeks to disrupt the normalizing tendencies of the sexual order, locating non-

heteronormative practices and subjects as crucial sites of resistance. This enables an analysis that deals with the gulf between the normative alignments of sex, gender, and sexuality, and the lived experience of individuals. Queer theory challenges what had become a monolithic, homogenizing discourse of (homo)sexual difference, and offers a possible escape from the hegemony of white, male, middle-class models of analysis by introducing problematic multiple differences (Halperin 2003:340). Queer analysis has the capacity to enable an understanding of the many ways in which individual desires, practices, and affiliations cannot be accurately defined by the sex of object choice, thus it goes beyond the historically constructed and contingent nature of the homosexual/heterosexual binary.

Despite the queer framework having been embraced by African scholars there are calls to decolonize queer studies in Africa (Spurlin, 2006). Queer theory has been criticised for having little relevance in African contexts given that it is heavily dependent on Western theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence (Epprecht 2008:16). For example whilst in the Western context 'queer' marks a refusal to accept the legitimacy of socially dominant sexualities, it might not be the same in Zimbabwe where individualism is not as dominant as in the Western world. Same sex loving people in Zimbabwe may not be interested in dismantling the power relations that would make heterosexuality or any form of sexuality compulsory. The attempt inherent in queer theory to shake the foundations of what is commonly accepted as 'normal', disrupting power and cultural normativity makes it less desirable as a framework to understand the realities of the LGBTI community in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, as noted by Epprecht (1998), evidence shows the existence of same-sex desire before colonial contact. Evidence also shows that there was tolerance though not respect for it. Thus, there was a certain degree of permissiveness insofar as the same-sex desire did not threaten heterosexuality and these relationships had to be kept a secret. This is thus contrary to western based queer theory as the slogan 'homosexuality is unAfrican' is chanted with passion by influential leaders with the capacity to influence public opinion.

Tamale (2011) notes that the language of Western colonialists has dominated discourses on sexuality and thus shaped the construction of the meanings and definitions of related concepts to reflect realities and experiences outside Africa. Hirsch et al (2005:91) note that the Western assumption that 'heterosexuality' and 'homosexuality' are universally meaningful categories of

sexual identity is ethnocentric as this has been disconfirmed by substantial social science scholarship in non-western societies. Tamale (2011) bemoans the tendency to uncritically apply Western research indicators and assumptions which often result in skewed results. This in my view has often proved disastrous in studying same-sex relationships in Africa particularly for early anthropologists. Some of the often cited 'homosexual' arrangements in Africa such as woman to woman concubine, ritualistic/ institutionalised homosexual arrangements were socio-cultural and economic; yet they were mistakenly considered as sexual/ erotic arrangements. Resistance to same-sex marriages in Africa has mainly emanated from the consideration of sex as being coterminous with fertility. Choosing to become homosexual is considered as abdicating from the role of having children as assigned by society. Sexuality is tied to creating a legacy through leaving children and becoming an ancestor. This is something that non-reproductive sex cannot achieve. In Zimbabwe heterosexual non-procreative couples actually find it difficult to navigate socio-cultural structures. Accordingly, remedies were arranged to ensure that every male became an ancestor.

Msibi (2014) in his thought provoking paper entitled, 'Is current theorising on same-sex sexuality relevant to the African context?' challenges the blind acceptance of queer theorising in the African context. Msibi questions how, for example, one can speak of queer theory and agency in places where same-sex desire is still an aberration and taboo? As observed by Van Zyl (2015:147), can global queer fit in a context characterised with historically communalist ways yet the paradigm's bedrock is individualistic. Can queer theory work without recognition of the cultural differences that exist in multicultural communities or cross-cultural countries? (Clarke 2013:182) Msibi (2014) holds that challenging the naturalness of patriarchy and heterosexuality requires that African scholars begin to understand that the one-size-fits-all mentality does not work. Queer theory with its western orientation causes a stir as it may be perceived as another colonial project. Thus, Msibi (2014) notes that 'surely the blind acceptance and usage of current Western theories mimics colonisation which sought to erase the distinct African cultures by imposing Western norms?' The global queer current gives insights and enables the visibility of sexual diversity through its attempt to create an open acceptance of all queers in all contexts. This call, however, has potential for complicating the previously 'communitarian' practices that protected the diversity. Van Zyl (2015:151) argues that in African communitarianism the recognition of human diversity provided 'face-saving' practices to restore social stability,

thereby facilitating a blending in. Prior to colonial discourses becoming dominant, a person's same-sex performances did not lead to that person being labelled 'a homosexual' they existed as practices of pleasure and social exigencies alongside procreative imperatives (Van Zyl 2015:151). In other words, the community had mechanisms of integrating 'queers' which, however, have been challenged by the contemporary global queer theory as doing little. However, as noted by Clarke (2013:175), there is no doubt that everybody wants a progressive theory that allows homosexuality to be tolerated even in the public.

Accordingly, my intention is not to advocate closeted identities but to unpack the potential challenges associated with uncritical adoption of a queer framework in waging the struggle for Zimbabwean LGBTIs, given the limited cultural and legal provisions protecting them from the state and public opinion. As this study shows, in some cases that invisibility though associated with marginalisation and exclusion, also denotes something unremarked, a blending in (van Zyl 2015:151). The visibilisation of sexualised identities which is celebrated within contemporary queer theory has the effect of lifting out of the shadows, but simultaneously a delimitation, regulating how identities enter discourses. Thus, much of the 'anti-queer animus' in Zimbabwe is due to the increased visibility of queer identities. Ethnographic evidence cited by Hirsch, Wardlow and Phinney (2005:95) from other contexts shows that coming out is a privilege not accessible to individuals who cannot afford or do not desire an identity that will require them to sever ties with their families or for whom coming out is not relevant. The other limitation is that despite queer theory borrowing many insights from constructionism, by deconstructing identities it has paradoxically shaped an anti-identitarian approach which is not in line with the interest of the study (Weeks, 2005: 248).

Msibi (2014) points out that the issue is not about arguing for the rejection of Western theories, but rather learning from what has worked in the West by integrating, questioning, troubling and even querying its relevance for our own contexts in Africa. I, therefore, subscribe to the notion that social theory needs to respond to contextual realities and provide space for emergent lesbian and gay identities which may conform, modify or challenge the existing 'global' conceptualisation. Therefore, in this study whilst appreciating the value of queer theory, I have adopted sociological frameworks that are reflective and conscious of the social and historical realities that exist in Zimbabwe. The study embraces Anthony Giddens' (1991 and 1992)

theorisation of late modernity and Erving Goffman's (1966 and 1963) self-presentation concept. Apart from the two sociological theories I borrow insights from the 'border wars' concept as enunciated by Judith Halberstam (1998).

3.9 Towards a theory for understanding same- sex loving people in Harare

Despite the concerns raised in the preceding section that current Western theorising fails to capture accurately the structural, cultural, historical and societal complexities found in the African context, it is prudent to acknowledge that Africa is not rigidly static hence in this era of (high) modernity, sexual experiences and identities are shifting. These "changes/shifts are affecting all levels of social interactions, from changes in the self, to redefined meanings of relationships, to new ways of experiencing pleasure, and new ways of (re)understanding our bodies" (Better 2014:17). Accordingly, these developments empower people with new potential in regard of identity and intimacy, hence creating opportunities for constructing a new sexual self.

The current study draws on Giddens' (1992) characterisation of late modernity as providing the historical conditions under which some individuals gain reflexive distance from their subject positions. Whereas Giddens' work focused on the global North, Zimbabwe may not be understood as entirely late modern but has a mixture of modernity and late modernity. Colonialism was associated with transition from traditional agro-society towards industrialisation and development of the nation state. The country is linked to late modernity through transnational processes such as international migration, information revolution and global capitalism amongst other processes. Late modernity is characterised by the profusion of competing and sometimes contradictory identity discourses (Green 2010:326) which offer opportunities for self-reflexivity and identity negotiation. Late modernity enables "increasing choice between discursive systems and a modicum of self-fashioning" (Green, 2010:329). Giddens connects his concept of the reflexive project of modernity with a new paradigm of sexuality, intimacy, and relationships (Better 2014: 17; Giddens 1991:31). Giddens (1992:15) asserts that "sexuality today has been discovered, opened up and made accessible to the development of varying lifestyles. It is something each of us 'has', or cultivates, no longer a

natural condition which an individual accepts as a preordained state of affairs". Giddens proposes that in a way "sexuality functions as a malleable feature of self, a prime connecting point between the body, self-identity and social norms" Giddens (1992:15).

Sociological accounts of identity increasingly show that identities are becoming less fixed and stable. "Giddens sees in late modernity an efflorescence of identity discourses that serve as resources which individuals may draw on in the reflexive creation of a self" (Green, 2010:327). The individual/self has the capacity to develop his/her own consciousness and identity amidst the discursive struggles over its definition. Indeed, Giddens (1992:198) argues "that the individual is 'obliged' to ask of him or herself: 'who shall I be?' and 'how shall I live?'" I propose that the dominant heterosexual rhetoric in Zimbabwe, far from "colonising the identities and subjectivities of gays and lesbians, it is significantly characterised by negotiation and self-fashioning, opening up new pathways for self-development and life satisfaction that were previously unimaginable or unforeseeable" (Green, 2010:329). As Giddens (1992) argues, in late modernity the project of cultivating the self is anchored to reflexivity as individuals scrutinize their identities, regarding them as objects of analysis and transformation. Therefore, the self is not a static or passive recipient of experience. Thus, the participants of the study have an opportunity to perceive, process and interpret the dominant discourse on sexual orientation and choose what they want to be. By this Giddens means that the self is constantly evolving through experience and self-reference. The reflexive project in the context of modern complexity is characterised by an increase in autonomy which enables the autonomy of sexual expression in people of all sexual and gender identities. Thus, in the new modern social order, sexuality can shift meanings at both the individual and cultural levels. To understand this we need to turn to Giddens' theoretical concepts of 'plastic sexuality' and 'pure relationships', which significantly assist in the current study to explore sexual identities adopted by same sex loving people in Zimbabwe.

For Giddens (1991:88), the pure relationship is very important for the reflexive project of the self. It is a relationship entered into for its own sake. The pure relationship is not borne out of obligation or necessity. It is used for what each party can derive from the other and from their connection. In this study, despite heterosexual relations being obligatory, some participants who

felt that they did not derive benefits from them did not engage in them but rather in same-sex relations. However, others would enter into heterosexual relations for their functionality in diverting attention. The pure relationship exists for as long as each party derives satisfaction from its existence (Giddens 1992:58). This new relationship model can provide insights on changes in the socialization of intimacy and sexual relations, shifting us away from a traditional marriage paradigm as the only conception of intimate long term relationships (Better 2014:17).

Better (2014:18) points out that Giddens introduces the concept of 'plastic sexuality' which "is crucial to the emancipation implicit in the pure relationship". Plastic sexuality is decentered sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction" (Giddens 1992:2). Plastic sexuality can be viewed as a trait of one's personality; it is intrinsically bound up with the project of the self. Giddens posits that, in principle, plastic sexuality "frees sexuality from the rule of the phallus, from the overwhelming importance of male sexual experience" (Giddens 1992:2). Plastic sexuality provides an understanding of a new sexual agency in which people (same-sex loving) have power to control their own bodies and sexualities. (Better 2014:18). Giddens (1992: 178) notes that the 'biological' justification of heterosexuality as 'normal' may have fallen apart. What used to be perversions are now merely ways in which sexuality can be 'legitimately' expressed and self-identity defined. Giddens (1992:178) contends that "recognition of diverse sexual proclivities corresponds to acceptance of a plurality of possible life styles". Therefore, within these possibilities gay and lesbian identities can emerge and individuals can self-define whilst co-existing with other identities. Giddens (1992:180) posits that what used to be 'natural' becomes increasingly socialised as the separation of sexuality from reproduction develops. Individuals are increasingly being liberated/freed from major moral reference points and sexuality is one such area. This resonates with Weeks' (2005:253) contention that "the power of traditional authorities, of family, of religion, of conventional morality or even ideology, have been battered by decades of challenge and change, and eroded by the dissolving powers of global flows, economic modernisation and cultural transformation as well as the will for change represented by everyday choices of countless millions". Thus one could choose to remain single as a cover for their erotic desires for same sex activity without the burden of the public gaze on the absence of procreation.

Better (2014: 18) observes that for Giddens, sexuality is the property of the self in modernity, with the body becoming the venue for a range of new potential choices. “The age of high/late modernity affords individuals (in this study same sex loving people) the ability to reframe and redefine the meanings surrounding sexuality as they become delinked from the bounds of marriage, reproduction, and romantic love” (Better 2014:18; Giddens 1992:175). Castells (1997:235) claims that contemporary society has witnessed a sexual revolution characterized by the delinking of marriage, family, heterosexuality and sexual expressions and desire. Whilst the heterosexual marriage or relationships appear to hold a central position in the social world, pure relationship and plastic sexuality have significantly undermined it (Castells 1997:236; Giddens 1992). Delinking of sexuality from marriage and the family works to affirm elective sexuality and homosexuality (Castells 1997:236).

Giddens provides local-level theories of sexuality and love which in my study enable an understanding of the participants’ narratives of their sexual choices and sexual selves. Better (2014:19) attests that Giddens’ theoretical perspectives provide us with a starting point for a discussion of the changes around sexuality and relationships found in modernity. The concept of plastic sexuality helps to inform potentials and transformations in same-sex loving people’s understandings of their sexuality and pleasures, and broadens their intimate horizons. ‘Lesbian’ and ‘gay’ narratives of lived experiences allow the private and often silenced aspects of self to become central to public discussions and this new knowledge can lead to wider social understandings and potentials for change (see Better 2014:20). As reproduction is removed from the centre of sexuality, we begin to see moves away from heterosexuality as well, as it is no longer fundamental to one’s sexual needs, as we see sexual needs shifting towards pleasure and away from conception. Thus we can be in a position to appreciate how a lesbian woman and a gay man negotiate their intimate life reflexively and critically with a strong integration in their chosen social and institutional lives.

As I am conscious that sexualities are a historical and cultural phenomenon that cannot be understood outside the specific context (Weeks 2005:249), I borrow insights from Goffman’s self-presentation framework to augment Giddens’ framework. As much as one is free to adopt object-choice based identities in Zimbabwe there are other complexities that need to be considered which may inhibit or enhance one from expressing one’s chosen identity. The agentic

nature of same sex loving people is carefully navigated as the participants negotiate the structures that have a constraining and enabling effect on their lives. Identities may involve a performance thus participants in this study are not exempted from the dynamics that characterise performances. Hence Goffman's framework blends in well with the ability to maintain a 'desired identity'. Whilst in other contexts same sex loving people can find it fruitful to 'come out of the closet', my study contradicts that thinking.

We can draw lessons from Hirsch et al.'s (2005:95) ethnographic study which shows that despite the adoption of object-choice based identities, sexual categories should not only be determined by partner choice as this can exist alongside pre-existing notions of social and sexual categories. Hirsch et al. (2005:96) adopt reputation as an axis of sexual identity to move beyond the stigmatised labels of people's resistance to embracing object-choice organised sexual identities. Thus the study demonstrated how reputation and the consequent spatial management of sexual practice are elements of sexual identity. Spatial management of sexual practices would mean engaging in sexual practices perceived to be 'down the hierarchy' whilst in spaces considered to be 'moral trade free zones'. Hirsch et al. (2005:103) point out that sexual identity is built at the intersection of many competing projects and is thus not just a product of one's desire for a particular practice with a person of a particular sex, but is also an assertion of social class, gender performance, a navigation of strongly patterned social space, and a means of ensuring access to kinship structures without which adult life is hardly possible. The theorising of identities from such a vantage point enables consideration of the concept of intersectionality which provides some insight into the crosscutting identifications of individuals along several axes of social difference. Following Crenshaw's (1991) conceptualisation of intersectionality, we can observe that the sex of object choice may be less important to an individual's identity formation as ethnic, religious or class differences maybe more important. These other factors may significantly inflict understanding of sexual identities which has a bearing on the emergent practices that cannot be adequately understood by uncritically applying dominant categories of homosexual or heterosexual or any other single identity category as there is a complex interplay. Thus, in Zimbabwe there are various social spaces that same sex loving people have to navigate which enable or constrain their ability to express themselves in an identity and life style of choice, hence the outcome may or may not be an identity that conforms, modifies or challenges global queer identities.

Hirsch et al (2005:104) argue that the clear distinction between spaces for the performance of sexual respectability and those for the demonstration of sexual independence provides an opening to think about the political economy of sexuality. Thus we should understand the social forces in which sexuality is constituted. Understanding the space will enable us to comprehend why same sex loving people may identify in the way they do. Thus Hirsch et al.'s (2005) work provides insights into how the reputational implications of particular sexual practices are particularly helpful for understanding the agentic dimension of sexual practice. It helps to appreciate what people long to do, what they avoid doing, and what they do but work hard to keep a secret (Hirsch et al., 2005:103). Sexuality is thus something that people build and protect rather than a static category to which they either do or do not belong that draws more on a nuanced notion of culture as a practice rather than culture as a taxonomy (Hirsch et al., 2005:92). Therefore, Goffman's self-presentation framework articulates the issues raised by Hirsch et al. (2005) which are also pertinent in the current study as same sex loving people attempt to create space for themselves in the 'homophobic' context.

Identities are not adopted or taken up in a vacuum but within an existent context. Msibi (2014) teases that how can one choose to be 'queer' in a setting where queerness is still considered a taboo and an aberration, as he calls for development of context specific theories. In Zimbabwe where there are significant homophobic utterances by influential leaders there is significant stigmatisation of non-normative sexual identities. In this regard, Goffman's work is, therefore, critical to our understanding of how study participants express and manage their sexual identities. For this reason, Goffman's (1959, 1963) conceptual framework on self-presentation (impression management) is useful as face-to-face interaction is a domain of social life characterized by 'co-presence'. In one's agentic decision to adopt an object-choice identity we should realise that there is always an audience. Goffman points out that whenever we are present before others – or are in their 'response presence' – we convey to them something of ourselves through the content of our talk and through the manner of our talk, through our posture, glances, our apparent disposition, and so forth (Smith, 2000:6). Everyday interactions are strategic encounters in which one is attempting to project a particular self-image and, accordingly, a particular definition of the situation. For Goffman (1959) the organising metaphor for social life is the theatre, and key concepts associated with an analysis of behaviour include frames, staging

front versus back stage, plots, acting parts, rehearsals, taking roles, rituals, spoiled identities, and doing face work.

In this study some of the participants indicated their unwillingness ‘to come out of the closet’ for a variety of reasons which included fear of spoiling their identities, hence they would engage in staging-fronts which are well-decorated in order not to attract attention among the audience. In the process they act parts by taking roles that ensure that they save face in strategic encounters in order to maintain an identity congruent with what is expected at that particular time. Goffman uses metaphors of performance to describe social interaction, suggesting that there is no necessary consistency in selfhood but rather a range of revelations of self (Evans 2006:110). Furthermore, individual gay men and lesbian women are engaged in a processes of impression management, in which they seek validation by others of their presentation of self. This may be valuable for them as the context may be inimical to expressing desirable gay or lesbian identities by the participants.

Smith (2006:100) notes that Goffman’s attention to the ritual dimension of interaction leads to two very basic social rules: Goffman proposes that for mutually satisfactory interaction to take place, persons must follow a rule of self-respect (they must conduct themselves in a way that shows some pride, dignity and honour) and a rule of considerateness (they must treat others tactfully) Smith (2006:100). In this study one of the reasons participants would not open up to their significant others or even attend gay-themed functions was because of the fear of being ‘outed’. This is an indication of following the rule of considerateness in which they claimed they were protecting their significant others who may not be able to cope with their sexual identity.

Halberstam (1998:304) notes that the production of gender and sexual deviance takes place in multiple locations (the doctor’s office, the operating room, the sex club, the bedroom, the bathroom). In these multiple locations the discourses to which gender and sexual deviance are bound are constantly under construction with boundaries and borders being set. In popular discourses borders are set to determine what is outside and what is inside the border depending on the socio-cultural context. This study also adopted Halberstam’s utilisation of the concept of ‘border wars’. The border war metaphor helps us to appreciate how same-sex loving people and behaviours are placed on the margins and how the individuals challenge the borders. Halberstam (1998:304) argues that “on the one hand, the idea of a border war sets up some notion of

territories to be defended, ground to be held or lost, permeability to be defended against. On the other hand, a border war suggests that the border is at best slippery and porous”.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter began by discussing the concept of identity, its elusiveness and how it is generally understood and utilised in the social sciences. This was followed by an explication of sexual identities in the sociological lexicon as well as an interrogation of queer theory which is essential as it provides the entry point for the theoretical frameworks adopted and the background for the development of my arguments in this thesis. The chapter demonstrates an appreciation of how identities are historical and contested, how they are informed and influenced by particular discourses which are context and time specific whilst being mediated by existing power relations. Whereas the study appreciates that human subjects are shaped in a particular historical and cultural configuration, one should however be cognisant that human beings are never simply passive recipients of social stamping and moulding. Thus, even though discourses have the power to constitute identities there is no automatic relationship between social categorisation and individual sense of self or identity (Weeks, 1989:117). The chapter ended by introducing Giddens’ characterisation of late modernity, Goffman’s self-presentation concepts as well as Halberstam’s border war concept which assists in enunciating how same-sex loving people in Zimbabwe experience and negotiate identities that are considered dissident in a heteronormative society.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The chapter situates the current study in an academic context of knowledge creation as the process of knowledge production involves a series of steps which are impacted on by several political, social and scientific concerns. Knowledge creation is thus not a neutral process that is devoid of various contestations. The chapter starts by exploring the controversies surrounding sexuality research and how the field has struggled for legitimacy over the years and how the struggle for recognition has extended to studies focusing on 'non-normative sexualities'. The chapter reflects on the epistemological and ontological concerns informing ethnographic sociology which became a means as well as an outcome of this study. The chapter also reflects on the data gathering process, fieldwork experiences and realities with key lessons learnt which can benefit future researches focusing on sexualities considered as non-normative.

4.2 Controversies on Sexuality Research

Academia has over the course of the last three decades witnessed a veritable explosion in the field of sexuality research (Parker 2009: 254). The once very limited field, dominated primarily by biomedical and sexological research has expanded rapidly across a wide range of social sciences. As much as the field is growing it is not without challenges. Irvine (2014:632) contends that sexuality research has long struggled for academic and professional legitimacy. Furthermore, Irvine (2014: 632) chronicles some of the resistance that sexuality researchers have had to endure including derision, conducting research in secrecy, vandalised offices, limited training and funding opportunities as well as limited publication avenues. While Parker (2009) correctly observes the progress exhibited by the expansion of sexuality research across disciplines, sexuality researchers still to some degree face challenges of legitimatising their work in the face of deep cultural anxieties about their subject of study. Irvine (2014) notes that as late as 2009 some sociologists researching oral sex and male prostitution were targeted by law makers as wasting taxpayer's money in the US. Based on the analysis of the experience of sexuality researchers Irvine (2014) finds that the phrase 'dirty work' aptly describes how, despite being stigmatised, the work is, nevertheless, socially necessary.

Msibi (2014:669), writing about experiences in Africa partly concurs with Irvine's analysis as he observes that sexuality researchers have long been treated "as marginal subjects in the academe – tolerated and acknowledged, but reviled and deemed unimportant". The stigma is apparent in research that focuses on non-normative sexualities as there has been a proliferation of sexuality research in Africa insofar as it was seen as aiding an understanding of and developing responses to the HIV epidemic. However, Msibi (2014) argues that rather than attributing the marginalisation to academic processes in Africa, it has been produced by hegemony, mainly through the authoritative voice and influence of external forces such as donor agencies and pharmaceutical companies which have prioritised biomedicine. The effect has been engendering a profound re-medicalisation of African sexualities (Tamale 2011:16). The funding poured in by the international community to 'fight' against HIV and AIDS in Africa contributed substantially to an increased number of academics pursuing research in sexualities, but which consequently skewed the efforts towards heterosexual biomedical studies and undermined critical sexuality studies (Msibi 2014:672). Therefore, for Msibi (2014) 'dirty work' is only 'dirty' if it fails to conform to the conservative, heterosexual frame. Msibi concedes that respected colleagues and friends expressly informed him that his doctoral study on the African men who engage in same-sex relations would be trivial, and that it would make very little contribution towards the national development plan for South Africa. The current study was in a way not immune to challenges like these as indicated in the introductory chapter, as I often found out myself having to defend the choice of my work within and outside academic circles. Despite Epprecht (2014) acknowledging a supportive non-stigmatising research environment during his tenure at the University of Zimbabwe, he concedes that his line of work could have possibly jeopardised his promotion in a conservative department. However, Epprecht (2014) finds a new generation of African and Africa-based scholars, journalists and activists taking up the challenge to undertake research on sexualities. The work of Epprecht (1998), Kaare Moen (2012), Stella Nyanzi (2013), Sylvia Tamale (2011), Thabo Msibi (2009), Patrick Awondo (2010) and others signifies the onset of progressive research and demonstrates that the African continent was not only historically tolerant of same-sex desire, but to have rejected homophobia too.

4.3 Epistemological and Ontological Claims

Cognisant of the existent paradigmatic warfare in the social sciences regarding what constitutes knowledge and how that knowledge is generated, I deliberately adopted qualitative methodology as the current research problem required a naturalistic and interactional approach in which I could locate myself within the lived experiences of the respondents. “Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; lifestory; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005: 3). The study was qualitative and therefore allowed the foregrounding of subjectivities, meanings and interpretations attached by research participants to their ‘identities’. It enabled me to understand the lived experiences and life situations of gays and lesbians in an environment widely reported as ‘hostile’ insofar as they influence their identities. Such an approach accorded gays and lesbians voices and spaces to be part of the knowledge creation process. Nyanzi (2011:48) argues that “qualitative models can explore the wider meanings embedded within sexuality to generate more context-specific conceptualisations that disrupt rigid, blueprint definitions”. It enables individuals to self-identify with an identity that communicates to them in a manner not imposed on them.

Alasuutari (2010:146) notes that the qualitative enterprise seeks to capture the truth of social realities, thus acknowledging that all knowledge is necessarily situated. Hence Botha (2011:314) attests that “epistemological assumptions behind qualitative research methods are generally associated with constructivist meaning-making research approaches and have a typically inductive logic of enquiry”. Given the limited research that has been conducted on same-sex loving people in Zimbabwe, operationalisation of concepts was to be inductively done rather than imposing ‘identity’ terms on the respondents that took part in the study. Aguinaldo (2012:767) notes that qualitative research has been used as a key resource for prioritizing participants’ voice thus it allows participants to assert authority over their lives. This has the potential of eliminating the chances of misrepresenting same-sex loving people’s lives as well as stigmatising them as has historically been the case in the medical sciences. In this regard, qualitative research allows one to capture forms of social life hitherto undocumented or under-

documented (Aguinaldo, 2012: 767). Such an approach can claim epistemological authority. I appreciate that the approach leads to discoveries of unanticipated findings grounded in participants' lives and the context in which they live (Hill, 2009: 334).

4:4 Ethnographic Sociology

I adopt the term ethnographic sociology (Stewart, 1998) to refer to the approach that I used in this study. Ethnographic research methods attempt to study social life as it unfolds in the practices of day-to-day life (van Donge 2006:180). In this study I sought to document the participants' lives in their own terms and not to impose my understanding. Accordingly, I adopted methods that allowed 'variables' to emerge from the research (Hill 2009:334). I thus sought to explore the 'identities' of individuals in Zimbabwe that have been historically excluded and erased, hegemonically misrepresented and pathologised by the ideological and repressive state apparatus. The sensitivity and complexity of the subject matter could not be navigated by designing the research in a linear exercise but rather a circuitous, undulating process, which had many revisions that were determined by the fieldwork realities (Tamale, 2011:28). Flexibility is an indispensable tool for a study that seeks to explore in order to discover and understand social phenomenon (Moen and Middelthon, 2015). The complexity of the study meant that there are issues that I could not be certain of, which questions to ask, what strategy was effective but felt at the time that this could be developed as the study progressed. Moen and Middelthon (2015:329) note that pre-formulated questions to a "large extent reflect our own a priori understanding of the theme under study; not necessarily the questions that prevail, or that are most significant, in the lives of people in the context into which we hope to gain insight". This called for approaching methodology not as a mere appendage of epistemological issues but as a political process, a space in which complex issues of context, voice, ethics and ideological depth are played out (Bennett, 2008). Therefore, the study may have 'liberated' itself from the confines of conventional disciplinary methodological practices of fixation in paradigmic wars as it was determined by practical implications in its search for rich data. In doing this study I aimed at telling a credible, rigorous and authentic story in which I would give voices to the research participants in their local context (Fetterman 2010:1). I approached the study with an open mind as I tried to discard all preconceived ideas which could limit my ability to tap on to significant issues coming out of the field. I attempted to avoid getting trapped in methodological truisms

which would frustrate me and produce imprecise results (see Fetterman, 2010:3). As a fieldworker I exploited the flexibility of ethnography to compatibility with various methods and techniques to gather data.

4.5 Gaining Access

Moen and Middelthun (2015:354) posit that participant observation presupposes that there are people willing to let the researcher take part in and inquire about their setting. There are practical challenges in entering the fieldwork site that I had to deal with due to the ‘fears’ that the LGBTI community in Zimbabwe has. As I indicated above, much flexibility was required in this study. For instance, whilst I had planned to access respondents formally through GALZ, the emails through which I sought to set up a meeting with the leadership were simply not responded to by the officials. This may be attributed to security concerns. Visiting the premises without an invite was also problematic since the organisation tries to protect itself from malcontents that are anti-gay. Without any prior dealings with the organisation it is indeed difficult to present yourself unannounced at the GALZ premises. Although I could have informally contacted the primary gatekeepers through other acquaintances I also suspected that formal access attained through this way would have given me a privileged access to participants who may then feel compelled to participate because the organisation had requested them to do so. Goffman (1989:130) proposes that when conducting ethnography you cannot move down a social system you can only move up a social system. Goffman’s suggestion was that for one to be with a range of people you should start with the ‘lowest’ people, and the ‘higher’ people will understand that you are just studying them (Goffman 1989:130). I can testify that the advice from Goffman proved priceless as the leadership of the organisation embraced my work after they had seen me with and amongst the research participants.

As official entry was elusive and time consuming, I revised my proposed procedure and resorted to personal networks. When the study was being formulated I had participated in an evaluation study with a colleague with whom I had shared the topic who found it interesting and had friends within the LGBTI community. She became a key person for my entry into the various social networks of LGBTI people in Harare. She had a gay friend who attended the same church as herself and she also had a lesbian friend who played rugby with her. As noted by Fetterman

(2010:35), ethnographers typically use an informal strategy to begin fieldwork, such as starting wherever they can slip a foot into the door. These two individuals became key to my entry into the setting. It is from this starting point that I ended up participating at GALZ organised programmes that enabled me to interact with many people in the LGBTI community, including the leadership. Once the officials from the organisation were introduced to me by the members I had interviewed they openly accepted me and became friendly to me⁹. This development had the effect of rendering later encounters productive. I was frequently invited to workshops and other gatherings that the organisation hosted. I also became part of the network which received invites to events as well as security alerts.

Whilst initial formal access into GALZ was a challenge, in hindsight it became a blessing in disguise as I was now in a position to include even those not affiliated to GALZ. GALZ could have provided a basic sampling frame to tap into, but this would possibly have contributed to the exclusion of many who were not members of GALZ. A significant number of people in the LGBTI community are not officially members of the organization for a range of reasons, although some do participate in educational and social programmes conducted by the organisation. Some individuals who participated in the study had not been to GALZ activities as well as even the offices for one reason or another as discussed in subsequent chapters. It also helped me to avoid categorising and defining an individual's sexuality by their membership of particular groups or attendance at specific events (Browne 2005:49).

4.6 Recruitment of participants

One major concern with the study was the widely circulated mantra that says 'African same-sex attracted men are hard-to-reach individuals and populations' (Ca'ceres et al. 2008). Onyango-Ouma et al. (2009:6) note that as with other minority groups, some same-sex practising individuals may be difficult to locate because of the hidden nature of the population. Amongst the reasons Onyango-Ouma et al. (2009:1) point out is that men who have sex with men (MSM) themselves may not want to participate in research projects for fear of being victimised. Thus, one would assume that the publicised marginalisation of sexual minorities in Zimbabwe would render the study impossible to conduct. Despite many academics concurring on the hard-to-reach

⁹ I had the opportunity to discuss my study with the leadership, and the leaders were supportive of the study. The organisation was fully aware of my position as a PhD student doing research.

notion, Moen et al. (2012:196) note that the hard-to-reach notion, although rarely explained or discussed in any depth, is encountered in publications across the spectrum from scientific journals, via professional documents and NGO websites, to niche and mainstream news media, and seemed to be widely agreed upon. Moen et al. (2012:203) caution against accepting and propagating unexplained, unexamined and unverified hard-to-reach claims. Moen et al. (2012:202) conclude that, “in Dar es Salaam it was, on the contrary, neither complicated nor time consuming to identify, get to know and interact with a large and diverse group of same-sex attracted men, thus they could hardly be described as hard-to-reach”. Being cognisant of the two standpoints helped me to be open minded as I searched for a breakthrough. I found the emerging empirical evidence encouraging to my cause. In the current study what was difficult was to gain access to the research setting (as explained above) more than accessing same-sex loving people, thus I could also say they were not hard to reach. Besides GALZ they are no official ‘gay spaces’ in Zimbabwe but from the first few conversations that I had with some participants I was introduced to spaces that the LGBTI community members frequented and could be found in numbers. I visited many of these sites and found many people with whom I had informal conversations which in turn lead to more formal meetings.

Whilst I did not experience difficulty in locating and recruiting men who identified as gay the same cannot be said for women who identified as lesbian. It was often difficult to break through the networks even through the referral system. Some of the contacts I had been referred to would, after introductions and my briefing about the purpose of my study, either indicate that they were not attracted to other women or that we should meet some other time. Those indicating that they were not attracted to other women would say there might have been a mix-up somehow and did not identify as such or some would say it had only been out of curiosity and that they had only been involved in lesbian activity once. In these circumstances the women fell outside the inclusion criteria of self-identifying as same-sex loving and I then removed them as potential participants even though I would go on to meet some of them at some social functions organised by GALZ. The attendance levels of social and educational functions by the LGBTI community was always disproportionately in favour of men who identified as gay. Comparatively fewer women identifying as queer attended these functions organised by GALZ which also inhibited my ability to meet with many female participants to set possible interviews. Also amongst those

attending it was difficult to identify women who identified as ‘femme’ as shown in the next chapter. I therefore conclude that it was not difficult to reach men who are attracted to other men but was more difficult to reach women attracted to other women. The reason for this disparity calls for further research which was beyond the scope of the current study and so did not happen. However, overall this study does add to the call not to ‘blindly’ brand same-sex loving people as a hard to reach group.

4.6.1 Purposive and Snowballing sampling

In selecting and recruiting participants my intent was on flexibility and depth, rather than mathematical and statistical probability and generalisation (Gorman 2009:321) as this would enable the maximisation of the veracity of the data in depicting the phenomenon being studied. I employed purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. Bryman (2012:418) notes that “the goal of purposive sampling is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed”. Central to participation in this study was that one had to self-identify as gay or lesbian¹⁰. Purposive sampling was also employed to limit the downward side of snowballing which has a tendency of recruiting people with similar experiences which would limit my appreciation of the diversity of the group under study. Thus, whilst relying mainly on snowballing to practically recruit sample cases I broke the circle by purposively picking other potential participants that I would have met at either social or educational gatherings rather than approach only those that I had been referred to by those that I would have interviewed previously. I could at times listen through the discussions when people were sharing their experiences and I would then request their participation after the meeting. This enabled me to recruit outside the network of the referral system.

Snowball sampling is a technique for accessing research subjects where one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the names of a third and so on (Vogt 1999). Snowball sampling takes advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with other potential contacts. In this study the technique had practical and epistemological relevance. Firstly, for practical purposes the difficulty associated with the inability to secure a sampling frame that could be used to identify a broad and varied sample of

¹⁰ Affiliation or non-affiliation to GALZ did not contribute to exclusion from the study.

gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe called for pragmatism in the selection of participants. For practical purposes snowballing enables researchers to gain access to individuals who live outside the boundaries of normative heterosexuality (Browne 2005:49). Due to the marginalization of the LGBTI community it would be folly to assume that potential participants would just make themselves available for a study whose inclusion and exclusion criteria was sexual orientation. Owing to the fact that the target population may not be validated by the society because they identify with a specific lifestyle that is 'silenced', the study called for flexibility in the recruitment of participants. Despite this being the fear I had there was one respondent who defied that fear: I managed to recruit a young lesbian woman around the age of 20 through contacting her on Facebook after she had commented on the GALZ Facebook page. To my surprise she agreed to meet in person and we had a chat which yielded positive results as she was able to refer me to a friend of hers. The two women were outside GALZ formal structures and had not attended GALZ functions before. However, I could not have advertised my study in full public openness as I was concerned about the security of my potential research participants. Thus, for practicality purposes snowballing was an appropriate strategy to recruit participants due to the sensitivity of the topic in Zimbabwe as the target population is considered to be outside the hegemonic heterosexual norm (Browne, 2005; Noy, 2008).

Secondly, as Noy (2008:331) notes that "when employed in the study of social systems and networks, this sampling method delivers a unique type of knowledge". Snowballing can lead to dynamic moments where unique social knowledge of an interactional quality can be fruitfully generated. Noy (2008:329) argues that through a snowball sampling design, social knowledge is primarily dynamic, processual and emergent. Despite snowball sampling sometimes being used as a safety net or a fall-back alternative, when other means of obtaining information (usually epidemiologic) are not feasible, in this study it was employed in its own right and merit and not as a default option (see Noy, 2008:331). In my study I acknowledge that sampling is not just an instrumental means whose sole purpose is to enable access to knowledge. Instead, these procedures entail knowledge in and of itself (Noy, 2008:332). As Noy argues, snowball sampling is essentially social because it both uses and activates existing social networks. Snowballing allowed me to relinquish a considerable amount of control over the sampling phase to the informants and considerably empowered the respondents in the research process.

Whilst I had contact with over 200 people who identified as same-sex loving people during functions organised by GALZ, 31 individuals were recruited to participate either in individual interviews or focus group discussions (FGDs). Much of what is reflected in the findings heavily relies on individual interviews and focus group discussion data. Participant observation data is however drawn on as it overtly influenced the data gathering process and helped in the appreciation of the context of research. Amongst the 31 study participants thirteen (13) participated in focus group discussions. Of the thirteen (13) FGD participants six (6) did both individual and FGD interviews. All in all twenty-four (24) individual interviews were conducted. The detailed sample characteristics are outlined in chapter five (5).

4.7 Data collection / Fieldwork

4.7.1 Participant observation

Fetterman (2010:37) and Stewart (1998:6) assert that participant observation characterises most ethnographic research. In this regard, a celebrated hallmark of ethnography is participation in people's daily lives for an extended period (Van Donge 2006:181). Moen and Middelthon (2015:247) note that participant observation is a research strategy that aims to produce knowledge both on and through interactions between people. It relies on the immersion of a researcher in the research setting to enable participation in the lives of the people under study whilst maintaining a professional distance that allows observation and recording of data (Fetterman 2010:37). Thus unlike in quantitative research procedures, the knower and the known are not independent of each other as there has to be significant or extensive social interaction to allow exploration of the phenomenon. Moen and Middelthon (2015:247) state that social interaction is important in that the primary objective of participant observation is to explore phenomena as they emerge in interactions between people in a given context. It also allows for the generation of knowledge through personal interaction between researchers on the one hand, and the people that make up the social context under study on the other. Van Donge (2006:181) holds that observation allows the researcher to check and deepen his understanding through watching people and situations and taking notice of casual conversation through which the divergent opinions of individuals become apparent. For the current study participant observation meant that instead of simply observing there was direct involvement with the subjects. In participant observation, as noted by Corbetta (2003:3), the researcher 'steps into the field' and

immerses himself/herself in the social context that he/she wants to study. Whilst I did not have to practically live amongst the participants, I looked for opportunities to be with participants in many life contexts and to share in their experiences, asking them questions, discovering their hopes and pains, their worldviews and motivations, in order to develop insights from within, which is a prerequisite for comprehending the lives of the group under study (Corbetta 2003: 3). Stewart (1998:20) advises that the single most potent tactic for ethnographers in attempting to enhance veracity is to undertake prolonged fieldwork. The increase in time spent in the field is associated with the ability to deal with challenges of the field site, as well as developing deeper contextual understandings which enable self-corrections. I spent almost three years in the field as data collection was done from 2013 up to 2015 with some further intermittent field visits in 2016 during the write up phase of the thesis. The length of the fieldwork was not strictly due to design as I had planned to spend 12 months in the field, but it was necessitated by my shift from one university to another (University of Zimbabwe to Rhodes University). This consequently worked to my advantage as I had more time to spend in the field. From the onset of the study, I sought as many opportunities as possible to interact with my participants in their diversity. When I commenced this study I made it a habit to attend educational workshops, get-together braais, Christmas parties, gay pride week and Miss Diversity which were organised by GALZ and any other activities that could accord me an opportunity of interacting with the study participants. The impetus for this approach was to look for opportunities to engage in a process of socialization and enculturation and become part of the interactions and practices (Moen and Middelthun, 2015: 247) that produce the phenomena being investigated. In this study I describe the life contexts in which I had opportunities to employ participant observation in an attempt to generate knowledge about gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe.

I attended the gay pride week in 2013 and participated in most of the activities taking place. For security reasons the pride week was held at different venues each night. It constituted a mixture of educational and entertainment activities and it was capped with a drag contest. During the pride week pertinent issues affecting the 'gay community' were discussed with the help of experts. Legal issues affecting the community were discussed and the available options for anyone who would need legal aid. Health issues were also extensively discussed, focusing on the vulnerabilities within the 'gay community', encouragement of voluntary HIV testing and uptake

of Anti Retroviral Therapy`. The week also offered participants an opportunity to highlight some of the challenging experiences they have been through, with their families, schools and the society at large. These conversations enabled the participants to encourage and affirm one another which is something that is not readily available outside the 'gay community'. On one of the nights documentaries with pertinent issues were screened and as participants we had the opportunity to comment and share views. Through these conversations participants expressed their concerns in a free environment that did not condemn them but which affirmed them. The stories ranged from painful experiences to positive experiences.

I sat in on one of the meetings where someone branded all 'straight people' as untrustworthy and encouraged others never to trust 'straight' people as they will turn around and betray them. I painfully listened to his experience and concerns and was naturally worried about how the others would perceive me, as a significant number of the attendees knew that I was there on an educational assignment. One prominent feature I observed in these gatherings was how connected the participants seemed to be, such that it appeared as if they were all known to each other which made me a bit uncomfortable in the early phases of the study as I was apparently perceived as an outsider. Invariably, people wanted to know who I was and the reason I was attending these functions and how I had managed to get through to these functions as they were strictly through invitation. Where possible I kindly explained to those who had shown some interest in knowing who I was, by indicating to them that I was a student conducting research¹¹. However, besides one programme officer who, on the first day, asked me who I was, I was welcomed without questions the moment they saw me conversing with the people they knew. I could say I was never short of friends within the community. On some occasions those of us who were new faces were called upon to introduce ourselves to others and say a little about ourselves.

GALZ organises the commemorations of World Aids day with a Candle Light commemoration and I attended one such event in 2015. On this day members are invited for a small function in which they reflect upon the impact of HIV& AIDS in the LGBTI community. Participants often remember members who died because of HIV& AIDS and the battles they fought and how they

¹¹ The principle of informed consent in ethnography is complex as it may be impossible to tell every person that you come into contact with that you are doing research particularly in gatherings such as braais, drag contests etc. unless there was a conversation which warranted disclosure of researcher status.

encouraged others. The participants engage in discussions focusing on HIV prevention, mitigation and treatment. Opportunities for access services within the country are explored. This gathering accorded an opportunity for us as participants to review the disproportionate nature of HIV & AIDS and demonstrate the vulnerability of the gay community to HIV compared to the general population.

I did not limit myself to attending GALZ activities but also attended other functions where some of the study participants were pursuing their personal interests. These gatherings included meeting others at church, funerals, concerts, clubs and sporting activities. Wherever I met participants we would have informal conversations about general issues, any other topical issues and even getting updates on forthcoming activities within the gay community. Unless the participant brought up issues of sexual orientation I tried to avoid the subject as I also wanted to understand other issues that are not necessarily mediated by sexuality. During the course of this study I attended three funerals where I met some of my study participants. These encounters were not planned but coincidental as either I had lost a relative known to them or a church member that would be related to one of the participants. Through totemic connections which are ubiquitous in Zimbabwe relations are also easily forged, especially at funerals when people meet. Some study participants turned out to be my distant relatives from the totemic connections. During funerals participants would also sing and do activities that all other people would do. It is typical in Zimbabwe that as part of the funeral rites that relatives are joined by their 'neighbours', church members and friends. During these funerals I sometimes could hear gossiping coming from these individuals about some of the participants in my study who they either knew or suspected were gay/lesbian. Conversations bordered around the issues of how guys would sing and dance like women, or at times focus was on the current partners that they were perceived to be dating. Some would talk about how these 'boys were being picked by people driving nice cars'. All such comments were significant to my understanding of the context of gay identities. I also witnessed a lesbian woman challenge the gendered funerary rites in that whilst it is the task of men to use the shovel when covering the grave she joined the men to do that, which could possibly have been part of asserting that she was different to other women. It is from the range of such experiences in daily life that ethnographers can pick some rich and informative material that would not have been possible without participant observation.

Such gatherings accorded me an opportunity to also hear mainstream views whilst I observed how the study participants interacted with members of the society.

Where possible I also went to the workplace settings of my participants where access was not mediated by going through the administrative structures. One such function I attended was a beauty pageant organised by one of my study participants, Nyasha (pseudonym), who was into fashion designing and choreographing. The function was conducted in commemoration of the 2014 Africa Day at a hotel in a high density residential setting. Attending this function enabled me to observe how he conducted himself and how he related to other people. As noted by Moen and Middelthon (2015:355), observation should not only serve to confirm an observed pattern but also systematically search for potential reorienting or disconfirming cases. I observed that his 'known' sexual orientation in this community did not seem to influence how the audience interacted with him as it was not a barrier, neither was there any whistling and jeering at him to show disgruntlement by the audience. He managed to put up an impressive show. At the same venue a number of individuals who were participants in my study also joined the proceedings and there were no unpleasant incidences, which called for the unpacking of the widespread notion of a notoriously homophobic Zimbabwe. The interactions within this setting were highly cordial even though the function was held in a community which at times during the day has castigated some of the research participants on allegations of homosexuality. I also had an opportunity of attending the men's netball training sessions where some of my research participants spent their time in preparation for the men's netball tournament that was to be held in Pretoria, South Africa. Though the team was not selected on the basis of sexual orientation, a number of the study participants featured in the team. I spent time watching them practise and noting how they related to one another and other team members as well.

Through these close interactions I familiarised myself with the lexicon that was a privilege of insiders such that even in conversations with the study participants and other people in the community I did not feel out of place. As the study progressed my '*friendship*' base increased regularly, and I often exchanged contacts with the people I met such that our conversations continued even outside the research setting. This enabled me to follow-up on issues that I had not managed to comprehend or explore when we were in the presence of others. The data from

participant observation were not recorded during the observations to avoid the impression of supervision, and altering the natural setting, instead, where possible the data was later annotated in a notebook. Teunis (2000:176) attests that every fieldwork project requires its own unique fieldwork methods, thus most of the material that he presented consisted of notes taken from memory rather than formal taped interviews as observation, casual conversation, participation at different venues, and simply spending time together yielded valuable information.

4.7.2 Qualitative Interviews

Fetterman (2010:40) is of the view that the interview is the ethnographer's most important data gathering technique as it explains and puts into a larger context what the ethnographer sees and experiences. The study design's flexibility enabled the research to benefit from informal interviews as well as formal interviews (semi-structured interviews). Because the *informal interviews* usefully established and maintained a healthy rapport (Fetterman, 2010:41) they played an important role in preparing me for the semi structured interviews. The informal interviews as used in this study refer to the casual conversations that I regularly had in the field, where I often sought interpretations of the acts and terms that I did not understand. They often helped me with understanding terminology that is used in the LGBTI community and it helped me to adequately follow proceedings at educational and social gatherings. These conversations happened in the most natural settings which made them user-friendly yet providing priceless understanding of the context in which gay and lesbian identities were evolving in Zimbabwe. Whilst the technique offers excellent opportunities to understand some practices, it entails ethical challenges. Madden (2010:34) contends that, "ethnography is an ethical commitment from the very outset, and through all phases of the ethnographic research and writing". I often debated within myself as to what to include and what to exclude particularly from the informal conversations that I had in the research setting or when some participants revealed information that I felt they would not have done had it been a formal interview. Given that there was an absence of note-taking and audiotaping, I often felt that the participants were vulnerable in that sometimes unwittingly divulged more than they were prepared to. With the high-level of rapport I had established with some participants they often shared with me experiences that were rich but I felt that they were off-guard so I decided to remove some of the information which I thought they were telling me as a friend and not as a researcher. There were often times that individuals would express their anger and frustrations to me about fellow members in the community, with

whom relations had turned sour. Sometimes this information could be proffered when we were discussing relations and trying to understand what it means to embrace a gay identity. I would often hear responses that turned out to be personal attacks on others as they would be described as people who brought shame on the gay 'identity'. In cases where the researcher had follow up interviews with some participants (as discussed in empirical chapters) retrospective consent was sought to use data obtained in on some earlier conversations.

Apart from the informal conversation that I had with research participants I also conducted *semi-structured interviews* with an interview guide that was not followed religiously depending on the experiences of the respondents. Unlike the informal interviews, the semi-structured interview had a specific agenda which proceeded in a non-threatening manner. Moen and Middelthon (2015:343) observe that while semi-structured interviews have some degree of premeditated "direction," they should also have considerable degrees of flexibility and openness built into them, making it possible to incorporate and pursue emerging themes and topics as they arise, both during the course of each individual interview and during the course of the study itself. Though I had an interview guide I treated it as a 'living document' which was constantly altered to reflect what I had learnt from prior interviews and interactions. Moen and Middelthon (2015: 344) note that this allows each new interview to build on those that have preceded them, and the study to deepen and widen its exploration of questions, impressions, insights, and tentative analyses that arise during the course of the inquiry. Essentially this data-gathering technique was well suited in exploring the emerging issues in getting deeper insights into the evolution of the gay and lesbian identities in Zimbabwe and capturing the lived experiences of participants. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed me to drift into aspects of the life history method as at times participants were asked to tell their story from their own perspective, exploring their past particularly on childhood experiences and the process of coming to terms with their same-sex attraction. The interviews were highly interactional, enabling a collaborative meaning-making process in the search for knowledge-creation. Accordingly, Moen and Middelthon (2015: 341) contend that qualitative interviews are occasions for knowledge-creation which cannot be done in isolation but is rather co-constructed through iterative processes of reflection and articulation involving both the interviewee and the researcher.

All the formal semi-structured interviews with the exception of one with Terry (pseudonym) were audiotaped with the verbal consent of the participants. The participants often asked for assurance on the use of the information they were to provide, and as long as they were assured that I was not a journalist, they gave their explicit verbal consent to the use of the voice recorder. Fears were that in the event that I was a journalist I would relay their information to the mainstream media which would possibly lead to their 'outing'. Terry's refusal was based on such concerns which however were seemingly dispelled as interaction with him continued. The interviews were conducted at venues that the respondents would have confirmed as safe for them when I proposed possible venues or asked for venues of their choice. Some interviews were conducted at one of the participant's residence. His house was considered safe by some participants who even went there upon his invitation when he introduced my study to them. A few interviews were also conducted in my office at the University of Zimbabwe for those who were comfortable with the venue. Other interviews were conducted at quiet, comfortable sports clubs and restaurants (eating places). The major determinant of where the interview could be conducted was the perceived safety of the venue by the respondent, I also desired to create a less threatening environment which is why I avoided suggesting formal settings such as the office. The places where we met were less noisy and less accessible to people, thus they served the desired purpose which enabled voice recording to take place.

I endeavoured to create a natural environment; sometimes when I had interviews it was not unusual for two or three participants, even those not being officially interviewed, to request to sit through the interview. This request was granted if the participant being interviewed was comfortable with the idea. In most cases the response was affirmative. I had to emphasize the importance of confidentiality to the friends who would have been given permission to be present by the interviewee. This meant that in some of these interviews there often were interjections which at times acted as checking whether the story had been told as it happened, as these individuals were friends. Often the interviewee would bounce a topic and seek confirmation from the friend(s) with regard to incidences that they had experienced together, such as victimisation by the society or the police. Such interviews also involved some interjections in which friends assisted in helping the participant with recalling retrospectively what they could have shared with their friends before. I often found this to be very useful as it helped some participants not to

filter or forget past events they were reconstructing. However, not all interviews benefitted from these dynamics. Consequently, in the current study interviews were considered a technique that invents both notions of individual subjectivities and collective social and political patterns (Briggs, 2003: 497). I managed to tap in to what individuals had experienced as well as the collective experiences of same sex loving people in Zimbabwe. I conducted the bulk of the interviews, whilst a few were done by my colleagues whenever I perceived the possibility of a conflict of interest, as explained later in this study.

4.7.3 Focus Group Discussions

In order to gain an understanding of gays and lesbians own understandings of sexuality, I intended to conduct 3 focus group discussions (FGD), one involving gay men, another involving women who identified as lesbians and a third that would be a mixed focus group discussion. However I only managed to conduct two mixed focus group discussion sessions (one formal and another somewhat more informal) with study participants. Whilst I made frantic efforts to have the minimum number of discussions that I had targeted there were security concerns and competing work and social schedules cited by the participants such that we kept rescheduling as not all invited participants attended. Since I valued the security fears that the participants raised I looked for an opportune time through the aid of GALZ officials to conduct one focus group discussion at the Centre. The focus group discussion was designed among other things to formulate a collective way in which the participants could map their identities and commonly experienced challenges and concerns.

Morgan (1996:30) defines focus groups as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. My choice of focus group was determined by the conceptual and empirical research agenda consideration. Conceptually the focus group discussion enabled me to shift from the conceptualisation of ‘sexual identity’ as the product of individual decisions, in favour of the concept of ‘sexual identity’ as a socially negotiated phenomenon (MacPhail and Campbell, 2001:12). The focus group discussion introduced potential for revealing the way in which particular individuals’ opinions were accommodated or assimilated within an evolving group process (MacPhail and Campbell, 2001:12). The adoption of the technique also enabled the uncovering of both normative and counter-normative discourses regarding sexual minorities (see MacPhail and Campbell, 2001: 13). Competing

discourses on emerging gay and lesbian identities were expressed which could have been difficult to explore in other settings such as an individual interview. The understanding of what it meant to be gay and lesbian was contested, as discussed in the empirical chapters. The focus group discussion did not only tap into a wide variety of opinions but also provided many different forms of interaction, including direct and subtle challenges to opinions, and the ‘collective voice’ strategy which is not exhibited in individual in-depth interviews (Smithson 2000:116). As the discussions mirrored the kinds of conversations participants might have in their daily lives, the technique is associated with high external validity (2004:607). I carefully moderated the discussion with the aim to avoid any individuals dominating the proceedings and in order to get various insights, even those that could be perceived to lie outside the socially acceptable opinions (Smithson 2000:116). The more informal FGD involved both same sex loving male and female participants as we were waiting to conduct individual interviews and having lunch. During this discussion my associate supervisor posed a question trying to explore if there were convergences and divergences with western same sex loving relationships in which individuals treated each other as partners. Participants were asked to confirm if they were comfortable with the discussion being recorded; they gave their consent. This informal focus group discussion which took almost half an hour had interesting issues that were raised by the participants.

4.8. Ethical Issues

The study was approved by institutional review boards (The Faculty Higher Degrees Committees) of two universities namely Rhodes University and the University of Zimbabwe. Apart from the internal ethics committees the researcher also sought ethical approval from the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (MRCZ) ¹². As noted by Madden (2010:33), ethnography is employed in countless social and cultural contexts which alert researchers to the pervasiveness of ethical issues at every phase. As a researcher I was committed to observing relevant principles and protocols relating to research ethics, including those specifically highlighted in the research guidelines for Rhodes University. Besides the explicitly stated guidelines I needed to be aware of the range of the possible consequences of my actions at every stage (Madden, 2010:33). Whilst organisational support was of import, the study was not about

¹² MRCZ/A/2204.

GALZ but rather individual experiences. Nevertheless organisational support ¹³ helped to dispel misconceptions within the community. Individual consent to participate in the study was sought from those who participated in interviews and focus group discussions. Negotiation of individual consent was a process which started at the commencement of informal conversations with participants who were then invited to participate in semi-structured and focus group discussions. For participants who were recruited through referrals, the process commenced when the researcher contacted them and introduced the study. Before commencement of the semi-structured interviews the participants were given a copy of the consent form to discuss with the researcher spelling out their rights. Assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. After briefing the participants on the nature of the research and enunciating their rights as potential study participants, verbal instead of written consent from participants was sought specifically for two reasons. Firstly, such consent allows one to avoid the potential risk entailed in keeping records with the full names and signatures of people talking about experiences that may be criticized and lead to stigmatisation and even reveal information perceived to be sanctioned according to law. Secondly, in communities under social and legal pressure signing consent forms is likely to have negative connotations, making otherwise willing participants hesitant to take part in the study (Onyango-Ouma et al, 2009:833). Despite the practice of signing consent forms being the widely accepted norm in research in various contexts, in Zimbabwe there is hesitancy to put pen to paper as many worry that they may lose something through their signatures. In a study of a different subjects in which I have previously participated it was a common concern among the elderly members to refuse signing forms despite having agreed to participate, citing that others people have lost their properties through signatures. This is compounded, as argued by Gune and Manuel (2011:38), by the “reality that ethical codes are produced and informed by a cultural order different from the one practiced in social and cultural context where the study would be developed”. Insisting that a participant who has already given one his or her express approval to take part also has to sign a consent form raises issues of mistrust and suspicion on behalf of the participants. The spoken word in some contexts of Zimbabwe is as binding as a written contract. Thus as much as signing consent forms is

¹³ Organisational support was gained after the researcher had been introduced to the leadership by one of the participants. The leadership was supportive of the research.

considered the gold standard¹⁴ of ethical consideration, it should be given a nuanced application that should respect the different realities in different research settings. It has the potential of dissuading individuals who could have participated and could in some contexts put the participant at risk for later negative consequences (as in the case of interviews about practices that are stigmatized or at odds with the law).

The study makes use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The participants had an opportunity of choosing pseudonyms of their choice but were advised that they were not guaranteed of having the name as it may already have been taken by a fellow participant or if that name was widely known in the community as identifying the actual person. Self-selected pseudonyms helped in revealing the subjective identities of the participants in a way they felt was affirming. Notwithstanding the fact that meanings are socially constructed, it was common for male participants who were identifying as effeminate to pick names that expressed femininity such as *Sashaa*. It was also common for female participants identifying as masculine to select ‘masculine’ names such as *Chibaba Ryan*. Biographical and geographical data that could compromise on anonymity was omitted or altered to protect the anonymity of the research participants (Moen et al. 2012:197). For example names, gender and residence of significant others were altered. Not all participants were in favour of the idea of suppressing their identities as some said they wanted the world to know of their existence, and that they cannot continue hiding even in published work. Whilst I could understand the logic of individuals who are challenging their continued invisibility even with researchers, I had a moral and ethical duty not to reveal their identities, in some instances thereby unfortunately overriding their views and preferences by sticking to the professional code (Gune and Manuel 2011:38). Besides ensuring confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms, all participants were asked where they preferred to be interviewed and the venues varied as was discussed in the above section.

4.9 Fieldwork Experiences

Whilst this was one of the most interesting topics that I have researched, with the temptation to continue collecting data, I must say that it was not immune to fieldwork and ethical challenges. I

¹⁴ Gold standard, this would imply the best practice of doing something, which people should aim to achieve in order to validate their work or get the best results. In this instance written consent has gained widespread approval such that alternative consent ways are seen as below the standard.

experienced a number of challenges throughout the research process which however did not threaten the practicality of the study.

4.9.1 Researcher motives questioned

Generally the context which I was working in was complicated for the researcher as well as the research participants. Firstly, when the study was conceived when I was at the University of Zimbabwe I did not get much encouragement from some senior academics at the time who thought my work was trivial and not worth investing time on. My sexuality and motivation was often the subject of discussion amongst those who knew the line of work I was pursuing. Many questioned why my interest was in same-sex loving people; could it be that I was also gay? How are you going to recruit 'these people' if you are not one of them? I was perturbed by such thinking as in other research topics no one demands to know one's sexual orientation. Whilst those in the research community had these questions, the research participants also expressed their curiosity on who I was. Some speculated that I was from the secret service office and I needed to gather information so that they would be 'outed'. Some, including those who became close friends, even accused me of not being honest with myself as I could be gay. They reasoned that I spent significant time with participants and never showed any signs of discomfort, neither did I appear to be condemning anyone, and that therefore there was something more to it than being a researcher. I tried by all means not to allow the issue of my sexuality to become the subject for discussion with research participants, though I responded frankly to those who had expressed interest that I was heterosexual.

4.9.2 Protecting sexual identity of students and potential discomfort

Protecting the identity of my participants was really a priority but at the same time a challenge for me, as some people at the University of Zimbabwe (students, academic and non-academic staff) often wanted me to confirm their suspicions on students that they perceived to be 'gay'. In this study some of the participants were from the university community and regularly interacted with me whenever they needed professional and social advice. At times they would come and seek advice on what they perceived as discrimination from teaching assistants. It was suspected that on the basis of perceived suspicions about their sexual orientation, teaching assistants would 'smuggle' the subject of homosexuality into tutorials to spike them. In some instances some would allege their low coursework assessment in one of the courses was probably compounded

by their perceived sexuality. Same-sex loving students who were interested in pursuing their honours undergraduate dissertations on topics related to sexual minorities would often seek advice from me, which was a difficult position to advise on as I felt that they would be stigmatised as their choice of research would attract attention to their sexual orientation rather than their ability to do the research. One student confided in me that she had avoided taking the optional course Special Area Study – in *Sexuality* which I was taking because she felt that she would not be comfortable with the subject matter that would be discussed as this would have other students speculating about her sexual orientation.

4.9.3 Recruitment dilemma: Participation of researchers' students (Sociology majors)

I also experienced a dilemma on whether or not to include students that I had taught, or was teaching or had potential of teaching during their undergraduate studies as part of the study. I felt that even requesting them to participate would be exploitative due to the existent power structures. They often helped in referring students from other departments for me to interview but from the informal discussions we had, I felt that because of their sociological training they may have significantly different experiences from other students as the discipline is liberatory in nature. As I would discuss with them what I felt was lacking in the data that I was gathering, I invited them to volunteer their thoughts and made it clear that whenever they felt they would want to share their experiences to broaden the diversity of my study they were free to do so. I also had a dilemma that even if they availed themselves how would the interviews be done and who would do the interview? I felt that it would be riddled with issues relating to power structures and would inhibit the ability of the participants (students) to fully reflect on their experiences if I were to conduct the interview. I assured them that I would not be conducting the interviews but an external person would. This dilemma was resolved by making use of a trained and experienced research assistant, who had worked with the researcher before. He conducted three (3) interviews with the *students cum participants* and I found the interviews very informative. As I was going through the transcriptions of the audio-taped conversations I found that the *students cum participants* did not regard their participation as being one in which they were the victims of exploitation. Rather, they appreciated the opportunity of expressing themselves in a non-judgemental setting. They also did not just perceive me as their academic lecturer but saw me as a '*friend*' who they could freely approach and with whom they could

discuss some issues. One of the students had exploited my study to secure his release when they had been detained by state security agents at a local hotel where GALZ was conducting an educational function. The *student cum participant* had to produce his student identification card and claimed that he was an assistant in my project¹⁵.

4.9.4 Ethics: Incentives and participants expectations

A further challenge that I experienced was that of the expectations created by previous researchers among the research participants. I remember from my undergraduate *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods* discussion on the issue of ‘spoiling *the nest*’ indicated by our lecturer as a threat to future researchers. Because other researchers have given some form of incentives, the research participants also had expectations based on their prior research experience. Whilst a few had expectations of getting some material or financial rewards for their participation I explicitly advised them that there were no financial or material incentives for participating in this study. I strongly felt that giving any such incentive would be tantamount to paying for information which in any way I could not adequately value. Apart from giving *taxi*¹⁶ money to the venue as well as having lunch or snacks with the participants I did not offer anything to the study participants. I explained to the research participants that the lunch that we were having was not to be taken as an enticement as their information was priceless and could not be equated to the meals we were having. On most occasions the interviews took place at some hang-out places which did not threaten our conversations and which also were considered safe by the study participants. Whilst for some this may be considered as an inducement, I would want to highlight that within the Zimbabwean context having a meal with someone is an effective way of establishing rapport. Amongst the Shona there is a proverb that says ‘*ukama igasva hunozadziwa nekudya*’ which loosely translated means ‘A relationship is incomplete until there is sharing of food’. It would also not have made sense for us to spend about two hours or so in a restaurant just having a conversation.

I was impressed by my first respondent who later acted as my key informant who candidly questioned the benefit of the work that I was doing. He was not interested in individual benefits

¹⁵ As much as the individual had not been contracted to be a research assistant, it shows how prospective participants are agentic, that they may use the study to their own good. I was however happy that the student was freed on the basis of that and did not have to endure hours in detention by the police.

¹⁶ Public transport, a round trip would range between \$1 to \$3.

accruing to him but felt that there is a tendency for exploiting the gay community, where some organisations have used their stories for monetary gain without the benefits ever filtering down to them. He reflected upon an interview that he granted a news reporter in the belief that it was meant to benefit them and the next thing it was on air. As much as I was not a journalist I was unsettled by his concerns, as I was certainly not in a position to offer more from my position as a student who was doing this for academic purposes. I was certainly not in the line of advocacy from which he insinuated that the gay community should benefit. I painfully explained to him that I could not guarantee an audience with the authorities but that I was on an academic course in which there is a distant possibility to increase the visibility of same-sex loving people which might generate debate on the subject of gay rights. Rather ruefully, he pointed out that the next thing was that I would wear my cap of knowledge (graduate with your doctorate) and nothing would change in their community. As I pondered on his thought-provoking position at that moment I felt that academia was somewhat limited and even sterile as he gave me his honest assessment of what goes on. One of the last things on my mind was to visualise myself in advocacy work as I simply thought my work was to generate knowledge. It got me thinking about how much of our work and possibly the current work will in the end lie in journals which are hardly ever used to inform policy. It seemed then that little benefit accrued to the community that will have provided us with the setting and the research information. I could not assure him of anything in that respect besides telling him about the publications that would come out of this work and the possible benefit of him telling his story to someone who was not there to judge him but to understand his life experiences. Nyasha (pseudonym) went on to grant me the interview and he subsequently became one of the key people to link me with other male respondents who participated in the study.

4.9.5 Religious tensions

Unlike in a quantitative research, in this study it was not possible to avoid an intimate relationship with the participants, some who are still part of my network of friends even after concluding the fieldwork. One respondent after the interview went on to ask me what I honestly thought about what God thinks about same-sex loving people, whether there is hope for them, given the widely spread and incorrectly interpreted ‘sin of Sodom and Gomorrah’. In this narrative the interpretation is that homosexuality caused Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed yet the contextual analysis of the Bible chapter indicates that evil was abound. The honest

conclusion would be that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah should not be pinned down to homosexuality alone, but rather to ‘all forms of iniquity’. The question was a difficult one for me to respond to, as it challenged my religious beliefs and I was not so eager to answer the question. It is always a difficult position when the tables are turned and you become the respondent. I carefully steered the conversation away from me but referred to the all loving nature of God. Other participants who knew about my personal religion and that I came from a conservative religious group often asked how I reconciled my line of work with my religious conviction. I was not only called upon to answer this question by research participants but even my fellow academics and friends. The questions raised were on the perceived antithetical relationship between Christianity and queer identities. Much of this shall be explored in chapter 9 where I discuss the research findings on the religious experiences of the research participants.

4.9.6 ‘Uneasy Reciprocity’: Request to stage manage as ‘boyfriend’

Another incident that challenged me was a request from one of my female research participants who asked me to pretend to be her boyfriend. She had been chased from where she stayed with her uncle on allegations of being a lesbian. The relatives she was now staying with challenged her to absolve herself from the allegations by bringing her boyfriend for introductions. I did not have an answer to this as I had not come across this in the research textbooks nor workshops that I had attended. I was afraid that any response would either jeopardise my relationship with her as she had the potential to introduce me to more female respondents or at a professional level I would get stuck in issues from which I could not extricate myself. The intricate relationships that develop in qualitative research can lead to complicated relations where reciprocity is expected. Whilst it was not so hard to find male respondents the same could not be said of female respondents. I had, therefore, to tread very cautiously indeed. I diplomatically excused myself on the basis of numerous commitments that I had lined up as my spouse did not also take lightly that request when I shared it with her. I consulted a senior colleague in the department who also advised me against considering that as an option and I took the advice.

4.9.7 Experiencing the raid

Ethnographic techniques can be risky for researchers especially in settings that involve discriminated groups. It is not uncommon for GALZ to be raided by law enforcement agents or unidentified individuals when they are having functions. In my endeavour to fully observe the

interactions of same-sex loving people I accepted an invitation extended to me to attend a function organised by GALZ on the 20th of December 2014. During that year the organisation had failed to host the Pride Week due to security concerns and wanted to combine the Miss Diversity (formerly Miss Jacaranda) drag contest and the Christmas party. I attended the function with my academic advisor from Norway as we had been doing some fieldwork together. Whilst the drag function progressed well without any major incident, the after party was totally different as we were viciously attacked by a group of men wielding various weapons. They beat the patrons with clubs, clenched fists and bottles and also stole anything they could from the patrons. I was not spared during this attack. Neither was my visiting academic advisor. All the previous functions I had attended were incident-free. Consequently, I had no idea whatsoever on how to respond in the situation. I escaped with minor injuries though there were individuals who were so seriously injured that we had to take them to the hospital after the attackers had driven off. Whilst I did not in any way want to become an academic martyr there were valuable insights that I got from this incident. This embodied experience helped me appreciate that in the absence of a legal framework to protect same-sex loving people anyone can take advantage of the situation to even carry out criminal activities against same-sex loving people. Up to date no one knows who had sanctioned the attack nor did we ever get to know the identities of our assailants. It was also not easy for the injured individuals to get medical attention as it required a police report. The participants who lost smart phones, cash and other electronic gadgets could not even recover them. According to the participants this was not the first time that it happened but the majority were still resolved that they would continue attending future functions as they were attempting to create space for themselves. The function had been well attended, thus challenging the popularized notion of the hard to reach community. I also observed that one parent had attended in support of her son who was participating in the drag contest which points to some considerable level of acceptance. The function was also attended by many neutrals who had been invited. Nyasha, who I had introduced to my advisor, later told him that he did not regret that he was also beaten in the attack as it awakened him to the real challenges of the gay community in Zimbabwe, given that he had spent almost a week interacting with same- sex people without an incident. This would enable him to tell a balanced story about the experiences of the ‘gay community’ in Zimbabwe.

4.9.8 Writing about intimacy

Matebeni (2011:238) sums up the challenge that I had in making a choice on whether to write or not to write about issues of sex, intimacy and pleasure among same-sex loving individuals. Matebeni (2011:238) points out how the writer enters the unspoken intimate terrain that is simultaneously eroticized and exoticized. My fear was that some parts of my thesis could end up unintentionally feeding into and reinforcing some of the existing stereotypes about the marginalised groups that have often been used by some who have made homocritical utterances. Unlike Matebeni's work which constitutes ethnography at home, I had a more difficult task as an 'outsider'. However the issues that encompass sex, intimacy and pleasure are all significant in work that is interested in identities that are significantly based on sexual orientation, the issues had to be explored.

4.10 Data analysis

Data analysis was treated as an ongoing process in which multiple processes were engaged in concurrently. I collected the data and coded them before I began conducting the analysis even as the data collection was still ongoing. My analysis of the data did not take place in a vacuum. Significantly, my data analysis was informed by the claim by Moen and Middelthon (2015:331) that "knowledge is a communal achievement". Accordingly, I did not visualise myself as a sole producer¹⁷ of knowledge but instead recognised the people that I engaged with during the research as both epistemologically active participants and as coproducers of knowledge (Moen and Middelthon, 2015:331). Whilst I offered my personal interpretation to the data, I constantly referred some of the issues to three participants in the study namely Nyasha, Tariro and Takura (all pseudonyms) who helped in the interpretation of data as they had an emic understanding of some of the experiences and associated meanings. This process of 'member checking'¹⁸ helped in ascertaining the validity and accuracy of interpretations. Apart from study participants, key staff members at GALZ also helped in clarifying some issues that I needed assistance on. Apart from 'member checking', I also benefited from the epistemic community I was part of during my

¹⁷ As a new researcher in the field I had to guard against misinterpreting the data and projecting understandings and explanations onto the research context. I thus treated the participants and GALZ staff as co-researchers.

¹⁸ Member checking is primarily used in qualitative inquiry methodology and is defined as a quality control process by which a researcher seeks to improve the accuracy, credibility and validity of what has been recorded during a research (Harper and Cole, 2012:1).

doctoral work, for instance through consultations with academic advisors as well as feedback from seminar talks and conference presentations.

To make sense of the data I applied a thematic network analysis. Adopting thematic networks is a way of organizing a thematic analysis of qualitative data. Attride-Stirling (2001:387) notes that “thematic analyses seek to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes”. Similar themes were grouped together and from these subthemes were identified to represent the data. Attride-Stirling (2001:388) further points out that, “thematic networks offer the web-like network as an organizing principle and a representational means, and it makes explicit the procedures that may be employed in going from text to interpretation”. As I was in search of ‘thick descriptions’ I use quotes from participants extensively to allow the voice of participants to inform and shape the data analysis.

4.11 Conclusion

The chapter explored the methodological concerns that guided the study in the data collection. It demonstrated how gaining formal access when dealing with marginalized groups can be problematic and how an ethnographic model helps to circumvent this through the use of other informal channels. The chapter also challenges the blind mantra of labelling same-sex loving people in Africa as a hard to reach group as this study. This is based on what the study revealed which led the researcher to come to the realisation that there is a need for a nuanced application of that categorization. Same-sex loving men were not difficult to find whilst the same cannot be said about same sex loving women who were relatively difficult to find. Qualitative data collection methods were useful in eliciting rich, in-depth and detailed experiences of study participants. They allowed for greater degree of flexibility which was compatible with the subject matter which requires subjectively told stories (experiences). Whilst upholding the necessary ethical guidelines, the study challenges the unflected application of the so-called ‘gold standards’ in settings in which there may be alien unintended consequence with the effect of scaring potential participants. For example demanding written informed consent as opposed to oral informed consent under the circumstances that prevailed for the participants in this study. The study further demonstrates how qualitative research becomes murky with regards to the

debate between ethical absolutists and ethical relativists. The chapter closes by chronicling the fieldwork challenges and how these were overcome by the researcher. The challenges were mainly addressed to the positivistic assumptions of distant professional researchers who are disengaged from their study participants.

Chapter 5: Subjective ‘Sexual Identities’: Globally and locally circulated identity labels among same sex loving people in Harare

5.1 Introduction

The current chapter is the first of the empirical chapters that identifies and describes how same-sex relations, subjectivities and identities are understood, performed and constructed among same-sex attracted males and females in Zimbabwe. I attempt to understand how the women and men who engage in same-sex relations construct these relations as well as how they express their love. Chapter 6 builds on this chapter by exploring the nature and dating patterns of same-sex loving people in Harare. In this chapter I explore the existence of subjective gay and lesbian identities in Harare and the associated labels that are used to describe same-sex loving individuals. I do this by exploring the adoption, rejection and modification of globally circulating queer identities. The chapter also explores locally circulating labels of homosexuality which are adopted by study participants to self-identify. The chapter starts by profiling some socio-demographics of respondents who participated in interviews and focus group discussions.

5.2 Socio-demographics of study participants

Table 5:1 reflects the chosen sexual identities of the participants. The categorisations were derived from what the participants were comfortable being identified as. The inclusion criteria for participation in this study was that one had to identify as sexually attracted to people of the same sex. As the study progressed as would be confirmed by other participants anyone who did not identify as heterosexual would either be labelled as gay or lesbian within this context. The distinction and diversity of the range of identities falling under the LGBTI umbrella seems to be hazy in the local context. In this study all participants were black Zimbabweans. Among the participants (55%) identified as gay whilst 10% did not want to be classified and identified themselves just as different, or free-spirited. As discussed in the methodological chapter, fewer women who love other women participated in this study. Interestingly, a report on Sexual Minorities and HIV in Zimbabwe conducted by the Biomedical Research Institute in 2013¹⁹ reflects that of the 572 participants, 69% were Men who have sex with men (MSM) whilst 31%

¹⁹Report on Sexual Minorities and HIV in Zimbabwe.

were Women who have Sex with Women (WSW). Attendance to GALZ organised functions is also skewed towards gay men’s participation.

Table 5.1: Distribution of participants by chosen sexual orientation/gender identity

Self-identified Label/ identity	n (%)
Lesbian	9 (29)
Transgendered	2 (6)
Gay	17 (55)
Other (Different, free spirited, sexual being)	3 (10)
Total	31 (100)

Table 5:2 summarises the age of the study participants. Generally most of the participants are in their early 20s with a mean age of 23.5 years and a standard deviation of 3.2. This trend was also evident in GALZ-organised functions where attendance is skewed in favour of the youthful participants. This however does not mean that there are no older same sex loving people in Harare. I did come across older men and older women who are same-sex loving at functions and at the Centre but they were not eager to participate. A discussion with a staff member about the limited participation of older members revealed that in most cases these were people who have achieved a lot and have more to protect. Accordingly they shied away from anything that could compromise their positions in society. Conversely, youthful members were seen as risk takers, outgoing and ready to attend and participate in activities. Interestingly, a bigger study conducted by the Biomedical Research Institute in 2013 on Sexual Minorities and HIV in Zimbabwe reflects that 37% of the participants who were identified as MSM were between the age of 20 and 24years whilst for WSW they were 32 % for the same age group. Thus without attempts to make inferences on representativeness, the current sample configurations by age do not deviate from what has been observed in Harare. However, the skewness with regard to age significantly impacts on the study in that much of the experiences that are reflected in this thesis will be devoid of the input of older same sex loving people. This distribution which is skewed towards the younger population unfortunately can be incorrectly interpreted to mean that it’s the younger people who are involved in homosexuality thus giving ammunition to those parroting anti-gay propaganda by arguing that young people are mimicking what is foreign.

Table 5.1: Distribution of participants by age group

Age	n (%)
18-20	6 (20)
21-23	10 (32)
24-26	9 (29)
27-29	5 (16)
30-32	1 (3)
Total	31 (100)
Mean Age	23.5 years
Standard Deviation	3.22

Table 5:3 summarises the distribution of participants by level of education attained by the participants. What is listed is the level that participants were currently at or for which they had already attained a qualification. There was almost an even distribution of participants according to educational attainment with tertiary though non-degreed participants marginally having a higher number of participants. Worth noting is that all the participants had managed to attend schooling up to Ordinary level, a basic qualification that makes one eligible for employment and further study in Zimbabwe²⁰. Thus, the interviews could easily flow in vernacular as well as English.

Table 5.3: Distribution of Participants by highest level of education

Highest level of education	n (%)
Secondary School (O Level)	7 (22.5)
High School (A level)	7 (22.5)
Non-Degreed Tertiary	9 (29.0)
University	8 (26.0)
Total	31 (100.0)

²⁰ There is a misconception that young men who are involved in homosexual practices do so in order to earn a living as they may be unemployable. The current findings refute that position as the participants are not in any way less educated than other people.

Table 5:4 demonstrates the occupations of the participants at the time of study. Employment status ranged from formal employment to self-employment whilst 19% of the participants were unemployed. Amongst those not employed were some who had just left school and also some who had been retrenched from their work places due to the shrinking economy. At this stage no inference can be established on unemployment and sexual orientation as this was beyond the scope of this study. The distribution of participants does, however, offer a rebuttal of the commonly held though unfounded claim that the young people who become gays and lesbians are attracted to it because of the money that will be dangled by richer people as the participants can be classified as economically active.

Table 5.4: Distribution of Participants by current occupation

Current Occupation	n (%)
Employed full time	10 (32)
Unemployed	6 (19)
Employed part time	3 (10)
Self-employed	4 (13)
Student	8 (26)
Total	31 (100.0)

5.3 Subjective Identities

The study reveals that in Harare multiple labels were used to identify same- sex loving people. Some of the labels are globally circulating terms used in identifying same-sex attracted people whilst other labels were locally circulating. At the time of the study the terms used varied from homosexual, homo, gay, lesbian, whilst local terms included *'ngotshani'*, *'inkotshani'*, *'stabane'*, *'ordaa'*, *'bhutsu'*, *'gumutete'*, *'ngengirosi'*, *'mwana waEliza'* as well as a range of descriptors such as *'asikana'* or *'anasisi'*, *'anagogo'*. Whilst the questions were in both English and Shona the respondents were free to respond in the language they were comfortable with. Respondents were asked to identify themselves sexually. It is noteworthy that Zimbabwe has had a significantly long history of organised LGBTI activities as GALZ has been active since the early 1990s (Goddard, 2003). This history has impacted on the self-identification of same-sex loving people with terms such as gay and lesbian that have been popularised globally being adopted by

the local same-sex loving people. Many of the participants were familiar with and have adopted terms that have been globally circulated in queer identities discourses to identify themselves. Nyanzi (2013:13) notes that in Uganda “contrary to arguments in the literature that the label ‘homosexual’ is loaded with historical baggage, Westernised, stigmatised, disparaged and shunned by same-sex-loving individuals living outside Europe and America, many research participants reclaimed and appropriated it for themselves”. It is noteworthy to point out that in Harare though the terms were accepted by some participants they did not necessarily have the same meaning as they would imply in the Western world. Thus, there is a need for a nuanced analysis of these labels. My use of the labels ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ in this study should not be seen as an assumption that there are no complexities in the area of same-sex love identification, neither should it be assumed to imply a uniform conceptualisation of the terms among participants nor should it be taken to imply that there is a fixed western gay identity. However I use the terms in this study because they were extensively used by participants as categories to identify themselves.

A significant challenge that I experienced is that despite a relatively long history of activism, amongst the participants there was no clear distinction of the various identities that are enshrined within the LGBTI continuum in other contexts. This was contrary to my initial expectations in which I assumed that with the relatively long history of activism there would be ‘neat’ categories of identities among the participants. This does resonate with Foucault’s ideas on identities that are subjectively produced through discourse. Accordingly, participants chose identity positions with which they were familiar. There was a tendency among participants to conflate anyone who did not identify as heterosexual as being either ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’. Thus, other identities were invisibilised and blanketed under ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ given that they did not feature prominently in the dominant discourse on queer identities within the local context. A conversation with a participant now based outside Zimbabwe helps to illustrate how he sees this conflation. As Tariro (27 years) notes:

What actually happens in the context of Zimbabwe is that the (BTQI) communities are not yet well celebrated therefore they are not visible. Issues of identity have not been explored yet to a point where people can understand the difference between sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sexual identity and sexual practices. It’s

almost like ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ blankets everyone. So many researches have been done at GALZ and many transgendered people and bisexual individuals participated as gay or lesbian. Not the organisation’s fault but because they do not fully understand themselves yet and also the concept of not having any identity at all has not been explored to them. I for one my journey to womanhood started as gay boy, I had to learn on my own and research and assume an identity that I related with (Author’s Interview, 02/03/2017).

This could partly be explained by the history of activism in Zimbabwe in which GALZ was the sole organisation, though the situation is now changing as other organisations such as Pakasipiti (an LBT organisation) and Transsmat (a transgender organisation) have emerged. This may contribute to a better understanding of the identities that have been to some extent marginalised. Therefore, in this study it is possible that some individuals who would be identified as transgender in other contexts would easily be either considered under gay or lesbian as that would be the closest that they have familiarised themselves with as their identities evolved. It is also important to note that identities make sense in the social context they obtain therefore what was important for me was to prioritise the identity claimed by the participants. As noted by Brubaker and Cooper (2000:5) this allows identity to “encompass uses by actors in everyday settings to make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from, others”. Thus in this case what was more important for me was what the participants attached to themselves rather than the conventional and academically politically accepted labels. In the paragraphs that follow I shall start by discussing the globally circulated identity labels then proceed to locally circulating identity labels.

5.4 Globalised Homosexual labels

Altman (1996:77) points out that it has become fashionable to point to the emergence of "the global gay". The term is used in reference to the apparent internationalization of a certain form of social and cultural identity based upon Western-style gayness (Altman, 1996:77; Altman 1997:419). There have been claims that queerness is now global (Kole, 2007:1). The global/universal gay identity is associated to a greater extent with modernity. Euro-American experiences and lifestyles are becoming increasingly widespread through the development of global media, entertainment and tourism (McLelland, 2000:468; Altman, 1996:79). The complex

process of economic globalization and consumerism has been linked with the entrenchment of individualism and greater life choices within the developing world thus consequently leading to the emergence of Western-style identities and identity politics (Altman, 1996:79; Kole, 2007:2). Kole (2007:2) notes that “whether in advertising, film, performing arts, the internet or the political discourses of human rights in emerging democracies, images of queer sexualities and cultures now circulate around the globe”. Though contested, globalisation has also to some extent contributed to global queer mobilization and sexual identity politics. Globalization of same-sex politics or Western-style politicised homosexuality has gained momentum and has spread to non-western societies (Woodcock, 2004:1; Altman, 1997:417). Massad (2002: 361) notes that one of the most compelling issues to emerge out of the gay movement is the universalization of “gay rights.” The dominant LGBTQ organizing discourses emanate from western conceptions of sexuality and sexual identities (Moussawi, 2015:594). This has influenced claims on the existence of a truly global LGBTQ identity and community.

The global gay identity or the modern gay identity is often assumed to supersede the previous forms of homosexuality which may have been either age-stratified or gender stratified in some contexts (Murray, 1992:29). It is, however, important to appreciate that homosexuality is situational and does not necessarily fit nicely into these categories. Murray (1992:29) describes age-stratified homosexuality as referring to situations where a boy is sexually receptive to an older boy or man who takes responsibility for helping the boy to become a man. Gender stratified homosexuality is described as where one partner acts the role of a woman (Murray, 1992:29). Whereas the first two are age and gender stratified Murray (1992:29) observes that “the gay or modern organization of homosexuality breaks from assigning one partner to the inferior role of ‘boy’ or ‘wife’, and without regard to their sexual behaviour, insists that both are men who should have equivalent privileges”. Therefore, the modern western model of homosexuality which has gained global ascendancy is associated with approximation of egalitarianism among the partners. Significantly in Anglo-American societies the modern gay identity is not solely dependent on homosexual behaviour (Murray, 1992:30). Altman (1996:83) identifies the following as features characterising modern western homosexualities. Firstly a differentiation between sexual and gender transgression; secondly an emphasis on emotional as much as on sexual relationships; and thirdly the development of public homosexual worlds

(Altman 1996:83). Therefore, “homosexuality is now conceived as physically desiring others of one's own gender without necessarily wishing to deny one's masculinity/femininity rather than considering it as an expression of being a woman in a man's body (or vice versa)” (Altman 1996:83).

Whilst the study was conducted at a time when queer debates in the global north were out in the public domain (Farqhar, 2000:221), the same cannot be said about sexuality debates in Zimbabwe where debates have been muted in mainstream media²¹. The experiences that are presented in this work are grounded in a context where sexuality issues let alone sexualities that are considered as ‘transgressive’ hardly feature in the public domain. In the Western industrialised societies and other contexts there has been a new willingness to discuss homosexuality openly creating what Altman calls a specific “gay world,” which is defined socially, commercially, and politically (Altman, 1996:84). Whereas the gay community in some countries (mainly Western societies) enjoys a considerable degree of legitimacy and recognition by the state, the same cannot be said about the gay community in Harare which is often castigated. Therefore, this has implications for how gay identities emerge in Harare as they may not exhibit the overtly political rights based debates as witnessed in the West. However one also needs to appreciate how various electronic platforms have enabled significant proliferation of information and experiences from other contexts than previously experienced. Thus, despite the official attempts to maintain a moratorium on LGBTI sexual rights there has been significant exposure to some global trends. The experiences that are presented below show how same sex loving people in Harare have embraced globally circulating western style queerness as well as modifying and resisting the trends.

5.5 Gay/ geyi identities

Moen et al. (2014: 511) note that “the English word ‘gay’ has found its way into the Swahili vocabulary of quite a few same-sex attracted men in Dar es Salaam”. In Harare men whose primary sexual and emotional attachments are to persons of the same gender identified themselves as gay pronounced as *geyi* in local parlance. As in the case or Dar es Salam (Moen et

²¹ After the outbursts of the former president Robert Mugabe, mainstream media was barred from churning out gay themed material in a positive light such as advertisements of counselling services by GALZ. Only negative issues on the gay community could be reported or were actually ignored.

al., 2014:512) in Harare same-sex loving men have significantly embraced the word 'gay' in their vocabulary in identifying themselves or others who have similar sexual orientation. The use of the term 'gay' is popular within the LGBTI community in Harare. The participants used it to self-identify. Participants could loosely use the word to refer to themselves as individuals or as a group. One could say '*isu mageyi*' (us gay people) or one could say '*uya mu-geyi*' (that one is gay) as well as '*ndiri ge yi*' (I am gay). For example Larry (27 years) responded by saying "*right now what I can say, I'm gay*", whilst Sindiso (28 years) said "*Haa inini I am a gay*". Others such as Mario attempted to quantify their gayness. Mario (31years) said that, "*actually I could say I am gay, 110% gay*". Most of the study participants did not have a challenge in self-identifying as gay regardless of the sexual positionality they took, being the insertive ('top') or receptive ('bottom') partner in the context of anal intercourse. The adoption and use of the word 'gay' in Harare differs from how the same word is used in other non-western contexts. Unlike in Dar es Salaam, where Moen et al. (2014) note the distinction between 'guys' and 'gays', where a gay person would be the one that is penetrated anally, in Harare 'gay' was not limited to the position that one took but referred to same-sex attracted men in general. However, the sexual partners of receptive men were not only limited to men who identified as gay but also 'straight' men. Wegesin et al. (2000:45) note that various researchers have reported that within the Latin-American sexual system men who are insertors are not stigmatised as those who are receptive and are not regarded as homosexual men. Generally in Zimbabwe a man who sleeps with another man is considered a homosexual despite the fact that he may not see himself as being homosexual. Whilst the term 'gay' can be found in use both in Western and non-western societies there is a clarion call to interrogate whether it has a universal meaning similar to that propagated in the Anglo-American discourse of a modern homosexual. Moen (2014:512) cautions that, "one should not assume that gay equals gay and gei". The danger would be taking for granted that one's own understandings are shared by others. Thus it will be erroneous to assume that gayness in Harare is just borrowing western style even though there has been an influence from the west.

In trying to understand the adoption and meaning of the word 'gay' in the local context I asked participants who had identified themselves as gay to explain what they meant by that. Most of the responses turned on sexual attraction to other men and the absence of attraction to women.

Whilst sexual practice should not be conflated with a sexual identity it was evident that the majority of the participants used this as an indicator of their sexual orientation. Whilst in Anglo-American societies homosexual behaviour is often considered an insufficient basis of gay identity (Murray 1992:30), on the contrary in Harare this was often portrayed as the main if not the sole basis for one to claim a gay identity. The excerpts below indicate what some of the participants meant when they said they are gay. As Sindiso (27 years) notes:

Zvinoitwa nevamwe zviya zviya zvekuti musikana akabvisa hembe apa vamwe anobva aita feeling haaa kaana tenge takatofanaa hapana kana feeling. Kune vamwe vekuti anenge achitsvaga mari asi ini haa handimboite feeling tenenge takatofanana zvekuti anotochinja ndirimo hapana, asi Mukomana akabvisa hembe apa (Sindiso laughs) munongozivawo. I don't do what other men do if a woman undresses then they get an erection, as for me we will be the same (with the woman), I have no feelings for her. I am not gay because of money but I don't have feelings for women, but if a man undresses in my presence then something happens. (Author's Interview, 30/05/2015).

Thus, for Sindiso his gayness is defined by his not being attracted to women as he does not have feelings for them. Sindiso consequently draws attention to how genuine he is about his attraction to other men, by indicating that, he is not gay because of money. This is crucial for him to highlight given locally circulated allegations that there are men who masquerade as gay in order to get money. The border war concept used by Judith Halberstam (1998) on gender and sexuality aptly explains the participants' concerns that there are others who are not 'real' gay but are becoming gay because of financial need. Halberstam (1998) applies the concept of border wars to understand the contestations between the categories of transsexual (FTMs) and butch which are noted to be constantly under construction. According to Halberstam (1998:304) the border war idea "sets up some notion of territories to be defended, ground to be held or lost, permeability to be defended against. On the other hand, a border war suggests that the border is at best slippery and porous". Thus, the participant attempts to discredit those whom she or he perceives as not being 'genuine gays'. Therefore there is contestation on who should be identified as gay in Harare. The border was generally marked by the absence of sexual attraction for women. There is a widespread perception that gays have money in Africa (Masvawure et al., 2015), even the participants raised this issue as shall be explored in Chapter 7 on the social

categorisation of gays. Similarly Nyasha (26 years) stakes claims on his gayness by dispelling any possibility of having sexual intercourse and erotic feelings for women.

Ok let's get something straight right before we go there. I am gay meaning I am totally not attracted to women, you can get Sonya, Chido and everyone else (women) to come into my bedroom get into bed *tirare ndotonyatso tena kutarisa kumadziro mufunge tikanyatsorara kusvika kuseni*, (can share a bed with woman and sleep without any arousal) give me a guy *hope hadziuye*, like 2, 3 am *dzinochaya munhu uchingogaya kuti* whats going on, that's exactly who I am (loosely translated, if he is to share a bed with another man, he can't even sleep because of the desire to initiate something or in anticipation that something will happen) (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013)

Thus absence of sexual attraction to women was a signifier that one was gay, hence the construction of a gay identity was marked by attraction to other men. Therefore real gay men in Harare in view of some of these participants were constructed as those who do not have feelings for women, but sexual and emotional attraction for other men. Takura also concurred with what Nyasha said, as he expressed that he is not sexually attracted to women and nothing will happen if he is in the company of women. This is what he said when I posed a question on whether there is a gay identity in Zimbabwe?

Here in Zimbabwe, yeees, I'm an example, I'm gay, I love men, and I'm not attracted to women, not even. Even *tikatorara umo, ndinomupira musana* (Even if I'm to sleep in that bedroom with a woman, I would give my back to her/ will not do anything) but if I sleep with a man there I will feel that there is something going on and I have to avoid it, either I will change the room or I will sleep on the floor (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

Significantly participants identified themselves as gay because they felt that they are attracted to other men and not women. Thus within the LGBTI community in Harare an 'authentic' claim to a gay identity could be validated by lack of attraction to women but a strong and possibly irresistible desire for men and not doing it for money. There was thus, a distinction between 'genuine' and 'counterfeit' 'gays', therefore a border was put in place between gay and non-gay men. Mario, Takura and other participants' subjective adoption and acceptance of a gay identity

in a context where such an identity is denied an existence demonstrates that the contemporary society enables a plurality of identities. Takura's response, '*Here in Zimbabwe, yeees, I'm an example, I'm gay, I love men...*' goes beyond just claiming a gay identity but also citizenry of individuals with that identity. His insistence that there is such an identity in Zimbabwe disputes claims that Zimbabweans cannot have such an identity. Therefore, it goes against the popular rhetoric of 'unZimbabwean' which is often used to rubbish calls for protecting sexually diverse individuals. Thus despite the dominant rhetoric that is chanted in Zimbabwe, attempts to expunge same sex attracted people from the citizenry, there are individuals who take on that identity. Therefore evidently individuals can self-define whilst co-existing with other identities. Giddens (1992:30) sees in late modernity an efflorescence of identity discourse which thus enables individuals to negotiate and self-fashion an identity they would want to identify with. The self does not just become a passive recipient of experience but actively chooses an identity that suits them. Accordingly, the participants in this case could reflexively engage and ask themselves, who shall I be and how shall I live? Thus they had some degree of autonomy to choose to identify as gay despite the heterosexual rhetoric.

5.5.1 'Top', 'bottom' labels

Gay literature is replete with some self-ascribed labels that designate the sexual positionality of the partners in anal sexual intercourse. Researchers such as Grundy-Bowers et al (2015:177), Hoppe (2011:194), Moskowitz (2008: 191), Wegesin et al (2000:43) among others have observed that within the gay male self-identity, secondary self-labels exist. Hoppe (2011:194) notes that "many gay men identify as 'top' or 'bottom' (or 'versatile'), a practice generally thought to reflect their preferences for insertive or receptive anal intercourse (or both)". These labels designate positions adopted by many men as an important aspect of their identity (Grundy-Bowers et al, 2015:177; Moskowitz, 2008:191). Hoppe (2011:194) asserts that "these categories are imbued with meanings that go beyond a mere preference for insertive or receptive anal intercourse as they serve as relational reference points for men's intimate lives, informing how both they and their partners make meaning of their desires and sexual practices". Consistent with identities that are not fixed, these terms are subject to a process of constant refinement. There have been developments that include a multitude of prefixes that further specify an individual's particular preferences, practices, abilities and attributes such as 'versatile-top' or 'fisting-

bottom’, to ‘bears’ as well as ‘chub chasers’ (Grundy-Bowers et al, 2015; Moskowitz et al., 2008)

In Harare among the study participants the sub-categories are in use though not commonly circulating among gay men. One could come across social media posts for instance on Facebook, one could post, “*any bottomz in Harare, inbox*”. This would be posted on platforms that are gay-themed which are frequented by men who desire other men. Few respondents were explicit about the use of the terms ‘bottom’, ‘tops’ and ‘versatile’ though there were vernacular terms such as ‘*mukadzi*’ (woman) and ‘*murume*’ (men) which to some extent convey the same meaning at least indirectly with bottom and top. Nyasha is among the few that made explicit reference to the terms as he took time to explain to the researcher what he called the different types of gay people.

There is a **bottom**: who just naturally are recipient and most of them are very emotional, some of them are clean, speak like girls, some act like girls. **Tops**: these guys you see them every day, some of them as your friends, they are natural, good looking they are muscular take care of themselves. They act like guys everything is just ordinary. They basically top, what they saying is they don’t get done they do the doing. **Versatile**: is a person *wekunzi* you do me and I do you, let’s just do what we are doing, so it differs with what people you are dealing with.

I personally preferably I am a bottom, I’m not into the freaky- freaky style (Author’s Interview, 31/01/2013).

Yuval-Davis (2010:269) argues that dialogical identities narratives build on common cultural resources and meanings. Thus given the absence of the terms ‘tops’, ‘bottom’ and ‘versatile’, the participants had local terms that they used borrowing from the local culture. Whereas there was limited use of the English words, participants did have local Shona words which by implication were taken to indicate the positionality of the participants in sexual intimacy. Whilst the Shona words ‘*mukadzi*’ (woman) and ‘*murume*’ (man) do not necessarily equate to ‘bottom’ and ‘top’ they remain close to the meaning of the English colloquial words that designated roles taken by men in anal sexual intercourse. However, the use and understanding of the terms ‘*mukadzi*’ and ‘*murume*’ should not only be limited to sexual positions as it was also used to express the gender

roles that participants would take in their relationships. Participants would talk about ‘*kukwirwa*’ meaning being penetrated anally rather than saying I am bottom. This could possibly be explained by the stigma that has been created around men who are receptive partners in sexual intercourse.²² Some participants said they were gay and they felt like women. For instance Clarity (26 years) responded to the question on sexual identity by saying; “*I just know I’m gay, I like man yah, I feel like a woman*”. It was not unusual for some participants to equate themselves to women in their apparent rejection of a masculine gender identity. A conversation below between the researcher and Takura about the researcher’s phone which had crashed demonstrates the use of the words ‘*mukadzi*’ and ‘*murume*’ as he tries to dissociate himself from men.

Takura: *Kkkkkkkk*²³ *ehee ndotadza nei hangu chete iweakness yenyu varume* you are careless (I don’t get my phone damaged, it’s your weakness as men, you are not careful)

NM: *Kkk seka urema wafa. Iwe hazvisati zvamboitika kwauri here* (You shouldn’t say that you mean your phone hasn’t been damaged ever)

Takura: *Kkkkkkkkkkkk aaaaahhh inotofa yakabatwa nemurume kwete neni payakawidzwa mumvura handisini* (Aaah it can only get damaged by my man not by me, the last time it was dropped in water it was not me)

NM: Why did u say *varume tiri careless iwe wazviisa kunze* (Why did you say men are careless while excluding yourself from men?)

Takura: *Ndiri murume here ini? uuuuuuummmm* (Am I a man? uuum)

NM: Who is a man then?

Takura: *Vakaita semi sooo*, (They are like you)

NM: *Takasiyanei?* (How are we different?)

Takura: *Takasiyana mufunge pazvese kunze kwekuti mondiudza mava mukadziwo moda vamwe varume seni kkkkkkkkkkkk ndogara ndaziva* (we are different in everything unless you are telling me that you are now a woman also, you now want other men as me, tell me so that I know)

²² This issue will further be explored in Chapter 7 which focuses on social categorization of same sex loving people. The receptive partners are looked down upon as they are perceived as having betrayed the dominant strand of masculinity.

²³ Kkkkkkk is shorthand code for expressing that one is laughing when conversing using instant chat messages such as WhatsApp and Facebook messenger. The number the k vary depending on the emphasis that one wants to make. One can even add the suffix *est* to make it kkkkest, expressing the magnitude of laughing. In this thesis whenever I use it the information would have come from follow up interviews through various social media platforms in which instant messaging was taking place.

NM: So are you telling me that you actually see yourself as a woman

Takura: Yes I am a woman ini. I'm the one who gets penetrated (Author's Interview, 09/05/2017)

Identities lead to differentiation as they mark boundaries, of who belongs where and who does not (Weeks, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2010). The concept of border wars helps us to understand how identities are framed. Takura attempts to draw the boundary between his identity and that of the researcher, and alludes that those who behave like him are similar to him and the researcher does not have those traits so he is different from him. Evidently the participant associates men with being careless that's why their phones get damaged, whilst because he claims a feminine identity 'his' mobile phone is well-kept. In the preceding conversation the participant uses Shona words that depict femininity and points out at the same time that those who are different from him are male and 'he' is female. In this case Takura and others' responses draw on the heterosexual categories to express their homosexual identities. Thus the categories 'men' and 'women' are also replicated in their relations, therefore traditional categories of relations are reflected upon and used by some of the participants. Takura distances himself from men and claims his behaviour is consistent with that of women.

The participants associated being a woman with the positionality that is taken in a sexual act as well. Femininity was not only claimed with regard to how some participants identified themselves sexually but also with regard to power dynamics in relationships as the majority of those who identified as bottom also demonstrated submissiveness to their partners. I demonstrate in the next chapter (6) that the labels '*murume*' and '*mukadzi*' are saturated with meanings that go beyond just the preference for insertive or receptive anal intercourse respectively. These subcategories depicting femininity and masculinity are, however, at odds with the circulated modern gay identity which is not gender stratified. There were very few participants in the current study who did not identify with gender-stratified homosexuality, thus mainly there was an adoption on a traditional gender/sex script by many participants to describe themselves and their relationships. Therefore, as noted by Altman (1996), we should not assume a linear progression towards Western-style queerness as most people negotiate numerous models of identity in everyday life depending on the context. Whilst one would assume that what obtains in Harare is contrary to the 'modern' model of gay identity one should appreciate the ability of

human beings to negotiate their identities where tradition intersects with modernity and decide for themselves what their identity or identities are. Thus, I appreciate that the participants subjectively perceived themselves as gay in their everyday life. Therefore as the gay identity in Harare evolves it does not necessarily overlap with the prominent globalised discourse.

Nonetheless there are participants who did not invoke the traditional gender scripts to reflect on their same sex relations. Their relations were not gender stratified and were not an attempt to mimic or replicate how heterosexual relations are structured. I reflect on the following transcript in which Ricky (26 years) says that it's due to lack of knowledge why people identify themselves with traditional gender labels. Ricky's wish is that the local gay community adopt an egalitarian gay relationship which is not gender stratified but based on equal partnership. He even questions the use of the feminine labels within the community. As Ricky notes:

I'm trying to educate most of our guys, we are guys not a man and a woman and I find that most of these guys use the terms *anasisi* (sisters/woman), who is the man in this relationship? Who is the woman? There is no woman, they are guys so, yes you are two guys who are together, a guy who likes other guys, you are not a woman. I believe if you are a guy into guys why go and find a woman in a guy, so I'm gonna educate people so that they don't necessary label a woman (13/06/2013)

Whereas most of the participants found it acceptable to adopt the term 'gay' to describe their sexual identities, there were a few participants who had reservations in using the word though without extreme rejection of it. Nyasha's concern is that the local gay identity is a misrepresentation of the global gay identity. Becoming "gay" is to take on a particular set of styles and behaviour (Altman 1996:80). Nyasha feels that the local identity falls short of what defines a gay identity. The excerpts below aid in illustrating the participants concerns.

I don't like to be limited, I'm sorry to say this but I'm going to have to expand. I don't like to be limited, people tend to categorize each other right, that I'm gay, I'm bisexual , I'm transsexual, I'm heterosexual I'm what , I don't like to be categorized because if you count me amongst the gays most of them behave like 'dogs'....right, I don't want to be counted amongst .. I don't want to be ranked with people who have their own form of

lifestyle or their way of living because I don't live like them, I might be like them sexually but I don't live like them (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

Nyasha considers himself to be an enlightened person who disagrees with the way gay identities are evolving in Zimbabwe. Nyasha is of the opinion that the gay movement has lost direction hence to be associated with the label 'gay' in this context does not aptly describe him. Nyasha's concern is that people in the LGBTI community are not behaving as expected. Therefore, in his view, the label 'gay' has been misappropriated. He attempts to draw boundaries on what the 'real gay' identity is in an attempt to defend what he cherishes as depicting a gay identity. Thus the concept of border wars informs us how Nyasha classifies lifestyle and behavior that does not fall in line with what he thinks is gay. Thus for Nyasha the border of what marks being gay and not gay is not permeable and it needs to be maintained. He even mourns the passing away of the maestro Keith Goddard who was central to the formation of the LGBTI movement in Zimbabwe.

'... Keith Goddard started GALZ with a positive note, and when he died and it went to the black people, I'm sorry to say black people, but they showed true African nature, when it went to the black everything just changed, the real stuff died, the real being gay just died it's now just an illusion, the sex, drugs and alcohol' (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

Evidently Nyasha's concern is that being gay has been conflated with the already stereotypical view expressed by those uttering homophobic statements in an attempt to castigate gays. A former member of parliament, Mr Chigwedere, once described gays and lesbians as given to debauchery and licentiousness. Thus Nyasha feels that what he perceives as lack of direction has exposed young people to a misconception of what it means to be gay as they end up thinking that it's about sex and having parties. Thus Nyasha strongly feels that there is a misrepresentation of what it means being gay hence he cannot easily accept the label 'gay' to describe himself. The real stuff for him is addressing fundamental issues that people encounter in a context that lacks affirmation. He feels that without the necessary support young same-sex attracted men will become wild and end up engaging in behaviours that make them vulnerable to STIs including HIV. He bemoans what he calls a lack of support in the current leadership which he claims to have received when he was young.

I first went to GALZ when I was 18 and I came upon Jackson (not real name). He was one of the founding members of GALZ, he was the one who gave me direction in my life, I was wild, I was crazy, and he told me what I was coming into (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

Nyasha goes on to say that there are fundamental issues that need to be addressed

I'm gay and you don't even know what to be gay means. Most people don't even know what gay people entails, even gay people..... Most people don't know this, basically what they are doing is get young people to party, put on dresses, put on heels, shake your booty do what you are doing go home and then say we had a nice time at the Centre (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

Significantly Nyasha's contestation is not on the use of term 'gay' to describe same-sex attracted men but his concern is that the label has been adulterated. Nyasha's position calls to attention the importance of not identifying people on the basis of their sexual practices. The term gay / *ngochani* for him in Zimbabwe elicits or is loaded with misconceptions which from his point of view are a consequence of a misinformed society as well as the behavior of those who identify as homosexual who have not received adequate guidance.

Nyasha: Well I would just have to fall under 'gay' but I would rather call myself a free spirit, I don't like to be narrowed down to anything, because when people speak of 'gay' that's why you hear most people freaking out. Because when they hear his gay, *ngochani*, *stabani*, right, people have a mentality of.... If I was to tell you that I'm gay the first thing most guys would think of is I told you because I want to sleep with you or I told because I want something or I want to expect something from you, that's not being gay. Being gay is what? What can I say? It's a lifestyle, it's a way of life, it's who you are, gay people I think look at life from a different view from the rest of the world. We look at art, we look at music, we look at even people we look at them differently, gay people tend to love but since it's not given back to them, right... it just makes everything weird, so when people categorize gay people, being gay *kana kuti ngochani* it's termed with bad terminology, everybody who just has to say those words thinks 'black' you never really get to think positive when you hear such words that's why I don't like being trapped (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013)

Nyasha's case raises pertinent issues on identities in a context that is globalized. Gay identities in Harare become a test of the globalization thesis (Altman 1996:91). The new identities are not necessarily taking the form and shape that depicts the Western experience despite the fact that there have been attempts to 'internationalize' the gay identity. However Altman (1996:91) also reminds us that, "Western gay life is no more monolithic than non-Western gay life". Therefore, whilst Nyasha has a certain type of gay identity in mind it does not have the authority of discrediting other identities shared by other people as identities are contested. Nyasha's concerns are on validating certain 'gay identities' that exhibit conformity to a marketed westernized type of identity. Nyasha's concern feeds into what can be termed homonormativity, which is defined by Collins (2009:466) as "the new regulation of gay identity, politics, and practice". Offord and Cantrell (1999:208) note that in contemporary life a crisis revolves around knowing how, why and where to situate oneself. Thus, in terms of how the gay identity is being represented in Harare, he struggles with where to locate and position himself and whether that will adequately represent who he is. Notwithstanding his reservations Nyasha says, "*Well I would just have to fall under gay*", which reflects how he feels compelled to identify himself with an identity that is recognized. McLelland (2000:464) notes that Arjun Appadurai (1996) "speaks eloquently of the limitations of all forms of labelling, even when the labels are self-applied when he argues that 'many of us find ourselves racialized, biologized, minoritized, somehow reduced rather than enabled by our bodies and our histories, our special diacritics which become our prisons'". Gary (27 years) shared similar concerns on how limiting labels can be on human beings, even those that may be considered as not stigmatizing. Gary resisted classification into any of the dominant categories that are used to identify people either in the western world or in Zimbabwe. The participant just preferred being classified as a sexual being. Below is the excerpt of the interview with Gary.

Q: What would you say about your sexual identity?

Gary: I would not put myself in a box... I'm a sexual being (laughs)

Q: You are a sexual being?

Gary: (laughs) it varies from time to time I'm a sexual being

Q: Whom do you have sex with; men or women?

Gary: It doesn't matter. What's good is the bond between two people as long as that (makes a growling sound) is there... I'll be with a man and feel like wow and be with a

woman and feel like aargh shit get out of my bed or if I knew where you kept your house keys I'd just walk out (laughs out loud), so no I don't think with me... it varies from time to time

Q: So would you say you have a specific sexual identity or you are just a sexual being?

Gary: I'm a sexual being... I would not do (laughs) aah no I'm not that extreme... (Keeps laughing) (Author's Interview, 28/01/2015).

Gary's position reflects the flexible and contingent nature of identities. The participant denies being boxed into one category and prefers to take on a category that he likes at a given time. In his case one can appreciate how pleasure is central to his sexuality and how it is not tied solely either to homosexuality or heterosexuality but what makes him feel happy at that time. Thus his experience challenges the border between heterosexuality and homosexuality. In his case his sexual identity is not fixed but is contingent. What is also evident from Nyasha and Gary's cases is that sexual labels can be restrictive even though they are self-chosen. Motschenbacher and Stegu (2013:526) point out that sexual identity labels construct people's identities as clear cut and enforce an either/or choice. What can be seen in Harare is that there is a continuum which does not follow the clear cut suggested sexual identity labels. Evidently it can be noted that participants identified themselves with labels that are used at the global level, though one needs to be cautious of concluding the exact meaning as espoused in other contexts. In some cases some would embrace the meaning of the labels that appear to be dominant on the circulated global discourse whilst in other instances it will be modified or 'glocalised'. Thus rather than talking of just a gay identity in Harare which is monolithic, it will be more convenient to accept that they are gay identities that are evolving which may mirror, challenge or modify the 'modern global gay identity'. Therefore similarly to Beret and Adam's (2006) observation in Turkey, in Harare gay identities should perhaps be understood as plural entities reflecting a wide spectrum of desires, acts, attributes, and identities associated with same-sex preference.

5:6 Lesbian identities

In the findings the pseudonyms that are prefixed by Madzimai refer to participants who identified as femme lesbian whilst those prefixed with Chibaba referred to those identifying as

butch. This is not intended to further categorise participants but it is meant to allow the reader an easier flow to understand some of the gendered positions taken by the participants. Female participants mainly embraced the globally circulated terms used to describe queer identities though the meanings may or may not necessarily be the same with that depicted in Western media and literature. Predominantly the female participants identified themselves as lesbian and some went further to describe themselves in relation to subcategories used among lesbians such as butch and femme. Briefly I look at how the lesbian identities in Harare have demonstrated the permeability and porosity of borders and goes beyond the narrative of victimhood²⁴. Whilst the dominant rhetoric has been on denouncing homosexuality as an identity that is antithetical to the African (Zimbabwean) culture, the findings demonstrate that this identity has been variously embraced by participants. Mainly participants adopted the globally circulated labels to describe themselves. In the conversations that follow I demonstrate how the label 'lesbian' has been embraced and used whilst challenging the border that homocritical individuals have tried to set and defend in an attempt to kick out or keep out lesbian identity from Zimbabwean citizenry.

In the following transcripts I analyse how participants identified themselves as proud lesbians as well as using the associated subcategories to position themselves. The participants construct positive subjective identities of themselves. Chibaba Tindo (21 years) who was studying at a university outside Harare identifies herself as a butch lesbian and is proud of that identity.

Q: How do you identify yourself? Is there a term that can describe who you are?

Chibaba Tindo: A very proud butch lesbian.

Q: Okay uum proud butch? Is there such an identity in Zimbabwe?

Chibaba Tindo: Yes (Author's Interview, 14/05/2014)

Similarly Chibaba Nikkaz (20 years), who was recruited to be part of this study after she had posted her details on a GALZ website without hiding her identity shows how a border set depicting sexual conflict where lesbianism is defined as foreign should be perceived after all as slippery and porous.

Q: How can you describe yourself?

²⁴ There is often told portrayal of non-gender conforming women being victims, who are castigated and go underground as if they do not have agency.

Chibaba Nikkaz 'I am a proud black lesbian, I am proud of myself'

Q: Given Zimbabweans' perceptions on homosexuality, you did put your details on Facebook on the GALZ website, looking for a femme, if I may ask why you decided to do it publicly.

Chibaba Nikkaz: I was tired of being silent about it, it's who I am, it's all about choices, I am a proud black lesbian who wants to be happy. That's me (Author's Interview, 10/09/2013).

Employing the concept of 'border wars' the conversations reveal to us how participants chose identities that challenge homocritical statements by leaders who attempt to impose borders on what is African and what is not African, by using colonial metaphors of portraying homosexuals as colonial residue. Despite broadcasting that gay and lesbian identities are unZimbabwean, women who love other women have embraced that identity. Apart from embracing the lesbian label with pride, the participants challenge the popular mantra of homocritical leaders who associated this practice with Westerners, as in Zimbabwe the popular misconception is that lesbianism is for 'white' women. Thus attempts to dissociate lesbianism with black women are challenged. Weeks (2007:50) points out that identities can be sites of contestation as they multiply points of resistance, I therefore argue that the use of a Facebook post broadcasting one's sexual identity does demonstrate how the participant resists dominant rhetoric that her identity is antithetical to a true Zimbabwean identity. Chibaba Nikkaz and Chibaba Tindo's chosen self-identities depict how in the modern world a plurality of identities emerge even if they are not supported by the socio-cultural structures. Despite the absence of significant affirmation in the society these participants embraced a lesbian identity. Giddens (1992:30) does inform us how the self is part of a reflexive project in which the self is not a static or passive recipient of experience. Therefore despite the homophobic environment participants enjoy autonomy to scrutinise their identities and do not permit the dominant heterosexual rhetoric to colonise their subjective identities. Chibaba Nikkaz's claim that, '*...It's all about choices...*' does help to show how borders are challenged as individuals make choices about identities they want to adopt and express.

5.7 Butch and femme lesbian identities

'Butch' and 'femme' are terms often used to loosely describe lesbians' approximate adherence to traditional masculine and feminine gender roles respectively. They emerged in North America in the early and middle part of the twentieth century, they provide a unique organising system of personal representation, interpersonal interaction and community participation (Crawley, 2001:177). Despite contestations over the use, meaning and utility of these terms they have persisted over the years. Matebeni (2011:188) notes that any thesis involving lesbians which does not make reference to 'butch' and 'femme' is heavily criticised as these have become central terms. Despite the use of the terms, many are hesitant in defining them (Crawley, 2001:177). Rubin (1992, as cited by Crawley 2001:177) defines the terms as follows:

Butch and femme are ways of coding identities and behaviours that are both connected to and distinct from standard societal roles for men and women... "Femmes" identify as feminine within the larger culture; "butches" identify primarily as masculine or prefer masculine signals, personal appearance and styles.

Generally, as noted by Inness and Lloyd (1995:1), "scholarship has focused on the butch-femme dyad, usually either emphasizing its historical significance for the lesbian community or decrying it as an outdated imitation of patriarchal gender roles that fails to embody feminist values". In the western context Levitt et al, (2003) note that, "by the 1950s, it was imperative for a woman to identify as either femme or butch if she wanted to become integrated into this lesbian culture". This history has consequently influenced the debates surrounding the use and relevance of the labels to lesbian identities. Smith (1989:399) points out that while it is not easy to discover nor explain what the butch/femme tradition consisted of, "what is clear is it was a system of sexual communication carried out in dress, in style, and in more immediate sexual ways". According to Walker et al., (2012:91), "Much of the language and understanding of lesbian gender is embedded in the labels that are imposed on and adopted by individuals". Consequently labels have an effect of categorising and defining characteristics of individuals. Not only do labels categorise people but they tend to be value-laden as they are loaded with meanings that may either be positive or negative. Walker et al. (2012:91) state that societal labelling for lesbians is based on presentations of masculinity and femininity, thus lesbians have been thrown into the same sexed stereotypes as straight men and women. Levitt et al. (2003:99)

point out that “this gendering cast butch women as protectors and aggressors and femmes as seductresses and sources of emotional solace within a community geared for resistance”. Significant debates have been on whether or not butch/femme dynamics simply mimic the patriarchal relationships that they challenge (Levitt and Hiestand, 2004:606). Instead of perceiving butch/femme as imitative, others have theorized and reclaimed them along with drag and certain transgendered practices, as transgressive, queer and examples of gender performances in action (Eves, 2004:481). Levitt et al. (2003:99) note that besides appearing to the outside world as mocking heterosexuality, “femme–butch identities were very complex, and transcended and radicalized traditional gender roles”. According to Levitt et al, (2003:99) both butch and femme genders stretched what it can mean to be a woman. Butch identity did this through appropriating the signs of masculinity whilst femme women gave feminine signifiers new meaning by orienting their sexuality toward a butch woman instead of a man, which all challenged notions of female sexuality (Levitt et al. 2003:99). Whilst the foregoing debates may be disconnected from the local lesbian identities they do significantly help in understanding the complexities of the emerging local lesbian identities.

5.7.1 ‘Butch’ identities

Inness and Lloyd (1995:1) point out that the concept ‘butch’ has long permeated lesbian culture in Western societies in such a way that every lesbian is familiar with it regardless of her self-identification. In most studies the butch lesbian or the butch is associated with deployment and manipulation of masculine gender codes and symbols (Rubin 1992). Matebeni (2011:217) notes that significant scholarship on butch and femme sexual styles and role-playing is predominately North American. Matebeni (2011:17) highlights that in other contexts such as South Africa, the works of Gevisser and Cameron (1995) and Morgan and Wieringa (2005) attempted to recover historical accounts of same-sex existence for the liberation of gay and lesbian individuals. Matebeni’s (2011) work constitutes a commendable effort in exploring the butch–femme category, as it gives useful insights on how these identities are embraced, modified and produced in an African context.

Some of the female participants in this study identified as butch lesbian. The overall impression from the fieldwork experience point to butch category being more common compared to femme. I sought to explore what it meant to be butch and what butch identifying participants attached to

this identity. Inness and Lloyd (1995:3), in their attempt to interrogate the meaning of butch, observe that there is a wide range of ideas that women have about what constitutes butchness. According to Inness and Lloyd (1995:3), for some women being butch is primarily about one's desire to be the dominant individual in sexual activities whilst others perceive it as primarily a means of resisting the cultural norms for feminine behaviour. The meaning of butch in this context was mainly constructed to refer to women who experienced sexual attraction towards other women who in most cases perceived themselves as the dominant partners. Some of the participants perceived themselves not just as women who love other women but as men in their relationships. The discussions that follow demonstrate how the butch identifying women appropriated masculinity to challenge the cultural scripts on being a woman, thus demonstrating how the borders, despite desired attempts to make them impermeable, can be stretched to allow agentic beings to express themselves.

Crawley (2001:177) observes that Rubin (1992) perceives 'butch' and 'femme' as located within the broader cultural context of dominant gender norms. In the current study participants comprehension of 'butch' and 'femme' borrowed significantly from the heterosexual dominant gender norms. Butch identity was associated with adoption of practices and behaviours that are noncompliant to expected feminine traits in the broader local cultural setting but with the adoption of behaviour consistent with masculine trends. Therefore, given the influence of culture on the individual participants, the closest that they could reflect on and embrace to express their butch identity was taking on roles played by men in the wider society.

Q: In this relationship, do you see yourself as a woman who is attracted to another woman or as a man?

Chibaba Tindo: I see myself as man, but I know that my girl is not that and I try to meet her half way and treat her the way she expects that girl thing.... (Author's Interview, 14/05/2014).

Whereas there has been an attack on butch identity in feminist scholarship (Crawley2001:177) as well as in this current study by some femme participants, a number of participants comfortably identified as butch and expected to be treated as men in their relationships with other women. They expressed how in their relationships they had to behave in a typically

masculine and dominant way as expected within the cultural setting. I return to the claims on masculinity in the next chapter which focuses on the nature of same sex relationships in Harare. By claiming to be men the participants were challenging the borders constructed by society on who a man is, thus they were expanding the concept of manhood. Therefore butch identifying women challenge the cultural script by transcending the traditional gender categories. Thus their understanding of being a man did not depend on biological grounds and what was culturally stipulated but on who they felt they wanted to identify as. These accounts demonstrate how a butch identity is seen by other participants as an opportunity to challenge the traditional gender distinction which attributes masculinity to biological sex. For instance, the transcript below shows how a butch identifying woman felt on her first intimate relationship with another woman.

Q: How did this relationship make you feel?

Chibaba Tindo: Me, being a butch I really felt like yes I'm man now, uum that I have achieved those things that I have as a man I have someone who has accepted me being a butch girl attracted to other girls and somebody had accepted that, it really meant a lot to me (Author's Interview, 14/05/2014).

Thus Chibaba Tindo feels manly because she disrupts the heterosexual system which valorises that it is only men who should and can attract women and possibly satisfy them. Her victory and ability to attract another woman disrupts the conceptualisation of masculinity as inherently a male attribute (Matebeni 2011:226). Chibaba Tindo reminisces about the first relationship she had, *'I gave my all to that relationship but unfortunately things didn't work out. But I will never forget the first time we were intimate it was too good'*. Thus the ability to satisfy and enjoy sex with another woman challenged the heterosexual borders as well as allowing the participant to positively construct a butch identity which enabled her to claim and express masculinity.

To further stake their claim on a butch identity which they associated with being a man in the relationship some of the butch identifying women spoke about how they were involved in multiple concurrent partnerships. Generally there is another version of masculinity that exists in Zimbabwe which is demonstrated by the ability to attract many female partners (Muparamoto, 2012). In the conversations that follow I reflect on how the butch participants felt that having multiple partners was part of being butch. Chibaba Nikkaz does not only perceive herself as a

man in the relationship but also naturalises the desire to have more than one partner as this would express her masculinity.

Chibaba Nikkaz: Allow me to say I have watched someone I liked very much but failing to get me satisfied so I would have three or four girlfriends just like any other normal man I am normal, just like any other straight person (Author's Interview, 10/09/2013)

Thus Chibaba Nikkaz's claim on being masculine is further authenticated by embracing what she perceives as normal for men to do, that is, having more than one partner. This claim does show how the participant rejects a feminine identity whilst adopting a masculine identity. Besides challenging societal scripts on what a 'woman' can do the claim also points to how despite appearing as resembling men the butch identity offers opportunities for participants to challenge gender conventions. At the same time having multiple concurrent partners does demonstrate that some butch lesbians fulfil an existent script about how to be a man. Similarly another participant Chibaba Natsi who identified as butch also shared experiences she had in which she expressed her identity by having many partners.

Chibaba Natsi: I think that for any other lesbian it's just a time when things are just going so well you don't even care it's just all about cheating or having so many chicks, so we were just talking and she did say "*iwewe uri hure*" (you are promiscuous), like you have got so many chicks" I always look at it like it was a phase I had to feel because I was so immature now it's not something that I even think of coz (because) as much as I am gay but women are so complicated so to have four is always gonna bring gwan (problem) so I would like to work on myself and have one woman to please her, be a good lover, have a good home, and have a good wife but yaa I should say most butches consider themselves as men as I have said already maybe wanna have a lot of girlfriends maybe possible wives but I have passed that stage I'm all good with one (Author's Interview, 15/07/2013).

The desire to express masculinity through multiple concurrent partnerships was also expressed by other participants who identified as butch. It was seen as something fashionable and enhancing one's ego for a butch lesbian to attract a lot of women around her at the same time. This thus tends to reinforce the idea that butch lesbians fit and reinforce the traditional masculine

role characterised by less restrictions on what men can do. However within the same quote Chibaba Natsi expresses how the desire to have multiple concurrent partners depicts a phase of immaturity which one has to grow out of and settle for one partner. Just like as there are various versions of masculinity the same is depicted here. In the preceding quote Chibaba Natsi refers to potential partners as women, who are for her complicated hence she would not want to have many. Categorising partners as woman marks a border for the participant in which she differentiates herself from women who become partners for her.

Butch aesthetics have considerably varied through different historical epochs. Matebeni (2011:189) refers to the concept of self-styling among lesbians which is used to refer to dress, demeanour, clothing, stance, activity, eroticism and language. Many of these aspects often conflict starkly with feminine norms. In this study butch aesthetics significantly contributed to marking and constructing a butch identity among study participants. It was evident that the participants who identified as butch put much emphasis of their clothing style. “Clothing and appearance play dynamic functions in a black lesbian body” (Matebeni, 2011:199). The majority indicated how they dress in clothes that are regarded traditionally as appropriate for men. The common characteristic was the rejection of clothing attire that exhibited femininity. Some of the participants indicated that they have actually stopped attending church because they do not have clothes that are seemingly compatible with the setting, thus to avoid the congregants’ gaze they would rather stay away from that setting. As Chibaba Natsi notes:

I used to go to church so much, I even started a choir, Youth for Christ, but I can say now because of who we are I couldn’t go because I have grown much more older and I started dressing more like a man, and my neighbourhood there are more whites than coloureds²⁵ and they know somebody who dresses like this should be gay, so they would pass out comments I don’t feel comfortable (Author’s Interview, 15/07/2013).

Many of the butch participants indicated that they do not dress in feminine clothes: skirts and dresses were not something to be expected in their wardrobe. For instance, Chibaba Ryan said that “*Noo I have never worn a dress in my life, not in my wardrobe*”. Clothes do constitute markers that are put in place by the society as they determine what is feminine and what is

²⁵ People of mixed race are often referred to in popular Zimbabwean lingo as coloureds.

masculine. Thus transgressing the clothing border offered an opportunity for participants to stake their claim in a butch identity which was closely associated with masculinity. In transgressing the boundary on clothing attire, butch identifying women managed to present themselves in a desired identity which was consequently a rejection of femininity. Putting on clothes that are perceived as feminine clothing for most participants was equated with giving up on their desired masculine identity, thus fashion offered an opportunity for waging resistance against the universalising tendencies of societal scripts on gender. Putting on masculine clothing by participants shows how borders can still be permeable, despite many support structures such as churches and schools. Even in circumstances where it was mandatory to put on clothing deemed feminine, participants either withdrew from such gatherings (for example at church) or they temporarily complied (for instance at school). The following transcript demonstrates how Chibaba Lee negotiated self-styling to resist conformity.

It's not part of my wardrobe, I don't even have a single skirt in my wardrobe although I have a twin sister who doesn't wear trousers at all, not even shorts. She puts on dresses and skirts but I don't have even a single skirt in my wardrobeyaa at school we just have to do that, during my primary school, yaaa we had to put on those pinfold dresses like yaaa with some shirts inside. So whenever I had to go to school I had to make sure I will be putting a little short like yaah those sports attire shorts inside, then just after we finished school I just had to remove the dress yaah like wearing the shirt and the short. Every day I had to make sure that I put my dress in the bag (Author's Interview, 17/06/2015).

However the same clothing that makes them feel uncomfortable with church or other gatherings is also deemed as an asset in generating the desired interest among potential partners. The dress code that is evidently different from what are considered feminine trends creates the desired attention by some butch participants as that makes them different and draws the attention of other woman who then in turn start conversations with them. Goffman's (1959 & 1963) concept of self-presentation enables a better understanding of how the participants valued masculine clothing which helped them to build a desired identity in which they marked themselves as different from other woman. In Goffman's submission, social life is characterised by 'co-

presence', thus there is always an audience towards which individuals are presenting themselves. Therefore masculine clothing was meant to broadcast a message to the audience which constituted femmes, women considered as straight as well as men. Participants indicated how most women who are considered as straight get fascinated by them due to their clothing which in turn attracts potential partners. As Chibaba Runyararo notes:

Most people like my dressing *inongoita kuti vanhu vaite* attention (it's unique for a woman and draws attention) and people start asking then some random girl comes asking, sometimes it's just out of the blue I just ignore. In the night clubs, girls invite me for dances (Author's Interview, 18/12/2015).

In the 'co-presence' of men, clothing also played a key part in butch women's attempt to set boundaries for potential men who would want to date them. Clothing was used to broadcast a message to any man who would attempt to date them as they would draw on their fashion to show that they were also men thus not interested in other men. Thus masculine clothing was meant to broadcast a message to men that they were lesbians and not interested in men. In the transcript below I reflect on how Chibaba Lee draws on her masculine fashion style to tease those who would want to date her by flipping the homosexuality card on them.

Like I have no problem if some man calls me. This other day I was walking from the shops (supermarket) and this guy calls on me to wait for him I'm like *ndotokumirira uum like mhanya shamari totofamba toenda* (make it snappy I'm waiting so that we walk along), then the guy says I like you, and I'm like uum really *asi uri ngochani kani aaaaaah chii chakunakidza pandiri takangopfeka zvakafanana step yedu yakafanana* (are you gay, what has attracted you, isn't it I'm just dressed like you, our step is the same) maybe you gay or something (Author's Interview, 17/06/2015).

Chibaba Lee thus draws on her masculine decorum in the form of clothing and the way she walks to ward off any nagging interests that men show in her. She thus challenges the meaning of what it means to be a woman or a man as she crosses the boundary and claims a masculine identity. She even accuses men who come after her of being gay, by implying that if these men were interested in her they should be gay because she considers herself a man. Evidently the participant's decision to embrace masculine clothing was an outward visible marker of a

masculine identity in claiming a butch identity that's rejecting an association with femininity. Clothes also helped in creating a desired identity of a person who is not available and interested in entertaining pursuits of being wooed by men as potential suitors. Besides clothing, some of the participants also constructed a butch identity by narrating their participation in traditionally masculine sporting activities that required muscular physiological activity. The individuals participated in professional sporting activities such as soccer, rugby and cricket. Zway and Boonzaier (2015) explore how in South Africa participants constructed positive lesbian identities through participation in embodied activities such as soccer, pantsula dancing and other activities.

5.7.2 'Femme'

As much as the sub category of butch is complex in conceptualisation and drawing borders on what it constitutes, the femme category presents no less challenge. Eves (2004:487) notes that "the self-policing nature of the lesbian community is based on a defensive position of exclusion from the dominant culture, and often produces a desire for boundaries and distinction, which promote a policing of who a lesbian is, and also who a woman is". Some have questioned whether femmes are 'real lesbians' (Matebeni 2011; Eves 2004) or are just straight women who are curious. Whereas on one hand they are accused of not being genuine, on the other hand they are accused of not effectively challenging patriarchy and heterosexuality as they embrace femininity and perform heterosexual femininity. In this study, as highlighted in Chapter 4, it was not easy to come across femme identifying women either at GALZ organised gatherings or through snowballing. Consequently the study had fewer participants who self-identified as femme. In adopting the femme lesbian identity the participants embraced femininity and would display feminine gender roles. Those who identified as femme, were comfortable with that label and made efforts to show how consistent their lifestyles are to that identity category

Q: If we talk of your sexual identity, how would you describe it yourself?

Madzimai Maka: Ok I would describe myself as a femme. The one who like takes their feminine roles when two women are dating (Author's Interview, 16/12/2014).

The above quote from Madzimai Maka aptly captures how being femme was perceived by the participants. Even the butch lesbians also expected this from the femme lesbians. The apparent distinction between femme and butch was expressed mainly through role taking by the participants and this tended to reinforce the traditional binary gender roles that are also found in

heterosexual relationships. Despite seemingly reinforcing the conventional relationship between sex and gender, femmes do challenge the meaning of and existent heterosexual script of a woman's desire. Femmes do stretch the often fixed link between gender and sexual orientation by being attracted to women (Eves, 2004). Thus the participants challenged the cultural borders of women whose sexual and emotional desires are to be channelled to a men. Madzimai Trish's personal narrative corroborates partly what Madzimai Maka alludes to with regards to roles, but she goes further to illustrate the femme identity with regards to attraction and love.

Q: How do you identify yourself sexually?

Madzimai Trish: Well I'm a femme lesbian

Q: What does it mean to say I'm a femme lesbian?

Madzimai Trish: I am... I'm interested in girls, and...

Q: Well I'm interested in girls too, does that make me femme?

Madzimai Trish: (laughs) well I'm attracted to girls, I'm attracted to girls and I'm not attracted to men. I guess that's what makes me a lesbian. Emotionally, physically, everything I'm attracted to girls... that's what makes me lesbian. (Author's Interview, 16/12/2014)

The participants also constructed their femme identity by contrasting it with 'butch', thus 'femme' was constructed as different from butch by some participants. As I probed further to explore the issue in detail, participants would attempt to describe what being femme is by making an effort to differentiate it from butch lesbian. The distinction between the two categories 'femme' and 'butch' was also extended to the physical features of people and the assumption was that butch will exhibit masculine features.

Madzimai Trish: In the lesbian society we have the femme and we have the butch. The femme is someone like me who is the girly type if I can say the girly type of a lesbian, and the butch is the tough one, that guy-ish lesbian. That's how you can manage to differentiate between a femme and a butch. (Author's Interview, 17/12/2015)

Similarly another participant shares similar concerns.

Madzimai Quality:...I'm not butch, I'm femme because I'm female... uuuum I still have that female in me that whole lady in me okay. It doesn't mean that if I want to date a girl

I want to become the man no. I'm still a girl and I still deserve, I'm still that girl. I'm still a girl but I just like girls. Uuum my sexuality is I love girls (laughs) and men for me are just not there. (Author's Interview, 13/12/2014).

Madzimai Quality distances herself from an identity in which one 'becomes a man'. Whilst a heterosexual relationship is borne out of necessity and obligation, Madzimai Quality opts for a pure relationship in which she derives benefits from it. Therefore to a greater extent participants are in a position to choose who they want to be and who they want to date, thus her insistence on not just dating another woman but one who is femme. Thus Madzimai Quality shows the new sexual agency that is implicit in plastic sexuality which gives her control over her own body and sexuality.

Whilst there was acknowledgement of the existence of a lesbian identity, some lesbian women who identified as femme were sceptical of the butch identity. Thus given a choice they would not date a butch lesbian. To them this was not an ideal identity that women could take as it was just an imitation of a male identity. Thus, there seems to be internal divergence on what identity qualifies one to be a lesbian, some femme participants perceived butch identifying women as pseudo-lesbians. The point of contention was on why one would want to be a man and act like a man? This is contrary to what the majority of the butch participants expressed as they thought the masculine characteristics were a must for them to find a partner. As Madzimai Quality notes:

In Zimbabwe well butch would be... for me honestly my argument is why would you want to be a butch? If you are going to be dressing up like a guy, the reason why I am a lesbian is I want to see you in a short skirt, wearing a dress but you are wearing jeans and timberlands. (Author's Interview, 13/12/2014).

In light of the above conversation one can note that the process of claiming a lesbian identity involves reflexivity and choice (Eves, 2004). Thus Madzimai Quality's understanding is that these identities are identities of choice, thus why would someone settle for an identity that depicts a man if she is a woman. If lesbianism is about female identities then the butch identity in her conviction was thus antithetical to lesbianism. The reason why she would also not date butch was that they are just like guys. Fashion and style are considered as key determinants in the

construction of a lesbian identity, thus Madzimai Quality draws on that to distinguish herself from butch identifying women. The logic of the argument was that lesbian woman who are butch are just mimicking men in the society thus they do not define what lesbianism is. I was eager to explore if there was also a distinction of these identities if one was expressing them in vernacular. Participants were asked about this in a focus group discussion.

Q: I was also thinking of this distinction between butch and femme, do you have any words for that in Shona?

Respondent 2: People usually just say “*uyu anoita kunge mukomana*” (she is just like a guy)

Respondent 1: And also because what we are doing is already considered as English, you know there won't be terms for that because *chachirungu* (it's Western), it's already British or whatever it's English or it's Western. So people would not find expressions for that because it's already English.

Q: But in Shona if you leave aside the sexuality how do you describe a woman who looks manly, are there any terms for that?

Respondent 1: It's just tomboy, *arikuita kunge mukomana* (they look like man)... (laughs) *arikuita kunge ngochani* (they look homosexual). The distinction is the one end they have, now people didn't know but now they know so... (Focus Group Discussion, 17/12/2015)

There seemed at the time of the interview to be no word in the vernacular that could be used to distinguish between 'femme' and 'butch' apart from labelling women who looked masculine as having the stature of men. Thus sometimes it is difficult to find local terms to fit the internationally circulating labels, however this should not be taken to imply that the participants were not aware of what the globally circulated terms referred to. One respondent's attempt was to locate the distinction between the femme and butch in a western context. This is evident in the reference made to *chachirungu* which loosely means it's for westerners.

Not all women who participated in the study embraced and neatly fitted into the popularised lesbian subcategories of butch and femme. Some participants interrogated the categories or did cross the boundaries of the subcategories during the course of this study. The excerpts below

attempt to demonstrate the concerns raised by individuals critical of being put in categories. I start with the conversation with Chibaba Ryan, a female student at the University of Zimbabwe who preferred to be identified as different.

Chibaba Ryan: I told her I'm different, I don't like it when people call me gay or lesbian, I prefer different, I don't like the labeling in it like the stereotypes with the name, so when people call me different I like it because it's so cool.

Q: It's so interesting for me because I haven't heard it before, so if you were to say you are different on campus will people know.

Chibaba Ryan: They won't, like yesterday I was in town in a mall, so I saw some girls in a mall and they were looking at me and saying wow are you a guy and I said no and they said are you a lady and I said yes I am and they said no and I just said I'm different, so they can't really tell what it means

Q: So if you were to explain to me what's inside that word, 'different'?

Chibaba Ryan: Oh that word, it shows I like different things from what people call maybe normal just like different

Q: So especially when it comes to things such as love, sex or even gender is that what you mean?

Chibaba Ryan: Yes. (Author's Interview, 18/12/2015).

Thus instead of self-identifying as a lesbian, Chibaba Ryan felt that the label 'different' had a better meaning for her than the widely accepted term 'lesbian'. Her concern was that with labels there is always potential for stereotypes and some labels are marginalised and designate something inferior.

Q: You said sometimes you don't like these labels, like 'gay'?

Chibaba Ryan: Yaah the labels is what I don't like because they are stereotypes, I feel sometimes 'gay' or 'lesbian' is synonymous with lesser in society, it's you are like down and under there in the society so that's what I hate. So most of the time, my girlfriend knows that I work very hard to be on top, I want high standards, I want to show the world that we are capable of doing great things, being different doesn't mean we are not capable just like straight people (Author's Interview, 18/12/2015).

Jenkins (2008) notes that identity can imply social position and status. The ‘border wars’ on sexual identity in Zimbabwe have been systematically and hierarchically structured with same sex loving people marginalised and considered less human by the most vocal groups. Thus homosexual individuals are considered as inferior which Chibaba Ryan challenges. In this case Chibaba Ryan’s contention is that the society has reduced anyone who identifies as gay or lesbian as a lesser being who is not ‘normal’, thus they are perceived as incapable of normal functionality. This stereotype is often buttressed by commonly held misconceptions in Zimbabwe that black people who are involved in homosexual relations are doing it because of the money that is assumed to be in abundance if one engages in it. Thus Chibaba Ryan feels that she can rise above this level and she does not consider herself inferior and she is capable of being successful in different endeavours in life. Thus, the participant rejected being pigeon-holed and preferred to be identified as different. Therefore, the participant was cognisant of the border wars in society on sexual orientation which perceives same sex attracted individuals as inferior whilst heterosexuality is ranked superior, Chibaba Ryan feels the urge to challenge the borders by rejecting the label as well as insisting how she is competitive in all facets of life that she is involved in. Invoking Giddens’ (1992) perception of late modernity in which there is an efflorescence of identity discourse which enable an individual to choose who they shall be in a reflective process, Chibaba Ryan negotiates an identity for herself to suit who she would want to be, just different.

Hall (1996:210) proposes that identity should be perceived as being in a constant flux as it is never fully fledged or complete. This allowed participants to resist categories that put them in pigeon holes of one identity. Some could transgress the borders within the LGBTI identities in Harare. Reflecting on the border war concept, this would show that the border is at best slippery and porous (Halberstam 1998:304). I reflect on a conversation with Madzimai Maka who during the course of the initial interview had consistently identified as femme, but when I was following up on a few issues using Facebook messenger to fill the gaps in my write up she indicated that it was now different. Madzimai Maka’s experience helps one to appreciate the fluidity of identities as they are in a flux.

Madzimai Maka: Haaaa but what I said in the scripts and what I identify now is different unless you want me to explain things according to those scripts kkk

Q: What do you mean different. I doubt if u remember the scripts well, myt (might) as well go with the present.

Madzimai Maka: By different I mean tt tym (that time) I identified as femme but now I identify myself as butch. I remember them so well

Q: Wow what a transformation, what led to that?

Madzimai Maka: Kkkkkkkk not really a transformation kkk I jus (just) changed labels but labels don't really matter...f u (if you) ever noticed my dressing had olwez bn tt (always been that) of a butch so haa I just thot (thought) I should jus transform it and seize tu b (to be) femme kkk

Q: Yaa labels are socially constructed but how you feel is more important.

Madzimai Maka: Exactly so *malabels* distract pple (people) so really wanna identify myself as a woman who is attracted to other women (Author's Interview 09/05/2017).

Consistent with Oppong's (2013:13) observation on the self that it can be perceived as transitory and adaptable, Madzimai Maka's subjective positions challenge the primordial position of identity. Madzimai Maka shows the fluidity and malleability of identity but does help to stretch the traditional conceptualisation of what women can do and can become. Giddens' (1992) notion of plastic sexuality shows how Madzimai Maka understands her sexuality and pleasure to broaden her intimate experiences. This becomes possible in the age where individuals can reframe and redefine who they want to identify as, thus allowing them to cross the existent sexual borders. In Madzimai Maka's case one can appreciate what Giddens means by the project of cultivating the self which is anchored in self reflexivity, as her identity is evolving through experience and self-reference. In justifying her transition from femme to butch she draws on how she has always dressed, thus implying that she had self-styled as butch.

5.8 'Localised labels'

Alongside the internationally circulating labels that were in use in Harare, same-sex loving people also had local colloquial labels that they used amongst themselves and some were used by the society as well. In the following section I shall reflect upon some of the labels in use and their origins as well as acceptability among same-sex loving people. I should however point out

that the use of these labels is not to be understood as an attempt to reject the internationalised labels but that they are used in conjunction with the local labels.

5.8.1 *Ngochani*

A localised label that is prominently used by the society and some members within the community is ‘ngotshani’ in Shona, ‘inkotshani’/ ‘stabane’ in IsiNdebele. Epprecht (2004: 3) notes that *hungochani* means ‘homosexuality’ in chiShona, the main indigenous language of Zimbabwe. The same term is spelled *ubunkotshani* or *iNkotshani* in isiNdebele, the second indigenous language. The terms were coined in the mid-1990s by gay rights activists through simple addition of the prefix *hu -* and *ubu-li -* to an older, highly derogatory term (*nkoshana*) (Epprecht, 2004: 3). In contemporary usage the label is *ngochani*. The younger urbanites have however derived shortened versions of the word *ngochani*, as they use the terms *ngito* and *ngiti*. *Ngochani* label has been widely used though it evokes shame, anger and denial for some Zimbabweans who are same sex loving. It is the term that is popularly used by prominent members of the society to discredit same sex loving individuals such that it has attracted a level of notoriety. Participants were ambivalent to the use of this term as a label to describe them. Many expressed that they were comfortable if they were using the term amongst themselves and this was also evident whenever they interacted amongst themselves. It was common to hear one narrating his story to say that ‘*ngochani*’ referring to their community or friends. When asked about the prevalence of same sex loving people in Zimbabwe it was common for participants to say, *ngochani dzakazara muharare* (there are many homosexuals in Harare). This label was unisex as it could be used to apply to both men who love other men and women who love other women though it’s predominantly associated with gay men. As Takura notes:

.....I can tell you that *ngochani inogona kuswera iripamusika ichitengesa* and all the profit will be squandered at the bar. (Loosely translated a gay person can spend the whole day hustling to get money but spend it at a pub) (Author’s Interview 21/03/2013).

The excerpt from an FGD also confirms that whenever the term *ngochani* is used among the insiders it does not have the same impact it has when used by outsiders.

Q: The word *ngochani*, what would that refer to?

Respondent 1: Everything

Respondent 3: Lesbian/gay everything

Q: Is it a bad term?

Respondent 1: It's kind of a degrading term but I wouldn't know how it would be called in Shona. But that's how it is, it's degrading

Q: How do you call each other then in Shona?

Respondent 3: When we are doing it amongst ourselves we don't mind, but if someone is not...

Respondent 1: The way someone says it, like just like in English when a straight guy does something and they're like aah that's gay, like a diss it's the same thing in Shona like aah *uringochani*. With us when we are doing it its fine

Q: So it's like if it's in the community its fine but if it's someone from outside?

Respondent 1: from us it's fine but not from an outsider... not really

Q: So this term *ngochani*²⁶ why is it so derogatory? Does it have a specific meaning or?

Respondent 2: I think it was created to mock, to mock people who are gay or homosexual. We don't have a Shona term for ourselves but it's to mock like "*vanoita zvinhu zvechingochani*" like they do things that are homosexual. From culture or religion it's sinful so... (Focus Group Discussion, 17/12/2015).

Despite the label *ngochani* being used as applying to both lesbian women and gay men there were times that participants would make further distinctions. On rare occasions you could come across participants who would want to differentiate between homosexual men and homosexual women using the labels that introduced femininity and masculinity. In this case participants would add suffixes to the word *ngochani*. Thus lesbians would be referred to as *ngochi-kadzi* (*ngochikadzi*) whilst gay men would be called *ngochi-rume* (*ngochirume*). Within the Shona language *kadzi* would mean female whilst *rume* would refer to male. During ICASA 2015 I asked one of the research participants about what was happening at the Global Village booth where GALZ and other organisations had been allocated booths to exhibit and his case illustrates an example of the use of these terms: *Iwe zvakaoma ngochikadzi ne ngochirume dzeZimbabwe dzitorikowo ku ICASA, tanga tiriko*. (Hey, lesbian women and gay men of Zimbabwe are also

²⁶ Epprecht (2004:4) comments that despite the well intentioned appropriations, the older meaning of *ngochani* evokes shame and denial for most Zimbabweans. Some Shona speakers have queried that the word does not sound Shona, whilst some claim it was invented by white settlers to shame Africans.

present at ICASA). I later followed up on the use and meaning of these labels and it appears that it's not a commonly used label.

Q: Sometime back you used the label, *ngochikadzi* and *ngochirume*, what does it mean?

Tariro: hahahahaha²⁷ that is just a funny way I used, *ngochikadzi* meaning lesbian women and *ngochirume* gay men, a few people would use it every now and then but it was just a funny way of saying it (Author's Interview , 06/05/2017)

I asked Nyasha who often acted as my key informant on the use of these feminised and masculinised suffixes. Whilst the intended meaning of the labels seems to be commonly shared the label was not extensively used. I enquired on who would mostly use the label and possibly why it could be used.

Nyasha: Mostly bottom guys would adopt such a word?

Q: So lesbian women would not adopt such labels?

Nyasha: No *masisi* (bottom-gays) would use such language it has a flare or drama to it

Q: Uuum drama? Why?

Nyasha: People like Takura would use such a word not because it's a word but just because of the impact it will have on the person listening (Author's Interview, 20/06/2017).

I did not come across lesbian women who would make use of the labels '*ngochikadzi*' and '*ngochirume*'. Nyasha's position is that *ngochikadzi* is carefully chosen by whoever uses it in order to strategically position themselves in an interaction. In this particular incident Takura and Nyasha were friends. It was known to the researcher and Nyasha that besides doing part time jobs Takura also engaged in sex work as he revealed in an interview. Therefore Nyasha's point above that, '*...Takura would use it to impact on the person listening*' could be interpreted as an indication of availability or advertisement on who one was. Goffman's (1959, 1963) self-presentation framework can help one to appreciate that whenever we are in the presence of others or in their 'response-presence' we present ourselves in a desirable manner to create a desired image (Smith 2006). Therefore the label that one attaches to themselves, *ngochikadzi* it will sell a particular self-image. Thus the context in which this will be used is taken to be a strategic encounter.

²⁷ Hahahaha , indicates that one is laughing.

However the use of the label *ngochani* within the LGBTI community should not be conceived as indicating an acceptance of the term as it is less affirming but has gained popularity because of the ability of those with power to force it upon same sex loving people. The participants felt that when the term is used by outsiders who are not part of their community it constituted some form of stigmatisation as it portrayed them as ‘others’ who are often misconceived as societal misfits. Thus the label *ngochani* created a border between ‘them’ and ‘us’ where the heterosexual community would use it to discredit any non-conformist behaviour. The term *ngochani* invoked feelings of sexual perverts who are supposed to be treated as social outcasts. Thus this vernacular term used in society *ngochani* are loaded with negative connotations and are derogatory hence it had varying levels of acceptance and participants adopted English terms. A transcript below from a female participant demonstrates some resistance to the use of the term.

KM: Since I don’t know so many words and labels in Zimbabwe, what are some of the terms used to refer to homosexual people?

Chibaba Ryan: You mean like in Shona?

KM: Yes

Chibaba Ryan: Aaah, Ok, I really don’t know what the term denotes, but I hate the word, they just say like *Ngochani* to me auh

Q: Are they very bitter words?

Chibaba Ryan: No they are not, but me I just hate the term word, sometimes it’s like they are saying pigs, its dirty, dogs (Authors’ Interview, 18/12/2014)

Thus, whilst this label *ngochani* is used even by the LGBTI community it is not necessarily welcomed by some study participants. It is a term that evokes negative feelings among some participants. For example, Chibaba Ryan indicates that she hates the word. She finds it distasteful as it is associated with pigs and dogs. This is most probably due to the former President of Zimbabwe’s pronunciations that ‘gays and lesbians’ were worse than pigs and dogs. Thus the participants resisted the use of this term as they found it derogatory, assigning them to a position of being less human. Whilst there was ambivalence towards the use of the term *ngochani* there are other vernacular terms that were locally circulating such as *ordaa*, *bhutsu*, *gumutete*, *mwana waEliza* and *ngengirosi*. These self-given labels communicate to insiders, as the general person on the street cannot get their meanings. These terms were regarded as

affirming though their translation to English would not necessarily have any apparent affirming quality. For instance *bhutsu* when loosely translated it means a shoe. One would say *ibhutsu yangu* referring to their partner. One could also say ‘*Nelson igumutete*’ which was supposed to communicate that he is gay, he fucks other men. *Kana urigumtete unoita* meaning if you are gay I want you. *Gumutete* could also be used to refer to sex but gay sex, for instance, *unoda magumutete here?* (do you want to have gay sex)? The excerpt below summarises the use of some of the labels when I asked Tariro to clarify what they meant in a follow-up conversation through facebook messenger:

hahahahahahaha *ordaa*, *gumutete* and *mwana eliza* are code names generated by the LGBTQ+ communities to refer to a fellow LGBTQ+ individual. Like *kuti hona ngochani iyo iwe uri ngochaniwo* (check out that homosexual when you are also homosexual). So instead you say *hona gumtetete iro or hona mwana wa eriza uyo*. (Checkout that gay person). However *gumtete* is ambiguous coz sometimes others use it to refer to sexual intercourse. So instead of saying I’m going to have sex or a hook-up we can simply say *ndukuenda kuma gumtete*. *Bhutsu* simply refers to a partner, *bhutsu yangu* = my boyfriend, girlfriend, partner etc. whichever way people define their other half. (Author’s Interview, 06//05/2017).

In the following paragraphs I illustrate the emergence and meanings of the locally circulating labels by same sex loving individuals. Indicated in the quote above is consideration that it was not very polite for a gay person to refer to another using the word *ngochani*, thus the self-coined labels were regarded as more appropriate. These labels could therefore be seen as significantly challenging *ngochani* the socially dominant label in mainstream media and public discourse which if continuously used by the ‘LGBTI community’ could end up constituting self-stigma. Therefore the self-coined labels gave better options for self-expression among the participants. When asked whether the popular use of these labels compared to *ngochani* within the community indicated that they were affirming, Tariro’s responses succinctly embrace what many respondents said.

Yes pretty much so, coz the whole concept is to create our own names and identities in response to the rather derogatory term *ngochani* (Author’s Interview, 06/05/2017)

5.8.2 *Ordaa*

Ordaa is as an emergent term that has gained popularity among same-sex attracted people to the extent that GALZ has adopted it and developed a newsletter entitled *Ordaa*. 'Ordaa' is a colloquial term that LGBTI individuals use to refer to one another in Zimbabwe. With regard to its use among same-sex attracted people, this term was started by the gay community in Harare. It was common for participants to refer to each other as *ordaa*. I enquired about the origins of the term from some participants and why the term is popular within the LGBTI community. Takura's response captures the common responses on the etymology and meaning of the label *ordaa*

Takura: Uuum it started way back *tichisangana kuCentre raingotaurwa* (it evolved some time back when the LGBTI persons would meet at the Centre)

Q: What does it mean?

Takura: It means *ngochani* (homosexuals), *kutaura in riddles vanhu vasanzwe zvatenge tichitaura* (it's speaking in riddles so that people would not understand what they were talking about as in their sexual identities)

Q: Which people?

Takura: Straight people *sewe so wakatovharika* (those who are not members of the LGBTI community just like, you are lost if we use this word) (Author's Interview, 09/05/2017).

Thus *ordaa* is a way of identifying each other through an acceptable word in the community. The term evolved out of the interactions of same-sex attracted individuals during their meetings at GALZ. A staff member also confirmed the general position taken by participants on the use and origins of the label *ordaa*.

Q: Would you care to share the origins of the term *ordaa*?

Respondent: Doesn't have origin. Community just use it as name within the community to call each other without people knowing what they are talking about. It was used when guys were looking for men in the 90s and had casual partners. They called it *tichambo odha varume*. (Referring to how gay men would go and get partners to spend time with). Men will come and go discreetly

Q: It seems it is popular amongst your members

Respondent: It seems so as most people are more comfortable using it than *ngochani*.
(Author's Interview, 08/05/2017)

As social life is characterised by 'co-presence' self-presentation becomes crucial in homophobic contexts (Goffman, 1995). Thus the use of the self-coined label *ordaa* helped in not spoiling identities of the participants when they will be identifying each other in the presence of 'response presence' (Goffman 1959). Other people would thus not know of their sexual identity thus enable participants to avoid unwelcome actions or comments from the public. Thus the label *ordaa* was considered affirming as well as elusive to the general public. It did not elicit feelings of shame as its use did not attract the stigma associated with the widely known label, *ngochani*. It is also noteworthy to say that the use of the word *ordaa* generally amongst Zimbabwean Shona people draws attention to something which may be a shoddy deal or even a clean transaction which however the one communicating would not want other people besides those involved to know about it. The term *ordaa* is derived from the English word order, which however in this context when used in Shona has more than one meaning. Firstly it would imply of the same order or some likeness. Thus gay men would be referring to one as of the same order (sameness) if they label one as an *ordaa*. I use here some of the statements in which the term *ordaa* was used by participants on our way home from the last evening of the Rainbow 263 2017 Film festival (an LGBTI themed film festival). *Iya i ordaa chaiyoo* (that one is gay indeed). *Apa anoramba kuti i ordaa iyee aenda nasekuru* (the person that was being referred to denies that they are gay yet they have gone home with a known gay person). Some would also shout during the movie screening commenting on gay scenes. '*Apa ndopawaratidza chi-ordaa chese, chi-ordaa nedoro hazvisayane*' (you have really portrayed gay life).

Secondly, as shown from the conversation with an older staff member with historical appreciation of the term, it referred to how gay men would discretely make reference to how they would go and get partners (*tichambo odha/ ordaa varume*), it would imply a transaction. Generally it is common for the Shona people to put a prefix *ku-ordaa* (*kuordaa*) which would mean placing an order so that one can have a delivery of something. So the gay men would conceal the meaning of what was taking place to outsiders whilst insiders would understand the

meaning. Thus evidently *ordaa* had a double sided utility as it was considered significantly affirming as well as a good disguise to ordinary citizens who may not approve of same sex relationships.

5.8.3 *Mwana waEriza*

Another label used among same-sex attracted people, particularly men, was *mwana waEriza*. ‘*Mwana waEriza*’ is a locally circulating term among some gay men though not as commonly used as *ordaa*. *Mwana wa Eriza* is short for ‘Child of Elizabeth’. The label should be understood as a response to the border wars on gender identity and sexual orientation in Zimbabwe where a border is framed between what is an acceptable sexual identity and what is alien. Thus, those who are heterosexual are assumed to belong ‘home’ (Zimbabwe) whilst those who are attracted to the same sex as accorded an alien status hence are not part of the citizenry. Therefore, metaphorically the participants who are not citizens of Britain claim among themselves British citizenry due to being descendants of the Queen as their behaviour has been categorised as foreign. I asked participants to explain what they meant by this and the general understanding is reflected in an informal conversation

Q: Ko kuti mwana wa Eliza zvorevei? (What does it mean to say *mwana wa Eliza*)

Takura: Ngotshani

Takura: *Handiti zvonzi ndezvevarungu* (Isn’t that they say it’s for white people)

Q: By Eriza do u mean Queen Elizabeth?

Takura: *Ehee wazvibata* (Yes finally you got it now) (Author’s Interview, 09/05/2017).

Thus the idea is to mock the border war on who a genuine Zimbabwean is with regards to construction of citizenship on gender identity and sexual orientation which perceives same sex attraction as antithetical to Zimbabwean citizenship: If we don’t belong here therefore we belong there, yet fully knowing that they belong to Zimbabwe. In popular mainstream lingo, some people to express their disapproval of homosexuality often say, ‘*baba varamba*’. In this case *baba* will be used to refer to the former head of state, thus the popular mantra would be; because the president said this is not Zimbabwean therefore this is a foreign practice. The discussion with Tariro seems to confirm the understanding which Takura also had. There was association of homosexuality with perceived western liberalism. I asked Tariro to share his understanding of the meaning and origins of the label *Mwana waEliza*

Yes so the concept started from the idea that Queen Elizabeth signed laws that support LGBTQ community so it was actually a joke to say she's the mother of gay people coz she "supports" them with signing all these laws. So we would always joke and say *haaaaaa uyu mwana wa Eliza* (this one is the queen's child) meaning this person is very gay no doubt "it's almost like saying this person was granted the blessing by the queen mother to be gay" and also partly bcoz many gay people especially *ma sisi* (effeminate men) we are flamboyant and call each other queen, queen so we would also say nooo this one is superior than this one but either way we all not to the level of Queen Elizabeth so *tese tiri vana va Eliza* (we are all children of the queen) (Author's Interview, 06/05/2017).

Generally a border exists in popular discourse in Zimbabwe which has portrayed a sexually liberal and permissive Western culture compared with a conservative and restrictive Zimbabwean sexual culture. The above conversation feeds into some misconceptions that have been popularised by some homophobic individuals who have assigned homosexuality to the west whilst claiming that its presence in Africa is due to contact with western world. Eliza in this case was short for Queen Elizabeth, thus if one was gay one was the Queen's descendant as the practise has been associated with western influence. Generally in Zimbabwe any decorum that is associated with the English culture would be described in terms that point to the influence of the former colonial power. For instance beer which is not opaque would be regarded in colloquial lexicon as the 'queen's waters' whilst conversing in English would be regarded as the 'queen's language'. Thus in this study some same-sex attracted people would refer to each other as *Mwana wa Eliza* indicating their defiance of what the president of the country has declared that homosexuality is 'unZimbabwean' and as a way of mocking the claims made by former President Mugabe. Thus the participants were satirical to accommodate their existence as well as express an element of self-pride and self-assurance in the face of animosity.

5.8.4 Ngengirosi/ ngingirosi

'*Ngengirosi*' or '*ngingirosi*' (like an angel) is another local label used among some same-sex loving people in Zimbabwe. In its use it seems to have a double meaning among the participants. Whereas for some it was a claim on the flair and elegance that gay men have, for some it was an indication that they were unwanted and considered as fallen angels. The border war between

good and bad angels is played out in the lives of same sex loving people. They are considered as loveable and enviable people insofar as they go about their normal responsibilities at home and at church till that time they are outed. However participants then become more of ‘aliens in the house of God’ when they have been ‘outed’ thus the border war is played out where others would identify them as demonic as they have an orientation that is antithetical to a Christian identity.

Q: What does *ngengirosi* mean?

Tariro: It’s just another way of saying *ngochani* just like *order*, *sisi*, *granny*, *gogo*, *ngito*, *ngiti* etc

Q: OK does it have any special origin?

Tariro: No not really. It was actually a mockery of ourselves when we talk about how we are mistreated in churches, yet we seem to be angels in the church. We sing, usher and do all these things in the church but when we are found out we are stripped of everything. So how we went from changing *ngirozi* to *ngengirosi* hahahahahahahah still I don't know. I guess my people have a hyper imagination and animated creativeness lol (Author’s Interview, 08/05/2017)

5.8.5 *Anasisi, askana, gogo*

Whereas some of the locally circulating labels were neutral, they were other terms which were used which demarcated the roles that an individual performed in the sexual act. The labels borrowed from the heterosexual narratives to describe woman, thus the labels were adopted to refer to gay men who were perceived to be exhibiting femininity. They were variously referred to as *anasisi* or *askana* (sisters) and also *anagogo* (grandmothers). An excerpt below from an interview with Takura illustrates the use of these labels.

Q: What do you mean by *anasisi*?

Takura: laughs, *masisi* means those like us, those who act like ladies, they call them bottoms, they are like us. Then those who are a bit aged are known as *magogo* (grannies) those around 27 going upward. *Aaa gogo nhingi* is dressing like *sisi* he does not want to get out of the young, the 18-25 years are the *sisi*, you still have hot blood. (Author’s Interview, 21/03/2017)

Takura's submission is that younger gay men who are penetrated anally as well as behaving in a feminine way can qualify to be assigned the label *anasisi*, meaning they are still young and can be considered as 'desirable spinsters' those that still look attractive and should legitimately enjoy their youthful days. There is a way of dressing which was implied to be appropriate for the young gay men which was inappropriate for the older gay men who were ascribed the label *gogo* (grannies). The older gay men were thus expected to dress and act in a manner consistent with expectations of their age. Generally in heterosexual relationships the younger females could dress and act in a manner that could woo potential male partners which however would be seen as inappropriate if done by older woman. Therefore what Takura meant was that while it is appropriate for younger gay men to entice potential partners, older gay man should grow, implying that they should not continue to do that. Thus Takura's opinion sets borders on the association between age and how to experience being gay. The claim that that *anogogo* need to grow and settle down implies that there is a territory that needs to be defended. Similarly in an FGD the local feminine terms *anasisi* and *gogo* were also used by participants

Respondent 2: Not exactly, uum what do we call ourselves? *Gogo*...granma... that means you are like a girl... *sisi* means a girl. Then for a guy we don't really call them names they are just a guy. For someone who is butch and then for someone who is acting femme like me I don't know we called the *sisi*, *gogo*...

Q1: Are those good terms?

Respondent 4: It's not bad, I used to be uncomfortable with the terms but now as I'm going to the Centre (GALZ) more and it's you know it's inside me now so I don't really care now. Although I still assert myself that it is derogatory (Focus Group Discussion, 11/08/2015).

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has reflected on the subjective identities of the participants, the accounts reflect the complexities of identities that are emergent, fluid, fragmented and not necessarily neatly coherent. Notwithstanding the inconsistencies that may be observed among the participants' subjective categorisation, it is important to appreciate that there are emergent gay identities in Harare despite attempts to obliterate such an identity by the heteronormative structures. In sync with Hall's (1996) postulations, the production of identities is never complete as it a process that

is contingent and complex. The absence of supportive socio-cultural institutions influences the identities that have emerged in Harare, thus they are not necessarily a carbon copy of the 'globalised' gay identities. Despite different historical trajectories (socio-cultural, economic and political) in the evolution of Western and African identities, most participants could still relate to the labels that are used most prominently in global discourse to identify people who are attracted to people of the same sex. However in the global north the trend has been towards the proliferation of a 'modern gay identity' in which homosexual behaviour is not the sole determinant of a gay identity. In Harare the gay identities were predominantly determined by homosexual behaviour and were gender stratified. Thus what constitutes being gay in Harare is not necessarily behaviour that mimics gay lifestyle in the western world. The different ways of behaving in Harare show the local peculiarities or specificities which unpack Western labels and call for a nuanced understanding of gay identities in the global south. This shows the agency of the local LGBTI community to define what it means to be gay in Harare. Thus labels that circulate in a globalised world are not simply copied by people who use them, but can perhaps better be regarded as inputs in the always ongoing process people engage in of figuring out who they are. Hence the labels do not necessarily refer to the exact same thing in different locales and cultural contexts. Besides using Western-derived labels for homosexual identities the participants have developed their own local labels to name gay and lesbian people showing the importance of having people with their own labels. The next chapter shall further explore how these subjective identities are experienced among same sex attracted people.

Chapter 6: Subjective ‘Sexual Identities’: Towards understanding the nature of same-sex relationships in Harare

6.1 Introduction-Nature of the relationship

The current chapter builds on the issues raised in Chapter 5 which explored how same-sex relations, subjectivities and identities are understood, performed and constructed among same-sex attracted males and females in Zimbabwe. In this chapter I bring this to the fore by exploring the nature and dating patterns of same-sex loving people in Harare. The dating preferences significantly show how one attempts to project a particular image in claiming a lesbian or gay identity in the ‘response-present’. The chapter reflects on the subjective preferences of the participants which demonstrate complexity in how the relations are constructed and how they are structured. Some of the dating trends are consistent with some experiences that are circulated at a global level, while some do diverge from the modern gay culture. The relationships and intimate actions among the participants do significantly influence how they perceive themselves and their perception of how ‘authentic’ their lesbian and gay identities are. Some of the relations indicate gender socialised roles whilst some do rupture the traditional gender roles.

6.2 Dating patterns among lesbians

Crawley (2001:177) points out that “many lesbian communities of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s in the United States had strict rules for their participants in which each woman was expected to assume either butch or fem and couple with an opposite partner”. The standing rules encouraged women to decide on the identity they wanted to embrace and no couple was to be constituted by two butches or two femmes. As the radical feminist movement gained momentum butch and femme were interpreted as socialised gender roles which could be considered as recreating patriarchy. Faderman (1992: 580) chronicles how butch/femme relationships in the 1970s were frowned upon as imitations of heterosexuality at the height of radical lesbian-feminism hence it was to be avoided. Whereas the butch/femme relationship was seen as ‘politically incorrect’ to the ideals of lesbian-feminisms in the 1970s, in the 1980s there was a resurgence of butch/femme as taboo smashers depicting their open expression of nonconventional sexuality (Faderman, 1992:586). Whilst there has been romanticisation of the butch/femme relationships of the 1950s

one can note that butch/femme roles, styles, and relationships today often appear to be conducted with a sense of lightness and flexibility (Faderman, 1992:593). Butch/femme are to be conceptualised as a complex system of erotic interaction between intimate partners (Crawley 2001:179). Thus, butch and femme in contemporary trends do not rigidly subscribe to earlier constructions of the 1950s. In recent years lesbian sexual roles have loosened, it has become permissible for a butch to admit interest in another butch, or a femme in another femme thus there is flexibility and the choice of partners can either be heterogenderal or homogenderal (Faderman 1992: 595). One area of interest in the current study is on the contestations of the dating patterns among lesbian woman. I asked respondents on who were or are potential partners for the woman who identified as lesbian. The responses varied from straight woman to lesbian woman with the various sub-categories also considered. Generally the discernible patterns were as follows: femme could date femme, femme to butch, butch to straight women, but it was thought of as improper for butch to date butch.

6.2.1 Butch dating patterns

Desirable partners for women who identified as butch were either femme lesbians or straight women. The scripts for women who identified as butch often disrupted the boundaries of a neat butch/femme relationship as the participants did not restrict themselves to dating femme lesbians. Some preferred dating straight women and possibly heterosexually married. The accounts from participants demonstrated complex fluidity which destabilises gender normalization. In the paragraphs that proceed, I explore how some participants were comfortable with dating any woman for whom they had developed feelings without considering their sexual orientation and gender identity. Chibaba Runyararo's account reflects her flexibility in dating partners. Her object preference does not take into consideration the sexual and gender orientation of the woman, she goes for whoever she desires as long as it's not a man.

My preference, I like anyone *wandangoda neanenge achitoita like haatombode vamwe vasikana anenge atori* straight, (anyone that I like, but even those who say that they don't even love or have feelings for other women) (Author's Interview, 13/05/2013)

Similarly Chibaba Lee does not limit herself to any particular women, but she will date whoever she gets attracted to.

...I don't have, it doesn't matter the woman is straight or bisexual or lesbian as long as she is a woman or the woman I want, I can actually go for the person like yaah (Author's Interview 17/06/2015)

Evidently the above transcripts show that some of the participants would date any woman that they are attracted to, whether lesbian, bisexual or straight and thereby disrupting dominant boundaries on female sexualities and popularised dating scripts among lesbian women. These accounts show how lesbianism offers an opportunity to challenge the dominance of heterosexuality. Invoking Giddens' (1992:58) theoretical concept on plastic sexuality enables us to appreciate the changes around sexuality and relationships in contemporary societies even among same sex attracted individuals. Plastic sexuality enables us to understand how the intimate horizons of same sex loving people are not fixed in borders. The experiences of lesbian women in Harare do demonstrate the complexity as well as the fluidity of relationships of same sex loving people and how the relations have not just mimicked the dominantly marketed forms of lesbian relationships in popular media. The relationships are not fixed on heterogenderal or homogenderal dimensions but demonstrate diversity (Faderman 1992: 595). Participants could reflexively explore intimate relationships that they felt comfortable with in spite of an environment that is overtly not permissive. Madzimai Maka's position sums up the flexibility enjoyed by some participants, '*kkkkkk (laughs) I date anyone who I want as long its pussy involved*' (Author's Interview, 09/05/2017). Thus Giddens' (1992) notion of plastic sexuality helps us to understand some of the emergent identities in Harare. From these local experiences one can observe the complexity of queer identities and relationships.

6.2.1.1 Straight women as more desirable partners

Whilst there was flexibility in partner selection among participants who identified as butch, some expressed preference for straight women compared to lesbian women. The reasons for this preference varied among participants. For some it was motivated by the desire to experience challenges which aided in their masculine claim as they would have managed to do what other men do by managing to seduce a woman. However for some participants it was motivated by the desire to escape dating a lesbian as there is a perception that partners have been circulated within the community. The transcript of a focus group discussion reflects what some lesbian women thought about dating within the community:

Respondent 1: But I think there are more lesbians at Beer Engine because there are more guys already and it's free for girls so... (all laugh)

Respondent 2: Why would butch girls go there, like they don't identify themselves as like proper chicks?

Respondent 3: Butch girls are going to Beer Engine to go for straight girls...

Respondent 2: Are you serious?

Respondent 3: Yes, because everyone has this mentality that they don't want to date a lesbian from the community because apparently they have been around you know

Respondent 2: Ooh you have circulated?

Respondent 1: Yes (FGD 2, 11/05/2015)

In a context where same-sex attracted people face censure and stigma, the community appears to be small and well networked such that many people know each other, and consequently know about relationships that have taken place. There is thus a desire for one to impress others by dating someone from outside the community. Goffman's (1959, 1963) concept of self-impression invokes how individuals conduct themselves in a manner that accumulates some degree of pride, dignity and honour. Given that every encounter is strategic, participants also project a desired self-image by dating outside the community, thus avoiding what respondents perceived as a 'circulated partner'. The border war concept helps us to appreciate the contestations of who a desirable partner is within the community, as 'lesbian' partners may be considered 'circulated' thus less desirable compared to straight women.

6.2.1.2 Straight women as exciting, challenging and unpredictable

Amongst some butch identifying participants the desirability of straight women compared to lesbian women stemmed from the perception that they will be exciting, challenging and unpredictable. Besides femme identifying women being perceived as 'circulated' within the community they were also apparently assumed to be 'easy' targets as they are perceived as already interested in other women unlike straight women. Dating a straight woman was perceived as offering a novel experience. Attracting straight women destabilised conceptualising masculinity as biologically attached. The ability of butch women to attract straight partners challenges traditional conceptualisation of masculinity as it demonstrated that a woman can be a man, therefore this challenges the idea that only a man has the ability to attract a woman (Ciasullo 2001:604). Therefore, significantly, some of the participants' preferences show how

traditional dating scripts are transcended by lesbian women thereby demonstrating that masculinity is performed and not the sole preserve of men.

Chibaba Runyararo: Straight ones, *Ndoda munhu asati ambodanana nemusikana* (I want someone who has not dated any woman before), that's why I don't even hang out with other lesbians, *kuti vane vachingodanana pachezvavo (they will be dating among themselves)*. *Zvingori interesting kungotanga kunyenga musikana asingaiti izvozvo. It's a challenge yandoda* (what is interesting for me is to try someone who says they don't do other woman, that's the challenge I want) (Author's Interview, 13/05/2013)

The participant's rationale for preferring straight women was that they are more exciting and the relationship is unpredictable unlike when dating someone who is a lesbian from the community. The victory and crowning moment for the participant is in the ability to convince someone who initially would be adamant that they cannot date another woman. This helps in staking a claim on masculinity as the butch lesbian has the ability and potency to date any woman that she wants. Thus essentially the participants who preferred straight women were rupturing the sex-gender nexus (Wieringa, 2012:521). As illustrated by Chibaba Runyararo below, a straight woman may initially doubt the ability of a woman satisfying another woman but she further stakes her claim not on only the ability to seduce a straight woman but also on her ability to give pleasure to that woman.

Q: Is there a difference in a relationship you have with a straight person compared to a lesbian woman?

Chibaba Runyararo: Yea there is a difference *yekungoti* the straight one *anotanga asinganyatsokupa* your all like *anenge achiku doubter* or something, unlike a lesbian then *paanozokupa anonyatsokupa* and she is more exciting, plus I like the challenge. (Loosely translated the straight chick doubts your ability but when she finally sees your ability she gives her all to you). *Zvandomupa inini nezvaanopihwa nemurume zvakasiyana* (What I give to a woman and what a man can give her is different, I am also a girl and I know what she really needs, I can give her pleasure that a man cannot. I know where to touch I know how to please her (Author's Interview, 13/05/2013).

Wieringa (2012:521) notes that butch lesbians' masculine swagger is compromised to the outside world by having a female body. Chibaba Runyararo raises the perception that straight women are initially sceptical about the ability of lesbians to satisfy their needs. In dating straight women some butch participants challenged the idea that only men can satisfy the sexual needs of women.

6.2.1.3 Older straight women as status enhancing

Whilst a straight woman was considered desirable, for some it was not just a straight woman but older straight women. Dating an older straight woman was perceived as enhancing claims to the desired identity by some participants. The ability to date older straight women was perceived as 'bashing taboos'. Among heterosexual partners in Zimbabwe the existent script generally prescribes that the man in a relationship has to be older or of the same age but not younger than their female partner. However there are some emerging trends being witnessed where younger men are dating older women but the relationships are often touted as transactional. In this study some butch women expressed their desire to date older straight women for various reasons. One of the reasons included creating a desired identity in the response present (Goffman 1959). Older straight women helped one in consolidating ones' claim on masculinity. In this desire not only do participants subvert heteronormativity but they also disrupt the age dating scripts which in turn enhances their ability to create a desired image among their friends. In the script that follows I reflect on how one participant in her 20s had to boast about her exploits in having managed to woo someone older than her who has a child in secondary school. This apparently enhanced her impression management.

Chibaba Lee: Like *aah mkoma makapenga* (dude you so cool) uum dating someone who is 38 from Mutare with two kids and one of the kids is in upper secondary school. I'm like *yaah hona ndine mwana mu upper* (brags to the other person saying check out it means I have a kid who is in high school by dating this older woman) *and mupfanha will be like aaah mukoma hamuiite aaah mukoma hamuite* (the listener would then reciprocate and solidify the claim that she is cool) and you will be like *aaaah sure handiitite* (I'm very potent). (Author's Interview 17/05/2015)

Older women were thus regarded as desirable partners. Some participants preferred dating older women for the perceived benefits they could offer which were assumed not to be available from

younger women. Whilst downplaying the transactional nature based on materiality, the participants chose to highlight how concerned and sensitive older women would be in relationships. Therefore the relationship is entered in precisely for the potential benefits that the participants stands to enjoy which she assumes to be lacking in younger straight women.

Q: You have emphasised that the straight women have to be older. What could be the reason?

Chibaba Runyararo: I like older women I don't know why, but I like getting attention, I have never been given attention in my life so I need that attention and I think that's why.

Q: So older women can do that for you?

Chibaba Runyararo: Yeah haa yaa they do. Older women they can because they are more caring most of them have had children and when they see that I am serious they give me care. (Author's Interview, 13/05/2013)

On the contrary Chibaba Natsi explains that her preference for straight women was just a passing phase in which she was exploring herself. She used to prefer straight older women because of the perceived potential of teaching her more. However her current preference is now lesbian women.

Chibaba Natsi: I actually used to do anything because I used to be a bitch, any type of woman, straight older, any gun can shoot but now because I'm grown up I have to be fully responsible I was also interested in straight women because like I said before the way they are treat you is just different,. They just try more they just teach you way better they just try more, but now I'm into full lesbians. (Author's Interview, 15/07/2013)).

6.2.1.4 Physical Attractiveness as desirable

There are different attributes that participants considered to be desirable in partners, ranging from emotional, intellectual to physical. However it could be observed among some participants identifying as butch lesbians that they were significantly interested in the physical appearance of their potential partners. Among butch participants one's image in the eyes of friends was enhanced by the ability to seduce women considered to be attractive in their stature as well as facial appearance. The transcript that follows reflects on a conversation with Chibaba Runyararo who talks about her desire in a straight woman:

Chibaba Runyararo: It's just, but I just feel like my heart skips a beat [having butterflies] when I want to talk to her, even when she greets me my heart starts beating faster [skipping a heartbeat]

Q: What attracted you to her?

Chibaba Runyararo: *Anga anemazigaroo iii anga akanaka, plus I think ndoda vasikana vakanaka, like not just.* (She had a big bottom, she was beautiful, and generally I love beautiful women) (Author's Interview, 13/05/2013).

Chibaba Lee also reflects on what attracts her to another woman. Her concern is primarily the physical appearance of the person rather than the character. This could be interpreted as due to her desire to enhance her social standing among her friends. The partner that one is able to attract enhances one's reputation among friends as they tend to commend and admire what they would classify as her 'conquest'. This does significantly enhance claims on masculinity by participants as they deem themselves to be able to compete with men over women.

Chibaba Lee: If I ask someone out it's more of the looks, that's me. I don't even consider something like maybe she has a good heart because she has given a beggar some coins, I don't use that. I actually want the looks, like check out this babe, maybe she is just passing by, and then I discover she is good I actually say boys (to other butch friends) that I'm going after her. That's what I do..... But when I'm talking to a woman, I can't say I was attracted to you just because of the looks *aahh unorambwa* (you will be turned down), but the truth is I date someone just because of the physical looks. It's only because yaah she is kinder pretty, at the end of the day I have to introduce her to my friends and I actually say this is my girlfriend and they are like wow and I say that's my girlfriend. (Author's Interview, 17/06/2015).

In the preceding conversation what is apparent is that some participants do consider their partners as acquisitions that enhance their status. The partners are thus perceived as 'trophies' (Muparamoto, 2012) to enhance their standing among their friends. Thus for one not to spoil one's image (impression management) one had to date someone who was considered good looking. In a bid to create a desired identity, some butch identifying participants indicated that the women they go after should be pretty and sexy such that even a married man would be attracted to her. This helped in boosting the ego of the participants. Generally the desired

characteristics for some of the participants mirrored those that were sought after by some heterosexual men. By doing this participants were shattering existent gender norms.

Chibaba Nikkaz: I believe anything that makes a woman so pretty and sexy, that's what I look at. Yaah the hips, bottom, face and trendy dressing such that even a married man when they see her passing by he can think twice about his marriage or something yaah, that's the thing with me (Author's Interview, 10/09/2013)

6.2.2 Femme dating patterns

In the paragraphs that follow I explore the perceptions of participants who identified as femme on who constituted desirable partners that they could date. Generally for femme it was perceived as acceptable and proper for femme to date femme, femme-butch and also femme to straight women. The transcript that follows helps to reflect on the dating patterns of femme identifying lesbians.

Q: So who dates a femme?

Madzimai Trish: A femme can date a femme, a femme can date a butch but butch cannot date a butch.

Q: Why, if femme can date femme?

Madzimai Trish: That's just how it is; they say if a butch is to date a butch that's being gay (giggles) so... butch cannot date butch. That's what they say I didn't really look much into it but...

Q: So femme dating femme can't be gay, why?

Madzimai Trish: (laughs) because... aah I've never really looked into that but it's just inappropriate for a butch to date a butch according to the society people in the society. We've never had a case of butch dating butch we haven't.(Author's Interview, 17/12/2015)

Despite not having seriously considered the reason behind the inappropriateness of a butch to butch relationship, what the participant was sure of was that a butch could not date another butch as this would become 'gay'. Thus the implication was lesbians have to be lesbians. By this the participant was implying that it's just as if a man is dating another man and that becomes wrong for lesbians. The border war concept (Halberstam, 1998) can give insights on how to understand

who constitutes a desirable partner. As noted before, borders imply a territory to be defended but also an aspect of permeability. Despite preference to dating femme and having had previous relationships with femme in her current relationship Madzimai Trish was dating a butch lesbian.

Madzimai Trish: (laughs) The difference when dating a femme and a butch, uum when you are dating a femme well I actually prefer dating a femme to a butch but I couldn't get in the way of my feelings in this situation. I prefer dating a femme because aaah first of all what draws me to want date a girl or to like another girl is physical attraction...

Q: What do you mean by physical attraction? The eyes or the boobs or what is it?

Madzimai Trish: (laughs) Everything, everything about a girl, everything

Q: What do you mean by everything?

Madzimai Trish: Everything about a girl's structure is what fascinates me. So when it comes to dating a butch it's more like dating a guy because a butch is a girl that's trying to be a guy, to be like a guy in terms of dressing and character. So it doesn't really embrace the fact that you are a lesbian so I'd say dating a femme is more interesting than dating a butch. (Author's Interview, 17/12/2015).

6.2.2.1 *Femme to Femme as chilesbian (real lesbianism)*

However the border for Madzimai Quality is fixed as she insists she will date femme women given that in her eyes butch women are just trying to imitate men and she is not attracted to men. The transcript below demonstrates what she thinks of butch lesbians and why she would not date them. This kind of thinking is thus an attempt to question whether butch women do represent what lesbianism is about, it thus accentuates the border wars on what a 'real' lesbian is.

Madzimai Quality : They (butch lesbians) are lesbian but they are trying to be a man.

You get what I'm saying, like if *chiLesbian* (being lesbian), okay lesbian means you like another woman, right you are not attracted to men because of certain reasons. You are not attracted to men because it's either the way they dress or the way they are or the way they are controlling or the way they feel or just the way they are. So for me to date butch that is trying to take the man thing that I don't like from men and she's taking the whole, the whole dress the whole everything she takes that as a man. For me that's not attractive okay, a girl that's just a girl that's just like me is fine. (Author's Interview, 13/12/2014)

The reasoning by some lesbians who identified as femme not to prefer dating lesbians who are butch seems to be that they want to be like guys (men), they dress like men, act like men in terms of control and dominance (to be explored latter on in this chapter). Thus the thinking was, “why do you become what I am trying to avoid? That’s the reason why I am dating a woman”. Therefore this demonstrate that lesbian relationships are complex and it’s not simply an attempt to imitate heterosexual relationships, neither should femme lesbians be frowned upon as overly exhibiting patriarchal informed femininity. Femme to femme can thus be perceived as significantly rupturing the sex-gender norms. The desire demonstrated by femme to date femme participants challenges the popularised media representation of femme lesbians. Ciasullo (2001:578) interrogates how “recent mainstream representations of lesbianism are normalized, heterosexualized or ‘straightened out’-via the femme body”. Jackson and Gilbertson (2009:199) note that Ciasullo (2001) suggests that heterosexualization of lesbians reifies the ‘femme’ and obliterates the political, feminist ‘butch’. The media achieves this by making a femme an object of desire for straight audiences through her depiction as embodying a hegemonic femininity. Jackson and Gilbertson (2009:199) note that femme lesbians are depicted as, “attractive and sexy within heterosexual norms (slim, pretty, curvaceous), she is hot”. Thus she is presented as not having the potential to destabilise heterosexuality and therefore she is not a threat as she is depicted as embracing traditional femininity.

6.2.2.2 ‘Not so desirable’- Femme to straight women

Whereas among participants who identified as butch, a straight woman was someone they relished and would given an option prefer straight to lesbians, the feeling was not the same among femme lesbians. Femme lesbians did not think straight women generated the wave of excitement that they did among the butch lesbians. Madzimai Trish’s account points to how sceptical she is about straight woman though she would not mind dating one if a serious one comes along the way.

Q: So you wouldn’t mind dating a straight woman?

Madzimai Trish: If she doesn’t yes I wouldn’t

Q: Have you ever dated any?

Madzimai Trish: No the thing that stops me from dating a straight woman is I wouldn’t want someone who will toy around with me, because for straight women it’s just them

experimenting or doing it for the fun so if I get into a relationship with a straight woman it's not going to last she is going to go back to a guy. So I'd rather not, I'll keep my attraction to myself.(Author's Interview, 17/12/2015)

Whereas some butch participants prioritised the physical attractiveness of their potential partners some femme identifying lesbians did not valorise the physical attributes but considered non-physical attributes as important. They were interested in the ability to connect on the basis of personality factors. I reflect on a conversation with Madzimai Quality whose desirable partner has to demonstrate a certain degree of confidence in how she conducts herself.

Q: So what attracts you in a woman to say I want that woman?

Madzimai Quality: (laughs) I like... I like a lot of things but I like confidence in a girl. The confidence, you can see a girl's confidence in the way a girl approaches you or the way she gives you a handshake you can tell this girl is actually confident. Physically if that's what you mean I like girls with big thighs (laughs), big thighs that's what I go for (laughs) (Author's Interview 13/12/2014)

6.3 Pleasure and intimacy among lesbians

Richardson (1992:188) raises a pertinent question with regard to the relationship between sexual conduct and sexual identity. She questions the importance of sex to a lesbian identity which consequently has implications on what constitutes real lesbian sex and whether this authenticates one's claims to a lesbian identity. Richardson (1992:188) asserts that, "prevalent ideologies concerning sexuality, such as those coming from religious, legal, medical, psychiatric, and psychological discourses, influence common-sense ideas about what is both 'normal' and 'appropriate' sexual behaviour. For example, it is commonly felt that it is 'normal' to be heterosexual but 'abnormal' to be lesbian or gay; or that it is 'normal' for men to be more interested in sex than are women." There have been questions about whether lesbians actually have sex given the social construction of 'sex' as penile-vaginal intercourse. In this study, it's the meanings that participants give to various sexual acts which they engage in that will help in exploring how participants frame their sexual identity. Participants indicated that they have been involved in emotional and physical relationships with their previous or current partners. Participants referred to various ways of having sex, ranging from touching each other, oral sex,

fist sex, fingering, connecting sexual organs and use of sex toys. The transcript that follows captures issues raised by many on sexual intimacy among lesbians.

Chibaba Lee: Sex is just the coming together of bodies, that's what happens. There a lot of things that people do when you are having sex. Most people think that when you are lesbian you do the finger fucking, or the jaw. ..Sex is about the G-spot and the clitoris if it's a woman or something..... Then if it's the clitoris, as long as there is contact to the clitoris and they have that , like that feeling , what can I call it , that feeling actually feel something is going on now. You can have it clitoris to clitoris yaah it can be, yaah people call scissors, where by, yaah they call it scissors. A lot of things can actually make pleasure using clitoris or something. Even if like yaah the touching you know that, even if the clitoris to clitoris, even if using the vibrator or something, it's all sex. Because people think that as long as penis is in the vagina that is sex but there is more to sex than penis in the vagina, there is more to that.... As long as there is a connection of the bodies, that's what matters most, as long there is a satisfaction or that or when someone is satisfied, that's it. (Author's Interview, 17/06/2015).

Chibaba Lee challenges the dominant socially constructed view of sex as penis in vagina (Richardson, 1992:190). Thus there are many acts that can constitute sex among lesbians which challenge heterosexual conventions.

6.3.1 Beyond butch and femme stereotypes of dominance and passivity

Matebeni (2011: 264) points out that William Simon and John Gagnon (1976) developed the concept of sexual script which refers to how individuals reproduce and recognise a repertoire of sexual acts as well as a set of rules and expectations surrounding those acts. Whilst there was an array of sexual activities that the participants could engage in, not all were perceived as available to all partners as some could be appropriated according to one's positionality in the relationship. Evidently preference to sexual practices was mediated by the preferred sexual identity of an individual; butch's and femme's preferences would at times vary. The butch has been commonly perceived as the aggressor in sexual encounters and as desiring femme (Inness and Lloyd, 1995:2). In this view butch lesbians are thus assumed to have a desire to be the dominant individual in sexual activities. Inness and Lloyd (1995:2) note that in some instances of extreme-butchee stereotype, the butch is portrayed as the woman who sexually refuses another woman to

touch her. Whilst the current study shows some desire to dominate by butch lesbians it does however present a complex picture in which some butches would allow other women to explore their bodies. Consistent with some existent literature some butches indicated their desire to give pleasure to their partners thereby getting satisfaction, but they would not allow their partners to touch their genitals or to have them inserting anything in them.

Chibaba Natsi: Aaah as a butch I don't like penetration. So I do get oral sex and a lot of touching and a lot of rubbing and all that that's it, I don't get penetration. (Author's Interview 15/07/2013)

For Chibaba Natsi and other butch participants to allow their partners to penetrate them would be an indication of transferring their power in the sexual act thus challenging their masculine claim. It would thus be an abrogation of their script as those responsible for chasing, seducing and giving pleasure to the woman. However, Matebeni (2011:281) argues that “positioning of sex as an arrangement of equality powerfully suggests that even relationships of exchange can be beneficial to both partners, including the negotiation and achievement of mutual satisfaction and situates this in its own localised language”. In this study not all intimate experiences conformed to traditional hegemonic constructions of sex, gender and power relations in the sexual act (Matebeni (2011:281). Amongst some participant there was somewhat of a drift towards approximating egalitarianism in their relationships. Not all butch participants were against the idea of their partners sexually penetrating them or viewed themselves as the sole initiator. Madzimai Maka (now identifying as butch), instead of using the Shona word *ndinomukwira* (I fuck her) she uses the word *tinokwirana* (we fuck each other)(Author's Interview, 09/05/2017). Shire (1994), as noted by Muparamoto (2012:322), argues that masculinities are negotiated and constructed in different areas through language usage. Thus attitudes and meanings are conveyed in language. The participant shifts from the passive and dominant conceptualisation of the traditional sex act in which the man initiates, dominates and ‘fucks the woman’ to a negotiated encounter. Chibaba Ryan indicates that she is considerate to her partner who prefers foreplay and oral sex, but finds penetration as a complete turn off. The participant respects the needs of her partner and is also comfortable in trying new things. After asking about her partners' preferences I asked about her preferences

Q: What about you? What do you like?

Chibaba Ryan: Everything (she laughs), yaah everything and maybe it's a good thing about me I can adjust to anything as long as it is in a homosexual relationship.

Q: So you can be penetrated you like that, oral sex you like that, foreplay?

Chibaba Ryan: Yaah yaah yaah. Yaah because I think being rigid to one thing takes the fun out of it. So you need to explore. (Author's Interview, 18/12/2015).

Reflecting on Chibaba Ryan's account does help one to explore how the 'traditional sexual gender scripts' are ruptured by some participants. Matebeni (2011:268) suggests that there is ambiguity and complexity in sexual behaviour. The complexity is demonstrated in how the participant can give and anticipate reciprocal action from the partner. Thus the participant's behaviour transgresses the traditional script and creates potential for equality. Seidman (1993:112) asserts that lesbian feminists have interpreted lesbianism as a personal, social, and political commitment to bond with women. What is therefore important for Chibaba Ryan and other participants is having intimacy with another woman without limiting oneself to any particular role in sexual intercourse. This sexual arrangement challenges male dominance as women can satisfy one another's needs. Not only does Chibaba Ryan's conduct challenge male dominance but it also challenges the 'untouchability' discourse which is based on gender normativity. Sinnott (2007:129) notes that "untouchability" means that it is considered masculine and proper for toms (butches) to perform for dees (femmes) sexually, while not allowing their feminine partners to touch toms physically.

Whereas traditionally the heterosexual sexual script depicted the woman's body as passive, Madzimai Maka's (femme) account challenges that as she actively engages her partner in sexual relations. She actively negotiates and ensures that sex happens on her own terms. She actively manipulates the partner to give in to her sexual demands. In this the participant is able to exercise her sexual autonomy.

Madzimai Maka: In our relationship maybe I can say sometimes sex just happens just like that no one decides right. But sometimes maybe he [butch partner] wants sex but I don't then I will have to say no I don't want sex but he may insist but I refuse and say no I don't want sex and he will listen to that and we won't have sex. But if it is me who wants sex and he doesn't want it I then say you are not being fair to me because you are the one

who gives it to me and I need it. Maybe sometimes he will just give it to me just for my sake and not for him (Author's Interview, 16/12/2014).

What is evident in this and other lesbian accounts is the redefinition of women's sexuality in terms of a focus on women. The redefinition of women's sexuality thus involves shifting from male-based interpretations of sex and sexuality to female-based ones. Thus what Madzimai Maka does contradicts the general ideals on female sexual passivity as it presents her as someone who is hypersexual who is challenging conventional assumptions about the sexuality of women. Richardson (1992:192) points out that a "highly sexed lesbian would seem to contradict dominant discourses of sex, in particular the view of female sexuality as 'passive', responsive, primarily concerned with meeting a man's needs and 'sex' as synonymous with intercourse". Madzimai Maka's desire to have her sexual needs met and her rejection of the use of anything that resembles a penis interrogates traditional conceptions of female passivity during intercourse.

6.3.2 Sex toys as antithetical to butch swagger

Despite acknowledging the use of sex toys most of the participants did not have their own, the ones they have used belonged to their partners who in most cases would have procured them from outside the country as they were said not to be readily available on the formal market. However, for some butch participants use of sex toys would be an admission that she does not have the ability to satisfy her partner. Chibaba Runyararo had this to say 'Haa noo personally I don't use *it inenge atori yepatner yangu, kana iye achitoda* (she does not use it unless the partner has and the partner wants it' (Author's Interview, 13/05/2013). Thus besides not having a personal dildo the participant does not use it unless the partner insists on the use of it. In the transcript that follows I reflect on Chibaba Natsi's views on why the sex toys are not so desirable among some butch identifying participants.

Chibaba Natsi: No I don't use sex toys I don't, I use my hands, and my tongue, yaah I don't use toys. I just believe we supposed to use what we have not try and get that from a toy yeah know that if you gay just know how to use what you have, in order to satisfy yourself, you don't have to buy something, it's almost like you don't have confidence in your own abilities Author's Interview, 13/07/2013)

Chibaba Natsi challenges the popularised ‘virile inferiority’ phenomenon. Richardson (1992:192) notes that lesbians have been described as suffering from feelings of ‘virile inferiority’ and wanting a penis of their own. They are thus assumed to find ‘penile substitutes’. This emanates from the portrayal of butch as a pseudo-man which however is rejected by Chibaba Natsi who maintains as much as she is butch she is still a woman who loves other women and she is not a man. Thus, her self-identity evidently impacts on how she becomes sexual without necessarily mimicking penile-vaginal intercourse. Therefore sex among lesbians should not just be conceived as ‘role playing’ mimicking a man and a woman having vaginal intercourse.

6.3.3 Of sex toys and penetration among femme

Femme participants also spoke about their intimate sexual practices. Madzimai Trish said that ‘people use sex toys, people use their hands, and people have oral sex’. However not all femmes were comfortable with penetration, particularly with sex toys. In the current study some femme identifying lesbians rejected or had reservations on the use of sexual toys which they perceived as antithetical to their identity as lesbians. Madzimai Maka, whilst acknowledging that sex toys are used, was concerned that they constitute failure to dismantle attachment to the male organ hence they need to be rejected.

Madzimai Maka: Yes they are used and my guy [butch partner] loves them, he wants to use them but I don’t like them, why because to me now using those doesn’t make sense because the fact that we are girls and we are dating it means we don’t want any penis involved then those toys most of them resemble the penis so to me it doesn’t make sense using those I don’t like them (Author’s Interview, 16/12/2014)

Madzimai Quality: Okay there are different types. You can have oral sex, there’s fist sex, there’s fingering, there’s a lot of things. But well the thing is what we run away from is the insertion for me *zvangu* it’s being inserted. Of course I’ve had it but I didn’t... it wasn’t as nice as everyone says “sex” ”sex” for me it wasn’t. (Author’s Interview, 13/12/2014)

Reflecting on the preceding transcripts one can observe how ‘pure relationships’ (Giddens 1992:28) have contributed to female sexual autonomy. Therefore having sex without a penis or

anything that resembles it demonstrates that sexual pleasure can be attained in ways which are not dictated by men. Not all femme participants were comfortable with being penetrated as they did not find pleasure in it. Lesbianism is viewed as a political act by radical feminists (Seidman, 1993:112). In this regard, the decision to bond with women and do away with anything that resembles men challenges male dominance. It marks an attempt to challenge male-imposed definitions of womanhood which are informed by heterosexuality.

6.4 Dating patterns, intimacy and pleasure among gay men

As among lesbian women, there were different attributes that gay men preferred in terms of partners and associated sexual acts. The participants who identified as ‘top’ or *murume* had different preferences from those who identified as ‘bottom’ or *mukadzi*. Participants who are mainly insertive were said to consider looks as well as body structure whilst the receptive partners considered more than just the looks of a potential partner. Interestingly in this study those that could be classified as bottom indicated that they would not consider being top. Based upon the interview participants there were no participants claiming the versatile gay-sub category.

6.4. 1 ‘Bottom’ or ‘mukadzi’ partner and sexual preferences.

Some of the participants who identified themselves with receptive positionality indicated that they were not mainly attracted by the physical looks of a potential partner. They considered non-physical factors as significant. When I asked Nyasha what he looks for in a potential long term partner, his interest was not simply in what the person looks like but the potential of a strong connection between the two.

Nyasha: I’m not really attracted to the physical aspects of anybody but I’m attracted to the brains. I like a person who can challenge me mentally; I believe in building up things, that everything needs to be built, I get bored with people after 3 or so days, I feel like I have exhausted like your brain capacity. So really this thing of bed-hopping today I’m with this person I sleep with you I’m tired of you after 2 / 3 weeks the next day with another I’m whatever I’m tired, it’s not just me, so I have decided to get out of it for a while. (Author’s Interview, 31/01/2013)

Similarly Terry claims that non-physical aspects are important if he is to have a relationship. To him sexual attraction due to physical appearance of a potential partner does not result in a relationship. Terry says he is more interested in the ability to connect rather than the physical attraction.

Terry: I only had one relationship. You know a relationship, it's just but only a part of your life, and it's not something that you go around with, I was sexually attracted to him but we didn't think alike

Q: What do you mean you did not think alike?

Terry: Sometimes you need someone who you connect to, someone you can listen to a song with, watch a movie with, talk to and spend the whole day with. I write poetry, read books, and want someone I can connect to. For some gay people it's all about sex and cheating. (Author's Interview 03/02/2013)

6.4.2 'No sex' 'no relationship'

Whereas Terry indicates that he considers many things in order to be in a relationship with someone, he draws attention to what is held by other participants. Terry says, "*for some gay people it's all about sex and cheating*" (Author's Interview, 03/02/2013). When Stavo was asked about whether his relationship was emotional or physical, he said, "*Yaah I can say for gay people for the relationship to be a relationship it has to involve sex*" (Author's Interview, 15/07/2015). This was something that was always raised during workshops or other events such as the candle light memorial. During these talks participants were often told that there was more to gay relationships than just the sex. Some would indicate how short-lived gay relationships in the community are. Mhazha compares a gay relationship to that of liaison with a female sex worker and claims the latter can be better.

Mhazha: *Marelationships achoka haa laste emagays. Hure ritori nani rine mazamu rinotohurira panze, hure ritori nani mahurire arinoita emazamu than magays, gay's tinohura.* (Gay relationships do not last, sex workers who are openly changing clients are better, us gay people we are promiscuous). (Author's Interview, 21/05/2014)

6.4.2.1 Sexual Pleasure among bottoms

Though very complex in how it plays out, Hoppe (2011:206) notes that the bottom identity is imbued with a conception of power transfer in which one temporarily hands over control of his body to his partner(s) as a means for pleasure giving. The transfer of power in the current study should not, however, be perceived as passivity as some bottoms expressed how ‘hot’ they could be in bed. From some of the informal conversations when receptive partners were talking amongst themselves about their sexual experiences they would talk about how they gave a good time to their sexual partners, how they danced in bed. You could hear expressions such as ‘*askana ndakamupakurira, ndikati omasinhi ako chirova*) (I gave him, and I said here is your booty, you can hit it). In gatherings those identifying with the bottom positional would talk about how good looking they were and how the ‘tops’ or other men could not stop looking at them. I draw on the discussion I had with Takura on whether there was any tension between *anasissi* (younger gay-bottoms) and *anagogo* (older gay-bottoms):

Takura: Every man [top / insertive partner] wants a young woman, every man wants an active wife [bottom]. If you are guy and you are a man, you are top. And there is your friend he is gay and he is top, you are drinking or eating you are talking. He says haaa my young man [bottom] satisfy me, yaah he is *anemoto* (hot). Other people who are listening want to know how this person is said to be hot, yet they are in a relationship with this *gogo/ granny* (older gay-bottom) so they would design a plan to get to me and then they may get to me when I’m drunk they may fall for me, then we hit it, then they can go to their partners and say act like the young lads who know what they do on the bed and they get affected by that (Author’s Interview 21/03/2013)

In this quote one can see that some bottoms find pleasure in giving pleasure and take an active position in the sexual act. There was an indication among the receptive participants that they would not insert as they do not find pleasure in it. Stavo said that, ‘I do not do bottoms, I need a man’ (Author Interview, 15/07/2015). The concern which was also shared by participants who preferred a bottoming role was that they could not have sex with another bottom, as they needed

a man²⁸. Thus a bottom was regarded as not man enough for other bottoms to enjoy the sex. Some of the participants who preferred the bottoming role, also expressed preference towards heterosexually married men who would have shown interest in them. I reflect on some the interviews with some participants. Remy talks about his on-and-off relationship with an insertive partner who is not gay. In this transcript Remy distances himself from dating effeminate men.

Q: That guy is he heterosexual?

Remy: He is married, he is actually married.

Q: So is he your type?

Remy: My type is someone who is not really feminine, someone who doesn't exaggerate. I would prefer bisexual people. There is this drama though, I don't like drama. The girlfriend comes in stiletto and will be saying I wanna beat you, you took my boyfriend. (Author's Interview 17/12/2014)

6.4.2.2 'Tops' or murume partner and sexual preferences

Garcia, Parker R.G, Parker C, Wilson, Philbin & Hirsch (2016:1031) point out that "in many ways, men's preferred sexual roles set the boundaries for their expected gender performance". They found out that men seeking partners who were solely receptive in anal sex often presented themselves as more masculine. Similarly in this study boundaries were set with mostly those identifying as 'top' indicating that they would not date or have sex with another 'top'. Some participants perceived these positions as rigid and could not be interchanged. Mhazha who identifies as top indicated that it was part of his preliminary research before he can date someone.

When I meet someone on Facebook, I ask them how old are they, I want those between 20-24, then I ask them whether they are bottom or top. If one asks what is that? Then I block them, others I can ask them are you gay? Some can say I just feel I am bottom..... so if one says they are a 'top' we then cut ties but if one says they are bottom then we can meet up, I don't date a top. (Authors' Interview 21/05/2013)

In short the desired partner has to be within his age range and they have to be gay men not anyone who is straight who does not understand the gay language codes. Thus one may say that insertive individuals do prefer dating only receptive gay men. Mhazha also insists that he cannot

²⁸ The dominantly circulated position was 'bottoms' are not really men as they are 'receptive', and for there to be sex they would need a 'top'.

be bottoming in any relationship which he is going to have. He has been insertive and will continue being insertive.

I will be the top (giggles) because that thing is painful, I don't know I have never done it, but I hear people saying it, I'm a top, I have never been a bottom.

Whereas some insertive gay men such as Mhazha would maintain a rigid position Mario indicated flexibility though he had not actually practised it. Though having had sexual experiences as an insertive partner Mario's understanding shows how he is not fixated on positional identities, thus demonstrating the fluidity that can be experienced among gay men. Mario rejects being pigeon holed:

I have never practised the other side which is being bottom, but from the beginning I could sense that I have strength being on top though I would not want to box myself, so during the relationship before, the two previous one before this one and this one I was acting as a top, as a man (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014).

6.5 Power dynamics in Same-sex Relationships

In an attempt to understand how the identities are subjectively experienced the study also explored the nature of relationships with regard to power dynamics. Two major positions emerged in the study in which most of the relationships mirrored the traditional heterosexual power dynamics which are characterised by a well-defined division of labour and skewed decision-making. The second position which was expressed by a few was an approximation of an equal partnership in which the partners were challenging the traditional gender based arrangements in favour of egalitarian homosexuality.

6.5.1 Skewed power relations

Hoppe (2011:194) postulates that beyond linguistic accounts, very little social science scholarship exists that interrogates how gay men understand their 'positional identities'. As discussed in Chapter 5 the positional identities refer to subcategories of gay men or 'sexual self-label' such as 'bottom', 'top' and 'versatile' which indicate preference for receptive or insertive role in anal intercourse. Hoppe's (2011) work marks an attempt to begin to interrogate these 'sexual self-labels' insofar as they are imbued with meanings that go beyond a mere preference for insertive or receptive anal intercourse. In the current study my concern on positional

identities goes beyond interrogating power dynamics and preferences of intimate sexual practices but focuses on how these positional identities influence various facets of gay life which are non-sexual. As indicated in Chapter 5, the labels ‘bottom’ and ‘top’ are sparingly adopted in the local context in favour of their near local approximates ‘*murume*’/ *mukomana*’ and ‘*mukadzi*’/‘*musikana*’. McAllister (2013:96) notes that use of language marks identities if one explores the diction that is used. The majority of participants were comfortable with terms which either equated effeminacy or masculinity respectively. These positional identities had a significant bearing on many non-sexual facets of life for the study participants in Harare, such as decision making, financial contributions and dominance. The locally circulated labels were also equally adopted among lesbians in Harare despite the adoption of globally circulated subcategories butch and femme. These were also associated with some degree of transfer of power to the butch identifying partners. Though there are peculiarities at an individual level generally there is consistency with the dominant gender scripts. A significant number of both gay and lesbian participants described relationships in which they are involved in relation to traditional patriarchal gender based arrangements.

Whereas Giddens (1992) argues that the transformation of intimacy raises the possibility of equality and intimacy, Kurdek (2005:252) notes that “for many heterosexual couples, biological sex is one major factor that determines which roles partners assume”. This is despite the increase in the number of women taking up work outside the domestic sphere. Kurdek (2005:252) observes that, “given the persistence with which biological sex is used to assign roles relevant to household labour in heterosexual couples, the division of household labour for gay and lesbian couples provides one way to examine how roles in relationships get assigned independently of biological sex”. However, the current empirical work demonstrates that most of the participants make explicit reference to traditional beliefs about manhood and masculinity. At the time of the study no participants were currently married but it was common to come across participants who had cohabited with their partners pretending to be friends or cousins to the public and some had in the past spent a lengthy time at their partners’ places to enable them to explore how household duties were assigned. It is possible for same-sex couples to live together for extended periods in Zimbabwe without being victimised or arrested as it is common for people of the same sex to share residency or form a household without raising any eyebrows. In the event that they do not

display public affection the society would not suspect that they are a gay or lesbian couple given that even 'straight' people can also adopt similar living arrangements. One of the participants also noted how possible it was for people of the same sex to live together without attracting much attention.

Q: How could that be if you decide to spend your whole life with him (her) how would you organise that practically? Would it be acceptable that you are living together in this community and society?

Madzimai Maka: Maybe the society won't accept it if we are living together as husband and wife showing it to the whole world, maybe if we just lived just as friends showing that we are living together as friends especially here in Zimbabwe that's the way we are used to

Q: Sometimes women can stay together as friends?

Madzimai Maka: Exactly yes

Q: Are there or do you have some friends who are living together as a couple? Do you know some gay people who are living together as couples?

Madzimai Maka: Yes they are living together but it is us gay people who will know that they are living together as husband and wife but the other people they don't know. They just think they are just friends living together (Author's Interview, 16/12/2014)

Therefore the society seemingly accepts a woman/man who lives with another woman/man as long as they do not claim to be husband and wife. In the paragraphs that follow I explore how partners who have ever lived in, cohabited or have spent some time with their partners, have assigned each other duties and responsibilities. One of the conclusions drawn by Kurdek (2005:252) is that individuals within gay and lesbian couples do not assign roles for household labour such that one partner is the "husband" and the other partner is the "wife." In Harare where gender-stratified homosexuality is seemingly a common arrangement as highlighted in Chapter 5 the division of labour among live-in partners was mainly constituted by assigning roles mostly on the basis of 'husband' and 'wife' following traditional gender roles.

6.5.2 Gender assigned roles among gay men

Amongst some of the gay participants, *mukadzi* (wife) expected *murume/ baba* (husband) to perform the instrumental roles whilst they would perform the expressive roles. The empirical evidence challenges Giddens' assumption of 'pure relationships' that have potential for equality. The transcript that follows illustrates how Takura and his boyfriend assigned each other duties and responsibilities in their two and half years of cohabiting. The partner (husband) in this case was the provider and fended for the couple whilst his (Takura) money was just perceived as a supplementary income or to meet his other personal needs.

Takura: My boyfriend would meet most of the things, I would just buy food once in a while but almost everything was taken care of by my boyfriend. When he would get his salary he would bring it and then he would say do whatever you want, but know that I want some for entertainment. Mine was mainly for fun and clothes, and I would see what had been used up like cooking oil so I would not continue to say *baba mumba hamusisina mafuta* (Husband the cooking oil is finished) , because I would be having money.

(Author's Interview 21/03/2013)

Evidently from this and other conversations some gay men who had assumed the feminine attributes waited upon their partners to provide for the couple's needs. Takura refers to the partner as *baba* which is a value-laden status among the Shona, it ignites feelings of an individual that has to be honoured, respected, at times feared, someone whose decision is final and cannot be questioned. In essence if one calls another person *baba* one is signifying one's deference to that person which indicates abdication and transfer of one's control and power to that person. For example in politics the former President of Zimbabwe was referred to as *baba*, in religious circles selected and highly revered religious ministers are designated as *baba*. Thus Takura effectively accords the partner a head of household status. This extends to decision-making and distribution of household chores. One to a larger extent cooks, does laundry and makes sure that all the needs for *baba* are catered for.

The above arrangement could also be observed among those partners who were just dating without living together. The one who was designated as the 'man' in the relationship was given the privilege of making the major decisions in their relationship as well as meeting incurred

financial costs whenever they had spent time together. It was perceived as normal and acceptable that the one designated as the 'man' should dominate the relationship in many ways. Stavo who identifies as 'bottom' indicated that, "*My man dominates the relationship, my boyfriend*" (Author's Interview, 15/07/2015). In this instance the participant associates his positional identity with how the other facets of their gay life should also be structured. He accepts and takes it to be normal that his 'boyfriend' should be in control. So in this instance contrary to Hoppe's (2011), observation of the temporary transfer of control and power in pleasure-giving by 'bottoms', in this study the power transfer extended to other aspects of the gay partner's life. Sindiso's case illustrates this transfer of power which is not just temporary.

Sindiso: He is the one who decides on where we hang out, if I decide he asks me why I want to go there, so I see him as my husband (*semurume wangu*), my boyfriend (*semukomana wangu*). He is the one who forks out money because he is the one who works. (Author's Interview 30/05/2015)

Sindiso normalises the violence that happens between him and his boyfriend and has continued in the relationship despite the control that has been exhibited by his boyfriend.

Sindiso: We have been dating since 2007 but in between we part as he beats me, just like what happens between a boyfriend and a girlfriend who quarrel. Life is like a cake, it has sugar as well as salt, so it can't be rosy always, so sometimes we part then reconcile.

Q: So what will be the cause of the conflict?

Sindiso: Sometimes he would have suspected that I am having an affair with another man, for example, he may see me talking to a friend or at times I may go somewhere without him and he beats me saying you went there to look for other men. Then I can't take it and we part, but I will be missing him and if he comes to ask for forgiveness we then reconcile, who knows maybe we will end up living together. (Author's Interview 30/05/2015)

Gender-based violence is outlawed in Zimbabwe. However, traditional values still persist and it is to some extent acceptable for husbands to 'discipline' (using violence) their wives if they have not acted in an expected manner. If a husband beats a wife for cheating, in some quarters of the society it is actually condoned. Thus, even though Sindiso is beaten by the partner he shoulders

the violence and even anticipates that they may end up living together. This kind of relationship involves behaviour patterns that reproduce violence. The relationship does not seem to encourage equality in all aspects of life.

6.5.3.1 'Husbands' need respect and gender based roles among lesbians

According to Inness and Lloyd, (1995:5), “Lesbians have associated masculinity with butchness throughout much of the twentieth century, and masculinity continues to be crucial to a butch's self-presentation today”. Any woman who thus displays traditional femininity is rarely perceived as butch by other lesbians. Given that to some extent identities are performed, adopting a masculine style is part of the self-presentation of butch lesbians. And given that everyday interactions are strategic encounters (Goffman 1959, 1963), adopting roles and chores traditionally associated with masculinity provides an opportunity to express and manage one's butch identity. The majority of female participants who identified as ‘butch’ reinforced the traditional gender distinction between masculinity and femininity insofar as the relationships were concerned.

The majority of femme and butch participants reinforced traditional gender roles as reflected in the transcripts that follow. In describing what their understanding of what it means to be ‘femme’ participants descriptions were not limited to emotional attachment but also extended to roles associated with traditional femininity. The roles and behaviour narrated by some femme participants significantly replicate femininity traits upheld amongst Zimbabweans. Madzimai Maka's subjective depiction of herself would qualify her among the Shona people for what they call *mudzimai chaiye* (a real woman), one who submits to her husband. The conversation below helps to elucidate this point:

Madzimai Maka: Examples like I have this respect for my partner which shows that I am more like under, she is my husband, she makes decisions and we make some together but she makes most of them, then I have to listen to them (Author's Interview 16/12/2014)

Madzimai Maka also interchangeably calls her partner he or she. Madzimai Maka's sentiment is that she has to accord her partner a ‘husband status’ and the privileges associated with this status among the Shona people. Challenging the husband's position as Madzimai Maka says is considered as being disrespectful and not acceptable. Therefore, in interacting with the partner

‘femme’ participants exhibited the decorum expected of a woman in the society. This does significantly challenge the assumption that same sex relationships offer a platform to challenge the traditional gender-based power dynamics. Thus some of these relationships draw on the same logic of traditional heterosexual arrangements.

Some of the butch participants expressed the view that they were husbands in these relationships and that they had to perform the responsibilities associated with men. They significantly felt that they were responsible for decision-making, looking after their partners, meeting the expenses incurred when they were together and performing chores that are associated with masculinity. For the few cases among those who had at one point lived-in with their partners they indicated that they would not prefer taking duties traditionally considered feminine. They would rather take the chores associated with the man of the house.

Chibaba Runyararo: My wife (partner) would cook, do the laundry and plates and other things but I would focus on the garden and cleaning the car (car wash) (Author interview 13/05/2013)

Chibaba Tindo also expects that the partner has to perform duties associated with femininity and *he* is supposed to be in control.

Chibaba Tindo: I’m the man of the house so I’ll call the shots

Q: Would you want to have your laundry done by her, your clothes washed by her?

Chibaba Tindo: Yeah she actually did my laundry... she does that.

Q: Oh she did your laundry? How did that make you feel?

Chibaba Tindo: It was just something you know... (Author’s Interview 14/05/2014)

6.5.3.2 *Butch as provider*

There are also instances where the femme dating a butch attempts to contribute to the costs which could be misconstrued as challenging ‘masculinity’ thus generating some conflict. Thus some butches are perceived as wanting to avoid shame or spoiling their identities, if they give their partners an opportunity to pay for incurred costs. It would spoil their image as it may be perceived as a failure to meet their duties as the ‘man’ in the relationship. Madzimai Trish

chronicles how her partner is not comfortable when she wants to assert her ability to also meet the costs they incur.

Madzimai Trish: Most of the times with her, we make most of our decisions together but there are times when as butch as she is bound to act like a guy and becomes protective and controlling, I can't really say she is controlling but she does control at times, but I don't really mind. It's normal like that.

Q: Okay and uum who does what? Who provides? Who does what when you want to go out and..?

Madzimai Trish: She doesn't want me to do anything; she says she feels like I'm downing her superiority. So maybe we are going somewhere and we are in a taxi and I want to pay she'll tell me not to pay, it might actually become an issue *ndikada kuita nharo kuti no I want to pay* (if I insist that I want to pay). So she ends up doing most of the things. (Author's Interview 17/12/2015)

Evidently some femme participants take the butch's desire to dominate and control as natural and normal thus it should be accepted. Therefore, in their strategic interactions with their butch partners some femme participants would resort to adopting behaviour that does not challenge the perceived masculinity of their partners. As indicated above, attempts by Madzimai Trish to pay for anything in the partner's presence would be perceived as an affront to the partner's capacity which in their view will appear as if they were being stripped of their 'manly qualities'. By accepting and putting up this front, both femme and butch were reproducing the traditional gender inequalities thus militating against the emergency of pure relationships characterised by potential for equality.

In a general sense, traditionally as well as among the contemporary Shona, when people are courting in a heterosexual relationship it is expected that the male partner is supposed to be the one pursuing the female partner in an attempt to woo her. Though it varies, the script is typically characterized by having the interested man visiting the potential partner, buying presents and pampering her. This was also reproduced among study participants. The interested butch participant had to act in a manner consistent with that of a heterosexual 'man' who wanted to entice a heterosexual woman. Among the Shona, the man who is trying to woo a woman has to put significant effort into demonstrating that he is not just interested but is actually serious about

the relationship. In order to demonstrate that she was a capable partner, Chibaba Lee had to act in a way consistent with that of a male suitor, thus she had to fulfil an existent script by being persistent and living up to the expectations. The process of trying to convince a desired partner presented an ideal stage for Chibaba Lee to create the desired impression on the targeted woman who constitutes the audience. Goffman's (1959, 1963) concept of face work helps us to appreciate the effort that participants such as Chibaba Lee and others made in claiming a masculine role by demonstrating that they were capable. Chibaba Lee's case illustrates how she strives to meet that expectation:

I was attracted to her and I had to go after her and ask her out. Then I am the man and I have to decide whatever we do. Like *kumufambira kunomuona* (going to see her) everyday..... She doesn't know where I stay but I know where she stays because I'm the one always visiting her. Like if I have to meet her or something, *ndini ndofana kutopinda busy kutsvaga mari yelunch* (I'm the one who has to strive to get money to spend on lunch). (Author's Interview, 17/06/2015).

The ability to provide in Zimbabwe is closely associated with expressions of masculinity, thus failure to do so becomes a crisis. In this, one can see how participants strive to meet the existent script set by traditional patriarchal structures of masculinity that is expressed through the provider role. Therefore in order not to compromise their claim on masculinity, some butch participants had to act in a manner consistent with the script, thus impressing their partners in an attempt to avoid spoiling their identities. This seems to be a major concern among some participants who date 'straight' women as they felt that their failure to provide would lead to their girlfriends dating other men. Chibaba Lee's girlfriend at the time of the interview was coming out of a heterosexual relationship and so she felt that she had to strive to provide for her. '*The thing is the person I am talking about was once straight, thus I have to treat her as she was treated before by her boyfriend*' (Author Interview 17/06/15). Therefore, there was some kind of compulsion to strive to provide for partners in order to live up to the expectation of a man in Zimbabwe. Some of the respondents would even borrow money so as to meet the expectations of a man who provides. They are also responsible for buying presents in the relationship which may not be accompanied by any reciprocity as the general expectation is that the man is responsible for pampering his partner(s).

Chibaba Lee: That's what I do like when I actually know it's towards valentine's or something, I have to crack my heard or something like *haa* that time again I have to do something. Some thought tells me just get a card and give her, whilst I am like I will be jilted have to do better.... Then, like just because I feel I am the man like yaah, I have to do anything for a woman. Yaah in as much as I don't afford, but from the little I have I just feel I have to make a woman happy yaah (Author's Interview 17/06/2015)

Whereas the ability to provide by participants who identified as butch was widely accepted and also embraced by some who are femme, there is a need to have a nuanced analysis given that some accounts portray that it was dependent on the availability of resources to do so. There are accounts of participants who identified as butch but were being provided for by their partners. The partners who seemed to have a steady income would be the provider in their relationships. Chibaba Natsi, who did not have a steady job at the time of the interview, narrates how her partner provides and takes care of her:

...there are things she was just willing to do to me, she did spoil me a lot one time I was at the club it was all on her, she used to buy me shoes, she knew I liked food she would take me to lunch, dinner she would come and pick me up on her expense. (Author's Interview 15/07/2013)

Evidently in Chibaba Natsi's account despite the existence of a script that would require her to provide, she could not do so due to circumstances of limited financial capacity, thus she and others in a similar situation accepted the benevolence of their partners. They graciously accepted provisions that were coming from their partners.

6.6 Partnerships of equality

Jamieson (1999:487) points out that Giddens (1992) identifies same-sex couples as the vanguards of pure relationships. Kurdek (2005:252) points out that the second conclusion drawn from various studies shows that, "although members of gay and lesbian couples do not divide household labor in a perfectly equal manner, they are more likely than members of heterosexual couples to negotiate a balance between achieving a fair distribution of household labor and accommodating the different interests, skills, and work schedules of particular partners". Whereas the majority of the relationships in the current study mainly reproduced the traditional

heterosexual gender dynamics, there were also some relationships that challenged that kind of arrangement in favour of ‘pure relationships’. There are some who found in same sex relationships the possibility of equality of partners and challenging the gendered dynamics.

6.6.1 No masisi but partners among gay men

Some participants actually rued what they perceived as a misconception of saying that in a gay relationship there should be a ‘man’ and a ‘woman’ but rather partners. When asked about power dynamics in the relationship one participant had this to say:

Ricky: Thank you for bringing that issue, I’m trying to educate most of our guys, we are guys not a man and a woman and I find that most of these guys use the terms *anasisi (sisters/woman)*, who is the man in this relationship? Who is the woman? There is no woman, they are guys so, yes you are two guys who are together, a guy who likes other guys, you are not a woman I believe if you are a guy into guys why go and find a woman in a guy, so I’m *gonna* educate people so that they don’t necessary label a woman. So with us it was always do you want this or that, then we could meet half way, it was never I tell you what to do because we talked about things we discussed. (Author’s Interview 13/06/2013)

6.6.2 Beyond dominance and dependency among gay men

Some gay men were of the opinion that in relationships where there is dependence and dominance, they become a misrepresentation of what ‘gay’ is supposed to be. In their view the participants reckoned that all parties were to assist one another without one being overly dependent on the other partner to such an extent that they do not bring anything into the relationship.

With dominance there is so much that happens. Some people want to be weak, *zviya zvekunzi (to then say)* my boyfriend does this, does that for me but that’s not being gay. Being gay is like what I can say building a house, I’m dating a guy he brings what he has and I bring what I have and that will make the relationship move on. But with the people they are dominant people naturally, who are controlling, who do not want situations where someone does that for them. But financially and other things we meet 50 – 50, but there will be one who is controlling and one who is receptive, that does not necessarily have to go into the bedroom. (Author’s Interview 31/01/2013)

What is evident from this illustration is the attempt to break away from the traditional arrangement of relationships in which one is assumed to be dominant in decision-making and provision of the financial capital needed to secure what the two would need. This is contrary to Takura and Stavo's positions in which they say their male partners (boyfriends) should be the controlling partners in the relationship. Thus what Ricky, Nyasha and others are attempting to establish are pure relationships which are considered less exploitative. Mario's experiences also shows that despite attempts by his partner to treat him as the man of the house he implores him not to do so, in favour of egalitarianism.

Mario: When my partner is here we stay together, it's like my family knows and his family knows so we stay together, so when we were together before he went to SA, it was more like, he wanted to treat me as a man like what the heterosexual world do that a woman would want to treat her husband as a man and do all those chores , but I could tell him that no it's not good, we can share duties, I can even wash the plates, I can even clean the house, but most of the time he is comfortable with taking a role that a married woman can do, but we can help each other in terms of work at home.

Q: How about financial contributions?

Mario: When he was here he wasn't working and I was working so I was the one who was providing everything, that's why he said I need to go back to South Africa so that I can find work and we organized so that he went back to South Africa. When he went back to South Africa it's more like when I need something I can tell him that I'm short of money, I need this thing and he could assist me. So even when I am planning to do something I do tell that I want to do this and I'm buying this and he also does that. He can tell me that I received my salary but I want to buy this, so this is how we are working (Author's Interview 20/03/2014)

6.6. 3. 'Different' butch

Whilst many participants who identified as butch indicated that they performed the traditional 'masculine' roles and would want to be controlling, Chibaba Natsi's account reflects a contrary position. Chibaba Natsi does not prefer a submissive 'woman'/ partner and unlike the other butch identifying participants in this study she prefers to do her own things even the chores that have been broadly identified by others as feminine. The excerpt below summarises her concern:

Chibaba Natsi: I really find myself as a butch, I can't say a soft butch but a butch that isn't so much into the males, like I do like I said I like cooking, cleaning up I clean up for myself, do my own clothes, even though some, so many in my community that I have met like to be taken care of, getting their clothes washed, like anything, Nooo I like to do my own things, I can even cater for my own wife, I can meet half way of my chores, I'm not someone who would need a submissive woman, because I can do my own things as a woman because I do consider myself as a woman. Like most butches they think that some part of them they are male, but I don't, I am butch to the way I dress and act, and maybe sometimes be aggressive as a butch but I do have softer sides. (Author's Interview 15/07/2013)

Chibaba Natsi's account disrupts the association of 'butchness' with masculinity thus helping one to appreciate how complex identities can be. The participant prefers a relationship that is characterised by egalitarianism. This does reflect how local relationships are not just influenced by local conditions but can take after the circulated global modern relationships. Thus, the 'border war' between what was acceptably femme attributes or butch attributes is permeable as demonstrated in this case where the butch identifying participant was comfortable with conducting duties associated with femininity. Matebeni (2011, 282) asserts that the formation of 'lesbian' is mutable and evolving, so there cannot be a single formulation of the category. The lesbian identity which is in a constant flux is epitomised in this study by the experiences of Madzimai Maka who, as previously indicated had changed from identifying as femme to butch. The way her relationships are now structured also shows the fluidity of lesbian relationships. The account reflects how the participant desires a more egalitarian relationship that is characterised by negotiations to arrive at a 'pure relationship' which meets the needs of both partners rather than her own interests.

Madzimai Maka: It depends with my partner on how she wants to identify me as, its either she is my wife and I am her wife or its either I am the man, depends with what my partner wants because we discuss about these issues when entering in a relationship. I am more flexible with my relationships, I don't wanna be a dictator of things. I give room to my partner to call me whatever she feels comfortable (Author's Interview 09/05/2017)

6.6.4 Quest for equality among lesbians

The issue of power and control was also contested among participants in a focus group discussion. It demonstrates how the issue of control in relationships is complex. Whilst some participants identifying as femme want to shrug off the control that is associated with relationships, others seem to find it as natural and desirable if it is to some extent. Control is assumed in some cases to be linked with concern and care from one's partner. There are some participants who indicated that they are femme and would not want to date lesbians who are butch whom they regarded as control freaks. I reflect on some examples of control in the following excerpt from a focus group discussion.

Q: So that control that you are talking about, maybe you can give examples of how that control is?

Respondent 1: The butch. I'm guessing it's from the culture, we are lesbians, okay, but we have that background that we want...but there is still that control that everyone wants in a relationship.

Q: That is what I asked. What is that control thing? What is it that the butch can control in a different way?

Respondent 1: I guess a butch wants to feel like I can tell my girlfriend not to do this, like my girlfriend needs to be like this. Like my girlfriend has to be... I guess she wants to be the runner of the relationship you get it? But I also want that (laughs).

Respondent 3: Our struggle.

Respondent 1: So yeah I guess that would be the conflict in a lesbian relationship, we both girls so you can't bully me. (laughs) So the butch would dress that way so that you can see.

Q: So you wouldn't call yourself butch at all?

Respondent 1: No I'm far from it.

Q: But you still want to have that control?

Respondent 1: I'm not... like we are like we are we would be equal we discuss it. Okay babe let's do this so we going to get married, we are going to go to S.A and get married...

Respondent 3: And both of you will wear gowns.

Respondent 1: Yes, and we can at least work. So okay fine if you are butch you are going to be the man in this relationship so you have to work, you know, to provide. But that is not what the relationship is about, because I'll just have to go find a man. The relationship has to be equal.

Q: So in your relationship you wouldn't want it to be like that that one is provided for?

Respondent 3: We both provide... (FGD 1, 17/12/2014)

In this account the two respondents who dominated part of this conversation were femme and expressed their concern regarding how butch lesbians want to be controlling and act like men. To them, relationships should be characterised by equality rather than dominance by one partner. The logic of the two partners wearing wedding gowns would in their view symbolise that there was no man in the relationship, thus they were all equal. One of the participants equated the control that butch lesbians often have with bullying, even to the extent that if one wants to act like a man one would rather just have to go and find a man than to be with a woman who acts like a man. The two participants who were femme lesbian indicated that all things being equal they would not date a butch lesbian. However, during the course of the study one of the femme participants was in a relationship with a butch partner and she explained that in this instance she could not stand against the feelings that she had hence she was trying out the relationship. As the conversation was going on her phone rang:

Q: Does it have some advantages to date a femme compared to your current relationship?

Respondent 3: I think it's pretty much the same... besides the whole control thing it's pretty much the same.

Q: But that control thing is something that you notice?

Respondent 3: Yeah like babe go offline I'm not online so what are you still doing online, babe are you still in town I was out of town an hour ago so who are you with what are you doing? That's the only difference there is.

Q: But is that okay with you or not?

Respondent: I don't really mind but you don't have to get too controlling, too controlling. (phone rings)

Q: So there's a limit? Is she is calling now... (laughs). Please pick up I will turn off this thing (all laugh)

Q: So were talking about you and your lover, who just called... did she give us an example of the control thing or not?

Respondent 3: (laughs) Uum she asked me what I'm still doing... (laughs) but I don't really mind it gives me the feeling that she cares. She can't just let me do what I want so... it is a good feeling. (FGD 1, 17/12/2014)

There is desire among some lesbian women to have equitable relationships that are characterised by mutual support, love and sharing of responsibilities. However, this may not be a reality among some given the context in which these relationships are obtaining in. Whilst aware of circulated western gay and lesbian practices, the identities and relationships get mixed with local realities thus creating a different model.

6.7 Conclusion

The current chapter has explored the dating patterns of lesbian and gay participants in Zimbabwe. It has explored who constitutes desirable partners for the participants in their attempt to project a desired identity among their colleagues. It has also reflected on how these relationships are experienced by the participants with regards to how they reinforce or challenge the existent heterosexual constructions of gender and sexuality. Lesbians do challenge the predominant heterosexual conceptualisation of sex and sexuality. The ability to satisfy partners among butch participants aided in their claims on masculinity. There are some butch participants who reinforce the 'untouchability' notion in their attempt to maintain a masculine image, though some butch women also challenged that stereotype. Whilst some femme participants challenged assumptions of non-sexually aggressive females. A significant number of participants did reflect a gender based division of labour whilst some preferred egalitarian relationships. Whereas the participants were aware of how the circulated western gay and lesbian relationships were constituted, they mixed this with local realities and allowed an emergence of complex versions of gay and lesbian relationships. The relationships do not just mimic the gay relationships circulated in dominant Anglo-Saxon discourse but also modify and 'glocalise' the universally circulated identities.

Chapter 7: Towards understanding how same-sex loving people perceive their social categorisation in light their self-understanding

7.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the previous chapters which sought to identify and describe how same-sex relations, subjectivities and identities are understood, performed and constructed among same-sex attracted males and females in Zimbabwe. In this chapter I explore how same-sex loving people perceive how the society categorises and perceives them. The chapter focuses on chronicling the reflection of the participants' interpretation of how they are generally perceived by the wider community including the media. Thus, the chapter seeks to make an analysis of the relationship or lack thereof between social categorisation of gays and lesbians and their self-perception. The wider community has expressed various views about same-sex loving people which has significantly impacted on how the participants reflect on their identities. Some of the views are expressed across the board through media pronouncements generally characterised by castigating the LGBTI community whilst some views have been experienced at a personal level with individuals being exposed to varying insults. However, despite the perceived widespread intolerance of gays, there are many who have been accommodated within their communities and there are varying levels of tolerance. Within their various communities the participants have managed to develop coping mechanisms in order to create space for their existence.

The current chapter seeks to explore how social categorisations (societal perspectives) influence the participants' subjective identities and social behaviour. This is predicated on the assumption that in real social situations there is a complex interplay between subjective identification and external categorisations (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003:140) and the latter can significantly influence how people behave and manage their subjective identities. Barreto & Ellemers (2003:141) attest that "social identification constitutes a subjective process through which externally assigned category distinctions are accepted and in-group characteristics are adopted to help define the self". Whilst bemoaning a dearth in systematic theorization of the aforementioned relationship, Barreto & Ellemers (2003:141) note that "Tajfel (1978) pointed out that when people are repeatedly treated by others in terms of a particular group membership, they are likely to

internalise this definition of themselves eventually”. Thus in relation to this study the assumption is that as members of the lesbian and gay community become targets of homocritical utterances by others, they come to adopt or embrace their self-identity in response to systematic discrimination by others which will reinforce their segregation. As the participants adopt behaviors and attitudes that reinforce the distinction between the heterosexual community and non-heterosexual community, the ‘border wars’ are accentuated as the parent culture tries to expunge their membership and citizenry. They thus can be considered as rebels and a threat to the societal norms and values. Secondly Barreto & Ellemers (2003:141) note that “Turner (1987) conversely, has argued that people may actively try to bring external perceptions of self in line with internalised self-categorisations, by behaving in terms of norms that are prototypical for the group (in this case society) that constitutes an important part of their self-definition”. As individuals may feel the pressure to present the self in line with external expectations, they may comply or adopt the society’s normative behaviour. One should note that one’s own definition of self does not necessarily correspond to the way one is perceived by others (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003:142). Thus, in such instances in order to avoid a spoiled identity, participants may forgo some aspects of their internal categorization by tailoring their behaviour accordingly.

As noted in the introductory chapter, if one were to read into the dominant widely-publicized official government pronouncements, including from the former head of state (Robert Mugabe) in Zimbabwe one would concur with Handler’s (1988: 44) notion of a ‘fixed national essence’ in which there is no room for a Zimbabwean homosexuality (Engelke, 1999:298). Generally the dominant social categorization of gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe in popular discourse has been predominately built around the denunciations made by former President Mugabe and the sustained efforts by those parroting his position. Given that the former president’s infamous ‘worse than dogs and pigs’ statement has shaped popular local discourse on homosexuality, gay and lesbians’ social categorisations and their subjective identities, I shall start by exploring participants’ views towards the position taken by the former president. The chapter then explores how participants have been perceived within the society in general, how they are treated, accommodated and made to feel out of place or rejected. Lastly the chapter will explore how a significant social institution, the media, has portrayed gays and lesbians and how they have responded to this external categorization.

7.2. 'Worse than dogs and pigs' legacy

Dalacoura (2014:1291) attests that in “parts of Africa and the Middle East opposition to homosexuality has become a means of affirming cultural integrity and authenticity”. The subject of homosexuality has been appropriated into the ‘culture wars’ which have been ongoing in the Middle East characterized by resistance to Western culture. Boyd (2013:698) points out that “in Uganda, arguments against homosexuality are often framed in terms of the cultural legitimacy of certain sexual “rights” and the freedoms that such rights engender.” As discussed in Chapter 2, in Zimbabwe, as throughout Africa, homosexuality has been a hotly-debated issue with dominant groups affirming that it is antithetical to African ‘cultures’. Sanger & Clowes (2006:36) note that, “the notion of same-sex desire as sin, as dangerously deviant, as unAfrican and as a Western import permeates the legal, political, religious and medical discourses of most African countries”. This implies that there is a ‘border war’ between what an acceptable African sexuality is and what it is not. I reflect on the ‘*worse than dogs and pigs*’ statement using Judith Halberstam’s (1998) notion of ‘border wars’. The statement marks a distinction between members of the society who conform to the norms and values and individuals perceived as deviant. The claim by the former president was that an individual associated with homosexuality had exhibited behavior that was uncultured, thus attacking the society’s social and moral fabric. They were therefore behaving worse than ‘dogs and pigs’ thus they were ‘marginal individuals’ who did not fit properly into the society. The statement significantly gained widespread currency in Zimbabwe, given the relative popularity of the former president in the 1990s. According to Halberstam (1998:304), “on the one hand, the idea of a border war sets up some notion of territories to be defended, ground to be held or lost, permeability to be defended against. On the other hand, a border war suggests that the border is at best slippery and porous”. The border war metaphor can be connected to the notion of a ‘marginal person’: one perceived to be living on the periphery/ margins if the society or culture is perceived as bounded space depicting something that has an inside and a boundary, something that we could enter into, or get out of (Kharlamov, 2012:630). Kharlamov (2012:624) notes that marginality is rooted in the works of Robert Park (1928, 1937) in which he talks of a ‘marginal person’ to denote a specific social type, the person who lives between different social and cultural worlds. In this case the assumption that was made by the president was that those that were ‘normal human beings’ would be bound by the society’s social institutions and values, therefore they would not offend

what he termed the law of nature and social norms and values. Therefore, if the former president equated being heterosexual with being a properly socialized Zimbabwean, homosexuality was on the margins and hence unacceptable. The use of ‘worse than dogs and pigs’ can be interpreted as an attempt to depict how marginal same sex attracted people are thus drawing on a strong metaphor to denounce them. Kharlamov (2012: 634) notes that the “conception of marginality is founded on a metaphor social world is a space, society is a region, there are many regions, regions have boundaries, boundaries are special extensive zones, people and groups can live inside boundary zones”. Thus in the former president’s utterances gays and lesbians are on the edge.

Whilst some of the participants were very young when the president made the statement at a gathering in Harare in 1995, it has been repeatedly used as a point of reference in various fora. The statement impacted differently on the subjective identity of the participants. For some it consisted of an assault on their dignity as human beings whilst for some it could be justified in that the president did not know and understand the issues. There are also other participants who dismissed the statement as simply political posturing whilst one found it as a ‘blessing in disguise’ as it generated debate on their identity thus bringing to the fore their existence.

7.2.1. Painful, degrading but uncalled for

Describing homosexual behavior as worse than that of dogs and pigs sets boundaries on the basis of sexuality. It marginalizes anyone who does not identify as heterosexual, within the Shona context being compared to a dog and pig constitutes one of the most serious affronts to one’s human dignity. These animals are despised. Therefore gays and lesbians were assumed to be in another zone according to boundaries set on the basis of sexual orientation. Thus as participants had expressed sexual diversity, they could not be located on the inside of the border but outside region or zone. Some participants expressed how painful and degrading it was for them to be compared to dogs and pigs. I reflect on some of the responses from the participants. As Sindiso notes:

Aaah zvinondibhowa, zvinondibhohwa zvakanyanya zvekuti ndototi dai Mugabe aenda (sindiso chuckles) mutauriro wake uno irritator nekuti shuwa haangambotidzikisire kudaro, tiri vanhuwoka tine marights edu. (It’s so boring, very boring, I even wish if he was gone, what kind of talk is that, how can he denigrate us, we are also human, we have

our rights). He should go to South Africa and see what others have done. (Author's Interview, 30/05/2015)

Sindiso expresses how irritating and denigrating the statement is as he is also human and cannot be compared to an animal. The statement is an attempt to accord a subhuman status to him and others of similar sexual orientation. Despite the statement being an attack meant to make them inferior and marginal, he does not perceive himself as less human compared to others and feels that as gay people they also deserve rights just like all other people. Sindiso, in his rejection of Robert Mugabe's categorisation of gay people, makes an external reference to the South African experience in justifying his claim to an object choice identity. Weeks (2005) notes that the power of traditional authorities has been battered and challenged by a number of factors such as globalization enabling countless millions to make choices every day. Thus the participants challenge what the president says about their identity. Takura also shares similar concerns to those expressed by Sindiso:

That statement is painful, if you look at pigs (laughs), you look at a dog (laughs) and then you are said to be worse than pigs and dogs (Author's Interview, 21/03/2013)

Whilst pointing out that the statement hurts, Takura derides what the former president said, he laughs about it as he reflects on the metaphor used. This could in another way be interpreted as challenging the relevance as well as the effectiveness of the metaphor used. It can point out that instead of him being affected significantly he demonstrates some contempt for and ridicules it.

Madzimai Trish who was not aware that there was such a statement was equally perturbed by it. Interestingly whilst the 'worse than dogs and pigs' utterance gained notoriety internationally, there are individuals locally without knowledge of it which calls for a nuanced analysis on the homophobic Africa which is found in popular discourse. She was at pains to try and describe how demeaning it was, how it was unjustified in all respects. As Madzimai Trish notes:

That's so wrong. First of all before we go anywhere, you can't compare me to an animal just because of my sexuality. That's wrong in all respects in all regards it's wrong. And the fact that he said pigs and dogs, pigs are regarded as filthy and dogs are usually regarded as sluts if I may say. So you cannot compare me to dogs or pigs just because I am attracted to girls, you can't. That's wrong, I didn't know about that... (Author's Interview, 17/12/2015)

The participant rejects the categorization and emphasises that it is wrong in the process challenging the former president's authority to categorize them. In spite of the external categorization that has considered gays and lesbians as less-human, it has not succeeded in changing some participant's self-perception.

7.2.2 'Worse than dogs and pigs', a tired charade

Creating borders on the basis of sexuality can be seen as an attempt to shame persons who are non-heterosexual so that they change and conform. Some participants felt that a better way of dealing with this attack on their status as human beings is to reject it as it does not take away their humanity. Thus for some participants the statement represented an expired mockery. As Clarity notes:

Aaa ikozvinozvi ndingati handina kana basa nazvo because ndakatukirwa muroad a long time ago saka ndikatonzwa munhu achitaura achidaroka ndendichitofunga kunzi akushaya zvimwe zvekuita. (Now I don't even give a hoot about it, if someone says it I actually laugh it off saying is this the best they could do (Author's Interview, 12/10/2015).

The '*worse than dogs and pigs*' jibe despite having gained currency, has become a 'tired attack' that gay and lesbian persons have been subjected to. Chibaba Natsi's response sums up what the majority of participants adopted as a way of rejecting and coping.

That kind of statement they can always say what they want but won't keep us down we are humans, so that's just rude speech. We all do the same, we all have the body we have the same functions we are humans so they can just say whatever but we are still humans, that is a very powerful statement but we are humans at the end of the day. Because there is this thing I have learnt if you are to take it so personal you might end up feeling that yourself. As long as you know you are not doing anything wrong to anybody this whole gay thing is on me and I know that I am human that means you have the right to tell yourself everyday then you will live better if you never listen to people because if somebody tells you, you are a pig then it means you are not human when you know you are a human so I don't think you need to take this thing into consideration, I don't so I want to keep it up right to continue being strong and not listen to what people say as long

they stand on what they believe in what they say so what? (Author's Interview, 15/07/2013)

What is evident is that participants felt that they could not do anything to change just because they had been compared to dogs and pigs. In the last transcript, reference to the '*whole gay thing being in me*' signifies that no amount of talk and insults can change what she perceives as natural. Being gay does also not make one subhuman neither does it affect one's functionality. Therefore the border that the former president attempted to set in classifying homosexual people as less-human is permeable as participants asserted that they are full human beings just like anyone else, thus they maintain the struggle for self-definition rather than to allow someone else to define them. Giddens (1992:30) notes that the project of cultivating the self is anchored to reflexivity as individuals scrutinize their identities, regarding them as objects of analysis and transformation. Thus the self-affirmation evident in the above experiences where the participants challenge the border set by the president demonstrates that the self is not a static or passive recipient of normative statements. It shows the contestation between structure and agency, the participants perceive, process and interpret the '*worse than dogs and pigs*' statement and dismiss it to claim their autonomy and humanity.

7.2.3. 'Worse than dogs and pigs' discourse influencing violence

As much as participants have come to shrug off the *cliché* they do reckon that its ripple effect within the society should not be underestimated as it creates a precarious situation for them in the society. Being accorded a sub-human status in the border war predicated on sexuality is interpreted by some unruly elements within the society as authorisation to do whatever they want against gays and lesbians. The statement consequently makes gays and lesbians secondary citizens. This seemingly has an effect of condoning any acts that will attempt to bring homosexual people to tow the line. Participants are perceived as being on the margins or located in peripheral zones of society thus not deserving equal protection as other human beings who are seen as conforming. Thus one could perpetrate various forms of harassment claiming that they are justified because the victims deserve it as they have been accorded peripheral status. The transcript below reflects how Nyasha bemoans how some ZANU PF youth wing members terrorize them based on what President said:

“...when number one in Zimbabwe I’m sorry I get emotional on this one, even if it’s part of your work (assuming that the researcher could be a state security agent) I have to say it, I love the 1st family, I love the 1st lady and her everything but do you know what? It hurts me when they speak of that, why because that man (President Mugabe) is a pillar of strength. That man is holding one country together and when he speaks like that he provokes emotions. Right now I have a youth militia which comes 3 to 5 times a month just to promise me that election time is coming, *urikuuya kuzotorwa nechitima cherusununguko*²⁹ (the freedom train is coming to take you), why? I’m myself, I don’t sleep with people, people don’t know who I sleep with because do you know what? I’m in my house or I’m working or I’m doing whatever I’m doing; I’m never really around in the ghetto... but they think that’s what’s happening to me and since they were given the leeway to do whatever they want because we are worse than pigs and dogs. Do you know what? They will treat us like that. Author’s Interview, 31/01/2013)

Jenkins (2008) notes that identities can imply social position and status. Thus it differentiates people as well as provides a basis for collective mobilization and action with those claiming heterosexual identity expressing their disapproval of same sex attraction. The mobilization is against those suspected to be homosexual. The language used by the president to castigate gays and lesbians does put them in a precarious position in communities where their sexuality is known or suspected.

7.2.4 ‘Worse than dogs and pigs’: Populist mantra

Reference made to elections above (to be explored in subsequent sections), reflects how election time provides an opportunity for grand-standing by using the homosexuality issue as a trump card for politicians. Chibaba Lee’s response succinctly captures what the majority of participants thought.

But if you are someone who has accepted yourself, it’s something you can actually laugh about like yaah boys did you hear what your President is saying. The reason why the

²⁹ Chitima cherusununguko (Freedom train) would in this case be referring to a strong popular movement, which is there to execute the majority’s interest, by that time the interests of the president were interpreted as in the best interest of everyone thus he was not to be opposed. All those perceived as going against the freedom train would be crushed as the locomotive passes by. So gay people will be crushed when the freedom train comes.

President is there is because of the people, the people vote for him and for him to remain there he has to say what people want. So in as much as Zimbabwe is a cultural country he can't go there, even if he wants to support us he can't say that in the face of the public just because the public can't vote for him. The president like anyone else has to say something that the nation ends up clapping hands for. Author's Interview, 17/06/2015

Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015) chronicle how in Uganda homophobia has been appropriated as a tool for cheap popularity. Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015:37) conclude that, homophobia “presents fertile ground for the cultivation of populist support from those who stand to gain from the status quo”. Posturing as anti-gay allows the politicians to appear as defenders of conservative religious values and cultural values hence having the interest of the nation. Thus setting borders of citizenry on sexuality was just seen by some participants as a political campaign strategy, therefore gays and lesbians should not dampen their spirits as it was just another form of vote-buying by politicians. Interestingly Chibaba Lee says even if the president wants to support gays he cannot do so, this shows how there is some doubt among some participants whether he really meant what he said or it was part of a political strategy. The former presented is depicted as playing to the gallery.

7.2.5 'Worse than dogs and pigs' metaphor as lack of knowledge

Some participants tried to relate to the president's position and blamed it on lack of knowledge on gay and lesbian issues which makes it difficult for him to appreciate who they are. Thus the perceived border is on the basis of lack of knowledge as well as culture and Christianity. The excerpt that follows summarizes what some participants felt. As Mario notes:

As I understand it's very difficult for someone who is not gay, who is not in the gay and lesbian community to understand so it's like the way people view people who are gay or lesbian they do not see it as natural to people who practice it, so they think they are practicing homosexuality for money, it is western thing so that is the reason which is contributing to some statements like that. The other thing is our culture is against it and people basing on religion, Christianity they know that God created a man and a woman so when a man takes another man they see it as bad that's why they liken us to pigs and dogs. Now I understand I couldn't blame them because the most important thing that is lacking is that there is no information, they haven't sat down with gays to listen to their

experiences listen to their stories so they just think we are doing it for other things not that it is something within our blood (Author's Interview, 20/05/2014).

Whereas Mario sanitizes the president and people's utterances as contributed by lack of knowledge, for Garry the '*worse than dogs and pigs*' statement created an opportunity for something more positive because it has the effect of generating debate. With the background of limited public discourse on sexuality matters, the president's utterances catapulted homosexuality issues to the public domain. Though it was not intended to draw interest but only castigation it has had a latent function of raising awareness of the existence of silenced identities. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from the interview with Garry:

Q: So how does it make you feel when the president talks about homosexuals being worse than dogs and pigs and what not? What's your opinion on statements like those?

Garry: uum (laughs) its uum... (laughs)

Q: You don't have to worry it's truly an academic study... (laughs)

Garry: Okay uum (laughs) after being involved with people close like very close to him look I'll not mention names or how they know each other or relate, for me it's just bullshit... That's just a lie to the nation, but I kind of like it because that gets people talking and the more people talk about the subject either negative or positive the more people are aware that this stuff needs to be talked about. For me it's a win (Author's Interview, 28/01/2015).

There is talk which is existent within the gay community as well as some sections of the society alleging that there are influential people who have sex with gay men. Some participants claimed to have had contact with government ministers and other influential people as 'pimps' or as their boyfriends. There were also media reports alleging that GALZ threatened the government that it was going to publish names of government officials who were involved in homosexual acts if the government did not abate its sustained attacks on the organization. Thus when antigay statements are uttered some participants viewed them as mere talk which should be just discarded as they were hypocritical. Thus some of the participants have ceased to consider the homocritical statements made by public officials. Some participants therefore take public castigation by politicians as an attempt of self-presentation (Goffman 1959, 1963). Politicians are seen as just

presenting a front whilst in the back stage they do not have a problem with homosexuality. Therefore it implies that the border is permeable.

7.3 Society's perceptions

Sigamoney and Epprecht (2013:84) note that, “the claim that homosexuality is ‘un-African’, for example, has gained notoriety as an articulation of homophobic prejudice throughout the continent”. However a growing body of scholarly work such as Thoreson (2014), Awondo et al. (2012) has problematized this stereotypical image of one homophobic Africa. Branding Africa as a homophobic continent misses the existence of internal debates (Awondo et al. 2012). Whilst Zimbabwe has attracted international headlines because of homophobic utterances made by influential people, it is a mistaken yet easy assumption to associate Zimbabwe with homophobia. As noted by Epprecht, (1998:2) “many Zimbabweans seemed sincerely baffled by the 'anti-homo' campaigns and responded with curiosity and essential tolerance that belies the homophobic label”. In the current study participant's responses demonstrate the complexity of society's perception on homosexuals as in some cases it illustrates outright homophobia whilst some have exhibited curiosity and some level of tolerance. The scripts go beyond a strictly homophobic label thus contesting the stereotypical notion of a homophobic Zimbabwe. Whilst the underlying factors towards castigation of gays and lesbians may be the same, they do not suffer in the same way as gay men may be more visible than lesbian women.

7.3.1 Negative experiences

Castigation of homosexuals at the official level had an effect of evoking animosity among individuals and sectors that shared the view that homosexuality was ‘uncultural’ thus ‘unZimbabwean’ and the society had to be defended from the ‘moral pestilence’. It was also perceived as ‘unnatural’, and accordingly it offended the ‘laws of nature’ as well as the moral fabric of the society. If it was then considered ‘unnatural’ and ‘uncultural’, the implication was that gay people were rebelling against God's order of creation as well as imitating behaviours that are foreign. Therefore the nation had to set boundaries to curb any possible ‘recruitment’ of young people into homosexuality. Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015:36) point out that in Uganda the antigay campaign consolidated the “fundamentalist mission with purported protection of the nation's children from predatory homosexual recruiters, the anti-homosexuality campaign gained virulent forcefulness”. In Zimbabwe certain perceptions on gays and lesbians were propagated,

such as the economically empowered foreigners using money to lure young people into homosexuality. It is within this context that the subjective identities of the participants are experienced.

7.3.1.1 Perceiving being gay as a form of subsistence

Some participants highlighted how some members of society perceives them as shameful victims of the predatory financially powerful individuals. They choose not to see gay men as human beings who have autonomy over their sexual and gender identity. The transcript that follows shows how some members of the society assume that it's not natural for a man to sleep with another man, thus think the relationship is only transactional with young men pursuing material benefits. Therefore the young gay men are viewed as lazy and unable do anything for themselves, hence they resort to being 'wives' of other men. Any assets or any money that they may have is assumed to be proceeds from the transactional sexual act they have with other men.

As Nyasha notes:

I'm sorry to use such words but society doesn't know anything, they don't even know the difference between their head and bum. The thing is society thinks once somebody is categorized gay, *haa anorara nemadhara, urikutaura kuti kudii kamfana kepagedi reblack kaye katori nemdara ndiye arikutokachengeta* (he sleeps with older men who are responsible for his upkeep). They do not even get to look at you. I perform three to four times a week, I do choreography for entertainment for three different clubs, I work with guys from the politburo, I work with guys from so many places. People don't get to look at that, what they just want to look at is the fact that I am gay. Right now you are parked outside my gate right, when people would speak nobody will ask but they will say *nhasi anedhara rinebenz* (today he is with that men driving that car parked outside), you see that's what society is about, society knows nothing, but I have run away from the question, can you please ask it again (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

The concern expressed by Nyasha is that the society does not perceive gay people as capable beings given to rationality and industriousness in order to earn a living. Thus they have been regarded as using their sexual orientation to earn a living. Some members of the society are seen as perceiving their relationships as transactional. As Nyasha notes, some people attribute his relatively comfortable life to a richer man with whom he is meant to be sleeping with, thus they

choose to ignore how he labours to acquire what he has. Being gay thus gets a lot of attention and overrides other capabilities and competencies of same sex loving individuals. Takura describes how some overzealous youth aligned to the ruling party even question him in pubs. As Takura notes:

Chipangano wants to come and know deeper, even if they see you drinking beer they want to know where you got the money, especially if you are not going to work, so they ask what's the source of the money, who is that guy who came around and who is driving that car? Now they are quiet because we answered back and stood our ground and told them this is life do what you want with yours and I will do what I want with mine (Author's Interview, 21/03/2013).

Chipangano is a paramilitary wing constituted of youths, which has in the past been used by the ZANU (PF) party to intimidate members of the opposition (Mudzingwa, 2012). Mutongwizo (2014:40) concludes that “studies of networks such as Chipangano help reveal the nuances of governance mechanisms that operate through the instrumentalization of violence and that use or exploit state identities”. Apart from the political role played by this group, one can note that to some extent the group has extended its intimidatory tactics in suppressing gay men. Given that gay men have been placed on the margins, they are put under surveillance by these young men who in most cases are unemployed. The logic of questioning Takura's source of funds is that, how can you have money to drink beer? It must be money coming from homosexual acts, therefore that's why you are a homosexual so that you have money. In this discourse gay men are depicted as beneficiaries of transactional sex.

7.3.1.2 Gays and lesbians as Political pawns

Ndjio (2013:126) notes that “in many African countries, sexuality has become a political and social landscape of privileged intervention by the post-colonial state seeking to purify the body of the nation”. The policing by the political party affiliated youths (chipangano) is predicated on the notion that homosexuality is antithetical to Zimbabwean culture. The participants indicated that when *chipangano* (youths) know where you are staying particularly in the high density³⁰

³⁰ High density, in Harare urban planning has been characterised by zoning on the basis of socio-economic class. There are areas that are less densely populated in which it is more costly to secure land and areas which are densely

they can come there and start shouting insults and singing songs that echo what the former president said about homosexuality. The transcript from Takura helps to illustrate this;

I did not want to say, but its ZANU PF youth, those who just hang around smoking dung, those with nothing to do, those failures in life, yaah those are the ones who are part of Chipangano. So me and my boyfriend we were seen around drinking beer and having fun, you know the problem when you get drunk you can start holding each other (sort of caressing) not that you are being indecent but just like putting your hand on top of the other guys leg and because in their mind they have it that you are gay so they start connecting and say you are in love with that person and at the end they want to come and see what is happening in your life, they want to know your moves, who you are with , what are you doing, who did you sleep with? (Policing you). And they once came and started singing songs, *hee baba varamba chingotchani what what!!* (The head of state has said no to homosexuality). But at the end if you are scared of them they will continue coming, and will make you their ball (easy target), so you have to face them and confront them. You then say so what do you want? You have said I am gay, *ndiri ngotchani*, so what do you want from me, how have I wronged you? Who did I sleep with? (Author's Interview, 21/03/2013)

The experience shows how the statements by the former president cascaded down to those who then take it upon themselves to be responsible for cleansing the country of individuals on the margins because they were homosexuals. Reference to '*baba varamba*' (the head of state has rejected homosexuality) reflects how some people influenced by their former leader now perceive sexuality as a border marker on who deserves to be a Zimbabwean with full rights and who does not. However despite being placed on the margins some participants have managed to withstand attacks and challenge those attempting to intimidate them. Direct confrontation has been seen to work in some instances. Therefore some same-sex attracted individuals have not passively accepted the intimidation but have tried to defend themselves.

populated which are relatively cheaper. The high density areas accommodate the majority of people and in some areas they have exceeded their carrying capacity.

7.3.1.3 Normalized violence against gay men

Nyasha who lives in the high density narrated incidences of victimization by some youths. When he moved in to the area rumor went around that an older man had bought him a house yet the house was bought by his parent who relocated to Europe. As Nyasha notes:

I have been here for 6 years and when I first moved in, there was a rumor that circulated that there is a young gay guy who moved in, he has got an old man who bought him a house. Before I moved in we just started, what can I call it? Doing up stuff that is damaged (making renovations), so people could see it and they believed it because they would just see me come in and bring builders and stuff and I would go. So people now believed it when I moved in I would have groups of guys pass by my gate, throw stones on the roof of the house, the whole gate *yakadirwa mascud (messed up with opaque beer)*, you can have people screaming, *ngotchani tichakumamisa (homosexual we will beat you)* at 2/3 am. This area is full of people who smoke weed, the first few days I was afraid because sometime I will be walking and you would be stoned with bricks.

Sometimes friends would come over during those days, then after 10 or 15 minutes, 20 or 30 guys come to the gate, *tanzwa kuti munokwirisa tauya kuzokwira (we heard that you get fucked by men, we have come to fuck)* and you are looking at these men like are you normal and *unonzwa voti tinemari yedu iwe usatishainire mhanhiwe (we have our money)*, like there is a crowd of people who are shouting and there is so much going on and you will be like really. Author's Interview, 21/02/2013

Niang et al (2003:507) noted that in Senegal several gay men reported physical abuse such as blows and stone throwing. In Zimbabwe some participants have also been exposed to these sorts of responses in addition to threats of physical violence. The case of Nyasha reflects a number of things which are mainly based on misconceptions about gay men and attempts to associate Zimbabwean citizenry with heterosexuality. Firstly gay men are perceived to be on the margins of the border thus they do not deserve to live among the general members of society unless they change. This is based on the misconception that what they have may be 'contagious' and will contaminate others, therefore the youths were doing their neighborhood an honorable act. Perceiving homosexuality as a contagion assumes that gay people will recruit others, hence the society will become tainted. Secondly popular local discourse depicts rich white man luring young men into homosexuality because of money. As noted above, this kind of thinking pictures

gay people as incapable of working on their own. The mockery is even extended by the young men when they claim to have money and they have come to have sex with the participant and his friends. This emanates from the society's lack of understanding on who gays and lesbians are. Therefore the young men without knowledge about gay people, are gullible to homocritical misrepresentations by those in positions of influence. Thus the 'anti-queer animus' is also significantly fueled by misconceptions. The attempt to mock Nyasha and his friends by offering them money to have sex with them implies that they perceived gay men as individuals who have sex with just anyone with money as if they were 'sex workers'.

7.3.1.4 They think lesbians have to be ugly

Whereas Nyasha and Mario (in the preceding paragraphs) bemoaned the lack of knowledge in the society on what it means to be gay and lesbian, Chibaba Natsi (butch lesbian) reflects on how some people do not accept that she is a lesbian because they do not consider her as ugly. Ciasullo (2001) notes that prior versions of lesbianism depicted the women as unattractive and undesirable. The assumption is that any woman who can attract a man is not justified in becoming a lesbian because she can attain what is valorised and desirable in the society, 'getting married to a man'. They do not consider lesbianism as an avenue providing women with space to be autonomous about their sexuality but just as a fall-back option for those considered as not 'desirable' mates by men. Chibaba Natsi describes what people say at her workplace:

Yaah how is it at the workplace? They do discuss I can't say they do tell some that are not too exposed they just always want believe that no way it's something that doesn't exist, but maybe some who know are like 80s or 70s and they can tell by the dressing and act like guys are known as tomboys so when I go there they always say like, "tomboy" and I always act cool but maybe because I have gone there for a long time they are like yaah how come you don't have a boyfriend? I always brush it off I am like no, no, no, my boyfriend is away and they say oh okay. So sometimes I have just to act like I'm not even gay at all but I always keep to myself, that's how I do it. But I think there is the fact I have discovered in Zimbabwe they think that most gay people have to be ugly. Or they think it's an option for some because of the issue that they are not liked by men, so when they see me it's not like I'm all nice but they will be like she is okay so there is no way she can want to turn to women. There is a guy who was surprised he told me that all this

while I thought gay women turn so because no men wants to take them because they are ugly and he said oh that's an eye opener so when somebody sees me will be like she is okay she can't be, that's how some are much more back ward. (Author's Interview, 15/07/2015).

7.3.2 Street 'policing', name- calling and harassment

There are several incidences that were reported by participants where they were verbally harassed by strangers or people that they hardly knew in the streets in residential areas, central business district or other crowded areas. The verbal insults ranged from shouting obscenities which in some cases culminated in inciting crowds against the participants. Participants responded to such attacks in different ways. The attacks could basically be interpreted as an attempt to police citizens' sexuality. Popular discourse had located the sexual practices of gays and lesbians outside the borders. Thus whoever was harassing or influencing the people to do so would be tolerated, encouraged or supported by others as they were perceived to be doing so in defence of the society's culture. However it is also important to note that in some cases the participants were also saved from the beatings by some members of society who come to their defence. Some participants such as Madzimai Quality reported that, *'most people speak against homosexuals, you don't get to hear people who in support of homosexuals'* (Author's Interview, 13/12/2014). The transcript below reflects some verbal harassments that are carried out on in the streets, there is a lot of name calling by other people.

Madzimai Trish: It's always the usual, "*hee ngochani, hee*" (you homosexual) stuff like that. Nothing too serious.

Q: So how does it make you feel when you are walking around and there is name calling, how does it make you feel?

Madzimai Trish: With me I've opted to do selective hearing. I take in what I want to hear and what I don't want to hear I shut it out so they can say what they want I really don't mind anymore because it is who I am.

Q: What is it that you know that the people are saying?

A: That, everyone is saying they should be stopped, they should be jailed and yeah things that are along those lines, they should be banished and so forth. (Author's Interview, 17/12/2015)

The participant downplays the name calling probably due to the fact that she has been exposed to it on numerous occasions hence referring to it as the usual stuff. The participant coping strategy which seems to have been adopted by many is not to pay much attention to what the people say as they are tired of the hurtful words which are thrown at them. The participant's use of '*it is who I am*' is predicated on naturalisation of who they are and they have a right to live their life and sexually express themselves in a way that reflects who they are. Thus despite the verbal insults and intimidation by dominant forces, participants are not cowed into submission and retiring underground. Similarly, Niang et al (2003:507) noted that in Senegal nearly half of the 250 gay men surveyed had experienced verbal abuse including insults and threats.

7.3.2.1 Butch Lesbians accused of usurping male supremacy

Chitando and Manyonganise (2015:3) note that, "an important fact about hegemonic masculinity is that women are there to satisfy men's sexual desires, while men are deemed not to gratify fellow men's sexual needs". With this background, butch lesbians can be seen as rebelling from satisfying men's sexual desires but instead compete with them. Therefore the insults that are vented on some lesbians are an attempt to safeguard hegemonic masculinity in which women are expected to provide heterosexual men with sexual validation, and men compete with each other for this (Chitando and Manyonganise, 2015). As Madzimai Trish notes:

Madzimai Trish: People are always mocking aah, everyone well not everyone but most people especially in town well there was this one time we were going to Warren Park with my girlfriend and my best friend, so where we were going like close to where the rank is and we were the few last people on the kombi and then the guys, the driver and the conductor noticed that there was something queer about the other girl we were with, which is my girlfriend the butch, so they closed the door when the last person got out and then they were like... uum can I say this in Shona?

Q: Yeah sure you are free to

A: They were like "*iwewe mupfanha iwewe ukuda kutoita zvebababie ukatora mababie ese isusu tinozoita sei?*" (hey lad you are taking our girlfriends what do you think we are supposed to do?). So they were being... what can I say, they were being too aggressive and they pushed her around pushed us out of the ET (commuter omnibus) and I can say

that's the only encounter we had. The only bad encounter we had. (Author's Interview, 17/12/2015).

Msibi (2009:51) observes that “homophobic violence is largely based on the notion that effeminate gay men betray the superiority of masculinity and masculine lesbian women challenge and try to usurp male superiority”. The preceding transcript indicates how lesbianism is regarded as a threat to the dominant mode of patriarchy, according to which women are there to satisfy men's needs. It thus becomes a direct challenge to male interests to have other women dating women. The question posed by the emergency taxi crew as to what would become of men if Madzimai Trish's partner was taking girls, indicates how patriarchal men feel threatened by butch lesbians. As noted by Chitando and Manyonganise (2015:3), hegemonic masculinity assumes that women are there to satisfy men's sexual desires. Thus the men who confronted them were attempting to safeguard the territory they thought was legitimately theirs on the basis of what the society approves.

7.3.2.2 Effeminate men victimised for 'betrayal' of hegemonic masculinity

Significantly, given that according to heterosexism men's sexual desires are to be fulfilled by women, other men could not perform the role that was done by women, hence any man who gratified sexual desires of other men had betrayed hegemonic masculinity and should be sanctioned. Men who do not fit into the existent hegemonic masculinity constructions are seen as deserving derogatory terms. Mario reflects on how they are regarded as 'wives' of other men:

We are given a lot of names, but the name that is common is *ngochane*, *chichiman*, *sodindo*, they quote from the president's speech, which they say I don't know if it's true, but they say *vanofemera vamwe varume mugotsi* (breathing in other men's necks), they call us lots of names, some call us *vanasisi* (sisters) or *vakadzi vevanhu* (other men's wives). They say all sorts of things whilst walking next to us (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014)

Evidently some of the names are derived from the president's speeches whilst others come from popular international musicians who have anti-gay stunts. The president on one his speeches influenced the anti-queer animus by describing gay men as '*breathing in other men's necks*', in this he was attempting to belittle gay people. The statement was meant to be an insult that they

‘bend other men’. Buju Banton, Beenie-Man, Elephant Man and Cello-culture are among some international reggae artists who have a significant following in Zimbabwe and their anti-gay chants (*chichiman*) are borrowed and used in the local context. Zimbabwe has been significantly impacted by dancehall music and it is popular in high density areas. The *chichiman* word is thus taken from dancehall songs which denounce gay men. Sindiso said, “*Zvekunzi iwe chichiman, kune vaiti chichiman famba zvakanaka usaite semukadzi*” (They shout at you *chichiman* walk properly don’t walk like a woman) (Author’s Interview, 30/05/2015). The growing genre of dancehall music in Zimbabwe, is heavily influenced by some of these international dancehall artists. The genre is popular among urban youths, some of their lyrics by artists such as Ricky-fire and Celsius Ghetto Life throw jibes at gay people. In this way the explicit hate music lyrics (homophobic chants) are apparently normalised, thus successfully branding gay people as abnormal. Some members of the society also use vernacular descriptions belittling gay men by depicting them as feminine and not real men.

7.3.2.3 Feminine themed clothing among gay men attracts insults

Media reports have shown how women who are dressed in ways that the ‘public’ finds provocative have been exposed to harassment by the rowdy crowds (The Herald 27 January 2015). Similarly, dressing (self-styling) has been used by the public to classify other people as homosexuals, who are in need of public correction. Msibi (2009:53) attests that there are covert and overt ways in which many are policed and regulated in maintaining traditional and normative masculinities. Dressing is one such area where individuals are policed and signs of crossing the border could be seen as signalling that one is a different man or woman. The transcript below shows how Sindiso’s dressing was considered as ‘crossing the line’ (Msibi, 2009) between straight men and gay men. As Sindiso notes:

I was putting on skinny jeans, which were ripped, then someone shouted *ngochani*, don’t you know this one the one who plays with X, they started chasing me, I had to seek refuge on other people’s house, but these days it hardly happens (being chased after), they only verbally insult me but I am used to it now. (Author’s Interview 30/05/2015)

Attempts to censure the participant could be a reflection of attempts to reinforce hegemonic masculinity by silencing alternative forms that were perceived as betraying masculinity. In doing this the participants felt justified to use whatever means to regulate the behaviour of other men

they felt were effeminate. Whereas Sindiso was fortunate to escape the physical attack Nyasha, was assaulted by a group of men with a whip on his way to a health facility:

I got sick and when I came here there was one clinic close to down there which I could use to get my medication every day. There was a group of guys who stayed close to the clinic and one morning I'm walking to the clinic, one guy comes up and starts shouting, *uringotchani, mwana wemuroyi* (you are a homosexual, child of a witch) what, what. I'm normally used to being shouted because it happens so many times and I actually block it out of my head, but this guy just pulls a whip out of nowhere and hits me on the back. Hey I turned around and looked at him and he is like *hehehe* (says all sort of stuff). It's actually the people from the neighbourhood who actually stopped him (Author's Interview 31/01/2013)

7.3.2.4 Nature of verbal abuse in the Central Business District (CBD)

Some members of the society assume that they have powers to 'police' others on what they wear, their decorum and who they associate with, particularly if they suspect or know that they are gay. Thus there are a number of factors that could predispose one to verbal or even physical attacks. In Chapter 5, I reflected on the use of '*ngengirosi*' and some participants understood that it captured the flair and flamboyance that gay men possess. This at times makes them visible to other people. Generally the society gives boundaries on masculine and feminine clothes. Thus those individuals who put on clothes that are considered feminine are labelled gay. I consider selected responses on the experience of some participants. Mic Tagarira reflects on what he describes as the worst street experience in the city centre:

Usually name calling and then, and it's usually when I have someone else who is gay that's when people decide to name call me. But when I'm alone, you can see like this person is looking and wants to say something but they cannot say it, because I would be looking good then two, three, four people that's when, yea this starts, saying this and that, I have never had physical altercations. There is this incident I won't forget, at first it was by my area (near the college he goes to), where NSSA is. There is Second Street and then there is CBZ bank, and the guys who park their cars there were really drunk, because I was walking with my straight friend, who knows I'm gay and luckily my friend he grew up in America, so he does not understand Shona. There was one guy who started saying

hona ngochani iyo hona ngochani iyo (look at that homosexual). I'm walking, and I'm thinking 'Oh God its Taffie' and his name is Taffie my friend, 'Taffie please please don't listen, don't listen', "hona ngochani iyo" and like three of them came, four, five shouting. I was walking and walking away, then he looked at me, and he saw me getting terrorised and he was sorry because I felt it, because we had people screaming stuff and then you have the vendors listening, you have people passing in cars listening and there was so much attention on me, and I think that was the worst outside world experience I have had and that was last in year (2014). You could tell that they were calling at me, and my friend was like "nooo don't worry don't worry they are just drunk". I never said anything, I just minded my own business, I did not do anything. I did not try to get on them I didn't touch any of them, it was just them starting to call me names, because they wanted to, because they were drunk so they wanted to have fun, I was their toy. I was crying and they were laughing, it was horrible. That was the first experience I have ever had that was the first since high school (Author's Interview, 11/08/2015).

In this incident, which is similar to what others go through, it starts with an individual who just shouts '*ngochani*' and it can become a social current with some joining in attempts to belittle the participants. The perpetrators ride on the 'tone' that has been set by the leaders in various capacities, for instance politicians, religious ministers and unfavourable media coverage. Thus seeing gay men presents an opportunity to publicly disparage them in the comfort that the law enforcers will not arrest them as they have not done anything wrong but are simply helping out the society by discrediting homosexuals. In this case evidently the other people become spectators, who did not attempt to protect the victim, making them complicit in the 'homophobic' attacks. However in a context where the president attacked gays, those standing for gay rights and even their sympathisers, one cannot tell whether the bystanders were in support or not in support as some could fear retribution as they will be deemed as promoting homosexuality, which had been unilaterally described as an 'enemy of the state'. Therefore the border that has been set by the head of state was being enforced by those attacking gay people.

7.4. Positive experiences

7.4.1 Members of society censuring those attacking gays and lesbians

Whilst one cannot underestimate the ‘homophobic’ experiences that some participants go through, it is also important to note that not everyone supports the homophobic positions adopted by some in the community. In most cases the source of refuge and support for individuals being harassed are members of society. Sindiso and Nyasha were spared further victimisation by other members of the community. In Sindiso’s case he had to seek refuge in a stranger’s house whilst fleeing those pursuing him while Nyasha’s attacker wielding a whip had to be restrained by other members of the community. Another participant, Larry, expressed how someone from his neighbourhood saved him from attacks by a drunk person who was accusing him of homosexuality. This challenges the assumption of a universally homophobic Zimbabwe. There are members of society who can and do rebuke individuals who engage in name calling, who want to make fun of the participants. Chibaba Lee considers the society as understanding and can be supportive in the event that one is about to be victimised:

I was by the local shopping centre and an airtime (phone credit) vendor started making fun out of me by trying to draw attention of others. He was shouting is this a boy or a girl. Like I do remember everyone who was there was like is this young man mad, are you normal, so why are you shouting about it, don’t you see her, can’t you ask her? I could feel that he was being condemned by others because of his actions. I did not say anything and everyone was on his case and he was like, apologising to me, I am sorry. So the society turns to accept and understands that especially those who do mind their business, they don’t see anything wrong with you like yaah (Author’s Interview, 17/06/2015).

7.4.2 Supportive landlords and neighbours

The ‘homophobic’ tag that Zimbabwe in general has been associated with needs to be unpacked as not all experiences substantiate that. Makofane et al (2014:189) note that one of the consequences of the Ugandan parliament’s repeated resurrection of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill led to loss of housing and employment among LGBTI people. Whilst there are alleged reports on such incidences, amongst the current participants it did not get to such extremes though there were threats of losing housing. Mario reflects how people in his neighbourhood despite knowing

his sexual orientation have not ill-treated him. The aftermath of the famous raid on GALZ where 42 were detained was characterised by profiling and police visits of all those that had their names taken down. It included the police disclosing details to the individuals who stayed with those caught at GALZ. Mario was amongst those who were unfortunate to have their landlord informed about his sexual orientation:

In my society they don't suspect! But they know that I am gay, It's like where I rent (stay) at the first house (in the same area) there is someone who is gay who has stayed there for a long time, so when I came back there is an incident which happened. We had a party and after that party they discovered that I am gay. But I think they had noticed because it was midmonth and the landlord (lady) said the society is complaining about you so I can't live with you. So I was given a notice, so month end you should make sure that you are out because the society could not accept what you are doing, so I just said its ok. But three days later she came back and said you can stay so I cannot even chase you because there is Comfort who stays there you can stay. So that's how they started to accept it, so I have a good relationship with my landlady and others in the area. I think what most contributes to the harassment in the society will be the way you behave in the society. It's something also that they are against those people who are not from the area, if your friend comes they think that they are the ones influencing you so they can accept (tolerate) you but they cannot accept (tolerate) somebody who has come to visit you (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014).

The participant raises the point that he has a good relationship with others and there is a certain level of acceptance and tolerance. However the participant also highlights that the society may not tolerate gay people who come from outside their community in their attempt to protect their territory from being influenced by gay people. The assumption is the more gay people from outside come and interact with the gay people in their community, the more they will influence them to continue with that lifestyle. Possibly the fear is that some people within their community may also be influenced. Participants also noted that despite talking behind their backs (gossiping), there is not much that the people do, they end up tolerating them. As Takura notes:

The women from the neighborhood I don't think it's a problem, yes they do gossip but if they do it in their woman' spaces they do not have the proof and guts to come and

confront you to say, *nhai mwanangu saka urikuuta zvechingotchani* (hey my son you are doing this homosexuality thing) . They just end at saying today did you see the slack that he went out putting on, hey! (Author's Interview, 21/03/2013).

7.4.3 Ambivalent Societal members

For some participants it was difficult to evaluate what the society thinks about them. Garry talks about how people he has been in contact with say all sort of things to him about what other people may be saying about him, but they themselves do not directly attribute whatever they are saying to themselves, so it's hard to decipher what the society thinks. He however says that he has never in his life had people attacking him physically as people play friendly. Despite all things said the popularized 'wave of homophobia' needs to be treated with caution.

Q: Given that some people know and some people don't but how do you think people view you?

Garry: That's a good question because I wish I knew (laughs out loud). Like I have been involved with quite a number of people around the neighbourhood I am living in now and the other neighbourhoods I have lived in and it's so funny because one person comes to you and says so and so was bad mouthing about you and this person who says this to you is someone you've been with. And then whatever happens that time happens and they go off and then that person they told you about shows up and they say the same thing. So I guess it's just like when people are talking among friends they say it's bad and then well who knows what happens behind closed doors.

Q: So has society ever victimized you for your sexual identity?

Gary: No, not at all, they play friendly all the time, but sometimes you know you can tell when someone is playing friendly they will knock on my door and I welcome them with open arms but I always know that these ones are the kind of people that.(Author's Interview, 28/01/2015).

The level of (in)tolerance seems to vary depending on the whether the community is a high or low density area though this is not the sole factor. The participants from high density areas such as Highfield, Glenview and Glennorah have had mixed experiences within their immediate community. They have had negative, positive as well as neutral experiences. Above all they do

generally get along with their immediate community notwithstanding the intermittent homophobic experiences. Mic Tagarira and other participants who stayed in low and middle density residential areas expressed how they have not experienced people passing homophobic utterances as they tend to keep to their own issues. As Mic Tagarira notes:

Where I stay people mind their own business, because I stay in a quiet neighbourhood I have never heard people calling me. Walking in town, yea there might be one person who decides to shout at you, but in my neighbourhood no. I do consider myself as one of the lucky ones because I do not have that much discrimination from the outside world after high school, so with society, I have no difficulty (Author's Interview 11/08/2015).

7.4.4 'Not so bad', favorable experiences with health service providers

Makofane et al (2014:189) note the anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda triggered refusal of service to LGBT patients by health service providers as they feared losing their own jobs. Hunt, Bristowe, Chidyamatatare and Harding (2017:4) also note that in Zimbabwe "participants reported humiliating responses and inadequate care from health workers when sexual orientation or sex worker status was disclosed, often resulting in unwillingness to pursue treatment". One should not, however, conclude that that's the universal situation in Harare. Whilst such cases have been reported, it is important to note that some health practitioners have provided services and sought the protection of LGBTI individuals. Thoreson (2014:24) cautions assumptions on horizontal homophobia, in this case even internally there are divergent experiences. Mario describes his experience when he was beaten by the police, collapsed and was taken by the police to a government health center:

I was the only person who was carried to Parirenyatwa hospital, I still remember that I was accompanied by about 6 police officers. So the female doctor asked what is their role? What is it that the patient has committed? And they explained to her that *anoita zvechingochani* (he does homosexuality things), then the doctor said but democracy doesn't allow you to beat a person because they are gay. Did you catch him in the act? Then they changed the statement that I had been caught in a gathering that was not approved by the police. Then the doctor said if it was not approved you would have just dismissed them than beating the person up to this extent because if I am going to write

the truth about this you will end up in trouble. So the police officers just vanished after the doctor had said that.

Q: So what would you say about how the doctor treated you?

Mario: I would lie if I say they stigmatized me, because the female doctor referred me to the physician who was good, he was even nice, he talked to me and the nurses who attended to me were very kind. (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014)

Generally some participants have not had problems with health service providers. GALZ also has networks with gay-friendly health centers in Harare where their members can get medical attention in the event of being beaten in raids. The participants have also established centers that they perceive to be friendly in the event of anal STIs and these are communicated through informal channels. In my continuous interactions with Nyasha, he spoke about how informally they were assisting other young gay men who were scared of going to health centers due to fears of stigmatization. *"We the more senior guys take them to health centers that we know are friendly rather than to let them rot at the back because sometimes GALZ does little to help us here in the high density"* (Author's Interview, 2017) . Thus coping strategies have been adopted to deal with the challenge of unfriendly health service providers. Informal sororities play a crucial role as gays devise coping strategies. On various occasions I found Nyasha in the company of young gay men that he and his other friends claim to advise and mentor. Mario also reflected on how a medical doctor came to his rescue when his family requested the doctor to perform an operation that will change him from being gay. The doctor offered professional advice to them. As Mario notes:

.... so they tried a lot to make me change to the extent that they went to one doctor who is in Masvingo (Dr X) thinking that if it was in my blood an operation could be done so that I won't have any feelings for men, but the doctor suggested that it's not something that I choose deliberately to love men. Still up to now they are trying to change me

Q: What did the doctor say?

Mario: He talked to them and tried to explain what was it like, because the doctor was against their idea, so he tried to explain to them what it was like and he said maybe it will change with time, so they had belief in the doctor. (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014)

7.4.5 Forging ‘joking’ relations with community members

One of the coping strategies that has been employed by some participants both from high and low density areas has been forging ‘joking’ relations with neighbours and other people they come into contact with on regular bases. I could observe how Nyasha, one of the participants who I have visited on numerous occasions either to conduct an interview at his residency or just paying a courtesy call, seems to get along with his neighbours. I have also witnessed that many young people both male and female come to talk to him. Whilst some people would shout his name when he is walking in the street, he replied to them courteously. He is popular in his neighbourhood and they tolerate him despite having a sexual orientation that has been despised by political and religious leaders. Chibaba Lee has also adopted a similar strategy of engaging with people that she meets regularly in her community. As Chibaba Lee notes:

When I am passing by the shopping centre, some of the unemployed guys who used to sell fuel on the black-market just greet me and I return the favour. We can even talk about soccer as I also play soccer, and they will be teasing me asking whether I am a good player or a bad one. So that’s what happens, so like the community that you grow up in, people they do understand, they turn to understand that like yaah even some relatives actually those from the hood. I can create those relationships like *mbuya nemuzukuru* (grandmother and granddaughter). If I say *hesi gogo* (exchange a greeting) like even if when you are dressed in a butch way, they seem to understand. (Author’s Interview, 17/06/2015)

7.4.6 General success earning respectability for gay men.

The day to day experiences of gays and lesbians are not always characterized by homophobic challenges but some relative tolerance. Some participants said they have attained a level of respectability within the community because they have been successful in their lives as they have satisfactory employment. I reflect on two participants who perceive that the society does not say much about them due to their level of success. As Terry notes:

People see that around I’m more educated and successful , but when I was young people would insult me, they would call me Sodindo, so I learnt that I had to hide, try to walk like a man, had to change *zwakawanda* (many things in order to fit) (Author’s Interview 03/02/2013).

Similarly Stavo echoed similar sentiments:

Normally as for me may be back then, but now I just keep to myself, I go to work so normally they may talk about it but it doesn't get to me. I think it's different because if you do not go to work you cannot do everything, they (people) will be 100% control on you because you can't do things for yourself. As for me I think I can go out, sleep out and no one asks me because I do my own things, I get money for myself so people see that I am successful and they do not say much.(Author's Interview,

The participants perceived their relative degree of success as helping to mitigate possible victimization and harassment by the community. The participants are thus seen as capable individuals who have succeeded in life. Their success in life can to some extent serve to neutralize the prevalent thinking in some communities to the effect that gay people live the way they do because they want money. Their success thus is assumed to divert attention from their perceived sexual orientation as the society tends to appreciate the progress they have made. As Terry explained:

If you are good at what you do I think that people don't care about what you do behind, but leadership has made it a crime. Am I afraid of the wider community? I'm not! My life is my life I have a right to love whoever I love (Author's Interview, 03/02/2013).

The condemnation of the participants' sexual identity by dominant societal structures does not change their subjective identity. The discursive statement by Terry that, *'My life is my life I have a right to love whoever I love'* is an indication of how despite the force exerted on individuals by social structure they can decide to adopt a lifestyle that they want. What can be noted is that beyond the dominant discourse of homophobia and heteronormative structures, same-sex loving people have not been obliterated.

7.5 Media Representation

The media is a significant institution in shaping a society's perceptions on the LGBTI community and Zimbabwe has not been spared from the effect of the media in agenda setting. As noted in the introductory chapter, the state-controlled media which enjoyed monopoly before the proliferation of private and social media mainly portrayed gay people negatively. In this section I review the categorization same sex loving people in the print media and traditional electronic

media. They significantly amplified the homophobic utterances made by some political, religious and traditional leaders (Campbell, 2002, Engelke, 1999, Epprecht, 1998, Dunton and Palmberg, 1996). In Uganda the “tabloid Rolling Stone published the photos, names, and other identifying information of 100 LGBT citizens under a headline tagged ‘Hang Them” (Makofane, 2014:188). However, Zimbabwe’s media houses have not done that. Nevertheless, the local tabloid H-metro is infamous for publishing pictures of those that may have been accused of being gay or would have their pictures leaked when relations with their partners strain. Generally, the media has not given much space to reporting on homosexuality issues and when space has been offered it typically offers a negative portrayal of gays and lesbians. The sections that follow explore how the participants perceive how they have been portrayed by the local media. Whereas some participants perceived the media as misguided for misrepresenting LGBTI issues in a way that fuels stigma, others reflected unfavourably on media control and ownership which determines what does or does not get coverage. Some responses found the root cause of the media representation as lying within what President Mugabe had said. Accordingly, their understanding was that the media is not free to express its views but have to toe the line: For example Terry noted:

Media is not a problem but leadership is, if the President says something then the media has to do that. (Author’s Interview, 03/02/2013)

Similarly Takura sees the media as influenced by the leaders:

Aaa Zimbabwean media I don’t know, their brains were taken by their father (President) whatever he says is what they follow, if he supports today the media is going to support, if he goes against the media will do the same, so in the end there is no major difference, it’s all the same (Author’s Interview, 21/03/2013)

Whereas Terry was diplomatic, Takura was blunt about why currently there are negative portrayals of gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe. The media is seen as reinforcing the border wars pitting ‘homosexuals’ as situated on the margins of society. They are depicted as peripheral citizens who are an ‘eyesore’ to the society and who deserve to be rehabilitated if not punished. However what is significant in Terry and Takura’s accounts is their perception that the agenda has been set by the president on how the media should report on ‘gay’ issues. Mario reflects on how the media is not independent and observes that this then influences the final outcomes with

regard to what goes in and what stays out of publications. In their quest for survival, media houses have to comply with the wishes of those who wield power and have influence over its editorial policies. This practically erases any chance of balanced accounts.

Q: The media in Zimbabwe, sometimes has stories about gays and lesbian what is your view of the media representation?

Mario: I think what the media is doing is dancing to someone's tune, because I don't think that media is independent, but it will dance to someone's tune or to a political party. Because you find out that there is this paper which is writing against it (homosexuality) and this paper which writes something different. So if I'm looking at the media here it's not that independent so the editor or journalist could just write a story which is then edited by the editor and come out, but it's either that the person maybe a church leader or a politician. (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014)

The effect of the above dynamics have contributed to sensationalized headlines and newspaper articles. Some participants felt that the media portrays them in a negative way. There is hardly anything good that has been published in the traditional print and electronic media. Chibaba Tindo sums up what many of the respondents thought about their portrayal in the media, '*I have never seen anything on the media which is for homosexuality. The media is very homophobic*' (Author's Interview, 14/05/2014). The point raised by the participant is that the media castigates them and fuels homophobia through its biased representation of LGBTI issues. This has a tendency of normalizing the pathological discourses on gays and lesbians. As Madzimai Quality notes;

The media is not very friendly *ngito hadziite* (gay people are bad) like we were saying that's what they say, lesbians and gays are not allowed in Zimbabwe and the media is always saying bad and a lot of stuff about us, always. (Author's Interview, 13/12/2014)

Similarly Mic Tagarira complained:

I read an article saying gays don't have the right to be African, I'm like okay...I didn't read the whole article but some pastor is saying some crap, like gay people are going to hell, shame, shame. (Author's Interview, 11/08/2015).

The consequence of this media representation is perceived by other participants as dire in that it will fuel a lot of challenges for gays and lesbians, key among them is the lack of open discussions on sexual orientation and gender identity. This will have an impact on families, placing pressure on parents not to accept their children who turn out to be gay. As Nyasha notes:

Like I told you society knows nothing, if society wanted to know something they should sit down with the people and talk. I will not hear somebody speaking down on gays, or speaking against gays, why because you don't know them. Your own child could be gay in your own house but cannot come out to you because you are castigating them. I lived in a family whereby my mother would attack gay people with such verve, I was even afraid to tell anyone that's how I am. We have kids 16, 17, 14, 15 they who are coming up these kids need to be taught the right thing, they need to be told that being gay doesn't mean that you have to live like a dog. It doesn't mean you have to be jabbed by every men who passes by. But just because of what the media and some people are doing right now it can't be done. Right nobody is going to come out, some people are being abused in homes they don't know whether they are or not , do you know that they are people who are confused, they don't know whether they like guys or girls, it's because they have mixed feelings, you can't talk to people like that , do you know what? Because Zimbabwe says it doesn't exist. (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013)

Therefore, what can be observed is that as the media feeds into the 'border wars' of perceiving homosexuality as something marginal, participants resort to discretion. Accordingly, because gays and lesbians fear what others might say, they cannot talk openly about their sexual orientation. The concealment of sexual orientation has the effect of perpetuating the lack of knowledge on what constitutes being gay. An ancillary of that would be the very strong possibility of one being forced to conform. In an attempt to conform they end up having partners of the opposite sex even though they are not sexually attracted to them. Stavo, whilst maintaining that he was gay, had a girlfriend as a way of diverting attention from his sexuality. *'I have a girlfriend and the people around know her, so they don't say much about me'* (Author's Interview, 15/07/2015). Therefore, in order not to have an identity that is portrayed by the media as unacceptable, Stavo and others have relationships of convenience as coping mechanisms (the idea is further explored in the next chapter which focuses on family interface).

Participants have adopted various positions on how the media represent gay issues in Zimbabwe. Despite being categorized as ‘marginal people’ by the media some participants indicated how they are not moved by what appears in the media. They have developed this as a way of rejecting the negative portrayal that is typical of the media. They have come to a point of saying let the media people write whatever they write but they are not going to be affected as this to some is a mere campaign strategy. As Ricky notes:

I stopped looking at it, they was a time that it used to get to me, but it no longer does, I have seen the police, journalists and all sorts of people who are into it, well I believe they just write about it. It’s something that is a campaign strategy, and you can’t change it even if you see the window of change coming you can’t change it because it’s a strategy. Even if you realize it you can’t change and then say guys we were wrong. So that’s why they are loopholes you hear this and that yet there is this organization (GALZ) which is functional , I believe it’s just being said now but it carries no water. Same story different day but just keep going, all you have to focus.(Author’s Interview, 13/06/2013)

Similarly, Clarity says that he does not care:

Aaa what can we say, I personally don’t give a hoot about it. The press is not helping and it’s the politicians who will be saying bad things. Why can’t they concentrate with key issues which will help the country? So it’s something that I choose to ignore and not be affected by it. The country is also small, as we interact with others we hear that some of these guys have slept with so and so (gay sex), so why do they make a fuss on it, so it doesn’t make sense for me (Author’s Interview, 12/10/2015).

Related to what others said on media ownership and control, Ricky regards the media as a factory that churns out the political ideologies and propaganda of those in power. The issue of homosexuality has been appropriated as political ammunition for creating mileage for anyone who is seen as disparaging homosexuality because they are perceived as defenders of cultural integrity. Thus participants have realized that whatever appears in the media is mainly the recycling of the same old story denouncing homosexuality to get some political mileage. It is simply part of political propaganda which is rhetorical. Whereas others choose not to allow the

media talk to affect them, other participants have resorted to selective reading of the print media. As Mhazha notes;

Newspapers such as Herald, to tell the truth I do not read them, because Herald is a ZANU PF newspaper so it will side with ZANU. Then papers like Daily News (private media) they may write something positive, but Herald will be castigating gay people that they should not be allowed in Zimbabwe.(Author's Interview, 21/05/2013)

The Zimpapers media stable (The Herald, Sunday Mail, The Chronicle etc) have been associated with biased reporting on human rights and civil society issues. Mhazha specifically boycotts press that is insensitive whilst he reads what he thinks is a fair representation. This however is not only limited to gays and lesbians as other people in the society have shifted to buying newspapers that are not state-controlled. Whilst some participants have adopted selective reading, others have opted not to even read any newspaper article that talks about gay issues. Madzimai Trish sums up what some participants felt about how the media represents them.

Honestly I haven't read any article (laughs) that has to do with what the media has to say about gay issues. I'm not interested in what the media has to say, most probably I'm assuming that it's negative. I don't want to see anything that has to do with homosexuality that is negative. We know what the people are saying already it's enough so. (Author's Interview, 17/12/15)

It is clear from the words of Madzimai Trish that media reportage has generally been responsible for the avoidance of any reading of newspaper articles on gay-themed stories by the participants of this study. In this regard, some participants found the media representation (or lack of it) convenient. While in general, media articles on homosexuality are not that common, when they are published it is usually in response to something that would have happened. However, the accounts tend to be sensational and one-sided. To some participants, this relative silence on their issues is functional and does not draw attention to them whilst the negative reports also do raise awareness on the existence of gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe. Garry reflects on the options offered by the current media portrayal.

Q: How do you view the media's representation of sexual minorities in this country in Zimbabwe?

Garry: I kind of like it and not like it at the same time, reason being it's kind of like when you have a sweet tooth here is 50 cakes have 50 cakes, you are likely to just have 4 slices and not want more.

Q: So you are kind of happy that they don't offer a lot of space about...?

Garry: I am. I don't mind it actually works better for me (Author's Interview, 28/01/2015)

7.6 Conclusion

The chapter analysed how same-sex attracted men and women perceive how they are interpreted and understood in the wider community, and compared such views with their self-understandings. Generally, society has a lack of understanding on who gay people are thus their perceptions are based on misconceptions that are propagated by those with influence. The treatment of gay people has been significantly influenced by political homophobia. The participants go through torrid experiences ranging from verbal insults, physical attacks and potential physical attacks within their communities for exhibiting a different sexual orientation. Much of the attempt to police and regulate the participants is driven by the association of heterosexuality with being Zimbabwean whilst homosexuality is perceived as on or beyond the border. However, despite the homophobic experiences encountered by participants, they valued themselves and were not passive in allowing the dominant rhetoric to overrun them. Some accounts indicate experiences that are considerably not negative. The next chapter focuses on the family interface as it is one of the key institutions affecting LGBTI individuals in Africa.

Chapter 8: Interface with family

8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores a range of family experiences which have significantly impacted on gays and lesbians in Harare. The researcher takes the family as a significant institution which influences the identities of participants as well as their self-perception in light of the presence or absence of affirmation from significant family members. The family may thus be perceived as an arena where study participants negotiate and create space in identity development and management. In the Western context 'coming out' to family has been touted as a significant process in sexual identity development (Morrow et al. 2000; Svab and Kuhar, 2014; Waldner and Magrude, 1999), however the same may or may not apply in the current context, where coming out to family may not have such a central role in identity formation among the participants. Whilst some sociologists argue that the extended family waned due to industrial growth in the western context (Burgess, 1916; Ogburn, 1932 and Parsons, 1944), one would observe that in Zimbabwe the extended family, though shaken by modernity, still has a significant impact on one's life. Kin-group ties and relations are still valued and consequently impact on how core/nuclear family members deal with life developments such as celebrating success of children, prosperity and dealing with unsettling life situations such as death, illness and orphan care (see Nyamukapa and Gregson, 2005; Foster 2000). Nuclear families do not exist in isolation from extended families as there are significant intersections characterising the experiences of same sex attracted men and women in Harare.

Ncube, Stewart, Kazembe, Donzwa, Gwaunza, Nzira and Dengu-Zvobgo (1997) problematize the concept of the family and note how complex it is to come up with a precise definition. Despite the frequent use of the concept 'family' it denotes different meanings to different people and is defined according to one's interests and circumstances (Ncube et al. 1997). Say and Kowalewski cited in Morrow et al. (2001) define a family as a committed relationship, developed over time, between persons who participate in each other's lives emotionally, spiritually, and materially. Therefore, the term family can be all-encompassing to include a wide network of social relations. In this study the family shall be interpreted based on Morrow et al.'s (2001) perception of the family which includes a variety of biological and non-biological

membership groups. “These constellations may include parents, grandparents, and children, as well as siblings, extended family members (aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.), marriage partners, domestic partners, and others who share a commitment toward building long-term, sustainable, primary relationships with one another” (Morrow et al. 2001:54). Ncube et al. (1997) further note that parenthood which is a central concept in conceptualising the family is problematic in Africa where it is not restricted to biological and legal meanings but social. Thus, it will extend to all those relations who are not the direct ascendants of the person concerned but who are collaterals such as uncles and aunts (Ncube et al. 1997). Whilst the role of the extended family has become reduced compared to the traditional settings it still does perform critical and substantial strategic roles (Ncube et al. 1997). Therefore when I use family I shall be referring to both the extended and nuclear family as the participants did not make an attempt to separate these. This is generally consistent with everyday talk in Zimbabwe where distinctions between extended and nuclear are ordinarily not made.

The study participants’ experiences point to the fact that the interface with the family is complex and not static as there are many stages that they go through. Svab and Kuhar (2014:16) point out that in Slovenia, “The family of origin is a social milieu where both types of narratives—of acceptance and of rejection—are being experienced by gay men and lesbians”. However, there is need to appreciate that the narratives may not be that simplistic as they are not necessarily situated on the polar ends of either rejection or acceptance. Schroeder (2015:785) observes that various authors such as Gorman-Murray (2006), Atkinson et al. (2009) and Johnston & Longhurst (2010) argue that the “family home is embedded in micro and macro-geographic spaces, flows, and processes and is comprised of the micro geographic socio-spatial relations within its scope insofar as it is a site of biological and social reproduction, a site for legal regulation, and a site for internal and external socio-spatial relations”. The family is also heterosexualised and perpetuates gender and sexual normativity influencing a strong rejection to the entrenchment of the homosexual subject. It is within this heterosexualised context that gay men and lesbian women experience their sexual identity development. In this study in some cases for a single participant the experience ranges from explicit disapproval accompanied by threats of disownment to tolerance. As time progressed for some the families though not showing outward approval seem to warm to the reality and become less hostile. In a few instances some

families have embraced and accepted the participants offering them necessary support and defending them whenever necessary. Svab and Kuhar (2014:16) highlight that, “individual narratives of coming out to one’s family of origin are usually permeated by a mixture of negative and positive reactions pointing to the complexities of family relationships”. Whilst there are participants who disclosed or experienced forced disclosure, there are participants who have not disclosed and have dispelled suspicions from family members. These individuals who are still ‘closeted’ have varied experiences in which they employ various tactics/ strategies in an attempt to maintain a desired identity.

8.2 ‘Coming out’ or ‘outed’ to family

“The process of ‘coming out’ has been described as important for the individual lesbian or gay man since it is concerned with the discursive recognition and renegotiation of their identity” (Ward and Winstanley, 2005:447). The argument circulated in western contexts is that coming out indicates one’s acceptance and acknowledgment of one’s sexual orientation to self as well as to others as this is an indicator that identity development has occurred (Morrow et al. 2000; Waldner & Magrader;1999). Svab & Kuhar (2014:16) note that coming out to the immediate family is a central event for the majority of gay men and lesbians in the process of their sexual identity formation, however it can also be destructive because it endangers conventional expectations about gender roles that underpin all family relations. Similarly Morrow et al. (2001:55) point out that coming out to families is a consequential life event for lesbian and gay people which can result in greater closeness between lesbian and gay people and their families or in the complete dissolution of family ties. The family thus offers an arena for negotiation and construction of space in identity management by participants (Yip, 2004). Whilst coming out has been hailed in other contexts, the same cannot be said about the current context where it may not be a priority for participants.

In North America, research on people of colour coming out has been sparse and most models of gay identity development have been informed by white male middle class experiences (Villicana, Delucio & Biernat, 2016). There is a need to problematize the discourse on the benefits of verbal disclosure which has been predominantly constructed from a western perspective where overt coming out is associated with an increase in self-esteem and overall well-being. In a context where homosexuality has been portrayed as a taboo, unnatural and a western import, overt

indiscriminate disclosure can be problematic and is hardly a choice for many. Many of the research participants had deliberately not come out to their families for fear of rejection. The construction of homosexuality as subhuman and pathological through cultural, religious and political lenses in Zimbabwe has led sexual minorities to conceal their difference (Ncube G, 2016). What can be noted is that disclosure or non-disclosure is embedded in ongoing social interactions, and is therefore, also embedded in wider social contexts (Muparamoto and Chiweshe, 2015:148). Epprecht (2013) notes that in Africa many same-sex practicing people may opt to remain secretive and keep a low profile to avoid attention which can contribute to estrangement and discrimination. While remaining secretive is an option for some, some families may seem to practise "reciprocal secrecy"³¹, in the sense that some family members may know but decide they do not want to discuss it. However, despite attempts by some participants to remain 'closeted' to the family they were 'outed'. Hicks and Warren (1998:15) note that *outing* has been simply defined as "the identification of gay and lesbian public figures trying to remain in the closet". 'Outing' occurs when an individual is unprepared to disclose to the concerned people apart from those that they choose to tell. In the current study there were cases in which participants' partial or majority family members knew about their homosexuality. The pathway leading to family members knowing is varied. There were hardly any intentional disclosures among the participants. Most involved incidents that contributed to their 'outing'. In the next section the diverse experiences among the participants leading to their 'outing' will be described.

8.2.1 Raids and 'outing'

Some participants shared experiences on how significant family members got to know about their sexual orientation. The infamous raid in which 42 people were raided, arrested and detained on the 11th of August 2012 was one of the factors that contributed to the outing of some of the participants who were still 'closeted' to their families. During this raid the police profiled each individual. The profiling involved taking down their details including their residential addresses. As part of the intimidation exercise the police used these details to follow up on the people they had detained. They would pay a visit to the given address and request to see the person but in the process they would explain the purpose of their visit to the parents, guardian or any family member who was available at that particular time. The explanations were couched in such a way

³¹ 'Reciprocal secrecy' in this context would refer to some form of negotiated silence where individuals would know about one's sexual orientation but decide not to discuss the matter.

that they presented the individual as a shameful outcast recruited into evil things. The idea was to re-emphasise the border between what was desirable and what was on the margins of society. As Max (28 years) described:

When we were arrested our details were taken and follow-up visits to our places of residence were made. The police distorted everything to my stepmother, and gave an impression that I had gone to GALZ to look for men to sleep with me. *Mwana wenyu akaenda kuGALZ kundorarwa nevamwe varume* (your son was at GALZ to be bedded/fucked by other men) (Author's Interview, 27/10/2013).

This is one of the dramatic ways of outing which makes it rather impossible for participants to control the whole process. In this narrative the intention of the police could be interpreted as an attempt to indicate that Max was not just gay but was the 'woman' (receptive partner) and needs correction. This script was portrayed as, 'if this son of yours is the one who was being made a 'wife', it is as good as you have no son but a daughter'. The presentation by the police was clearly meant to arouse indignation in the parents on learning about their son's sexual orientation which they might expect would make them take drastic actions to deal with their child. Max's experience shows how hegemonic discourse on masculinity makes it possible for police to expect his parents to agree with them that what Max was doing was bad. The account which is similar to that of many who had been raided and profiled was basically an attempt to draw on the 'border war' placing non-heterosexual men on the margins of society, and casting them as people in need of policing and correction. The significant others were being touted to reflect on the impact of this to their family honour given the stereotypical portrayal of homosexuality. Chibaba Tindo (21 years) also chronicles how she was outed to a significant member of the family after the same incident.

Q: Does anyone in your family know or suspect?

Chibaba Tindo: Yeah there is only one person who knows, my sister-in-law. Sometime last year in August we were by GALZ and then we were raided by police and we were detained overnight by Central police station...

Q: Oh you were part of the 42?

Chibaba Tindo: Yes so we gave them our details, our contact details and then I gave them my brother's address so they went to the house and they found my sister in law there and

they told her we had been arrested so that's how she got to know about it. But then I am very grateful to her she didn't freak out and she promised she wasn't going to tell my brothers or anyone in my family because she knew what that meant so. (Author's Interview, 14/05/2014)

Whereas in Chibaba Tindo's case the police had expected that sanctions were to be imposed by the family, there seems to have been what can be described as a 'harmonising silence'. By 'harmonising silence' I refer to the decision taken by the sister-in-law not to inform others about Chibaba Tindo's sexual orientation as this would have brought disharmony within the family. Therefore, the dramatic outings do have complex effects which are not necessarily undesirable. Raids are not uncommon in Zimbabwe. The raids have significantly affected the participation of the LGBTI community in GALZ programming. One of the fears that the participants had was being 'outed' to their families if they would be arrested or beaten at GALZ. They were worried that arrest, detention and being beaten would mean the family would learn/ know about them being non-heterosexual. GALZ and other media reports have indicated that violence is perpetrated on the LGBTI community. The transcripts below reflect what was shared in a focus group discussion with participants:

I'm not comfortable, I may like to attend but because of the raids which we hear I am afraid. My fears are what if I get arrested, how will I be bailed out, what if I'm injured, what will my family say? My father will say let her rot in jail because he does not even want to hear about this gay thing. (Participant 1, Focus Group Discussion, 11/06/2015)

I'm protecting myself from family, there are some that I don't even want them to ever know. So if I get beaten, they will ask, *iwe wairohwa wairohwerwepi, zvambodii, zvakutonetsa* (where were you beaten and why were you beaten) (Participant 2, Focus Group Discussion, 11/06/2015).

Those participants who were not yet 'out' were concerned that their significant others would get to know about their same-sex attraction without having been prepared for it. This would contribute to anger if the disclosure was sudden rather than planned. Savin-Williams and Dube (1998:8) reflecting on one of the developmental stages of parental reactions to learning their child's same-sex attraction, note that in the anger stage "parents react with agitation, dismay, or

rage at their child; sometimes it leads to rejection or physical abuse”. ‘Outing’ has consequences for the participants, but it is something beyond their control. Ideally disclosure should be a strategically planned encounter, however if it is accidental/ unplanned there is a likelihood that it will detrimentally affect the identity of the person as well as strain their relations with the significant family members. Ncube G (2016:12) note that “by keeping their sexual orientation closeted, LGBTs attempt to minimise the stigma that often accompanies the perception of non-normative sexualities and genders, particularly within homophobic and transphobic spaces”. Participant 1 in the focus group discussion said, *‘my father will say let her rot in jail’*. This reflects the parent’s possible anger which would lead to her rejection, which she foresaw would consequently be demonstrated by not bailing her out. Gorman-Murray (2008) points out that the fears by LGBTI individuals are influenced by an apparent normalization of the homophobic family home in popular discourse. In this vein the family is conceived as a “primary site of heterosexual reproduction and heteronormative socialization” (Gorman-Murray, 2008:33).

Some of the participants have fears of estrangement from their families. This estrangement is a possibility if their ‘closeted sexuality’ is outed to their families. The ‘outing’ results in the spoiling of their identities that will previously have been kept secret in an attempt to create a desired identity on the basis of family expectations (Goffman, 1959). Blowing the ‘closet’ may have consequential effects for the participants which are not desirable such as putting them under almost a panoptical gaze of their families thereby limiting their space. In some cases they get monitored in terms of their day to day activities and movements (usually involving restrictions on where they can go and whose company they can keep). They can be told which friends not to associate with, particularly those suspected of having influenced their child to have same-sex desires. Such restrictions would not have been put in place had their families not learnt of their child’s sexual desires through ‘outing’. Hicks and Warren (1998:16) confirm that, given that gays and lesbians suffer discrimination and attacks due to their sexual preference, outing someone who is unready or unable to come out of the closet can have harsh repercussions for the outed person. The repercussions in this case include estrangement which can be associated with the loss of certain privileges enjoyed by being a member of the family. Msibi (2013:112) argues that while remaining ‘closeted’ limits men who engage in same-sex relations as they cannot publicly live out the lives of their choice; it also allows men greater freedom and respect in the community. Thus by remaining discrete (impression management) the participants safely

navigated the home space without attracting any undesirable attention from the significant others. Despite the transformation of the traditional family form, in Zimbabwe the family still plays a significant role in the lives of its members as it provides space and shelter as well as providing material and spiritual support (Ncube et al. 1997:13). Some of the experiences by study participants do challenge the popular discourse in Western and other contexts that disclosure to family is important for individual lesbian and gay men in identity development (Ward and Winstanley, 2005; Svab and Kuhar, 2014). In the narrative that follows I reflect on the interview between my academic advisor and Remy one of the *students cum participant*.

Kaare: So if you were the sociologist, or if you are the one to be me (conducting the interview), what would you have asked me?

Remy: Well uuum I'm interested in the quest that Western people or Western societies are, especially those who agitate for gay rights they are trying to push for black Zimbabweans or black Africans to help themselves. But we (Africans), family is important to us and they (Westerners) tend to base themselves on individuality. I don't know, what do you think? What do you guys think, what do you guys say about the whole issue? Like family is important to us, yet you say we should 'out ourselves'. Even though it compromises our families our relationships with our families, it is you know our strength and encouragement and even a source of solace. We go back to our families even though I'm gay we tend to go back there, but you guys tend to be like I'm out I can live alone you know.

Kaare: Okay so I agree with you very much, I think that first of all eeh I'm working in Tanzania as a researcher. I think, it has taught me so many things and one of them is that, the idea that being gay is something that you have to confess is not something that should be taken for granted. I think in the Western gay discourse, it's like the ultimate proof that you are real gay that you have to confess and be out. But it's not really necessary.

(Author's Interview, 17/12/2014)

What seems clear from Remy's question is that the family is central to most gay men in Zimbabwe, and that, therefore, there is apparent contradiction with what has been popularised in the coming-out discourse. In this claim 'outing' himself is not tenable as one should not risk creating tension with the family. In this claim, coming out is perceived by the participant as

compatible with western conditions and gay activists should not advocate that for African LGBTI individuals. Therefore, some stages that may be widely circulated as rites of passage in claiming a 'real' gay identity in western discourse are not easily tenable in the current context. This largely resonates well with Epprecht's (2013) observation that many same sex practicing people in Africa may opt to remain secretive and keep a low profile to avoid attention which can contribute to estrangement and discrimination.

8.2.2 Blackmailing and extortion

Whereas some individuals have been 'outed' to their families through 'raids', arrests and detentions some have been victims of blackmailing and extortion within the gay community. The first of the incidences that I reflect on demonstrates sheer manipulation by individuals in the LGBTI community who wanted to maintain some leverage over others. Familiarity with the LGBTI community presents an added advantage to someone for negotiating space and getting to hook-up with others of similar sexual orientation. Some who are already in the community could take advantage of the networks they have established to maintain some control over new members they would be introducing to the group. Attempts by the new member to sever ties with the one who introduced them and attempting to forge new networks may not be taken kindly by the other part, thus leading to conflict.

Nzembe: When I parted ways with my ex-boyfriend he was not happy about it and wanted to force me to continue in the relationship. So he phoned my sister and told her that your brother is gay.

Q: Oh really?

Nzembe: Yaah he did that, he was forcing me, he came to our house and started making noise, saying you are gay so I took poison (attempting to commit suicide). And it became public knowledge in this neighbourhood, but I didn't love him, he was now forcing me. He was taking advantage that I was naïve and that he is the one who had introduced me to the LGBTI community, so he was taking advantage.

Q: Oh shame.

Nzembe: So he came saying I introduced you to these other people, why are you jilting me, and I said get out of our house. Then two of my other friends arrived and he started

telling them that I am gay, then that's when I took poison. (Author's Interview, 10/03/2015).

McDermott, Roen & Scourfield (2008) note that some young LGBT individuals explain their self-destructive behaviours as resulting from the emotional distress caused by homophobia. Evidence from other contexts shows that some lesbian and gay youth are at risk of committing suicide or have committed suicide which is related to non-acceptance and rejection by family in a homophobic and heterosexist culture (Gorman-Murray, 2008; Morrow et al. 2001). Nzembe was responding to his outing when he was not prepared to come out to his significant others. Therefore Nzembe, due to internalised homophobia, could not face the prospect of significant others getting to know his sexual orientation. Whilst Nzembe was the only participant to have taken steps towards committing suicide other participants have to some extent contemplated committing suicide due to family rejection.

Goltz, Zingsheim, Mastin & Murphy (2016:104) note that the Kenyan Human Rights Commission reported that in 2011 LGBTI persons are “routinely abused, subjected to hate speech and incitement to violence, suffer physical violence from mobs and occasionally raped by police, vigilantes and organized criminals”. Apart from these violations the study also reported that there was a pattern of “trumped up charges” where LGBTI persons were extorted for bribes or sexual favours (Goltz et al. 2016:14). Whereas Nzembe and others were outed by their former partners over some disagreements, Ricky's story demonstrates how he was outed through attempts to extort money from him. Gay men and lesbian women are vulnerable to blackmail and extortion in Zimbabwe because they are considered to be on the margins, hence ‘trumped up charges’ are likely to stick. Philips (2009:352) notes that, “evidence from Zimbabwe makes it clear that those who are open about their sexual orientation continue to be subject to, and may even become more visible targets for, blackmail, especially when the law continues to prohibit the acts of which extortionists might accuse them”. The homophobic utterances exhibited at the political level gave a vantage point to those who wanted to blackmail and extort money from their victims despite it also being an offence. However, with political rhetoric extortionists would to a significant extent manipulate the homosexuality ‘tag’ for their own convenience such that the accused is disempowered as they are categorised as social misfits. Whist Philips (2009) explores blackmailing and extortion from strangers and police officers, in

this study even ex-partners attempted to blackmail participants. Ricky (26 years) discussed how someone close to him 'outed' him:

There was an incident where there was a friend of mine who thought maybe I could make money out of this guy, let me create a story and he said this guy raped me. Then they were like we have to prove it, you know I actually went to jail (remand). In order to prove it you have to go for tests (medical examination), then this guy goes like changes the story, then he says he attempted to rape me and then it ended up in a whole of a mess, then you know what? He was just like I just want money can you give me about \$1000, well he wanted \$2000+ at first and we were phew we don't have such kind of money the \$2000 became a \$1000 and a thousand became \$600, the \$400 and then \$200. What he only wanted was money, well we had been friends, actually we were best of friends before and he knew my secrets then he turned around and used my secrets against me, and I think we kind of dated without knowing that we are dating and we knew each other for 2 years, and the 3rd year is when sex happened. (Author's Interview, 13/06/2013).

8.2.3 School incidences and other miscellaneous

There are also participants who were 'outed' because of incidents involving homosexual acts at school or some incidents where a family member intruded on their privacy (phones or bags) and had found gay-themed material. In some cases the evidence made it difficult for participants to deny their being connected to 'homosexuals', but in some instances participants could deny involvement. Schools are 'spaces' of policing sexuality in Zimbabwe. If a boy and a girl are found in a compromising position suggesting sexual intimacy at school, they are punished, suspended or dismissed from school. Same-sex interactions are not spared as they are considered as doubly deviant, firstly by engaging in sexual intercourse and secondly in a despised way which should never be encouraged at all. Some of the participants were 'outed' through these incidents though the family members would often think that they would grow out of it as they may take it as a passing phase. Clarity noted:

When I went to a boys high school [single sex school] that's when I noticed I am so different and otherwise so different, the comments they (other students) were throwing upon me, and then I met this guy he proposed to me and then we started hanging out and then one day we were caught in an intimate act. The issue was taken up and when they

were deciding our fate my mum was called and they said that, *hungochani* is what your son is doing here. (Author's Interview, 12/10/2015)

Whilst Clarity and other participants were outed to their families through incidents at school which gave out their sexual orientation and gender identity, Mhazha (24 years) was outed through his mobile phone pictures and messages:

There is my uncle's wife, she is the one who knows. She saw my phone and went through my WhatsApp messages. I had not put my password so she checked my messages. She then went on my Facebook inbox and read different conversations. Then they started discussing with my mother's sister and she said that my mother should never get to know this, *vachiti havangazvigone kuzvitambira, vangafa* (she won't be able to accept it, she might die) (Author's Interview, 21/05/2013).

What one can observe from Mhazha's case is that the two relatives who were discussing his sexual orientation decided not to inform his mother, fearing for the worst and that she would not be in a position to take it. I can describe this as 'protective secrecy', where those who knew about his sexual orientation decided not to tell his mother in a bid to protect her from a set of consequences they (correctly or incorrectly) anticipated would follow from knowledge.

Rexy was outed by a cousin who saw a cut out from a magazine on gay dates. Giddens (1992) points out how the self is a project carried on amidst a profusion of reflexive resources. Such resources include the self-help manuals of all kinds, television programmes and magazine articles. Rexy related how he was outed by a cousin:

I think many people from my family do (know) especially these kids around who I grew up with. My cousin who is around 30, he caught me with a piece of paper. When I was around sixteen saying I'm looking for a gay friend that was when I hadn't really gotten into the community or known gay friends from around Harare because I was coming from Mutare like where I was at my school. When I came to Harare for my form four, that's O level, I wanted new friends. I had a piece of paper in the bag, I was using his bag actually, then he wanted his bag back and I just said you can just put everything out. Then he saw that paper, yeah a piece of paper I had cut it from a magazine, a people magazine the South African people magazine. Long back it used to have like a date page

where you just like cut it, like cut the number and email then look for a partner you know. I'm looking for friendship, in Harare Zimbabwe, I was in Harare I cut it, then I left it in my bag so I was actually, those days I was going to the internet a lot we really didn't have access to phones like we have now, so I kind of forgot to take it out, he saw it, he came with it to my mum and dad. (Author's Interview, 17/12/2015).

8.2.4 Planned disclosure

Whilst many of the participants were outed because of other factors, there were also some participants who disclosed voluntarily to their significant family members. Identity disclosure involves perceiving coming-out as more rewarding than costly (Waldner and Magrude, 1999:86). Disclosure has the potential benefits of greater closeness between lesbian and gay people and their families (Morrow et al, 2001). Participants took the step of disclosure as a strategic encounter which would help in opening up lines of communication as well as dissuading family expectations on valorised heterosexual marriages. Chibaba Ryan discussed her experience of coming out of the closet to her father. In my view she had full control until midway in an ongoing conversation.

Q: So I just want to find out you said there are new developments in your life in relation to you and your family. Would you care to shed some light to what has happened?

Chibaba Ryan: Well I guess a lot of things have changed because when I went home I decided I should come out to tell my dad because part of my maternal relatives knew, so I had to tell my dad so that he won't be in the dark as it were, so that if he gets to know it (through other sources) he won't be in a shock. So I guess he is okay with it. Though I know he is hurting a lil (little) bit.

Q: Okay how did the disclosure go? How did you tell him, was it oh dad I'm like this...

Ryan: (She laughs).It was like that, it was like when I was at school at UZ (University of Zimbabwe) it happened like those days I had to put a profile picture of my friend, my friend. My good friend so he was like who is this, and I was like okay dad I have to tell you something but I will do it in person when I come home. Because I can't live a life were I can keep things to myself I will tell you a whole lot about me because I don't wanna (want to) live a lie. So when I went home he was waiting for me obviously. So I wasn't so sure I was terrified so he was like pushing me you should tell me so I just had to say I'm different. That's the word I used so he was like how different are you? So I had to say I'm different in a way I can't explain in words and I'm

scared that I will hurt you if I tell you the truth of what I am. So he actually pushed it on me, I had to tell him, dad I am homosexual. (Author's Interview, 20/03/2016).

Madzimai Quality in her process of self-discovery had to disclose to her sister. Akin to other people's experiences, her process of discovery was assisted by self-help manuals that cover gay and lesbian issues. She explored her sexuality through reading magazines. The self has some degree of autonomy in discovering one's sexual orientation and gender identity. Despite the colonising effect of heteronormativity, individuals have agency to determine who they become as they do not passively consume the dominant heterosexual ideology (Giddens, 1992). Consistent with the observations made by Morrow et al. (2001), literature demonstrates that coming out can result in greater closeness between lesbian and gay people and their families. Disclosure to an immediate sister was strategic for Madzimai Quality in order to build trust with her. In Madzimai Quality's case disclosure demonstrates the participant's agency:

So I just liked girls from I think grade 7 onwards and then I started reading about it, had to actually. I told my sister, the one in America. I was like, "you know what sisi Taffie of course I've dated a guy and everything but *hazvisikunatsoita* (it aint working), it's not. I don't know but I really want to explore my sexuality" and my sister, she is the only person I could actually come up to (Author's Interview, 13/12/2014).

The decision to come out to significant family members shows how diverse the experiences of same-sex loving people are in Harare. Whilst other cases demonstrate that coming out is not always necessary nor desirable, on the other hand we do have a few who found it to be important in their life. Therefore it will be erroneous to conclude without caution that same sex loving people in Zimbabwe opt to remain secretive and discrete. There are also some participants such as Takura (as will be discussed latter on in the chapter) and Mhazha who do foresee themselves coming out to family. They have deferred coming out to family in order to be strategically positioned in order to be able to manage if the family cuts ties and all forms of support. Mhazha said, 'when I get to 30 (years) I will be in a position to tell them even my mother that don't force me, I will not marry, I am gay' (Author's Interview, 21/05/2013)

8.3 Outcomes of ‘coming out’ or being ‘outed’ to family

Svab and Kuhar (2014) highlight the possible positions taken by parents (family) when a child comes out (or is outed) as they are stretched between two situations. Svab and Kuhar (2014:33) note that “on one hand, they have stereotypical perceptions of homosexuality as promoted and reinforced by the heteronormative society”. The first position has an effect of framing their children/relatives as social misfits, lying outside the borders of normality thus they are shameful. This is also consistent with experiences of participants in Zimbabwe who have been socially marginalised with dominant discourse pathologising their sexual desire. Svab and Kuhar (2014:33) note that “on the other hand, there are feelings of affection and parental love”. The second position is also evident particularly when parents or the members of the immediate family are seen defending their children/ relatives in the face of hostility from societal members or when they try not to blame their children but trace their sexual desires to hereditary tendencies which have been observed in their families. Schroeder (2015) urges a critique of the binary categorization of LGBTI individuals’ home (family) experiences but emphasises fluidity – in terms of sexual identities, practices, experiences. Gorman-Murray (2008:31) notes that whilst research has predominantly tended to concentrate on negative and distressing experiences there is need to explore parental and sibling experience in supportive families. Svab and Kuhar (2014:33) note that various factors influence the outcome and they can be placed on a continuum of behavioural patterns ranging from extremely negative which might result in the breaking off of all relations with the child or in the non-acceptance of the child’s sexual orientation, whilst on the other side of the continuum there are behavioural patterns of positive reactions.

8.3.1 Negative reactions

8.3.1.1 Estrangement

Morrow et al. (2011: 55) observe that Rhoads (1995) and Magee & Miller (1994) highlight that whilst coming out has a potential for empowerment it can also result in feelings of loss and damage relationships (relationship upheaval) for some gays and lesbians. Loss of relationships can be seen as punishment for transgressing heterosexuality. Some participants in this study had significant family members severing ties with them because they were branded as outcasts who bring shame not only to themselves but to the family as a whole. McDermott et al. (2008:821) note that “homophobia works to punish at a deep individual level to create psychological

distress; it shames the self and requires a young person to deal with being positioned, because of their sexual desire, as abnormal, dirty and disgusting”. Given that the family in most cases is an agent of heterosexual socialisation it attempts to censure any sexual desires other than heterosexuality. By being homophobic and severing ties or threatening to sever ties with the children or relatives the idea is to enforce conformity. To some extent I agree with Waldner & Magrader (1999:86) who note that, “The family represents a basic structural and relational arrangement which serves as a primary socialization agent by supporting heterosexual norms and values”. I reflect on some of the unpleasant experiences that participants had to go through when their families learnt of their sexual attraction to people of the same sex. First, Chibaba Runyararo was estranged from the majority of family members after they got to know about her sexuality:

Q: What was the reaction of your immediate family?

Chibaba Runyararo: The person to find out was my twin sister, then she said its fine. Then someone told my mum, she was just suspecting, even my dressing. She was saying we have never seen your boyfriend here. When she knew, my mum stopped calling and after six months she called to discuss but I tried to defend but anyway she just knew it. Then my dad, that one, it seems he disowned me. Of which I don’t even know what he really thinks, he was not there when the family knew about it. All I can say all the relatives on my mother’s side (maternal) they just don’t care about me even about how I am surviving. They abandoned me, I don’t even go there.

Q: How did your brother take it?

Chibaba Runyararo: He just accepted maybe he already knew because I was always with him (spent significant time with him). (Author’s Interview, 13/05/2013).

D’Augelli (in Waldner & Magrader, 1999:86) attests that despite family members often inadvertently being a source of negative attitudes and stereotypes, the reactions of siblings are often more positive than that of parents. In Chibaba Runyararo’s case, both parents could not accept it and her mother stopped talking to her whilst the father presumably disowned her. Her mother who called after six months has stopped buying stuff that she used to buy her. She got estranged from her parents as well as some extended family members who have ceased to care about how she is faring in life. However, the siblings (brother and sister) did not become hostile toward her, though they do not openly support her. Asked how she coped with the estrangement

from the parents and other family members who were withdrawing from her, Chibaba Runyararo had to resort to finding comfort in friends.

Q: So how did you deal with this withdrawal of support from parents?

Chibaba Runyararo: After school I would spend time with friends. *Zvongorwadza zvazvo kuti varikutadza kuzvigamuchira* (it's painful that they are failing to accept it). (Author's Interview, 13/05/2013)

There is a need for a nuanced analysis of parents and sibling responses to discovering the child or sibling's sexual orientation. In some cases the siblings may be less supportive compared to the parents. Some parents seem to understand and accommodate their children whilst siblings may disconnect with their sibling. Mario's family became aware of his sexual desires when he had just completed his Advanced Level studies at the age of 19. He was 'outed' after having a fight with his partner at that time who confessed to his family why they had fought. The mother of the partner then told Mario's aunt and the rest of the family and he did not deny it when they sat him down to talk about it. Mario's family did not take kindly to this disclosure and tried to find explanations and remedies to his sexual orientation which to them was not acceptable:

When they discovered, it was very difficult, they nearly denied [disowned] me, and it took a very long time for them to accept the situation. I still remember there were days I could lock myself in the bedroom, the only time I could get out was when I was going to the toilet or going to have dinner with the family. So it was like that, they were trying to isolate me, they were saying if you do not change then you will not be part of this family so you have to go and choose your own family. So it was a very difficult time. I still remember my brother wrote me a letter, six (6) pages long, he is in Botswana, and he was quoting verses from the Bible. We are still not on talking terms, he does not talk to me (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014).

In Mario's case the father was accommodative of him whilst the other family members were not. As will be shown in the next section on neutral reactions his father did not blame him for what he had become. Homophobic punishment may be through physical and verbal abuse, rejection or isolation (McDermott et al. 2008:821). The isolation from the family was intended to compel the participant to 'grow out' of his homosexuality. Therefore, the family was saying they did not

have anything to do with him as long as he continues expressing his sexual desire outside heterosexuality. Membership to the family was thus defined by his sexual orientation. The family's concern was likely to be linked to his behaviour being on the margins of the society, thus it was a shame to be associated with someone like him. Marginalising Mario was an indication of how his family is part of the heterosexual machinery for sanctioning any behaviours perceived to be on or beyond the margins. Similarly Mic Tagarira talks about how in his family of origin apart from his mother no one supports him. The siblings just ignore him whilst the father would kick him out if he was still staying with them. All these are attempts to maintain family honour in a setting where homosexuality has been portrayed in popular discourse as disgusting and unacceptable.

In the extract that follows Larry's brother gives him a hard time in a bid to force him to change his sexual orientation. Their parents died when they were young but when they became adults they inherited the house left by their parents. He gets a share of the rentals from the other rooms they lease. Larry noted:

My brother gives me money from the rentals. When I have disagreements with my brother he does not even want me to get in his house. Sometime back I used to sell airtime and cool drinks that I kept in his refrigerator. He removed my stuff and said I do not keep stuff that belongs to a homosexual in my fridge. So I just cooled down, I know my brother. On one occasion he said I am going to bring the police so that they arrest you and lock you up so that you stop your gay things. I said to him you know that in jails there are no women there where they will put me so I will be ok because they are men who for 3 or 4 years have not seen a woman. So the response spiked him and he just said stop what you are doing. I asked him how and he said you should stop keeping company of the person you are playing with. Sometimes he just says Larry why don't you go back to school you could have a better life. He says do you guys ever think about it or you guys will just be talking about men, this and that about men (Author's Interview, 14/05/2015).

Cutting ties with a family member who is gay was used as a tool to put pressure on the person to renounce his homosexual behaviour and identity. Larry's brother assumes that he is 'becoming' gay because of the friends that he has. He concludes that if Larry is isolated from such friends he

will stop. Similar to Mario's situation of isolation and monitoring his movements, friends are often assumed to be sources of bad influence if they are also gay. By referring to going back to school, Larry's brother stereotypically assumes that uneducated people without the means of looking after themselves resort to homosexuality. Thus he could not want to have a brother who was associated with marginality. Chibaba Nikkaz's experience with the extended family members she was staying with shows how individuals can be thrown out of families:

Yea, they actually went to Roman Catholic, so it happened that I failed to come clean, such that I had to lose that family because of my sexuality, they couldn't take it so I had to move out. When I got where I am right now, my uncle's place, he is not aware though, I just have to be careful. (Author's Interview, 10/09/2013).

After being outed due to a school incident, Chibaba Nikkaz was asked to explain what had transpired and the end result was the family (adoptive) had to sever ties with her. This demonstrates how homosexuality is perceived as highly deviant, unacceptable behaviour which warrants estrangement from the family. Similarly, Nyasha's extended family members did not want to stay with him when his mother had left for Europe. It is not uncommon for kin group members to be accommodated by their kin, for example in the event of the death of parents or emigration of parents. Generally, kin are seen as readily welcoming children whose parents have gone to Europe as the destination is associated with higher remittances. The adoptive family will anticipate that they will benefit too. Therefore, one would have expected that Nyasha would have many families willing to take him in. However it was not so as Nyasha was perceived to be potentially of bad influence. Nyasha's extended family members were worried that he was going to corrupt their children so they could not take him in when he was out of boarding school:

Most of them, well the rest of them, everybody knows about my sexuality. My father left for USA when I was 14. I moved to a boarding school where life was tough, I never had friends, I never had what, I had to toughen up. By the time I got to 15 and 16 I was one of the worst kids you would have ever wanted to meet. I was tough, why because of what had been implanted in me. I grew so tough that even most of the people in my family were afraid of me. So by the time I left school, I didn't want to go back to school for A Level. I left school and came back to Harare and my parent asked the family because our house was being rented [leased], so who is taking my kid? And nobody wanted me.

Everybody was like *aah mwana wako atipandutsire vana vedu* (aaah so that he will corrupt our kids), so everybody knew, everybody had that idea but they would not speak about this. So my father had no option but to buy this place and he then gave it to me as my 18th birthday present why because the whole family nobody wanted to take me in. (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

8.3.1.2 Parental crises: Blame-Game

Disclosure often precipitates a painful family crisis, which can be in the form of blaming either of the parents. LaSala (2000:3) notes that, "considering societal hostility toward lesbian and gay people, it is not surprising that families respond poorly to the news of a child's homosexual orientation". Parents fear being branded as failures who have not successfully raised their children according to the society's norms and values. It is common in Zimbabwe for parents to blame each other if their child does not grow to fit into societal expectations. For instance if a daughter falls pregnant outside wedlock there may be counter-accusations between husband and wife of one having being too soft or not having done enough for the child. However in this patriarchal setting the blame is mainly put on the mother of the child. As homosexuality was perceived as being on the margins and attracting shame to the family, parents could blame one another for what their child 'turned out to be'. When Rexy's parents learnt about his homosexual orientation they shouted at him, asking him why he had become like that when they had not socialised him in that way. However, the two started blaming each other for having contributed to their son becoming gay:

Q: Do you recall what happened?

Rexy: Oh okay my dad was blaming my mum for being too, like what can I say? Lenient on us yah that's the right word, lenient on me in that I had adopted this whole thing because she was just being too lenient she allowed me to do whatever I want. And my mum was blaming my dad that he had relatives who invited gay people when I was around, so that kind of like exposed me to the whole thing and I probably liked it.

Q: And was that true that it happened?

Rexy: Not really I can explain from my father's side my aunt had gay friends. So when I was young like around 8, I saw one of her gay friends. That was my first time seeing a very gay man. When he came to my mum and me and he was like he greeted my mum,

he was different. I actually said to my mum he acts like a woman. She just said that's how he is like and it ended there. I was like okay its fine, so now when my mother was having an argument with my dad she was saying that it was mainly because I was exposed to gay people who are like my auntie's friends, so that probably triggered me to be gay.

Q: Oh really?

Rexy: She is my aunt, my father's sister, so yah she had gay friends from long back, so my mum now was blaming my dad for this whole scenario she was saying like, 'it is exposure your sister's friends which made our child gay', but it wasn't the case.

(Author's Interview, 17/12/2014).

The preceding extract is consistent with the observation by Savin-Williams and Dube (1998:8) that, "as a defensive manoeuvre, parents search for an external cause for their child's homosexuality and become irrationally angry at this perceived perpetrator. A bad second parent, an "alternative" peer group, or a gay teacher may be imputed". Rexy's parents' reaction to the news about their son showed how they struggled to accept and cope with the reality that their son was gay. This stems from what LaSala (2000:3) calls the history of blaming poor parenting for "the problem" of homosexuality where there was a myth of families of gays and lesbians being more pathological. This contributes to negative parental reactions. In the extract Rexy's father blames the mother for having been lenient on their child thus he had freedom to do whatever he wanted to the extent of adopting a lifestyle that has been labelled deviant. The implication is that those who become gay have not been properly socialised by the heterosexual family which is conceived of as an entity that churns out properly socialised individuals who abide by the set norms and values. This therefore serves to pathologise homosexuality as deviant behaviour which should not be tolerated. Conversely, the mother makes counter accusations by blaming the father for having relatives who had gay friends, which then influenced their son to be gay. The positions frame homosexuality in a stereotypical manner as, deviant and contagious.

8.3.1.3 Correctional Attempts

When some families learn of their child's homosexual orientation, they choose to think that it is just a temporary aberration which s/he will grow out of it. Some parents sought various remedies to deal with their children's gayness. Some consulted medical experts, traditional and faith

healers (to be explored in detail in Chapter 9). It was difficult for families to accept that the sexual orientation of their children was 'normal' as they did not think that it was possible for them to have a different sexual orientation. LaSala (2000:5) explains that parents find it difficult to embrace a fundamental component of their son or daughter's identity that is still stigmatized by society and historically has been attributed to family dysfunction. One of the initial strategies adopted by families is to try and seek remedies within the family and, if not successful, outside forces are engaged such as medical experts, traditional and faith healers. These mark some of the common efforts that are made by families in an attempt to reclaim a heterosexual orientation for their child or sibling. In the following extract I reflect on some efforts that have been made by families to convert their children.

Q: How did your family react when you confirmed that you were gay?

Mario: It was very difficult for them to accept, because what they thought was that maybe I was trying to do that for money or maybe I was possessed by evil spirits. I still remember that the next day they took me to a prophet. Then the prophet tried to pray for me and he was pointing out that it was being caused by someone who was against us, one of our family members in our clan who was against us. So they tried a lot to make me change to the extent that they went to one doctor who is in Masvingo (Dr X), thinking that if it was in my blood an operation could be done so that I won't have any feelings for men, but the doctor suggested that it's not something that I choose deliberately to love men. Still up to now they are trying to change me. (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014).

The remedies adopted by the family significantly demonstrate their perception towards homosexuality, they felt it was abnormal and there was a cause to it which could be spiritual or a biological anomaly. They firstly attributed this to an evil spirit which therefore needed some cleansing. When this did not seem to produce the desired results they resorted to exploring medical procedures in which they sought an operation to redress what they perceived as an anomaly. These remedies were influenced by the stereotypical views which have pathologised homosexuality, such that families think that they should take corrective measures which will cure their children of the 'disease' of homosexuality. Despite the professional advice that the family members had received from the medical doctor, they remained hostile to Mario in the hope that

he will change and started surveillance on him by monitoring his whereabouts as well as his associates to an extent of finding female partners for him.

Mario's experience reflects what many same-sex loving people may go through when their families find out about their sexual orientation. Parents and other significant individuals try by all means to 'fix' what they think is an abnormal situation in their children. There are many cases of parents and families who have resorted to similar ways adopted by Mario's parents where they try not only medically-based but also Christian-based and traditionally-based solutions aimed at curing homosexuality in their children. In most cases this has further marginalised the individuals who are meant to be helped. Clarity's narrative demonstrates a similar experience in which the immediate family members take various approaches as a remedy to what they perceived as a problem:

Clarity: Yaah they knew, like my aunt once told me. They used to have family meetings for me *kunzi mwana tomuita sei uyu, murikuona here zvaari kuita mukuona here kukura kwake* (what shall we do with this child, do you see what he is becoming).

Q: So did they try to change you or what solutions did they come up with after their meetings?

Clarity: That time *ndingati chii* (what can I say), I wasn't noticing anything because I didn't know but when this issue came out *havana kundirasa* (they did not abandon me). I went for therapy, after Glennorah, there is this white guy who used to live there. Yaah I went there, he started asking me questions, but then the results I didn't see any change, then we just stopped going there. And then I came back I had to deal with the society I had to do my education and stuff, and then in that process I wanted more, I mean like sexual activities I felt like I wanted more, and then I started going after men.(Author's Interview, 12/10/2015).

Significantly, the family as an agent of socialisation feels the need to correct what they perceived as an anomaly. Family meetings resolved that the child needed corrective measures so that their son will be restored to what they perceived as normal. This illustrates how the family may strive to take on a function as a heterosexualising institution. As will be presented in the following chapter the family also resorted to seeking help from the faith healers who attempted to exorcize him of homosexuality.

8.3.1.4 Fluid family relations

LaSala (2000:6) notes that researchers indicate that parental attitudes toward a son's or daughter's homosexuality may improve with time when parents are progressively learning that their offspring is gay. Generally whilst some study participants have had nasty experiences with their families, for some there is evidence of a relative acceptance and tolerance evidenced by some form of support that they get from their families. Some participants reported development of cordial relations with their parents and siblings even though some have not given up hope of attempting to make their children heterosexual. The study did not, however, explore the time that it took for relations to improve between gay or lesbian participants and initially hostile family members. In the following transcript I reflect on Nyasha's account whose father hated homosexuals with a passion before his son was outed but has softened his stance and tolerates his son:

I have an aunt who is married to a prominent person in a neighbouring country. She comes and visits the whole family, then she visits me one day and she is so nice to me. The moment she goes back she calls my father, *nhaiwe urikuziva kuti ndozvakaita mwana wako* (are you aware of what your son is doing?). My father just freaks out and she is like, *ive siyana nemwana wangu* (hey leave my child alone). My sister phones me and says do you know what she is saying to dad about you right now, she is on the phone and have just gone to the bathroom to call you. My dad knew but he was more in denial than anything else. He knew, he refused to accept it but could see it from the early days ... (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

I think almost everybody knows. But my dad he is cool, he is fine like he has had issues but the last time we were like together was in September (2012) we actually even ended up talking about boys and stuff. Whenever he sends stuff to Zimbabwe he makes sure he send condoms, lubricants and manuals with safe gay sex and whatever. He has come to terms with it, my sisters are cool my immediate family is cool. (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013).

Nyasha claims his father knew but was refusing to accept it, which could be interpreted as some form of 'strategic silence'. In this case the mother decided not to talk about it much, as he had noticed from the early stages. The fluidity of familial experiences for participants can be

observed in the above transcripts in which Nyasha's father defended him from extended family members who were castigating him. Not only does he defend him from other family members but he has resorted to sending safe sex material which he gets abroad where he is working. Without directly verbally condoning his son he tolerates and gives the necessary support. As much as the family is generally recognised as a heterosexual agent of socialisation which would seek to punish and condemn alternative sexuality and cut off the necessary support to pressure someone to conform, there is evidence of families becoming supportive. In one of the drag performances which ended with a raid, there was a parent who was in the gathering supporting a son who was contesting. This kind of support can help in how gay sons and lesbians perceive themselves. Whereas Chibaba Runyararo's family cut off support to their daughter, in this case Nyasha's family has become supportive. As Nyasha's father defended his son from his kin, Tariro's father defended his son from the community that was victimising his son in a high density area. Parents can end up sympathising with the pain that their children encounter in homophobic spaces, which can help in their self-perception. As Tariro revealed:

One day there was a group of youths outside our fence who were shouting, *pasi nengochani, buda ngochani tipedzerane* (down with ngochani, come out ngochani we want to deal with you). I don't know what happened to my father, he took a kitchen knife and went outside to deal with them. He dared them to come any closer. He said to them *siyanai nemwana wangu, ehe ingochani asi ingochani yangu* (leave my son alone, he is a homosexual but he is still my son). (Author's Interview, 06/07/2015).

However, despite tolerance by other family members, some significant relatives disapprove of one's homosexuality. At the time of the interview, Mario was still not on talking terms with his brother in Botswana who has cut ties with him because of his sexual attraction to men. However the twin sister and other sisters understand and have accepted him but they still want him to get married, in a heterosexual way. This is despite the fact that Mario has had two unsuccessful heterosexual marriages. The reason for their insistence was the belief that a heterosexual marriage will change him. Mic Tagarira's family members have not warmed to the reality that he is gay, only his mother is supportive. His father and sisters do not talk to him and do not care about what is happening in his life. Mic Tagarira revealed:

My father kicked me out (parents divorced) so my cousins did not bother to ask. He kicked me out because he hated me. My sisters are not supportive they just ignored, I don't like my sisters too much so, it's, no one supports me just my mother (Author's Interview, 11/08/2015).

In some instances family members who have learnt of one's homosexual orientation make internal pacts (protective secrecy) with others who also know in order to keep some significant others in the dark for the fear of the worst. As Mhazha revealed:

My mother once said if she was to discover that I am gay she would kill herself. So she does not know, the rest of the family even my twin brother does not know. What my uncle's wife and aunt (mother's sister) did after sharing what was on the WhatsApp messages, was to agree not to tell my mother as it could be catastrophic (they feared she would not be able to handle it). What they did was to find a girl for me at the apostolic church, saying you should now get married, but I said that I was not yet ready for marriage and I said I don't want to get married, I want to be a catholic priest.(Author's Interview 21/05/2013).

8.3.1.5 Intermediary reactions

Significant literature has perpetuated the homophobic discourse of the family by perceiving parents as 'heterosexual breeders', and thus failing to recognize that parents are multifaceted (Gorman-Murray, 2008:38). Parents are agents who have the potential to avoid adopting negative reactions towards their child when they learn that he or she is queer. Despite a lack of overt support for the choice made by their children in this study some of the parents did not react in a negative way. They tried to explain what could have contributed to their son or daughter's sexual attraction to people of the same sex. Similarly Gorman-Murray's (2008) study demonstrates that just as participants choose to come out against the 'heteronorm', parents too possess agency. In this study this agency is demonstrated by parents who did not condemn their children for being gay or lesbian. Thus, heterosexual parents do also have a choice to make as opposed to just resorting to negative reactions to their children's sexuality. In this study whilst some parents would not indicate their approval of the sexual orientation of their children, they significantly tried to find explanations as to why their children were attracted to partners of the same sex. At times this would entail a historical search of the family past, in which the parent would want to

relate it to some relatives. The cases of Mario and Chibaba Ryan help to illustrate this. Whilst Mario's father insisted on the need for his son to change and be 'normal' he connected his situation to that of his uncle:

Q: What was the reaction of your dad?

Mario: He called me and asked me about it, he sort of was understanding because he thought there was something wrong in the family he said his brother was like that. Up to now he is not married so you may have inherited something from your uncle we heard he had an encounter with a man, so maybe it's some evil spirit. So he said I was supposed to stop it because it is bad, maybe someone is influencing me. So I agreed with him that I was going to stop (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014).

The above experience challenges the binary categorisation of experiences as either negative or positive. Schroeder (2015:785) notes that "emerging work on queer youths' familial relations tends to represent their lived experiences as either negative or positive". Whilst the response was not essentially negative nor positive there was an attempt to understand the child's sexuality but with the expectation that he would change. Similarly Chibaba Ryan also received a neutral reaction from her father who also tried to relate the daughter's current attraction to family history. As Chibaba Ryan revealed:

Like he had to tell me like some family history like so maybe it runs in our family or something like that so he understands a little. Yeah he was making reference I guess to my great grand-aunt somewhere there was different and then my cousin who stays somewhere in Matabeleland in Zimbabwe she is so different. And then me saying that I'm different he had to make some biological explanation for that, like when I was born I had a twin but then he passed soon after I was born. So he was saying okay maybe it wasn't really the twin brother who really died maybe you exchanged souls we really have to find some explanation if I may say justification for everything. Yaah he understands he hasn't changed like a lot in my life but then my stepmom doesn't really know about it. My dad is not ready to share it with anyone else (Author's Interview, 20/03/2016).

However, though in the preceding scripts the parents do not openly castigate their children, they still find their situation as an anomaly. This is reflective of how non-heterosexual sexuality has been placed on or beyond the margins. Therefore, the children are perceived as falling outside

the border. Thus in order to accept the reality the parents have to resort to some crafted theories in order to explain their children's preferences. To the parents heterosexuality is still the norm which should not be challenged, and alternatives are hard to tolerate at least unless there is a genetic or spiritual explanation to that preference. Similarly to the preceding scripts, Mic Tagarira (gay) indicates that his mother, though not happy about his sexual orientation, has accepted it and does not try to make life difficult for him to force him to change:

My mum was, right now she is not happy about me, she is not happy, but she has accepted me, she has never tried to kick me out. Of my family, my mother has been the most accepting, she has never judged me she has never called me names, she has never stopped supporting me unlike my brothers and my father who would have kicked me out, my mother is really, I think she is trying to deal with the situation in a way she can.

8.4 Suspicious family members

With reference to Africa, Epprecht (2013:149) notes that many same-sex practising people opt to remain in, or to return to or adapt traditional forms of discretion that allow them to avoid attention, including by secretive, de facto bisexuality. Some of the participants have not disclosed to their immediate family members or may have told a certain confidante. This is despite that some family members are suspicious that their sons or daughters were 'different' from others. The participants have been confronted by people close to them about their sexual orientation and they have adopted various ways of dispelling the allegations. I reflect on some of the experiences that participants have gone through. The position that one occupies in a family and also in the society can work as good cover in avoiding being asked many questions about one's sexuality. Occupying positions of influence at family level could command some level of respect which would override scrutiny of their sexuality. Stavo rides on his bread winner status.

Q: You indicated that you are a leader of your family; does anyone in your family know that you are gay?

Stavo: Uuum not as such but they suspect, but the reason why they don't ask me is that I am a breadwinner, so you cannot, *hautonge baba* (you can't challenge the breadwinner). So they just respect you because of your role as the breadwinner. (Author's Interview, 15/07/2015).

The above case of Stavo indicates that he has not been directly confronted by anyone within his family probably because of his current bread winner status. Stavo was during the time of the interview employed as an administrator with a local bank thus he was responsible for the upkeep of his family as the father was deceased. Thus one status of being financially independent could be seen as an empowered position which has helped in warding off any questions from his family. Madzimai Maka had to deal with her mother who was suspicious after seeing her with friends she was convinced were gay.

Q: So what do they know about you. I mean your parents?

Madzimai Maka: They don't know that I am gay

Q: No?

Madzimai Maka: They don't

Q: Do they even suspect?

Madzimai Maka: I think they do, like my mum. I think she does suspect because like this other time a friend of mine her mom passed away so we had to go like to the funeral.

Then I went with my boyfriend (lesbian) and there were two other lesbian guys so we went with them as well. Then it's like we spent 4 days at the funeral. And when we came back we went and slept at the homestead of my friend, we slept there. Then the next day we went to my house and my mum, my lesbian friends. And after they left she was like aah when did you come back? And I said yesterday, and she said where did you sleep? And I said I slept at my friend's house. And she said what where you doing with those people who you were with? She was like I don't trust you because I want a *mukwasha* like a son-in-law here. I don't want you dating girls what, what, and she cried that day. And I was like mum what are you talking about I don't even know what you are talking about we are just friends. We don't do anything like that and she just said ok but she cried that day.

Q: As if she was certain?

Maka: Yes as if she was certain.

Q: And she was crying?

Maka: Yes and I said don't cry because it's nothing I don't even know what you are talking about. So from that day I just think that she suspects and also like she always says haa I don't even know your boyfriend and I was like no please don't rush I need to do my

school work now. I don't need a guy to disturb me and she was like okay its fine okay.
(Author's Interview, 16/12/2014).

Mvududu and McFadden (2001:74) note that the "heterosexual family has been mainly a means through which women's productive and reproductive abilities have been controlled and manipulated by those who have controlled this institution for thousands of years". The concern by Madzimai Maka's mother was that her daughter was failing to fit into the heterosexual script which would make her a mother in law, thus she was expecting to have a son in law. However, given the company with whom she had seen her daughter, that dream started to seem unlikely. Ncube et al. (1997:51) assert that "besides the sexual and procreative roles, parents in the nuclear family are responsible for the care, nurturing and socialising of their children and the transferring of culture and moral norms to the next generation". The parents' concern will be on how they will be construed as having failed the society by producing a child on the margins or periphery of the society. Thus having a child on the border is a challenge that parents had to navigate as well. Having a gay or lesbian's sexual orientation known publicly becomes a contagion that does not only threaten to affect the individual but also the family of origin as parents and family members are compelled to confront the same homophobic society which their child faces (Svab and Kuhar, 2014).

Apart from her sister, Madzimai Trish's family does not suspect that she is a lesbian. She has managed by dating femme much of the time as she also identifies as femme.

Q: Your family do they have a clue?

Madzimai Trish: Not at all, maybe my sister. One of my sisters because usually I used to date femme not butches. So there was this one time that my current girlfriend came to see me and she was dressed butch and when she left my sister started asking me questions, as in why are you associating with people like that? Are you considering being someone like that? It's something that I brushed off and I think she has suspicion but she's not too sure.

Q: So do you think because you have been dating femme it has worked to your advantage that no one suspects they'll think it's one of your friends?

Madzimai Trish: Yes it has worked to my advantage, because she came over to my house no one will know because it's just a normal girl dressed as normal girl.

Q: What do you think will be the reaction of your parents if they were to know?

Madzimai Trish: I think if they were to find out, they will probably send me to see a pastor, psychiatrist or a counsellor or something like that. And I think maybe if I persist they'll most probably kick me out of the house (laughs). They will kick me out of the house. (Author's Interview, 17/12/2015).

The concern raised by the sister due to her suspicion shows how homosexuality is perceived as something marginal and not as something that is desirable. The sister questions why Madzimai Trish is hanging out with someone who has styled herself in a lesbian way and whether she has intentions of becoming like her. The implication by the sister is that keeping company of a lesbian may influence her to become one. The sister finds interaction with lesbians to be repulsive and as individuals that one should not associate with. This emanates from the stereotypical perceptions that society has on non-heterosexuals. Madzimai Trish suspects that her parents would not take kindly to her homosexuality and would try all available remedies but if all fail they would cut off ties with her. Madzimai Trish expects a negative reaction from the parents reflecting normalisation of homophobia in many institutions. Thus she does not expect her parents to behave differently from what is popularised. Similarly Takura fears that he cannot confirm the suspicions of his cousins as it may lead to estrangement:

Q: Do your cousins know?

Takura: That much I know that they know as much as I deny it, that's what they know even though I insist that I'm not. I deny it even though they say but you, I tell them that I am not.

Q: What if they ask you that we have not seen your girlfriend around?

Takura: Yaah, yaah, I tell them if my time comes I will have the girlfriend.

Q: How has it been for you to conceal your sexuality?

Takura: It's difficult, because people outside talk, aah Takura yesterday he was with this *ngochani* from Z, or *ngochani* from L etc that's the one he plays with, all sort of things, he was seen there and there. So I know they know but me these days I'm quiet I just do my things and stay in my room, when I'm going out I just tell them see you later guys and I leave and I come back and get into my room.

Q: Do you think it would be better if you had confirmed to them or its better it stays this way?

Takura: I think its better that it remains like that (as it is).

Q: What are your fears?

Takura: Aaaaa family backgrounds, family issues, so first I need to settle on my own and do my own things and then I know that I'm stable I can then tell them that you know guys I'm gay. Yaah, because we once had arguments on many issues before with my cousin brother, we had conflict. He says you are gay, you were seen getting out of this local hotel, *Hee unoenda kumodelling yengochani* (You go for drag), this and that, and you won Miss Gay Zimbabwe. I would not know who is telling them. At some point they saw lubricants and condoms and they asked what do you use this for yet you do not have a girlfriend? I insisted on my innocence and told them that these were left over from those health researchers that we did and when I gave people I remained with some.

(Author's Interview, 21/03/2013).

Evidently the participant despite a series of opportunities for him to open up to his family, he has consistently denied being gay. The participant has fears about confirming what the cousins allege, as he feels he is not stable yet to live alone and taking care of his livelihood should he end up being rejected as family member. His fears are on possible estrangement from the family. He is however aware that his cousins may feel convinced that he is gay although he has denied it. This shows how it is not easy in some contexts for individuals to openly express their queer identity. Participants can weigh their options and possible consequences if they are to disclose their sexuality to significant family members. Whilst having fully accepted who he is, Takura is still cautious about opening up to his family, he still counts on their economic and social support, thus he is not willing to risk losing that support.

8.5 Family expectations on marriage

Despite the myriad experiences that participants have had, one prominent issue has been how the family inherently appears as an arena of heteronormative socialization. Families that had tolerated the homosexual orientation of their children still acted in ways that push participants to try heterosexuality. Those who were still closeted were not exempted from the expectations of the family that they would date and marry a heterosexual partner. Not having a girlfriend for male participants often raised suspicion among siblings or parents. Terry (gay) who was still in

the closet to his family, talks about how his sister expects him to marry and brought a present for the girlfriend she did not know but was anticipating to be there. As Terry noted:

My sister came from the UK and when she was about to leave she said I never got to meet your girlfriend but I know she is there so may you give her these presents. She gave me a necklace and earrings (Author's Interview, 03/02/2013).

Thus without having discussed the topic with Terry, the sister had expectations that at his age he would be dating a girl in preparation for marriage. The sister infers from what the society has normalised that a young man once stable should prepare for marriage and the partner is usually introduced to the sisters. Thus, in anticipating that her brother would not deviate from the norm 'feminine' presents were brought to give to the anticipated sister-in-law. 'Compulsory heterosexuality' does significantly influence the perception and expectations of family members. As highlighted earlier, whilst Mario's family has accepted that he is gay they still anticipate that he will change and marry a woman. Mhazha's significant family members tried to hook him up with a church girl in an attempt to bring him to conform to heterosexual norms. Clarity who has come out to his family is still being expected to get married heterosexually by significant family members. Despite the family having exposed him to various conversion therapy attempts which did not bring results they were expecting, family still anticipates that he will become heterosexual.

Q: How does your granny take it?

Clarity: They try to force things. When I was in SA she would send me messages warning me to be careful around South African women, because she did not want a daughter in-law from South Africa. And I was like oh my God these people. Even my brother's wife is also saying be careful around 'loose' women who are there. But they know, instead they should be telling me to be careful around men not women.

Q: So is there any pressure for you to marry?

Clarity: Yaah too much pressure. Like what I'm saying now my brother's wife, and my granny as well as my father. The very night I came back my father asked me whether I was still doing what I used to do (having homosexual relations). I was quiet and just looked at the TV, then it was obvious to him that I had not changed. He then said when you walk through the street out there imagine how many fingers point at you (people

talking about his being gay), and if I also pass through the same street how many will point at me just because of you. Even though I could get his point on what he has to go through, in my mind I just said there is nothing I can do to change the situation. (Author's Interview, 12/10/2015).

Evidently the conversation with significant family members even in what appears to be advice to someone who is not at home was heterosexually inclined. The warnings given about South African women emanates from a stereotypical position popularised by Zimbabweans who perceive themselves as more conservative compared to South Africa. In this instance the family members were advising Clarity that when he wants to marry, he should marry a Zimbabwean woman. This was despite their knowledge that Clarity was gay. The warnings were also a subtle way of reminding him that he should marry a woman even if the family was acquainted with his homosexual attraction. The father's concern was not only that his son was bringing shame upon himself, but he himself was also being exposed to the homophobic gaze of the society because of his association with his son. Chibaba Ryan's father though accepting his daughter's homosexual orientation was still concerned about how his daughter was to have children:

So he actually pushed it on me, I had to tell him, dad I am homosexual...so he was cool with it in quotes. Yaah a little bit cool with it but the thing came like the chilled part he was so very concerned what are you going to do about it as Africans you are supposed to have children and you being so different in a way how do you go about it. That's like the issue we are having like now, but he is okay with it he understands, like he had to tell me like some family history like so maybe it runs in our family or something like that so he understands a little. (Author's Interview, 20/03/2016).

8.6 Conclusion

The chapter explored the myriad experiences of gays and lesbians regarding their interface with family. As noted, the family in this context should not be assumed to refer to the isolated nuclear family but the nuclear and extended family, also extending into the realm of forefathers. Amongst the current participants a few had intentionally come out to their families or one or more individuals within the family, whilst a significant number had been outed due to various factors. Some were still closeted though for some there is suspicion from family members. The

accounts demonstrate a complexity of gay and lesbian participants' family experiences. In some families participants encountered outward rejection which was influenced by the stereotypical perceptions that the society has about non-heterosexual individuals. These families thus want to protect family honour rather than to support their child or sibling as they are perceived as living on the margins of the society. The families try different remedies in an attempt to correct the lesbian or gay individual whom they perceive to be 'abnormal'. Families exert pressure on individuals to renounce homosexuality through cutting ties or threats of cutting ties and the associated family support. However the relations could also become fluid as they were not fixed in outward hostility. Within the same family setup some family members could be tolerant and accepting whilst others would maintain their hostile stance. While families are centres of heterosexual socialisation and at most wanted to maintain that, there were some family members who accommodate their children or siblings. The above narratives point out the diversity of family interface for gays and lesbians, as it will be erroneous to perceive them in a binary dimension where they are either positive or negative.

Chapter 9: Enduring and subverting religious homophobia. Towards an understanding of religious experience of gays and lesbians in Harare.

9.1 Introduction

Silence and rejection constitute two dominant trends and trajectories of African theological discourses on homosexuality (Van Klinken and Gunda 2012). Religious leaders from diverse parts of the African continent have produced and disseminated homophobic utterances, often through biblical and qur'anic references to the 'sin of Sodom and Gomorrah' (Nyanzi 2013:957). At the same time, there is a small but growing ecumenical body of pro-gay religious leaders (Nyanzi 2013:958; Epprecht, 2013; Van Klinken and Gunda 2012). Desmond Tutu, retired Bishop Chistopher Ssenyonjo, Reverend Gideon Byamugisha and some female African theologians are among those who have espoused a more tolerant stance (Nyanzi 2013; Epprecht, 2013; Van Klinken and Gunda, 2012). These theologians have questioned the basis for anti-homosexual rhetoric, and have provided theological notions for further discussions on homosexuality and sexual diversity in African theology. However, although Van Klinken and Gunda (2012) warn against perceiving African theology as a monolithic bloc opposed to homosexuality. They conclude that it is true that many African theologians have taken up the cudgels against gay rights. What is largely missing from the debates on homosexuality in Africa are the experiences of same-sex loving people with religious convictions (Van Klinken 2013; Rodriguez 2009). As Van Klinken (2013) has pointed out, 'as much as vociferous homophobic pastors tell us something about religious dynamics in contemporary Africa, the religiosity of LGBTI people is also significant in order to critically grasp the width and depth of African religious realities'. The limited scholarship that exists on religion and homosexuality in Zimbabwe predominantly focuses on religious' perceptions of and responses to homosexuality, while religious experiences of gays and lesbians have hardly ever been explored. This chapter explores the range of religious experiences which may be positive, negative, and neutral which have significantly impacted on gays and lesbians in Harare. It examines tensions, and lack of tensions, between these men and women's sexual orientations and their religiosity.

9.2 Religious context in Harare

Religion is a powerful tool in shaping society's views on homosexuality as well as impacting on gay and lesbian self-perception. Whereas classical sociologists such as Marx, Weber and Durkheim predicted that religion would cease to be a force to reckon with as society progresses, on the contrary religion is still pervasive in shaping people's behaviour and perceptions worldwide including in Africa. Religion is showing no signs of disappearing or waning in public and personal significance. Religion plays an important role in the life of many Africans (Mbetbo, 2013) and most Zimbabweans are socialized in families that ascribe to some type of religious belief. The Zimbabwean constitution enshrines religious liberty, but Christianity, African Traditional Religions and Islam dominate the spiritual sphere (Chitando, 2002). Ganiel (2009) contends that three-quarters of Zimbabweans practice Christianity and, as a result, churches and related organizations play a significant role in the social lives of many citizens. The dominance of Christianity in Zimbabwe is so pronounced that it has been widely incorporated into the educational, economic and socio-political facets of life. Chitando (2005) notes that Christianity has been adopted as the religion for state functions and its ritual specialists perform at major national events, such as the Independence and Heroes anniversaries. Zimbabwean state functionaries have thus sought to authenticate political claims on contested issues by utilizing religious themes, and critical engagement with homosexuality is no exception

Long (2003) claims that many churches in Zimbabwe joined in denouncing homosexuals. Thus significantly religious groups have been accomplices in perpetuating and supporting the state's homophobic stance. Some of the churches have either aligned themselves with the president on these issues, or avoided commenting publicly on them. While even silence on the subject may be perceived of as challenging given principles of Christian charity, love and tolerance (Campbell 2002), some church leaders have also actively condemned both GALZ and homosexuals (Connor 2011:865). Among them are Reverend Canaan Banana (who ironically was arrested on sodomy charges), Dr Michael Mawema, Nolbert Kunonga, and Emmanuel Makandiwa. After the arrest of the first Zimbabwean president, Canaan Banana, on charges of sodomy, for example, Dr Michael Mawema of the African Reformed Church called for the public lynching, flogging and stoning of homosexuals (Campbell 2002; Epprecht 1998), and in the build-up to 'Judgment

Night 2'³², Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa of the United Family International Church referred to homosexuals as mentally ill (Stewart, 2014). In sum, homophobic utterances by religious leaders may well have been just as influential as those of political leaders in perpetuating homophobia.

9:3 Participants religious affiliation

The table below summarises the religious affiliation of the participants in this study. Interestingly the table does show that many of the participants subscribed to Christianity which can be interpreted as unsurprising given that the dominance of Christianity on the religious landscape in Zimbabwe is a well-known fact. Van Klinken (2013) notes that Epprecht (2013:66–67) posits that many African LGBTI people ‘are proudly, happily and deeply religious’, which is perceived by many Western activists and scholars as an ‘apparent contradiction’. It is perceived as an apparent contradiction due to the popularisation of the view that a Christian identity is antithetical to a queer identity. The chapter however explores experiences that are varied and at least complex which challenges the preceding position by Epprecht.

Table 9.1: Distribution of participants by religion

Which religion do you belong to	n (%)
Christian	29 (94)
Atheist	2 (6)
Type of religious grouping	n=29
Catholic	4 (13.8)
Protestant (Salvation Army, Anglican, Methodist, SDA)	7 (24.1)
Pentecostal	8 (27.5)
Apostolic sects	5 (17.2)
Believes in God but doesn't go to church	5 (17.2)

³² ‘Judgment night’ is an overnight religious ceremony in which prophet Makandiwa intercedes on behalf of congregants to be loosed from bondage of evil spirits and on this occasion he claimed that homosexuals will be delivered as well.

9.4 Irreconcilable identities: ‘Queer and religious’

Rodriguez’s (2009) assessment of existing literature predominantly emanating from the western context (particularly North America and Great Britain) illustrates the complexity that surrounds the issue of religion in the lives of gays and lesbians. It is characterised by themes of intolerance, homophobia, faith, and perseverance. As O’Brien (2004:184) has pointed out, “doctrines that condemn homosexuality constitute the ideological backdrop against which Christians initially experience their homosexuality”. Many Christian leaders have asserted that ‘gay’ and ‘Christian’ are mutually exclusive identities (Yip 1999), and the teachings are most often presented in such a way that same-sex loving Christians feel that they are irredeemable sinners. “Compared to nonreligious persons, Christian homosexuals tend to experience a greater sense of anxiety about exposure of their sexuality, a greater degree of alienation, and a lower degree of self-esteem” (Yip 1999:48). A critical analysis of the homosexuality discourse in Zimbabwe shows collusion between political and religious leaders in denouncing homosexuality (Manyonganise, 2016: 77). Whereas the state has claimed that homosexuality is ‘un-African’, the church in general has viewed the practice as ‘unbiblical’ therefore it should be denounced. The church’s position ignites the ‘border war’ contestations as it portrays homosexual men and women as ‘others’ who fall outside the border of what is acceptable. Within this framing, homosexuality is taken as a signifier of the border between sinners and non-sinners as well as good Christians and non-Christians. The popular discourse seems to reinforce the notion that religious identities are conflicting with queer identities. Gays and lesbians are variously seen as sinners, abominations, perverts and as diseased (Mathibe, 2015:84).

9.4.1 ‘Sin of Sodom and Gomorrah’

Nyanzi (2013:957) observes that, “building on conservative interpretations of scriptures, religious clerics convince their audiences that homosexuality is not only a sinful abomination, but also un-African and foreign”. Van Klinken and Chitando (2016:2) point out that it is undeniable that in African Christian circles prominent pastors and church leaders have warned against the dangers of homosexuality. The congregation is thus encouraged to be on guard against such practices and any individuals who are tolerant are branded as agents of the devil. As the discourse of rejection and debates about the morality of homosexuality continues within religious and spiritual contexts, many gays and lesbians struggle with reconciling their sexual

orientation with an already existent spiritual/religious identity (Buchanan et al. 2001; O'Brien 2004). As a result, persons who are homosexual may either feel compelled to reject their religious faith in order to accept their sexual orientation, or else forsake their sexual orientation in order to remain Christian. Thus, within the Zimbabwean context, the collusion between national leaders and church leaders denies homosexual individuals their national and religious citizenry.

Almost all of the participants had heard of or attended church services involving homophobic or homophobic utterances, often in connection with biblical references to the 'sin of Sodom and Gomorrah'. Takura related what happened in a church service he attended:

Yaah one day I went to Word of Life; I left before church was over (laughs). I cried that day; *ndakaudzwa, ndakaudzwa* (I was told) all the bad about homosexuality, down to everything about how bad it is. I came home and went straight to bed; I did not want to talk to anyone. And then I went back to that stage of confusion, and I was asking myself: Who am I? But at the end I said I don't give a fuck; I am gay, this is who I am. (Author's Interview, 21/03/2013).

Evidently the religious cleric's words are powerful because they influence meanings associated with sexual practices and persuade the masses to act in accordance with the circulating hate-speech (Nyanzi, 2013:957). The sermon had the effect of reinforcing the border wars and was meant to compel those branded as homosexual sinners to renounce their sexual behavior. Takura talks of how the sermon impacted on him to the extent of questioning himself, who he is, as he has a sexual identity that had been castigated. Sullivan-Blum (2004:19) observes that "conservative Christian discourse constructs heterosexuality as natural and God-ordained while framing homosexuality as either an unfortunate pathology or as intentional sin". However, despite having been negatively affected by the teachings, having re-examined himself Takura comforted himself as he felt that he could not do anything to change who he was. Thus the effect of setting borders on individuals according to their sexuality does impact on how gay men and lesbians perceive themselves. Madzimai Trish had a similar experience:

Madzimai Trish: To be honest with you the one time the preacher was talking about it. I literally walked out of church and went home. I told my mum I was sick, I couldn't tell

her that's why I left so I told them I was sick and I had to go home.

Q: Why did you have to walk out of church?

Madzimai Trish: I wasn't going to be comfortable with someone talking about my sexuality in a negative way

Q: In what ways?

Madzimai Trish: Well it's an obvious thing that the church, most churches if not all are against the idea of homosexuality so I already knew he was going to be against it, he was going to be talking against it so I didn't want to hear about it.(Author's Interview, 17/12/2015).

Significant scholarship has popularized the negative character of religion particularly Christianity in sustaining homophobia in Africa (Nyeck, 2016:110). Not only Madzimai Trish but other participants as well, perceive homophobia as having been normalized in religious circles. By leaving even before the preacher had gone into much detail about the subject of homosexuality, she was trying to protect herself from the homocritical diatribe she expected to hear. This illustrates the borders that have been drawn, where some are perceived as 'others' and what they do is regarded as wrong and in need of change. Chitando and Mapuranga (2016:171) note that "the dominant narrative describing the relationship between LGBTI activists and churches in Africa is that of tension, confrontation, hatred and even violence". Though rejecting homophobia some participants anticipate that their sexuality attracts tension with religious institutions. The excerpt from Madzimai Queen helps to illustrate how religion (Christianity) is seen as an avowed opponent of sexual diversity.

Q: You said you are a Christian so do people know that you are a lesbian?

Madzimai Queen: Well, from church people don't know. Yeah because religion says you can't.

Q: Which religion says you can't?

Madzimai Queen: The Bible says, well the... okay at school we've heard the pastors I think its Romans when the angels entered I think Babylon and they wanted... well religion it's just not acceptable...(Author's Interview, 13/12/2014).

Without necessarily picking on the specific texts that are used by preachers, the participant was convinced that 'church' people perceive religious identities as being conflictual to queer

identities. Thus Madzimai Maka anticipates that homophobia is normalized in churches. Even in cases where participants were of the view that there was nothing wrong with their sexuality, they assumed that their families, because of strong Christian backgrounds, were likely to assume that they were demon-possessed and were not praying enough, which are basically some of the ideas that are found in homocritical sermons by the church leaders. Some participants' anticipation that churches are intrinsically homophobic helps them not to allow the statements to negatively impact on them. Chibaba Natsi noted:

As a Christian, she (her mother) would think that it's probably the demons. I am demon possessed. She would think that I am not going to church enough and I am not praying much. She would make me go to church more and try to force me to wear skirts and dresses but I have friends that I know who have gone through that and they are still gay, so if that were to come I would tell her you can try what you want but this is a decision that I have taken and I am happy about it (Author's Interview, 15/07/2013).

Some respondents had often been repeatedly reminded by preachers, fellow congregants and family members that their sexual orientation is a 'sin', and that God does not want people who are gay. Other participants had been told that they are demon possessed as long as they continue to hold their sexual orientation. At times, participants had felt that sermons had been deliberately crafted to demonise them because the preacher suspected or knew about their sexual orientation. For example, Nyasha explained:

... And the first sermon of the first night of the camp was entitled: *Nhai brother zvingaitewo here shuwa kuti ini murume ndinganane nemi* ('Well brother, is it of sound mind that I will fall in love with another brother?') and I am the only person in the church who has actually come out open to the youth deacon about this. And I'm looking at him, am like what the hell dude. After the service I ask him, dude why are you talking about me during services and he is like, it's not about you, but the word that I preach could actually have caught (pricked) 10 to 15 people. Yet I just told you about this last week... (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013)

The deacon in this case castigated same-sex attracted men with the intention of compelling them to change their behaviour. Whilst the deacon claimed his sermon was not directed at Nyasha, his

idea was to broadcast a message to others who may have had a similar sexual orientation and gender identity. By framing homosexuality as a problem in his sermon, the preacher reinforced the boundary that has been set by politicians in castigating same sex loving people as ‘others’. The idea was to demonstrate that the two identities are not reconcilable, being gay and being a Christian. Some respondents had internalized and accepted that they are sinners, while others struggled with the idea that they will go to hell because of their sexual orientation. Therefore, homocritical speeches served to instill fear which was meant to force LGBTI people to renounce their homosexual identities which were framed as conflicting with a desirable religious identity. These excerpts from interviews with Chibaba Runyararo and Stavo capture thoughts shared by several respondents:

Chibaba Runyararo: In many instances, like I pray, I pray alone and ask God. Asking Him why is it that I have feelings for girls and not guys? So I pray and ask if I can change, but that’s not what I want, so I will be saying don’t look at me differently from others. I know it’s a sin, but I don’t do it because I know it’s a sin, but it’s something that just started. If I had feelings for guys, maybe I would not be doing it, but I don’t have feelings for guys. (Author’s Interview, 13/05/2013).

Similarly Stavo also noted:

Some time back I broke up with someone that I was in love with (because of the sermons) and I told myself that I was not going to be gay again but I realized that I was lying to myself. So I will just listen to the gospel but I cannot change it (Author’s Interview, 15/07/2015)

On many occasions participants questioned themselves about whether or not they were sinning. Participants had been made to think that they were embracing competing if not conflicting identities; Christian and queer, thus they had to drop one preferably the latter if they cherished salvation. Chibaba Runyararo struggles with the threats of damnation and rejection that have been popularized in Christian circles in which queer identities are seen as a hindrance to becoming a good Christian. In popular religious discourse in Zimbabwe the images of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are constantly reinvented, reinterpreted with homosexuality apparently being singled out as the reason for its destruction. In this framing, the God of the

Bible is depicted as a god of punishment to those who deviate, particularly homosexuals. Stavo's initial reaction to the sermons was to break up with his partner in order to force himself not to be gay. The fear that he was sinning made him reject being gay which however he says was a futile commitment. The demonization through the sermons creates some cognitive dissonance in participants such that as they reflect on their attraction to people of the same sex, they are forced to see themselves as lost. In spite of knowing that what they feel is genuine they try to reject the non-heterosexual identities which are being castigated. Dealing with the identity conflict is complex. However, the participants initially attempted to reject their sexual identity rather than reject the Christian identity. This emanates from the importance of religion in many people's lives. Murr (2013:350) notes that "religious practices are often deeply personal, meaningful, and central to a person's sense of self". However most realized that they could not reject what according to them was 'in them'. Thus as much as the religious doctrine marginalized their sexuality they could not reject their sexual identity as it was something they said had no control over. At the same time rejecting a Christian identity was, however, not tenable to some given the religious belief systems they had grown up with and into. Some participants had been told by their relatives that they were wasting their time by going to church when they were homosexuals, as God would not bless them; rather they would be cursed. The excerpt from Larry captures some of the challenges:

My uncles and other relatives know and they ask me that you go to church and you know that it's not allowed why you do it (being gay). I tell them that there is nothing that can stop me from worshipping God, because he is the one who put me on earth [referring to creation], so *hurema hwangu* (my handicap) can't stop me worshipping God. So, I go to church despite what they say. They also say that but you are wasting your time by going to church because the bible does not allow it and that's why God is not blessing you to get a job (Author's Interview, 14/05/2015).

Lyonga (2016:57) highlights that "the gospel of prosperity is centred on the belief that the biblical God is a just god, who takes care of his own; he rewards with prosperity those who heed his laws and punishes the wicked, the recalcitrant and reprobate". Whilst the prosperity gospel emphasizes giving it also presents righteousness and faith as prerequisites for one to receive blessings (Lyonga, 2016:58). Thus Larry's relatives draw on his 'marginality' as the reason why

he is not 'progressing' in life. In their eyes homosexuality is detestable to God beyond measure. Thus, no matter how often he attends church he will not be blessed. God is invoked in the border war and homosexual individuals are perceived as outside God's people who will get benefits from the benevolent God. Therefore in this line of thought a homosexual identity is depicted as competing with an ideal Christian identity which is approved by God. The relatives even draw Larry to his knowledge of what God wants, thus demonstrating that homophobia has been normalized within the religious context. This resonates with Mathibe's (2015) claims that homosexuals are seen as sinners, abominations, perverts and diseased people. While many participants had been exposed to the perception that homosexuality is un-biblical and un-Christian, as in Larry's case, they were not simply passive recipients of this type of view. On the contrary, some had developed spaces for themselves as 'gay' Christians. Note how Larry, for example, claimed that nothing could stop him from worshipping God, and also his 'naturalisation' of his sexual desires. It was God who had put him, with his sexual orientation, into the world. Similar to Yip's (1999:60) observation among gay Christians in Britain, same-sex loving Christians draw on, "invent and reinvent narratives and accounts that help shape their self-identities and relationships with the social world".

Instead of being of being a 'safe haven' where all are comforted, churches are often experienced as the exact opposite when they lay out homosexuality as beyond the border, demon possessed, sinful, and against God's will. In some instances, participants had accepted that they were living in sin, and many were struggling with tension arising from their holding of identities perceived of as conflicting. Some felt they were considered aliens in the 'household of God' and beyond the promised redemption of Christian theology if they continued identifying with their sexual orientation.

9.5 Counter narratives to the 'sin of Sodom and Gomorrah'

Whereas there is a significant tension between queer identities and religious identity and affiliation, same sex loving people have not been passive recipients of damnation and castigation. O'Brien (2004:188) observes that in the western United States and British Columbia "despite threats of damnation and rejection, some lesbian and gay Christians remain undaunted in their commitment to both a queer identity and Christian religiosity". Some 'gay' Christians are not passive but through a 'politics of counter-rejection' they manifest a positive self-image.

Some respondents did not straightforwardly accept the narrative of sinning, but could draw on narratives countering the narrative about the ‘sin of Sodom and Gomorrah’. Chibaba Natsi found comfort from her understanding of who and how God is:

There is a time that I wake up and I say I’m not doing anything bad, and there is a time that I wake up saying I am sinning. But I always say in the end that God is an understanding person. I will always have a one on one opportunity to tell Him how I feel. I will tell Him that what I had was a genuine feeling. (Author’s Interview, 15/07/2013).

Apart from her belief that God is utterly understanding, Chibaba Natsi also, in the last sentence, focused on the significance of being genuine. Whilst the homophobic religious concerns are based on the assumption that being gay is sinful and demonic, Chibaba Natsi’s claim about being genuine challenges the border on what is ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ as she questions what is sinful as well as demonic and what is not sinful and demonic. Given that she is genuinely expressing her feelings she appreciates that God will understand her, thus making the border permeable. Participants draw on their religious understanding that God is merciful and knows what is in them and will find their reasons ‘justifiable’. Mhazha also focused on his gayness as something genuine and that was always part of who he is:

... But in my heart I say if Lord you are taking me and putting me to Gehenna of fire, I can’t take this gay out of me because it’s in my body. I know that God is there, but being gay is in my body. I know there are some gays who are in churches, but it can’t be taken out of the body (being gay) (Author’s Interview 21/05/2014).

Some of the participants countered the castigation by drawing on their being genuine and on how God understands what is happening in their ‘bodies’. Based on that understanding some participants confirmed Epprecht’s (2013) claim many African LGBTI people are proudly, happily and deeply religious. When Madzimai Maka was asked how often she goes to church, she emphasized that she goes there regularly and loves church. Madzimai Maka said, ‘Yes *almost every week I go to church. I love going to church*’. (Author’s Interview, 16/12/2014). Some participants did not find it difficult to reconcile the two identities – being Christian and being queer. For example as Madzimai Trish illustrated:

Q: You said that you are Christian?

Madzimai Trish: Yes

Q: How do you reconcile the two identities, being femme and being Christian?

Madzimai Trish: It really does not make a difference to me; I take it as it's normal.

Q: What do you mean by saying you take it as normal?

Madzimai Trish: I don't think it's something that's a taboo to be lesbian. So I think that's what makes me think it's normal.

Q: Is that the way people from the church that you go to perceive it? As something that is not a taboo that is just normal?

Madzimai Trish: Well there are times that you know, they preach about something like that lesbianism, gayism, you can't love the same sex and I guess because no one from church knows about who I am I can't really come up to someone and say well this is what I'm going through

Q: So would you describe yourself as someone who is a happy Christian?

A: Yes, very, I am.

Q: And do you have any moments you talk to God about it, to understand it?

Madzimai Trish: I have tried, a bit but to me it's almost always pointless because from my point of view he made me like that. He created me like that and I can't keep going to God to say why I am like this or anything along those lines (Author's Interview, 17/12/2015).

In a study in North America Murr (2013) observes that some study participants had no inner conflict about integrating spiritual practices and their sexual orientation. In Murr's (2013:362-3) study some never thought it was an issue being queer and Christian. Similarly in this study, Madzimai Trish counters the abnormality and demon possessed clichés popularized in religious circles by making a claim that it is normal to be a lesbian and a Christian. She draws on her understanding that God made her the way she is, therefore she is not abnormal and should not question God about being a lesbian. Thus, the border which determines what is normal is challenged by the participants who reflect on God's power to create people as they are. Giddens (1992) informs us that in the context of modernity the self is constantly evolving through experience and self-reference. Thus participants used their own experience and the understanding that what God created was immensely valuable to question religious anti-homosexual rhetoric in

order to choose what they wanted. They did not passively accept homocritical religious positions which seemed to be meant to denigrate them and force them to conform.

Some participants are thus assertive about their sexual orientation despite knowing that some people in religious circles claim that homosexuality is unacceptable. Some respondents found comfort in the understanding that they, as all people, had been created by God. As Nyasha put it, “Then at times I ask myself where did I come from if God hates homosexuality, so was I not created by God, was I created by the Devil?”(Author’s Interview, 31/01/2013). Thus the participants lay claims on God’s ability to create, therefore if that’s the way God wanted it to be they should not be considered as abnormal and demon possessed. Larry said:

So when I pray I say ‘God, this is not my will and I did not choose it.’... My heart bleeds as I ponder on this, but I say ‘God you are the one who put me on earth, whatever comes my way I will accept it.’ And that has kept me going, God has a plan for me, others of my age are now late (dead) but I am still alive (Author’s Interview, 14/05/2015).

In short, the narrative these study participants are drawing on goes, If God created me and I am genuine; did he not also create my homosexuality? The respondents’ claims are based on the theological notion of God as a creator and hence they suggest that their sexuality is not chosen but innate and intrinsic (Van Klinken, 2013) and for which they can be held responsible. On the basis of the belief in creation, some respondents were in this way able to reconcile their sexual and religious identities. The counter narratives construct homosexuality as part of the God’s natural design as they draw on the creationist ideology. Within the “creationist argument, LGBT Christians posit sexual orientation as an immutable attribute assigned by God” (Sullivan-Blum, 2004:199).

Phiri (2016:164) notes that in Zambia same-sex loving people call upon a pluralistic understanding of God. In this framing God is understood as not only a giver of sexuality but also understanding of same-sex orientation and approving it. Similarly, in the current study two related narratives were also discernible. First, some study participants put forward the question that if God does not want homosexuality, why would he allow homosexuals who are still in the closet to be given positions in church? In this vein the participants demonstrate how they challenge the ‘border’ set within religious circles where homosexuality is branded as

unacceptable and something that God will ruthlessly punish. Having successful Christian experiences was perceived as an indicator of how understanding God was to all his creation. If God did not love them, was he not going to expose all those LGBTI people who are closeted and still in church. Mario, for example, had held a position as *vasondosi* (prophet aide) for some time, whilst others were church choir members. Mario was in an African Independent church which is renowned for having members publicly confess their ‘sins’ during services. If one does not do so the prophet is shown the omission in the realm of the spirit and forces a confession. However Mario did not go experience this. In relation to this, Stavo challenges the claim that homosexuals are spiritually possessed as the church prophets have not managed to pick on who is gay.

I think it’s not spiritual, because some of the churches, we go to they don’t pick it, you know some can pick (spiritually discern) that you have stolen, committed this sin or that, but they do not pick this (homosexuality) (Author’s Interview, 15/07/2015).

Rather than accepting the popularized narrative of possessed individuals needing deliverance, some participants drew on how God has accepted them in his service. Stavo’s narrative is that if the prophets pick those who steal and other congregants who have committed certain ‘sins’ how come gay people are not picked for confession. Larry’s narrative also helps to illustrate this, how continuance in God’s service may indicate that God does not despise gay people:

Actually I go to church, I go to Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and what amazes me is that people say God doesn’t want it, but I started going there in 2010 and I completed lessons (Catechism) and was affirmed [confirmed] that very same year and became a full member. I sing in the church choir and I was a Sunday school teacher. I also have a position in the youth department. So what amazes me is why people would choose you to leadership posts when it’s said God does not look at gay people and does not want them (Author’s Interview, 14/06/2015).

Others felt that being discriminated against was just one of the trials that befalls any Christian, and that they had to be strong. Thus Christian theology was drawn on to develop resilience in the face of ‘homophobia’. In essence within this narrative, ‘gay’ people claim to be no different from other Christians as they also go through temptations just like them. Being gossiped about on their

sexuality is then seen as a trial and temptation that they have to overcome. These participants redraw and reconstruct the boundaries to meet their own circumstances. Their ability to contain gossiping without opting out of organized religion can then be perceived as demonstrating their Christian maturity. Sindiso's narrative captures the idea:

Now even if people diss me on the road I am no longer affected as I was before, maybe it's because I now pray, I take it lightly with the understanding that people talk, I say to myself there is no one who is not gossiped about, if people don't gossip about you, you are not yet a Christian, if you do not get temptations you are not fully a Christian (Author's Interview, 30/05/2015).

9.5.1. Compartmentalizing the two identities: Queer and Christian

Some of the study participants continued enjoying fellowship with other Christians through the adoption of a conformist strategy and the avoidance of focus on and attention to their gayness. Religious spaces for participants were areas that they needed to assess the reputational implications of openly adopting object-choice sexual identities. Therefore in the 'response-present' participants had to project a desirable identity which was not stigmatized through impression management (Goffman 1959, 1963). Thus, some participants were involved in staging fronts, taking roles and doing face work in order not to spoil their Christian identity. They made efforts to conceal their sexual orientation from other people, and particularly so from those in church. They often actively participated in church activities, and some were particularly eager to avail their services whenever there was work to be done in church. Others might participate in youth gatherings, sing in the church choir, or attend revival sessions. In many cases, these church members were working harder than others, and participating more fully, in order to shift focus away from their sexual orientation. The following transcript from Takura exemplifies how some gays and lesbians try to conform:

First days it was very difficult, oooh my God, it was difficult. Because in the church choir I used to sing soprano then I switched to alto and you know the grannies and the women, would say '*eeh anaoda zvechiskana*' (he likes girlish things). And you know once that word *zvechiskana* (girl's things), the end of it will be *kanenge kangochani* (he must be gay). Even if you get in church with a good scent, they would say you will become gay because of the lotion you want to put on. But they forget that I am a man, I use perfume

and I also use body lotions, they only take it as if it's only done by women. So in the church it takes time for them to accept that that's how you are. You end up trying to defend yourself by being active and participating in all church programs. So if there is any church program you should be there so that they won't talk much about you, if there is *rumuko* (Revival programs) you are there, if there is any need for youths to cook you are also there so that they won't start talking about you saying you exclude yourself from others, you think you are special or what. So if you participate actively some will defend you when others start talking about you because you are just as involved and active as anyone else. For instance they would say, *kuti kudaro here inga akaenda wani kwaidonza vamwe rori* (could it be, but he is just as hardworking as others, could he be gay?). So you do not have to appear gay to them, do not give them any reason to talk about your sexuality, so you have to try and conceal it (Author's Interview, 21/03/2013).

Instead of making a choice on which identity to keep, some study participants had maintained both their sexual and religious identity, although they did so in separate social spheres. Participants made a conscious choice to maintain their sexuality but in a hidden form, in order to avoid attracting that scrutiny of other church members. Participation in church programs was strategically used by participants to create a desired identity. Adopting conformist behavior was part of impression management by the participants which served to allay any suspicions about their sexual orientation. Thus compartmentalizing their lives could allow gays and lesbians to enjoy Christian benefits without denouncing their queer identity. Whilst in other western contexts LGBTI politics valorizes adopting an openly queer identity by coming out (Morrow et al. 2000; Svab and Kuhar, 2014; Waldner and Magrude, 1999), this cannot be universally sustainable where such an identity is not tolerated. In some circumstances where participants were confronted about their sexuality in religious circles some chose to deny the allegations in order to uphold their Christian identity.

Takura: Yaah last time we went to a youth outing and there is this game known as 'skeleton in the closet', in which a person can ask any question they want. The youth, they may be quiet but may have a lot to say about you. Someone can even ask sister so and so you had sex with so and so on this day, and you will be what, me?

Q: So what happened to you, what question were you asked?

Takura: Yes, Takura are you gay?

Q: and ...?

Takura: I laughed and laughed and I was like aaah no I am not gay. And then after that there were a series of questions that were asked. Why is it that you like hanging out with girls? Why is it that your conduct is like that of girls? How come the way you carry yourself is similar to what we know gay people doing? And I was like maybe that happens to me unconsciously not that I am gay, I do not notice it. I then said I actually have a girlfriend. So once you say I have a girlfriend it allays their fears and they are like okay, okay (Author's Interview, 21/03/2013).

Therefore, not being open about one's sexual orientation and gender identity, even sometimes denying it, as in the example immediately above, was strategic for many participants in order to avoid spoiling their identity. The expectation that 'church' people are homophobic compelled some study participants to live separate identities, publicly in church circles hiding the 'gay' identity. The self was presented in a way that would not draw attention on their sexual desires which study participants had come to take for granted was considered undesirable among church people. Impression management was drawn on to avoid stigma.

9.6 Spiritual deliverance

Amongst participants whose sexual orientation was known, or had become discovered, by family members, attempts at 'spiritual deliverance' had been made in several instances. Much of Zimbabwe is Christian, but religious pluralism also characterizes the spiritual landscape of the country. For instance, it is not uncommon for Christians to consult traditional healers when they have challenges which they perceive as being mysterious; neither is it uncommon for those who are members of conventional mainline churches to consult faith healers in times of trouble, or for non-Christians to do the same. Moreover, many African independent and Pentecostal churches have incorporated some form of healing and deliverance rituals in their ministry. Van Klinken (2016:74) points out that demonology has shaped the responses of African churches and homosexual individuals are targets of healing and deliverance ministries in attempts to cast out the 'homosexuality demon' in them. Whilst some Christians would perceive homosexuality as demon induced, African traditional religion and indigenous apostolic churches would perceive it as resulting from evil spirits that are being caused by someone, not a demon. In this frame the

assumption is, if one is gay one has fallen victim to evil spirits that have been cast upon one by someone who is jealous of their family. Therefore, these variable framings influenced the context in which spiritual deliverance occurred among some participants. Essentially labelling gay people as demon possessed or evil spirit influenced draws a border between what is sinful and what is not sinful with those labeled as demon possessed consequently being regarded as sinful. Such kind of framing reinforces the stereotypical perceptions on the LGBTI community.

Clarity shared a scenario in which he and his gay friend were subjected to spiritual deliverance by members of Johane Masowe weChishanu (on this church, see Mukonyora 1998) an indigenous African Apostolic Church. One of the prophets had approached him and his father and told the father that his son was possessed by the spirit of a mermaid, and that this was the reason he exhibited feminine behaviour. The prophet went on to say that he had been shown a remedy for this. In the middle of the conversation, Clarity's friend, who was also gay, arrived at the scene and the prophet then said that the spirit had revealed to him that another mermaid had arrived. His father believed the prophet and agreed to exorcism, which was to be conducted at the shrine. Clarity and his friend were requested to bring tea leaves, sterilized milk, eggs and raspberry juice the following day and they complied since Clarity did not want to disappoint his father. At the shrine, they spent the greater part of the day drinking tea without sugar and the ceremony started in the afternoon, after 3 pm. During the procedure, some aides of the prophet restrained them to the ground and the prophet poked their tummies with a staff/rod (following the Mosaic tradition of the patriarch having a staff). The congregants were singing during the exorcism, which stopped when Clarity and the friend vomited and became weak. The vomiting was regarded as an indication that the spirit in them had departed. However, for Clarity vomiting was just a result of the pressure that had been exerted on their bellies, and the copious amounts of tea they had drunk. Drawing on the mermaid spirit served to heighten the call for deliverance as Clarity and his friend were depicted as victims of the water spirits. Thus the implication is that a person who is not possessed cannot be homosexual.

Mario grew up in an African apostolic church in which a strong sentiment against homosexuality was present. When Mario's family discovered his sexuality (after he had fought with his previous partner), they thought he was possessed by evil spirits, and they resolved to take him to the prophet to cleanse him. The session lasted the whole night:

I still remember that the next day they took me to a prophet, and then the prophet prayed for me, shaking my head. He claimed that it was being caused by someone, one of our family members in our clan who was against us. (Author's Interview, 20/03/2014)

Reference to a person who is causing homosexuality implies that it is not normal and it is not God's will and therefore the prophet could reverse what their enemy had implanted in him. Some of the participants had experienced spiritual deliverance attempts within Pentecostal churches, which are becoming increasingly prominent in Zimbabwe (Chitando et al. 2013, Van Klinken, 2016). Van Klinken (2016:74) notes that, "in the African Pentecostal imagination, demons play a central role. A wide range of social, economic, relational, psychological and medical problems tend to be framed in a spiritual framework where they are explained with reference to demonic spirits and or the devil and are dealt with through deliverance and spiritual warfare". Max's experiences were prompted by an accidental disclosure of his being gay after the police raided a party at GALZ. The police took the names and addresses of those who were present, and made follow-ups through those addresses. When they came to Max's address, they told his stepmother, who was present at the time, that *Mwana wenyu akaenda kuGALZ kundorarwa nevamwe varume* ('your son went to GALZ to be made a woman by other men'). Since then, church has been an uncomfortable zone for Max in the presence of his stepmother. Max explained:

'My stepmother comes shouting at me *dhimoni buda, haunyare, hungochani ngaubude nezita raJesu*' (demon get out, you are shameless, homosexuality, get out in Jesus' name). (Author's Interview, 27/10/2013).

Lyonga (2016:59) notes that the healing gospel which is also central to African Pentecostal churches constructs homosexuality as a manifestation of demonic powers which however can be fought through intensive prayers. These cases illustrate that in some contexts, if one is gay, one is assumed to be possessed by an evil spirit. However, none of the study participants who had experienced spiritual deliverance felt that it changed anything in them. This was so even among those who had volunteered to be worked on spiritually.

9.7 'Opting out'

Epprecht's (2013) claim of many African LGBTI who are proudly, happily and deeply religious needs to be taken with caution. As has been observed from the various narratives, many have

remained in church but none seem to be without conflict/struggle. However not all study participants maintained membership in church or regular fellowship with other congregants. The accounts that follow demonstrate the experiences of individuals who have struggled to maintain a happy and deeply religious life and have opted out of organized religion. I use the term ‘opting out’ to describe the decision to stop attending church gatherings. Opting out-decisions were prompted by intentions to protect significant others as well as oneself.

Some of the participants knew very well that their sexual identity was regarded as incompatible with Christianity by others, and had opted out in order to protect significant others in their lives. Chibaba Natsi, for example, said she made a deliberate decision to leave church in order to protect her mother, a highly active church member, from ‘embarrassment’ among fellow congregants. Chibaba Natsi was assertive about her sexuality and connection to God but was worried about how people likened them to ‘devils’ and about how her mother would be stigmatized because of her:

This whole thing like you are the devil, I don’t like that, yaa that’s the one comment that I don’t like, like you are the devil, I don’t like it at all because as a Christian as somebody who believes God, I don’t like it. Somebody tells you like God doesn’t love you but from where I come from the grace of God and the things that I have been through like, He has helped me. So I know for a fact that he loves me so for someone to come and tell me that God doesn’t love you because you are gay that pisses me off... So I just decided I won’t go (to church) and mainly because my mum is important in the church dances with the dancers and all, so I felt that one of the women might discuss the matter with my mum, yet I want to keep it a secret so I could not go, but I do miss going to church (Author’s Interview, 15/07/2013).

The claims made by individuals reflect a stereotypical perception which views homosexuality as ‘devilish’. In Zambia, Van Klinken (2013) asserts that advocates of gay rights are seen as ‘devil incarnates’. However, Chibaba Natsi has managed to be self-assertive in countering claims of being associated with the devil by emphasizing her relationship with God emanating from his grace. She has, however, opted out of church mainly because of the need to protect her mother. Consistent with Goffman’s rule of considerateness the participant opted out so as to protect significant family members (Smith, 2006:100). Whilst Natalie opted out of church before her

sexuality became public, Tariro severed ties with the church after he had been forced to come out of the closet. He had never liked church much because he had always been ‘girlish’ and was not comfortable doing what boys of his age were expected to do in church. A dispute with one of his close friends led to disclosure of his sexuality to the family, and the mother “threw tantrums.” This drew much attention in the local community, and in this way both the neighbourhood and the local churchgoers became aware of his sexual identity. Tariro’s case demonstrates how stigma can be extended to significant others:

I’m not Christian anymore... I feel for my mother, because she went through hell. Soon after my being ‘outed,’ she had Sundays that she would take off for church, but within a few minutes she would be back, as people on the way would be talking about her, *mai vengochani vari kuenda kuchurch* (the mother of a homosexual is going to church), or it would happen when she would have arrived at church. (Author’s Interview, 06/07/2015).

In this narrative the society and other church goers appeared to be drawing on the understanding that homosexuality is an aberration and that those associated with gay individuals deserve to be marginalized. The stigmatization was extended to Tariro’s mother with people seemingly questioning her audacity to go to church when her child was gay. Whilst some study participants opted out of church to protect others, Chibaba Runyararo and Terry opted out to protect themselves from being emotionally hurt. Both indicated that church members expect everyone to conform to the standards set by the church, and anyone who deviates from it attracts attention and becomes the subject for discussion. As Terry noted:

‘My sexuality is part of the reason [why I opted out of church]. I no longer feel at home, there is no room for being gay at church. At church one has to court and marry.’(Author’s Interview, 03/02/2013).

Similarly Chibaba Runyararo noted:

‘These days I hardly go to church, because sometimes you just see the way that people will be looking at you; it makes you feel uncomfortable. So I just decide not to go’ (Author’s Interview, 13/05/2013).

Similar to Terry's experiences, Chibaba Runyararo was not prepared to conform to the standards called for at church, and she was not prepared to continue experiencing the gaze and judgment of other congregants. Chibaba Runyararo is comfortable dressing in clothes that are not regarded as depicting femininity within a church setting, and for this reason she always attracted attention and people gossiped about her. The church draws borders on the expectations of femininity and masculinity and those perceived as transgressing the set boundaries are seen as outsiders. The church also socializes individuals into heterosexuality so any traits of deviating are not tolerated. Some participants, such as Mhazha, opted out of church for fear of being exposed by the prophets through their spiritual abilities of seeing what the ordinary eye cannot see. Greg used to go to the African Apostolic Church, but he left the church after acknowledging his sexual orientation for the fear of being 'outed' by the prophet. Mhazha said:

I was afraid that *vemweya vanozindibata* (the prophet could out him). So I now pray at home because I'm afraid of being outed because even Prophet Makandiwa has 'outed' some. I heard that he stopped some who were singing in his praise and worship choir because of being gay. (Author's Interview, 21/05/2013).

'Opting out' of church had different implications on the religiosity of same-sex loving people. In some cases, the individuals considered themselves as no longer actively religious but not necessarily as nonbelievers. Nyasha, for example, said, 'Let's just say, right now, with religion (pause)... I'm not really anywhere... So really right now it's between me and God, there is so much to go on between me and God'. (Author's Interview, 31/01/2013). In some sense, Nyasha had 'individualised' his spirituality; it was an issue between him and God. Terry's narrative illustrates a similar way of thinking and acting, 'Do I love God? Yes, I love God. Do I pray? Yes, I pray and God answers my prayers. Now, I just don't want to be part of a church group anymore...' (Author's Interview, 03/02/2013).

Just as in the case of Nyasha and Terry, some participants did not seem to feel that being gay and being out of organized religion stopped them being connected with God. Indeed, all but two participants distanced themselves from atheism. This would seem to exemplify what Van Klinken (2013) had in mind when he pointed out that there is an 'absence of a more or less secular culture' in Africa. I reflect on Mic Tagarira who did not subscribe to any religion at all:

Mic Tagairira: I'm not religious. I'm actually an atheist I don't believe in religion

Q: At what stage I mean in terms of age could you say you became atheist?

Mic Tagarira: I think from one that's when I discovered religion was not healthy for me, that's when I decided I need to do this for myself I cannot be happy, despite being happy if I'm gay and I use the bible and it's against it.(Author's Interview, 11/08/2015).

Mic Tagarira's opting out of religion was driven by his understanding of the irreconcilability of 'queer' and 'Christian' identities. His rejection of the Christian identity stems from his understanding of bible-based religion which he claims to be against homosexuality, so the only way he could live a happy life was to reject Christianity whilst maintaining his gay identity. In this thinking LBGTI individuals are perceived, "at worst as irredeemable sinners, at best, as suffering from problems or afflictions" (O'brien, 2004:184). Thus Mic Tagarira reckons that with this discourse of rejection it is better for him to renounce religion which however had proved to be a difficult path to take for other participants.

9.8 Challenging Hypocrisy

For some of the respondents, whenever their personal identity was challenged by the church, some decided to invalidate the credibility of the people using religion to denigrate them. Yip (1999) notes that despite being socially labeled 'deviants,' some gay Christians are capable of rising above their 'deviant' circumstances by imputing meaning to their identity and social actions, against the frame of meanings imposed by the church. Some study participants challenged the hypocrisy which they felt is characteristic of many Christian institutions that have marginalized them. They claimed that some people who regard homosexual persons as unnatural, sinful and Christian do not have the requisite moral standing to challenge them. Either these individuals had skeletons in their closets or had abandoned Jesus' way of dealing with sinners. Garry was not really affected by the demonization as he claimed that those victimizing them also engage in same-sex practices. Garry said, 'the very same people who speak against it despite whether religious or not are the people who are practicing it'. Whilst Garry challenged the moral standing of those disparaging gay people, Ricky drew on what he perceived as the failure of the church to have compassion for those to whom they seek to minister. Essentially Ricky draws on Christian theology to challenge the demonization of gay people:

As for the religion I got to a point where I believed, because I just said God must really hate us. Then I said well maybe there are certain people who are born to go to hell maybe, because how come we felt these things from childhood? Why am I not changing? I then began to realize that well everything happens for a reason, even God says how can you see a prophet of light when there is no darkness? There are certain things that you have to go through to realize something. I know I'm loved. I may not be so keen to worship God in the way some people do which go overboard and forget to take some people with them instead of caring for those people. It's just like the story of the tax collector, the same things are happening over and over again today. This time it's not the tax collector but it's a gay man. You need to talk to that person that's why you are there but you shun them, they don't talk to them, don't sit down with them, don't try to understand them, but because they have heard that this is wrong that's it, and yet you are in the church the very thing that is your refuge which is your religion has become the devils pillar to destroy you. One thing they don't realize it but they are just being extremists, they begin to commit sin within that very same thing they are doing. So I began to realize and opened my eyes and ears, so we don't take time to sit with these people, this one is a thief let's take him and pray for him if he doesn't change then that's it. Haa lets feed him with the word, have you taken time to listen to this person, how he is what he feels, what's the cause? So that we learn from his situation and help others, they don't they never do that. (Author's Interview, 13/06/2013).

Murr (2013:365) points out that “developing an affirming personal theology went hand in hand with rejecting the authority of the Church and of Christian leaders”. Similarly Ricky questions the approach that is taken by those who castigate LGBTI individuals. The participant deconstructs the castigation by redrawing the boundary on what Jesus would do if he was to engage with LGBTI individuals. The rejection of propagated church homophobia was accompanied by a reconstruction based on Jesus' love for sinners that's giving hope to all. In this the participants attempted to separate God from hurtful teachings (Murr, 2013).

9.9 Conclusion

The chapter explored a range of experiences that same sex loving individuals have in relation to religion. Identities are not developed and experienced in a vacuum and religion seems to be a

significant institution which militates against the entrenchment of a homosexual being. This is in light of popular discourse situating queer identities as incompatible with Christian identities. Religion is used to set and validate borders on what is acceptable and what is not. Mostly same sex desires have been projected as lying outside the borders, hence one should not entertain such desires. Openly expressing same-sex desires had the potential to spoil one's identity hence some participants compartmentalised their gay and Christian identities. The chapter does show how participants have endured and subverted homophobia demonstrating their agentic capacity as they are not just passive recipients of the normalisation of homophobia within religious circles. Some participants have negotiated space within religious circles by shifting focus away from their sexual identity. Some participants have developed counter narratives to the 'sin of Sodom and Gomorrah', characterised by condemnation and damnation to create space to express their religion. Some individuals have continued fellowshiping in organised religion. Some participants took strategic decisions to opt out of organised religion as a way of protecting significant others as well as themselves. What is overly evident from the chapter is that far from allowing the colonising effect of homophobic propaganda to dissuade participants from embracing queer identities, participants have actively negotiated various challenges rejecting homophobia and embracing queer identities. Therefore, most of the participants did not necessarily have to reject either of the identities thus challenging popular discourse portraying queer identities as antithetical and irreconcilable to Christian identities. It also calls for a nuanced analysis of emerging discourse that many African queers are proudly and happily religious as most of the participants have remained religious but not without conflict.

Chapter 10. Defiant Identities: Reflections and recommendations for further research

Dominant discourse on homosexuality in Zimbabwe has portrayed it as ‘unZimbabwean’, ‘foreign’ and ‘uncultural’. This characterisation consequently marks boundaries between those sexual identities and sexual behaviours that are acceptable and those that are not. The postcolonial history of homosexuality in Zimbabwe requires a nuanced understanding, but the opportunity for nuances has been overshadowed by the homocritical discourse popularised by the former president, Robert Mugabe. Scholarship on the subject of homosexuality in Zimbabwe has concentrated on the debates of indigeneity or foreignness and the acceptability or rejection of the practice whilst it has paid little or no attention to the lived experiences of same sex loving people. This study attempted to go beyond those debates by engaging in a lengthy ethnographic fieldwork aiming to develop a deep appreciation of the lived realities of same sex loving people in Harare. The ethnographic study’s task was to generate an understanding of how gay and lesbian identities are constructed, negotiated and experienced within an environment often understood to be thoroughly ‘homophobic’. From this study, a number of conclusions can be drawn which can also generate further areas of research interest.

Without denying a protracted history of attacks, at times of a very severe nature, on homosexuality, LGBTI organisations and individuals, it is important for scholarship on homosexuality in Africa to produce a nuanced analysis which goes beyond the uncritical characterisation of Africa as a homophobic continent. More scholarship in the line of Awondo et al. (2012), Epprecht (2012) and Thoreson (2014) is required in order to challenge the stereotypical narrative of a monolithic homophobic Africa. It is also important to go beyond portraying LGBTI individuals in Africa as only or predominantly vulnerable ‘victims’ of homophobic African governments and societies. The effect of the stereotypical narrative portraying LGBTI individuals in Africa as (only) vulnerable risks cementing a reductionist representation of LGBTI people that overlooks that they are indeed full and agentic human beings. Interestingly, it may also place African LGBTI people in the midst of biopolitical tension. While international interaction, debate, solidarity and pressure for human rights and social transformation can play a constructive role in national politics, foreign involvement and

intervention is also complex and potentially contentious (and fraught with danger, as colonial history demonstrates so well). Some countries in the global north have fuelled the geopolitical 'wars' by threats to cut development aid to countries that do not entrench LGBTI rights. Such dispensation may give ammunition to anti-homosexuality camps that dismiss LGBTI activists as neo-colonial agents (and homosexuality as foreign). Thus LGBTI organising and identity politics gets entangled in colonial and neo-colonial discourse, which risks overshadowing the fact that beyond these ideologies and propaganda there are human beings whose lives are impacted by these contestations.

What remains clear in this study of gay and lesbian identities in Harare is that the "production of identities is always in process, never complete, contingent and multiplex" (Hall, 1996). The intersection of local and international discourses on gay and lesbian identities produces identities that are to varying degrees emergent, fluid and perhaps fragmented. The emergent gay identities in Harare are not a replica of the western style politicised homosexuality or globally circulating modern gayness. It represents a negotiated outcome of the intersection between globally circulating gay identities in popular discourse and grounded in local cultural, social and historical realities and, more recently, socio-political environment that has fought vigorously against the development of homosexual identities. There is reference to globally circulating identity labels which however are mixed with local understandings allowing the development of diverse identities among same sex loving people. Significantly the labels that circulate in a globalised world are not simply copied by people who use them, but can perhaps better be regarded as inputs in the always ongoing process people engage in to figure out who they are. This demonstrates that identities are never complete, but continuously evolving. "The global gay" (Altman, 1996 and 1997) is not an immutable category as evidence shows the development of diverse understandings and meanings attached to being gay and lesbian.

The border wars in Harare are characterised not only by the marginalisation of homosexuality but also through the contestations on what constitutes 'real gay' and 'real lesbian' among same sex loving people. Identities imply boundaries, and in this study some study participants subjectively drew borders between genuine and non-genuine gays and lesbians. Some participants accused others of being gay due to financial needs whilst others were accused of misrepresenting the "true" gay and lesbian identities.

Despite the local contestations over what ‘real gay’ and ‘real lesbian’ is, what is abundantly clear is that beyond the homocritical rhetoric there are same sex loving individuals in Harare who claim gay and lesbian identities. The identities that have been explored are diverse and basically constitute stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to be, rather than neat categories.

The globally circulating modern gay identity which originated in the West is projected as not solely dependent on sexual behaviour (Murray, 1992) and may be seen as approximating ‘egalitarianism’. However in the current Zimbabwean context one could say that same sex coupling is predominantly characterised by gender stratified homosexuality in many aspects of their relations, such as gender stratified sexual roles, division of labour, decision making. Despite drawing on and reproducing heterosexual constructions, same sex relations do at the same time challenge the predominant heterosexual conceptualisation of sex and sexuality. Whereas borders signifying masculine and feminine ideals have been drawn, same sex relations destabilise and stretch the traditional meanings associated with masculinity and femininity. Participants’ self-styled and expressed themselves in ways consistent with the identities they claimed and desired. For example, lesbian participants who identified as ‘butch’ often self-styled themselves in ways that staked a claim on masculinity in projecting a desired identity, whilst some gay men who were receptive expressed themselves in ways that could include a variety of elements from what is considered “feminine”. Dating patterns and preferences for the participants were framed in a manner that destabilised existing notions on sex and gender whilst projecting their same sex desires. Importantly, however, not all participants adopted gender-stratified homosexuality. Some rejected such patterns and were in favour of egalitarian relationships characterised by attempts to assign one another equal privileges.

Though I bemoan the absence of a national survey to establish how homophobic or homotolerant Zimbabweans are, it was not difficult to find experiences that played into the narrative of a homophobic Zimbabwe. This had a clear impact on the subjective identities of participants and it was difficult for some to openly adopt and express their gay identities. However, notwithstanding that participants have been categorised as being on the margins or beyond the border within their communities, accompanied by vilification and marginalisation, same sex loving people have negotiated spaces for their existence. Negative social categorisations and

societal perspectives, whilst painful, did not erase the participants' subjective identities and behaviour. Borders are at best to be understood as slippery, as they are not fixated in perpetuity but can be negotiated and renegotiated, constructed and reconstructed. The understanding by most participants that their marginalisation and victimisation has been driven by political homophobia has helped same sex loving people to challenge the border set by the society, hence they are not passive victims of homophobia. Interestingly, homo-tolerance has not been much reported on earlier, but was existent in the communities that participants live in. The interface between society and same sex loving people calls for a nuanced analysis given the diverse nature of participants' experiences.

Contrary to literature emanating from the global North (Morrow et al. 2000; Svab and Kuhar, 2014; Waldner and Magrude, 1999), which hails 'coming out' to family as a significant and necessary process in sexual identity development, in the current study disclosure was perceived by many as neither desirable nor necessary. Most participants valued the family ties that they had such that they were not prepared to jeopardise them by overt indiscriminate disclosure, unless it was well calculated and would be likely to have a favourable outcome. Most of the disclosures had been accidental or forced due to various incidents in the lives of participants. There were also some unwritten codes on 'reciprocal silence' or 'protective silence' where some family members suspected or knew of one's sexual orientation but would not consider discussing it or telling others. Whilst family responses could either be negative or positive, the study findings go beyond the binary categorisation of the interface between gays/lesbians interface with their families as either negative or positive. Whereas some literature (Waldner & Magrader, 1999) perceive reactions of siblings as often more positive than those of parents, the current study shows how variable it is as it varies from one case to another. Whilst this study explored family members reactions from the perspective of LGBTI people, there is need for studies that explore the perceptions and reactions among significant family members to knowledge about their child's sexual orientation.

Religion has been identified as contributing towards 'African homophobia' (Van Klinken and Chitando, 2016) as it has been used to frame same sex loving and attracted individuals as sinful and demon possessed. Whereas dominant discourse has popularised the incompatibility thesis between Christianity and queer identities, Epprecht (2013) claims many queer individuals in

Africa are happily religious. The experiences of study participants were varied, and while some had opted out of their churches, others had remained within them despite unpleasant experiences. Gays and lesbians' agency had prompted some respondents to avoid situations and affiliations that could hurt their significant others or themselves. Some decided to leave church rather than endure emotional turmoil and gazing eyes, thus challenging the ubiquity of the 'proudly, happily and deeply religious African LGBTI'. Others cut off ties to prevent potential embarrassment for their loved ones, or because they had already been 'outed'. They did not want family and friends to be stigmatised by association, that is, to experience stigma because they were associated with a stigmatised person. Significantly, gay and lesbian Christians had designed ways of coping with homophobic utterances in Christian circles. Some study participants foregrounded understandings that countered and challenged church narratives that promote condemnation and criticism. Among these were narratives that emphasized God as creator of all human beings. When acknowledging God's creatorship, sexual orientation emerged in these narratives as an immutable attribute with which people were born, and one for which they could not be blamed. Other counter-narratives pointed to God's answer to the prayers of gays and lesbians, and to LGBTI persons ability to continue working for God in various capacities. Some of the participants who were still actively involved in church contexts indicated that they had a fulfilling Christian life, singing in church choirs and participating fully in church programmes. Without downplaying the significant challenges relating to unsympathetic environments, one may say that at least some same-sex loving Christians have created ways of coping within homophobic church environments. They had maintained a strong religious faith, continued to enjoy meaningful religious experiences, and had negotiated and reconciled identities that are widely perceived of as incompatible. However, not all had maintained a connection with the church. Some had opted out in order to protect themselves and/or their loved ones from denunciation and stigmatization. Almost always was the decision to leave prompted by experiences of a hostile environment in which men and women found themselves marginalized and attracting attention.

The thesis attempted to offer important contributions to scholarship on homosexuality in Zimbabwe and Africa. Significant research on same-sex loving and attracted people has been predominantly concerned with epidemiological issues focusing on vulnerabilities of the LGBTI community to HIV&AIDS. Apart from epidemiological studies, scholarship on homosexuality

has mainly theorised about contestations on the indigeneity of homosexuality (or lack thereof) as well as victimhood of same sex loving people. The thesis contributes to emerging scholarship that goes beyond the aforementioned dimensions and focuses on understanding the construction and negotiation of gay and lesbian identities in an environment that is in many ways overtly homophobic. Despite the criticism of western theories' relevance for African realities, Giddens concepts of plastic sexuality and pure relationships, Goffman's impression management, and Judith Halberstam's 'border wars' metaphor are valuable analytical tools to explore identities that can be described as defiant. Importantly the concepts are useful in analysing what characterises and shapes gay and lesbian identities in Harare and how they actively engage with the task of claiming 'space' in heteronormative surroundings. As much as the thesis pursued numerous themes associated with the experiences of gays and lesbians in Harare, it forms part of a scholarship that is still very limited. The need for further research is therefore very significant, indeed.

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