‘God Forbid, You’re Gay!’ How African Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) Negotiate Their Multiple Identities in Canada

by

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Abstract

Homosexuality in many African countries is considered a Western import and an aberrant behavior. As a result of the homophobic climate in some of these countries, sexual minorities, especially men who have sex with men (MSM), migrate to countries such as Canada to live freely. However, some of them encounter difficulties in assimilating in diasporic communities as queer men and in queer communities as black men. Feminist ethnographic research that examined the way in which the men adapt, negotiate, and resist the limitations of their marginalization was conducted in Ottawa and Toronto. Interviews with ten African MSM suggest that the men choose to compartmentalize their identities in order to exist in oppressive spaces. For some of the men, the ability to do so was productive. For others, it was oppressive.

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Introduction

This thesis explores how queer African men negotiate their sexual and gender identities. It does this by examining the everyday lived experiences of ten queer African men in Canada. It is concerned with how queer African men articulate, negotiate, and reconcile the conflicts between their sexual, gender, racial, and cultural identities. Additionally, it shows how their identities challenge the prevailing discourse in Africa that homosexuality is un-African.

Homosexuality is criminalized in some African nations.¹ It is also condemned by several national leaders and religious clerics as a Western import that taints the moral fabric of African cultures.² In the past decade, many African countries have re-institutionalized sexual and gender relations that fall within a family unit that consists of man, woman, and child. Any union outside this hetero-normative ideal challenges the foundation of the nation-state.³ The vigorous attempt at establishing this family structure for nation-building by government officials and religious bodies, some argue, is intended to distance Africa and Africans from colonial discourses and build a non-Western identity. Ironically, this appeal towards “authentic” African moral values and beliefs by “well-intentioned” officials of the state and of the church is based upon “imported Christian ideals which were central to the colonial destruction of existing social structures” (Dennis Altman, 2001, p. 22). Some state officials regard heterosexuals as “good citizens” and

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¹ This refers to the judiciary systems in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Uganda.

² For more information about the debates about homosexuality in Africa, see Shoko, T. (2010). ‘Worse than dogs and pigs?’ Attitudes toward Homosexual practice in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 57, 634-649; Msibi, T. (2011). The Lies We Have Been Told: On (Homo) Sexuality in Africa. *Africa Today*, 58, 55-77.

³ More information about how the nation-state is hetero-sexualized in nature. See Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Mask* (Charles Lam Markmann, trans.). New York: Grove Press; Ndjio, B. (2009). Post-colonial Histories of Sexuality: The Political Invention of a Libidinal African Straight. *Africa*, 82(4), 609-631.

condemn homosexuals as dissidents who have rejected Africanity⁴ in favor of Westernized or globalized sexual identity (Ndjio, 2012, p. 610). During the colonial era, several methods were used to employ Western heterosexual hegemonic discourses to institutionalize compulsory heterosexuality. These methods include Judeo-Christian biblical teachings and conversions, legal persecution, and social discipline.⁵ The institutionalization of homophobia in many African countries naturalized heterosexuality and reified a dominant masculinity where men are expected to embody particular heterosexual masculine characteristics. These characteristics include aggression, promiscuity, control, and force (Ndjio, 2012; Epprecht, 1998, 2008, 2009).

However, the upsurge of HIV/AIDS epidemic in many African countries encouraged scholars, on the continent and outside of it, to investigate the transmission of this virus through non-heterosexual relations (Epprecht, 2009; Doyal, Paparini, and Anderson, 2008). Even though some of these scientific studies have contributed to the production of knowledge of same-sex relations in Africa, they associate non-heterosexual relations with HIV/AIDS, thereby deepening the stigma as well as worsening the discrimination towards individuals who have same-sex desires. This study attempts to provide an different account of queer African sexual experiences outside the HIV/AIDS discourse. It will also show the varied cultural representations of sexuality based on the accounts of the men interviewed.

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⁴ I define Africanity as the essence of being African. That is the embodiment of cultures, languages, and arts that makes an individual a descendant of Africa. Jacques Maquet (1972) in *Africanity: The Cultural Unity of Black Africa*, asserts that Africa indeed has a cultural unity that is not defined by blackness or climate, but a unity that he defines as Africanity. According to him, "Africanity is the totality of cultural features common to the hundreds of societies of sub-Saharan Africa. The content of Africanity is the result of this double process of adaptation and diffusion. It is made up of elements belonging to various dimensions of culture: economic organization, family structure, political institutions, philosophical concepts, religions and rituals, graphic and plastic arts, the arts of movement, sound and speech" (p. 54). He considers Africanity to be similar to the concept of negritude, but that these concepts are different in orientation. Negritude, Maquet claims, "[is] an instrument of liberation, negritude had to affirm what the white man denied" (p. 14).

⁵ Social discipline involves institutionalized heterosexual repetitive acts. For example, if a man acts "feminine," his family members or friends will mock him and force him to act more "masculine". This form of social discipline forces people to pay attention to the image they are projecting and ensure that this image conforms to societal gender expectations. This is what Judith Butler (1988, 1990) refers to as gender performing.

Over the course of this study, I have been asked by family members, friends, and acquaintances why I chose this topic, especially since I am not queer and do not share in the struggles of queer sub-Saharan African men. Friends and family members have questioned my sexual orientation and shown concern over my emotional well-being. The idea of this research was born when on the 2 January 2012, when I attended mass at the Nunciature, at the Vatican Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, with my mother. The priest, an Irish national, thanked Nigerians in attendance and the Nigerian government for discouraging the spread of the disease of ‘homosexuality’ during his sermon. The congregation nodded in acknowledgement and murmured that it was a shame that some Nigerians have caught the “disease”. I was appalled by this gesture and recognized the colonial signifiers⁶ in the relationship between the priest and members of the congregation. The desire to conduct this research has to do with my interest in examining the language of silence that marginalized people have spoken and continue to speak. Many theorists, such as Gayatri Spivak (1988), have written and spoken extensively about the importance of speaking not for, but with the peoples strategically located in the lowest strata of society. According to these theorists, the voices of marginalized people are rarely heard and listened to, and yet their voices are the most important in confronting the prejudices that continue to infringe on peoples’ human rights.

In many African contexts, sexuality is a taboo subject.⁷ It is a subject that I have become familiar with, including its silences and shrugs that my elders have given me whenever I try to discuss the topic with them. An incident from my childhood in which some friends and I witnessed a neighbor, a young woman of twenty, kissing her boyfriend exemplifies this silence.

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⁶In this case, I am referring to the master-servant relationship that I observed between the priest and the congregation. Also, Christianity, as it will be explained later, was a tool used to control African subjects and maintain power over the colonies during the colonial era.

⁷ Epprecht claims that in many African cultures, sexuality or sexual relations are rarely spoken about in public in Epprecht, M. (2009). Sexuality, Africa, History. *The American Historical Review*, 114(5), 1258-1272.

Because of the taboo nature of sexuality and anything associated with it during the time, including intimacy, we danced around the young woman chanting tunes of mockery. She was publicly reprimanded by her parents and became the neighborhood “whore”. Shaming has become a tool used, especially by Christian zealots, to discipline the masses into sexual repression and obedience. It is because of this that I felt it important to create a public space where African men who have sex with men can discuss their sexual and gender identities openly. Also, I wanted to take on this project despite the backlash that I might receive when I do decide to return home.⁸ It is important that African men who have same-sex desires can share their experiences. This is to challenge the association of homosexuality with whiteness and bring African sexualities, from African perspectives, to the forefront of sexuality discourses in the world.

Outside of my personal experiences, the increase of violence – legal, verbal, physical – against sexual minorities in Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, and South Africa, shows that it is important to conduct studies to comprehend and modify views about sexualities in Africa. In 2008, Nigeria’s Senate wanted to pass a bill that would criminalize same-sex relationships and marriage (Eboh, 2011). As a result of the international attention received, the passing of the bill was postponed to 2011.⁹ In my opinion, the heightened attention paid to homosexuality is strategically deployed to distract the masses from growing economic problems and social instability currently confronting many African countries. In defense of the bill, conservative political and religious leaders in Nigeria argued that homosexuality is a Western invention imposed on Africans and that it is un-African and un-Christian (Msibi, 2011; Shoko,

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⁸ Home is Nigeria, where homosexuality is criminalized. Defending, supporting, or research that shows support for the rights of queer individuals is considered a criminal activity under the Nigerian Anti-Gay Bill.

⁹ The bill was passed through the Senate Committee on May 30, 2013 and was signed into law by President Goodluck Jonathan on January 13th, 2014.

2010; McKaiser, 2012; Ochola, 2014; Evaristo, 2014). They posited that it is not possible for a man to get pregnant and therefore, a man-on-man relationship is un-natural.¹⁰ The association of masculinity and femininity with procreation in Africa marginalizes other masculinities and femininities on the continent. Despite widespread international attention and condemnation, news that a Nigerian actor was imprisoned for three months for engaging in a homosexual activity,¹¹ demonstrates that the Nigerian justice system is applying the conditions in the bill. Moreover, the Senate President, David Mark, continues to insist that the bill is “irrevocable” and the “law has come to stay.”¹² In spite of the level of protest by gay rights advocates and activists around the world, the Nigerian justice system still stands firm on passing the bill.¹³

Although Nigeria just recently passed the anti-gay bill, Cameroon has always criminalized homosexuality. The *Sexual Offences Act* of 1972 set the precedent for the present regulation of sexuality in the country and allowed for the criminalization of immoral sexual activities. Unlike in Nigeria, this Act was not discussed or passed through the parliament. Rather it was implemented through “an ordinance issued by presidential decree” (Ndjio, 2012, p. 614). Even though the Act existed, gays and lesbians were initially able to live harmoniously in Cameroon. However, intolerance for sexual minorities intensified because of the social and cultural transformational shifts implemented by the Paul Biya regime of the 1980s. This regime

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¹⁰ The bill focuses extensively on man-on-man relationships as opposed to woman-on-woman relationships. Judging from the violent reactions against man-on-man relationship, I contend that many believe that homosexuality will undermine African masculinity. That is, the existence and tolerance of homosexuality is a threat to African masculinity.

¹¹ For more information about the case, see Mark, M. (2012, September 21). Nigerian Court Jails Actor for Homosexuality Under Colonial Law. The Guardian, retrieved from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/sep/21/nigeria-court-jails-actor-gay-offence>

¹² David Mark pleads to the Nigerian public to “join the crusade of decency”. According to him, “there are many good values we can copy from other societies, but certainly not this one”. Despite the level of corruption and social ills in the country, Mark insists that it is important for Nigerians “to prove to the rest of the world [that] we Nigerians promote and respect sanity, morality and humanity”. Not surprisingly, in the same week his opinion was published, BBC released a report about Nigeria’s secret gay clubs. Ogbodo, D. (2013, January 08). Mark: No Going Back on Same Sex Prohibition Bill. *Thisdaylive*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/mark-no-going-back-on-same-sex-prohibition-bill/135670/>

¹³ The president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, also signed an anti-gay bill into law.

decided to blame the social decadence¹⁴ and economic stagnation in the country on individuals who have same-sex desires (Ndjio, 2012). As a result, attacks and frequent arrests of gays and lesbians have become rampant. According to Ndjio (2012), about one hundred cases of homosexual related offences were brought to court since 2007.

South Africa is the first nation in the world to recognize Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transsexual/gender-Queer-Intersex (LGBTQI) rights in its constitution (Msibi, 2011). Despite this sign of progress, the level of violence towards black South African sexual minorities has increased over the decade. Corrective rape, a term referring to the use of violence or gang rape to “correct” the sexuality of black South African lesbians, has increased in the past decade (Ratele, 2011; Matebeni, 2013). Also, the recent killing of a self-identified gay black South African, Thapelo Makutle,¹⁵ further demonstrates that it is important that sexuality is examined in an African context. It is, therefore, crucial that African perspectives on African sexuality are adequately researched. This is because for centuries, African sexuality has been defined within a Euro-centric context. I am not arguing that a Western perspective is less accurate or that an African perspective on African sexuality is superior. I am highlighting that Western scholars have positioned themselves as having authoritative knowledge about Africans and their cultural identities. For example, T. Dunbar Moodie’s (1988, 1994) study on homosexuality in South Africa used a heterosexual lens to analyze the intimate relationships between men working in the goldmines in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Moodie pointed out that homosexual relationships at the mines were intergenerational, that is between senior men and younger boys. This same-sex relationship is known as *Hlobongo* in the Zulu language. The young boys performed wifely

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¹⁴ Social decadence varies from “loose” sexual morality to corruption.

¹⁵ Conway-Smith, E. (2012, June 14). Thapelo Makutle, Gay Man Killed in South Africa, ‘Severely Mutilated’. GlobalPost, retrieved from: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/south-africa/120614/thapelo-makutle-gay-man-killed-south-africa-genitals-stuffed-in-mouth>

duties for older men and in turn were compensated for their duties. He failed to acknowledge that the mines created a space where men could have same-sex desires. Instead, he concluded that these relationships existed as a result of the economic and social conditions that required men to migrate from their homes and wives to other regions for employment. This writing of non-heterosexual relationships through a Euro-centric heterosexual lens shows that it is necessary that scholars¹⁶ develop theories about the sexual and gendered identities that exist on the continent. Furthermore, limited research on African sexualities will continue to perpetuate the idea that homosexuality is un-African. It is important that the influence of Western sexual hegemony on the formation of identities of the queer African men is examined. Based on the interviews, I argue that the men are in the process of forming identities that resist as well as adjust to identities that they were socialized into. The processes of migration to and settlement in Canada have spurred the men to re-contextualize and re-conceptualize their identities. Their position as postcolonial subjects in a transnational space allows them to negotiate their identities in relation to the spaces in which they are engaged with. In some spaces, the men are confronted with oppression where they are forced to decide on how to compartmentalize their identities in order to function. I contend that some of the men encounter difficulties in compartmentalizing their identities in different cultural contexts. In addition, some of the men are more reflexive and were able to articulate in their notions of identity and belonging, while other men are not.

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¹⁶ African scholars differ cross-culturally. They possess different opinions on African sexuality. Ifi Amadiume's (1987), *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, accuses Western feminists of using the institution of female-husbands to promote their lesbian agenda. According to her, there is no such thing as a lesbian in Africa. Though an African scholar, her views do not support the evidence that same-sex relationships exist.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

Discourses of sexuality, identity, and difference are important to understanding how queer African men negotiate their identities in their respective home countries and in Canada. An examination of queer and postcolonial theories within a transnational framework shows the interconnections of colonialism, race, culture, sexuality, gender, and class in the production of multiple oppressions of queer African men. The intersection of theoretical perspectives demonstrates that a single perspective on identity formation is insufficient in explaining the subjective experiences of queer African men. Since heterosexist and homophobic discourses have come to shape the structure of the world in which masculine and heterosexual hegemonic structures have become entrenched in religious, cultural, and legal narratives and migratory patterns,¹⁷ queer and postcolonial theories are used to show the complexities queer African men encounter in negotiating their multiple identities in Canada.

The term ‘queer’ was constructed within studies of marginalized peoples to challenge the notion of normalcy. Normal sexuality, or heterosexuality, in Zimbabwe, Epprecht (1998) stresses, is achieved through the processes of “rigorous denial, secrecy, and misrepresentation of majority practice” (p. 1). In “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities,” Teresa de Lauretis (1991) uses the term queer to refer to marginalized groups. De Lauretis’ uses this term to examine the concept of normality and explore the practices that produce gender hierarchies. Queer theory has come to be defined as a theory that interrogates desire and normalized identities. It reveals the fragility of identities and the historical construction of the sexual subject

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¹⁷ For more information on migratory patterns see: Dhamoon, R. (2009). *Identity/Difference Politics: How Difference is Produced, and Why It Matters*. Vancouver: UBC Press; Desai, G. (2001). Out in Africa. In John C. Hawley (ed.), *Postcolonial, Queer* (pp. 139 - 164). New York: State University of New York Press; Spurlin, W. (2001). Broadening Postcolonial Studies/Decolonizing Queer Studies: Emerging “Queer” Identities and Cultures in South Africa. In John. C. Hawley (ed.), *Postcolonial, Queer* (pp. 185 - 205). Albany: State University of New York Press

through poststructuralist techniques of deconstruction (de Lauretis, 1991; Patton and Sanchez-Eppler, 2000; Fortier, 2001; Glick, 2003). In this study, queer theory is employed to comprehend how identities are constituted, reproduced, and performed on a daily basis. Also, it attempts to examine queer theory beyond sexuality and challenges other binaries that fall outside the heteronormative context or dominant identities. Foucault (1978) provides a genealogy of experiences used as objects of institutional knowledge, and how these experiences have led to the attachment of identities to particular individuals. These individuals, Foucault (1988, 1995) posits, are then utilized as objects of knowledge and are subject to disciplinary power. Identities, through disciplinary power over the self and others, are constructed and constituted over time. Queer theory interrogates these identities. However, gradually, queer theory began to expand from its intended purpose of challenging immutable normality and fixed differences to identifying marginalized sexualities.¹⁸

Queer theory, in this study, is used to assess how sexual and gender identities are negotiated by queer African men. Francisco Valdes (1996) underscores that the conflation of sexual orientation and gender has been accepted as a truism. But these two terms are not causally related. For example, an individual who is homosexual may be gender conforming and another individual may be gender non-conforming and be heterosexual. Gender identity, like sexuality, is a social construct that is produced and performed through our daily interactions. It functions in patriarchal societies¹⁹ to institute a particular masculine hegemony (and feminine hegemony) (Weeks, 1986).²⁰ In order to understand how culture influences our conceptions of biology

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¹⁸ During the late 1980s and 1990s, Katherine Watson (2005) claims that lesbian and gay activism relied on the ideas of queer theory to articulate their struggle.

¹⁹ Patriarchy functions differently in different cultural contexts.

²⁰ Masculine hegemony refers to masculine characteristics that are socially acceptable worldwide; this is an assumption because masculinity differs cross-culturally. However, I refer to the masculinity that majority of the world subscribe to. R.W. Connell's (2002) "The History of Masculinity," explains that Western masculine

through the prioritization of gender and how desire informs identity formation, Judith Butler (1988, 1990) introduces the concepts of gender performance and gender performativity. To challenge the concept of gender, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), describes the ideas of gender performance and gender performativity to show how gender is socially constructed. In this text, Butler (1990) recommends that the gendered noun be removed or not utilized as a significant category to foster transformative politics of identity. From her analysis, gender performance refers to one's ability to perform their gender well and the performativity of gender is as a result of discursive practices enacted over time which produce sexual practices and arrangements (Butler, 1988, 1990). Also, it institutionalizes hegemonic social roles through acts that are consistently repeated. The repetition of acts produces social realities where individuals perform their assigned gender roles on a daily basis. Such performances are enacted through speech, gestures, and movements – in other words all forms of symbolic expressions. These acts are regulated by the self and others (Butler, 1988, 1990; Foucault, 1978). The invisibility of this self-disciplinary power further naturalizes gender roles. Foucault (1978) and Butler (1988) identify the body as a site for these performative acts. The body²¹ embodies the social constructions of gender that one is to perform and is used to promote a rigid binary of sexuality: heterosexuality and homosexuality. In the context of sex and gender, Butler (1990) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2008) state that queer performativity is constitutive of queer identity in speech. In essence, coming out of the closet is tantamount to one's identity. That is a proclamation of "I am out, therefore I am," reflects to an extent one's arrival into their identity

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hegemony dominated other masculinities through violence. So Western masculine hegemony sets the masculine standards for most men around the world.

²¹ The body is used as a tool to differentiate individuals based on their sex organ. It is through the body that society constructs one as either female or male.

(Sedgwick, 2008, p. 4).²² Queer identity becomes the “defining moment of performativity” (Sedgwick, 2008, p. 4) through which a particular Western identity is constructed and embraced.

Compulsory heterosexuality, like gender performance, is used to control sexual behaviors and/or relations. In the African context, compulsory heterosexuality has been entrenched in cultural and religious discourses forcing men and women to perform gender roles that reinforce and normalize heterosexual relationships. This is also evident in Global North countries such as Canada. The regulation of sexuality in this context is closely tied to the “policing” and “shaming” of gender. Even though queer theory stresses the importance of multiplicity and diversity in identities, particularly gender and sexual identities, William Spurlin (2001) argues that it has shown little interest in various expressions and representations of same-sex relations that exist cross-culturally. The assumption that sexualities practiced in the Global North are the same across cultures reinforces Western queer hegemony. Even the term ‘gender’ is a Western construct (Weeks, 1986). I am referring to social constructions of gender emanating from the colonial era that have institutionalized a particular masculinity and femininity. This is not to nullify the existence of constructed gender identities that existed (and in some cases, exist) on the continent, but to show that Western gender, further complicated with the mixture of African cultural gender identities, is present. Thus, the use of ‘gender’ in many African cultural discourses has influenced how Africans come to define their identity, which demonstrates the extent of Western cultural and sexual imperialism on the continent. Not only do these fixed

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²² This cogito is influenced by Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am,” which paved the way for rational thinking and Western individuality. However, many African intellectuals, during the period of African consciousness, argued that this philosophy does not apply to Africans. Rather, “we are, therefore I am” appears to support the desire of Africans, as a collective, to extricate themselves from Western narrative of the “native.” It is through this mantra, I believe, that many African leaders have galvanized against homosexuality. John Mbiti formulated this phrase; see Mbiti, J.S. (1989). *African Religions and Philosophy*. Oxford: Heinemann.

binaries not reflect African sexual and gender identities in a cultural context, they continue to perpetuate European cultural hegemony.

To challenge the appropriation of erotic desire, queer identity, and sexual difference as stipulated by Western queer theory, it is important that queer inquiry intersect with postcolonial theory to deconstruct the identities of race and sexuality that racialized sexual minorities have to identify with. Race and sexuality intersect, and this inter-sectionality is important to conceptualize postcolonial subjects. The relationship between queer and postcolonial theories will interrogate the fixity of present Afro-heterosexual relationships in and outside of Africa. I have found that the experiences of racism and homophobia have been a recurring theme in the formulation of identities for African men who have same-sex desires. Postcolonial theory challenges colonial discourses through its conceptualization, re-examination, and historicization of the conditions following the outcome of colonial occupation. Following the emergence of independent nation-states after colonization, some African nationalists and intellectuals have adopted a prescribed notion of “authentic” African cultural identities in order to repress the nightmares of Western invasion and colonial oppression. In order to revive the pre-colonial or “authentic” African self or identity, African nationalists fail to acknowledge how the “authentic” self or identity is a reflection of its colonial self or identity. That is, the authentic self is in fact the colonial self. Also, African nationalists are adopting similar colonial tropes that homogenize African identities and subjugate non-conforming identities. In an attempt to resist colonial legacies, African nationalists are in fact embracing colonial rule of dominance. The *Sexual Offences Act* of 1972 in Cameroon and the bill passed by Nigeria’s senate are some examples where “transgressive” sexual behaviors are legally criminalized. By adopting a transnational

approach to analyze these theories within the context of sexual and gender identity negotiation, this study brings to light some challenges that queer African men experience on a daily basis.

Incorporating the intersections of queer and postcolonial theories within this approach will provide some insights into how queer African men negotiate their multiple identities – racial, cultural, gender, sexual, class – in Canada. In relation to the theory of diaspora, transnationalism is a new phenomenon. Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Blanc-Szancton (1994) define “transnationalism as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 6). Even though this study uses these concepts interchangeably, their geneses are intellectually different (Faist, 2010). Thomas Faist (2010), in “Diaspora and Transnationalism: What Kind of Dance Partner?” from the text *Diaspora and Transnationalism*, shows the conceptual differences and similarities between diaspora and transnationalism. Where displacement or forced dispersal is central to the discourse of diaspora, interconnectivity and reformation of new social structures have come to define transnationalism. Faist (2010) argues that “diasporic phenomena can be conceived as a subset of transnational social formations that have broader scope” (p. 9). He further argues that “a transnational or diaspora perspective should be able to deal with both new social formations *sui genesis*, such as transnational social spaces, and how ‘old’ national, international, and local institutions such as citizenship or local policies acquire ‘new’ meanings and functions in the process of cross-border transactions” (2010, p. 34). Migration patterns show that a transnational approach can develop an understanding of the fluidity of identities, especially gender and sexual identities. In addition, it provides a historical transfiguration of African sexualities that can be contested and challenged. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (2001) and Epprecht (1998) argue that it is necessary to study sexuality in a

transnational framework to produce knowledge about sexualities across cultures. According to Grewal and Kaplan (2001), a cartographical²³ study on different medical practices, scientific models, conceptions of the body, and political economies of the family across diverse cultures, will contribute to a better understanding of how sexuality functions within a transnational framework. In this framework, an examination of how “sexual practices, subjectivities, and politics” in Africa –their homeland– and Canada –their host nation– affect the migration patterns of queer African men shows the genealogy of sexual identities.

The men in this study traveled from their homes in Africa to Canada in search of better education or work opportunities, or to escape personal or national conflicts. Though these men have a common experience – emigration to Canada – their experiences, especially in relation to their sexual and gender identities, are not homogenous. Some of them are more privileged than others. For example, Hamza²⁴ has four degrees and is currently working on his doctorate degree while Hussein has not furthered his education beyond high school. The differences between them show how power dynamics exist in diaspora populations. Avtar Brah (2003) highlights the importance of relational positioning, where she posits that it “enables us to begin to deconstruct the regimes of power, which operate to differentiate one group from another” (p. 617). That is, it represents individuals as “similar or different to include or exclude from constructions of the ‘nation’ and the body politic” (Brah, 2003, p. 617). How do these men situate their multiple identities in Canada? What includes and excludes them from “belonging” in Canada? These men come from backgrounds that differ significantly from their compatriots in their country and from Canadian citizens. The issue of belonging then becomes a contested one. Brah problematizes the

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²³ Definition of cartography in this context refers to the practice of making maps, which ties well with mapping out cultural practices in order to interrogate the fixity of identities.

²⁴ The names of the men who participated in this study have been changed to protect their identities. See appendix A for a biography of the men.

concept of home and displacement. According to her analysis, to study diasporic populations, it is imperative that the researcher considers the historical specificity of each diasporic population. It is through this consideration that “the concept of diaspora concerns the historically variable forms of relationality within and between diasporic formations” (Brah, 2003, p. 617). Migrants experience the nature of power differentially; so the concept of diaspora is dependent on how power is distributed.²⁵ A transnational framework will be useful to articulate how identities are produced and re-produced, and how these identities often overlap (Brah, 2003; Epprecht, 2012). Brah (2003) further articulates, “There are multiple others embedded within and across binaries, albeit one or more may be accorded priority within a given discursive formation” (p. 618). Pillow and Mayo (2012) articulate that “all forms of oppression operate simultaneously and that, in order to address gender bias, all forms of bias must also be examined and challenged” (p. 188). This study focuses primarily on sexual and gender identities where binaries such as heterosexual/homosexual and man/woman do not exist in isolation but contribute to categories of identity that include race, class, and religion.

1.2 Terminology and Language

Terminology is one of the most contested issues in social science research studies; this is especially evident in postcolonial and queer research where a specific terminology used by researchers is examined and evaluated in relation to debates about power and agency. Who is defining whom? Why this definition and not another? Who benefits? Who loses? It is important to ask these questions because language has been used to construct marginal identities for people considered inferior to the people observing and naming them. That is, language has been used in

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²⁵ Some migrants are positioned hierarchically higher than other migrants either based on race, class, or ethnic group.

colonial discourses to construct the “other”. Through voyeuristic gazes and un-reflexive observations, people, culture, and their identities have been “othered” to Western cultural hegemony and stripped of their self-identity, and have come to exist in historical records according to how the West sees them.

There are several terminologies used to describe alternative sexualities, that is, sexualities that do not fit within the hetero-normative context. Homosexuality, gay, bisexual, lesbian, and queer, have been created and used predominantly in the West. Before conducting interviews, I had no prior knowledge of terminologies that members of the African queer communities were comfortable with. It was through my interactions with members of these communities and with the research participants that I began to realize the power of “labels”. It is through labeling that one’s identity is often forged (Butler, 1988, 1995; Foucault, 1995). The research participants were asked to interrogate the terms such as queer, gay, bisexual, or homosexual. Although it seemed most of them were unperturbed by these terms, these terms have different connotations for different people in different parts of the world. For this study, I use the phrase ‘men who have sex with men’ (MSM) and the term ‘queer’ to refer to African men who engage in same-sex romantic and/or sexual relationships.

The phrase, men who have sex with men, usually refers to ethnic-minority groups to show the limitations of terms such as ‘homosexual,’ ‘gay,’ and ‘bisexual’ (Manalansan, 1996). However, one research participant discussed how he was uncomfortable with the term, MSM, and proceeded to interrogate me on the reasons why I chose to use it. It was then that I realized that the term MSM is heavily used in studies where HIV/AIDS virus is discussed, especially in an African context. He was not comfortable associating his sexual identity with a deadly virus. However, the other participants were comfortable with this term and “queer”. Queer is used in

this study because it encompasses the complexities of gender, sexuality, and the inter-relatedness of gender and sexual identities in deconstructing hetero-normative narratives; also, it is resistant to a fixed hetero-normative identity. Throughout the interview process, I asked the research participants how they identify themselves and if they were comfortable with the terms gay, bisexual, and queer. Some African scholars argue that the term ‘queer’ is a Western construct used to describe sexualities on the margin and as such, embody a particular Western lifestyle (Ndjio, 2012; Oyěwùmi, 2005). The need or desire to self-identify or self-label oneself, some of the research participants claim, constrains their ability to explore other sexualities or navigate their sexuality discreetly within their communities.²⁶ I used the term ‘homosexuality’ or ‘homosexual’ frequently in this study because it is a part of the national discourses in some African countries used to describe people who have same-sex desires. Historically, Watson (2005) claims that homosexuality was used to describe a medical pathology utilized to objectify a group of people for medical purposes. It is because of this notion that many Africans believe that homosexuality is curable either through religious exorcism or traditional healing. Homosexuality entered some African cultural discourses through colonization and as such, it is important that the term is used to deconstruct colonial homophobic discourses. However, homosexuality focuses entirely on sexual orientation whereas ‘queer’ addresses multiple layers of oppression that may affect the lives of African MSM who reside in Canada. Furthermore, homosexuality implies that there exist two sexual binaries that include homosexuality and heterosexuality and thereby, failing to acknowledge other sexualities.

I utilize the term ‘African’ to refer to the men who have agreed to partake in this study. I have been debating with myself the use of this term because I do not want to continue to

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²⁶ Altman (2001) explains that today becoming ‘gay’ is to take on a particular set of styles and behaviors. Also, he argues that attempts to use Western terminology – gay people, men who have sex with men, bisexuals – often block us from understanding the different ways in which people understand their own sexual experiences and feelings.

perpetuate the idea that Africans are a monolithic group due to the fact that the continent is composed of thousands of cultural ethnic groups. My fear is that using the term ‘African’ to refer to people of diverse backgrounds will continue colonial discourses where a black man is a “negro” wherever he goes. The homogenization of Africans strips Africans from their unique cultural identities. By using the term ‘African’ I am not situating my analysis within this colonial frame of thought. My attempt is to demonstrate that the problem of homophobia, though more problematic in some parts of Africa than others, is an African problem, particularly sub-Saharan Africa. Homophobia is a problem that every African should acknowledge and challenge. Our histories, especially our colonial histories, are similar and so, the origin of homophobia is also similar.

Furthermore, I acknowledge that conducting this study in English is a choice I made deliberately. English or French is not the indigenous language for many of the research participants. As a result of colonization, many former British and French colonies have adopted these foreign languages as their *lingua franca*. Moreover, English is the primary language of the academy and of the society in which this research study is conducted.

1.3 Reflexivity

To conduct this research, I have learned to reflect on my positionality. As a Nigerian, I can identify with, but not assume the nature of, the experiences of being an outsider in a foreign country where the majority of the population is white. Feminist scholarship encourage researchers to employ reflexivity in their studies to acknowledge their “intellectual biographies and context” (Pillow and Mayo, 2012, p. 207) and their relations with each other and with their research participants. Pillow and Mayo (2012) explain that researchers who conduct studies on

communities or identity groups in which they identify with are often referred to as “outsiders/within” (p. 194). This “cultural intuition”²⁷ enables researchers to overcome or notice cultural discourses present in the interview process. However, this could also pose some challenges and limitations in analyzing one’s data. Closeness to the community or identity group could lead researchers to assume that they know “best,” thereby reinforcing power relations between the researcher and research participants. But my outsider/within positionality enabled me to understand the cultural nuances that occurred during my interaction with the research participants. The pauses, the gestures, and the silence in these interactions forced me to acknowledge my position within the study. On the other hand, as a woman and a non-queer, I cannot fathom the realities and experiences faced as an African MSM on a daily basis. Though this reflexive method was challenging, it provided me with the opportunity to better represent my research participants in my research analysis. For example, before I interviewed Kopano who has a physical disability, I did not know that individuals with a physical disability could be interested in sex or have interest in any form of intimacy. I had assumed that one’s physical disability rendered them asexual.²⁸ Also, in writing the consent forms, I assumed that research participants could physically sign the forms. However, my encounter with Kopano disrupted these assumptions and enabled me question my privilege as an abled person. In recognizing my privilege, I began to understand that people experience oppression differently. Some individuals experience multiple oppressions simultaneously, while others experience one or none at all. So I performed a self-reflexive exercise by taking field notes before, during, and after data collection. Documenting my observation of my surroundings, research participants, and how interacting with these men have impacted me, I believe, will produce a thorough analysis of my data.

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²⁷ A term coined by Delgado Bernal (as cited in Pillow and Mayo, 2012, p. 194).

²⁸ As a result of my interaction with Kopano, I have come to realize that asexuality is a sexual identity that I imposed on disabled individuals.

1.4 Methodology

For this research study, I investigate how homosexuality has been constructed as ‘other’ within sexualized power relations in Africa and how this othering has contributed to the marginalization of homosexuals both on the continent and outside of it. Furthermore, I explore the ways sexuality affects the migration of African MSM to Canada and how the men are able to negotiate their gender and sexual identities while residing in Canada. I ask the following questions. Firstly, how do queer African male immigrants negotiate their sexual and gender identities in two communities: in Africa and in the Canadian diaspora? Secondly, what is the relationship between sexual identity, gender identity, and the concept of “African” masculinity? Thirdly, how do African MSM adapt, negotiate, and resist the limitation of their marginalization based on race, gender, and sexuality in Africa and Canada?

I employ a feminist ethnography because Pillow and Mayo (2012) explain that it provides an understanding of how gender is constructed and how it is understood from a feminist perspective. Perry, Lyman, and Anderson (2006) provide a useful explanation of feminist ethnography. According to them, “a central tenet of this approach is that individuals’ experiences are socially organized, and as such, the researcher begins by examining the individuals’ experiences but then proceeds to explore how the broader social relations have shaped them” (Perry et al, 2006, p. 175). Feminist research questions identity and difference. It focuses on contextualizing the role gender plays in lived experiences and advocates for social change. It also interrogates the researcher’s subjectivity and his/her role in the research process. This approach enables me to explore how African men who have sex with men (MSM) negotiate their racial, cultural, gender, and sexual identities in Africa and Canada.

The use of feminist ethnography enables me to interrogate my situated knowledge, historical background, and how these influence the collection and analysis of data. This is particularly important because, historically, social science research used a positivist approach where the researcher assumed a position of objectivity and her subjectivity in the research is ignored or denied. Feminist scholars have disputed this notion, arguing that traditional research methods have patriarchal undertones because the researcher assumes to have an objective knowledge about the research participant under study. Also, it redistributes power disproportionately where the studied research participant is at the mercy of the researcher's voyeuristic gaze, observation, or conclusions. They argue that it is important that the subjectivity of the researcher is included in the research study. This is because the situated knowledge and the experiences of the researcher are included. Every researcher is biased to an extent because one's historical background and experiences influence how they perceive and articulate the complexities of the environs in which they live in. By disregarding the researcher's background and experiences, one cannot fully articulate why the researcher chose the topic, or how the researcher was able to gather and analyze the data collected. Thus, an application of this methodology ensures that I am held accountable for my actions and for the representation of research participants in the study.

The purpose of employing a feminist strategy in this study is to bring voices on the margins to the center in order to challenge dominant – Western and African – knowledge about homosexuality in Africa. Feminist scholarship adopts multiple points of view to produce new knowledge about marginalized peoples. Furthermore, this form of scholarship acknowledges the issue of power and agency, especially in research studies where privileged scholars study marginalized peoples. Linda T. Smith (2005) advises that feminist scholarship should recognize

the power differentials in research processes. It is this mindfulness that is used to reveal and challenge the multiple layers of oppression that African MSM experience while residing in Canada. These layers of oppression include racism, homophobia, classicism, and immigration status.

As well as acknowledging my positionality in this study, I had to consider safety and security concerns to protect the men who willingly participated in this research study. Before beginning the study, I had to go through the Ethics Board at Carleton University. To complete this application, I had to write a letter of information, consent form, and an explanation of how the study would be conducted. This direction was employed to protect the research participants and to make certain that they were not exploited or their rights to privacy violated. I provided the participants with a letter of information regarding the study. They were asked to read the letter of information and were provided with the opportunity to ask questions. Then I gave them a consent form and they were asked to read it carefully. After reading, the participants were asked to sign if they agreed with the terms. Signing the form indicated that they agreed to participate in the study. Though the process for approval was long, it helped me to realize the importance of protecting the men who took their time to make their voices heard. The homophobic climate in many African countries has discouraged queer African men to speak openly about their sexuality. This is understandable because witch-hunting tactics have been used to expose and persecute men who have same-sex desires. Therefore, I took into consideration safety, privacy, and confidentiality concerns. The recording device used to record their responses was stored in a secure place, where I have complete and sole access. Also, the names of the participants were changed to names that are commonly used worldwide and any reference, such as educational institutions and place of work, were omitted. However, countries of origin were used in order not

to homogenize the cultural identities of the men. Additionally, to compensate the research participants for their time, an honorarium of thirty Canadian dollars (CDN\$30) was offered at the end of the interview. Research participants were informed of this honorarium when they provided a verbal or written consent.

Originally, I had planned to employ a mixed-method of focus group and individual interviews to carry out this study. As planned, the focus group interview would be conducted first followed by individual interviews. This mix-method approach would have allowed participants to interact in a group setting, which can provide insights into the complex nature of behaviors and motivations. During the discussion session, I expected that participants would query and explain themselves to each other which could offer valuable data on the extent of “consensus and diversity” (Morgan, 1996, p. 138). This plan to begin with a focus group and end with individual interviews was to first identify a range of experiences and perspectives where I could draw from in order to add more depth in my analysis where needed. However, the vulnerability of the population made it difficult and unsafe for research participants to take part in the focus group. Once their identity was revealed, I could not guarantee that their identity will be protected. It is because of this rationale that I had to remove the focus group from the study altogether and use the interview method only.

An interview method is essential for any feminist research, particularly where marginalized peoples are concerned. Feminist research has produced a vast amount of stories that have been largely ignored. Interview research is a method feminists use to collect data about marginalized people and represent their voices in a manner that challenges hegemonic discourses (Devault and Gross, 2012). Through this method, marginalized peoples can tell their stories to challenge the desire of scholars “to give voice to others” (Devault and Gross, 2012, p. 216).

Feminist studies that use interview research do so to explore the complexities in language and discourse and to understand a group of people in order to produce knowledge about their experiences and activities. To collect data successfully, researchers have to be active listeners. In employing active listening skills, feminist scholars can “interrogate her or his deep-seated assumptions about various worlds and her or his arrogant perceptions of others in those worlds” (Devault and Gross, 2012, p. 218).

Though an interview method appears simple, human interactions are often complicated. Majorie L. Devault and Glenda Gross (2012) stress that engaging with people come with complexities that include “the flexibility and productive powers of language; the subtle shades of meaning conveyed through the nuances of speech, gesture, and expression; issues of translation; the ineluctable located-ness of any moment or stretch of talk; the specialized vocabularies of particular settings and groups; the organizing effects of format and genre; the injuries and uses of silence, the challenges inherent in listening” (p. 206). Taking these complexities into consideration, I took notes of the silences and gestures during the interview processes to understand why they took place. Note-taking enabled me to address the power dynamics between the research participant and me: Did I make particular facial expressions that made them uncomfortable? Or did some questions arouse some discomfort or forced them to remember some painful memories? In some cases, the participants aware of my sexual orientation observed my facial expressions while they recounted their sexual experiences. They paused and watched for my reaction and then continued when they felt that they were comfortable. Thus, I had to pay careful attention to my facial expressions so that the participants would not feel that I was judging their sexuality especially when they found out that I was not queer. Also, some questions forced the participants to think back to events that caused them emotional,

psychological, and physical harm. While some were willing to share their experiences, others refused to do so.

1.4. a. Research Sample

The African men who were recruited for this study have direct ties to the continent.²⁹ It was not necessarily important that the research participants spend their formative years while residing in Canada. From informal discussions, I expect that men who have recently arrived from the continent and those who grew up here would have different experiences in regards to their sexual, gender, cultural, and racial identities. It is because of this that the age range for this study is between 19 and 45 years old. This age range is to acknowledge different generational views on sexual and gender identities.

Initially, the geographical location for recruiting research participants was limited to Ottawa because this project is self-funded. However, the controversial and stigmatizing nature of homosexuality in many African communities and the conservative characteristics of Ottawa made it difficult to recruit men who were interested in partaking in this study. As a result, I had to expand the geographical grounds of this study to include Toronto.

John Biles and Erin Tolley (2008) explain that the city of Ottawa is the capital of Canada and the fourth largest city in the country with a population of 883, 391. Founded in 1826 as Bytown after the Lieutenant-Colonel John By of the Royal Engineers, it was changed and officially incorporated as “Ottawa” in 1855. The origin of the name, Ottawa, is an Algonquin term, ‘adawe’, which means “to trade” (Biles and Tolly, 2008, p. 111). According to Biles and Tolley (2008), Ottawa was initially settled by Irish and French Christian nationals, but gradually,

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²⁹ That is, they are of African descent.

the population of Ottawa has become increasingly diverse where 20 per cent of the population is foreign born. The 2011 census shows that 62.8 per cent lists English as their mother tongue, 14.5 per cent lists French, and 21.6 per cent lists languages other than English and French. Also, 75 per cent of the population claim to be Christians, where 43.3 per cent are Catholics and 27.6 per cent are Protestants. Ottawa is culturally diverse, but there are systemic and systematic structures that make access to social services and treatment unequal. These structures are influenced by social illnesses such as racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, etc. Though Ottawa is more progressive and “accepting” of differences than other cities in the country, there are still some prejudices that have to be addressed.

On the other hand, Toronto prides itself as an extraordinarily cosmopolitan city. With 150 ethnic backgrounds, it claims to be the most diverse city in the world (Siemiatycki, 2008). Its official motto is “Diversity Our Strength” (Siemiatycki, 2008, p. 24). The multicultural integration in Toronto where people, regardless of their racial, ethnic, religious, sex orientation background, are able to live peacefully, which makes Toronto a quintessential twenty-first century melting pot. Historically, Toronto is “notable for its trajectory from demographic diversity to uniformity and back to unprecedented diversity” (Siemiatycki, 2008, p. 24). According to Myer Siemiatycki (2008), this demonstrates how a makeup of a city can change drastically. European settlers, particularly Irish and French nationals, saw Toronto as an ideal location for trade, especially as a port to trade fur and serve as a military base. Siemiatycki (2008) describes the transformation of Toronto in two stages. The first stage is between 1940 and 1960 when European migration, especially from Italy, Greece, and Portugal, was significant. Between 1941 and 1971, the population increased significantly from one million to two and a half million. The second stage is still ongoing. The introduction of the point system in the 1960s

welcomed a different group of migrants to the city. Visible “minorities”³⁰ chose Toronto as their destination of choice. The new Toronto began to reflect the “globalization of Canadian immigration” (Siemiatycki, 2008, p. 26) where most of the migrants are from China, India, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and from the continent of Africa. The diversity in Toronto made it easier to recruit research participants for the study. The level of openness in Toronto has created pockets of communities where identities are “peacefully” situated and at the same time, able to travel across other communities.³¹

Research participants were recruited through a recruiter who has close ties with the ACB (African-Caribbean-Black) community. From initial contact, a snowballing method was used to get more research participants. I decided to use a recruiter³² who has close ties with the community because of the sensitive nature of the topic and the population involved. The recruited was not paid for their services. By going through a recruiter, research participants can trust that their identity in the study will be protected. The process of finding men willing to participate in this study took a year and four months. Some men showed interest at first, but were unable to fully commit. I had to let them decide, instead of coercing them, if or when they wanted to take part in the research. The men who agreed to participate did so for different reasons. Some of the men wanted to make a political statement by speaking up about their experiences. Other men wanted to use their interaction with me to practice their coming out

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³⁰ I am not comfortable with the term “minority” as it differentiates groups of people based on who is considered “authentically” Canadian and who is not.

³¹ It is important to note that I am not projecting an image of Ottawa and Toronto as utopic spaces where queer individuals of African descent can live peacefully because of the multicultural nature of these cities. However, I am reporting the attempt by the Canadian government, and to some extent the Canadian media, at showing how accepting and progressive Canada has become. This is not an effort to ignore the voices of indigenous peoples who have become invisible in Canadian public discourse. The scope of this thesis does not allow me to consider their experiences. However, I read Bonita Lawrence’s (2012) work on indigenous people in Canada to better understand racial discourses in Canada. See: Lawrence, B. (2012). *Fractured homeland: federal recognition and Algonquin identity in Ontario*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

³² It is important to note that the recruiter voluntarily helped me with this study. They were not paid to recruit the men. Also, they were informed not to pressure or influence the decision of the men. The men had to decide for themselves if they wanted to participate.

process. While for others it was to share their experiences as queer African men. I expect that the reasons the men had for being a part of this study may affect their responses and thereby, the analysis of this study. I had no prior interaction with the research participants before commencing the research. This may have or have not affected the course of the research. Research participants may have been more comfortable speaking to me because they did not know me, or because they did not know me, they may not have been as comfortable speaking to me about all of their experiences. However, to encourage participants to share their experiences, I divided the questions into eight categories: background, gender/sexuality, family, culture, faith/religion, legal/national discourse, diaspora, and future plans.

1.4. b. Analyzing Transcripts

My commitment to honor and represent the voices of the men who participated in this study meant that I had to faithfully transcribe their responses from the tape-recorder to my notebook. For some of the participants, French is their first language. During the interviews, I informed them that they could speak in the language³³ that they were most comfortable with. While transcribing their responses, I did not want to speak for the participants and so I had to be careful with how I translated their responses from French to English. I had to make sure that I used the right English words to confer their responses. It was important that I did not impose my understanding of their responses on their lived experiences. Furthermore, because each interview lasted an average of one hour and a half, the process of transcribing was time-consuming. Before I began transcribing the responses of the men, I listened to each of the interviews to refresh my

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³³ The languages the participants could choose from were English and French. This is because I am familiar with the two languages.

memory of the experiences of each interview sessions. Also, I reviewed the notes I had jotted down to prepare me for the analysis I would take. After transcribing a total of sixteen hours, I identified the key themes that were related to my study. These themes include race, religion, assimilation, gender, and sexuality. From their responses, it was clear that these themes were significant in the participants' identity formations.

1.5 Strengths and Limitations

As a Nigerian, especially of Igbo heritage, my positionality within the scope of this research provides a non-Western analysis about African sexuality. Though there are complications about this positionality as I cannot fully comprehend the experiences of all Africans' relation to colonization, I have come to understand the cultural nuances that were present during the course of the interviews. Also, by conducting the research in Canada, a country where cultural tolerance is high and fundamental human rights respected, it is possible to discuss sexuality, especially alternative sexualities, openly without the fear of being ostracized, beaten, or killed. Canada was ideal because it was financially feasible and safe to conduct this controversial and sensitive topic.

On the other hand, this project focuses on queer African men and does not consider other groups like women and other sexualities that exist on the continent. The dearth of research on female same-sex sexuality in Africa demands more resources - time and money - than I can afford. A focus on female same-sex sexuality would have helped bridge the gap that exists in Western academy about African sexuality and encourage a better understanding of gender relations on the continent. There is evidence that women who have sex with women (WSW) exist on the continent, thereby refuting the notion that female same-sex intimacy does not exist.

Furthermore, the geographical location of this research study was limited to Canada, specifically to Ottawa and Toronto.

1.6 Organization of the thesis

The first chapter of this thesis will give an overview of colonial and national discourses of African sexuality. It will contextualize these discourses within literary contributions of various authors to ground the experiences of queer African men in Canada. It will outline and highlight the constructions of African sexuality and of African masculinity within European framework. Also, it will illustrate how these constructions have impacted contemporary discourses of sexuality. Additionally, this chapter will illustrate how these changes have affected sexuality, especially homosexuality, discourse on the continent. Chapter two is a feminist ethnographic analysis of subjectivity as revealed by queer African men and it will discuss the results by contextualizing these interviews within the theoretical framework. It will examine how queer African men are able to negotiate and resist the limitations of their multiple marginalities in their country of origin and in Canada. The concluding chapter will provide a summary of previous chapters and some insights about the experiences of the men as queer African men.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Arguments about how same-sex relationships are practiced proliferate across the continent. Some people claim that a same-sex relationship is behavioral, that it is a bad habit that can be stopped at any time with proper cleansing methods, behavioral re-adjustment or governmental interference. This assumption is evident in comments about same-sex relationships made by religious and political leaders in Africa. On the other hand, LGBTQ communities, especially in the southern parts of Africa, contend that a same-sex relationship is more than a behavior. For them, homosexuality is an identity. As a result of the increasing globalization of cultural identities, citizens of the global South have appropriated Euro-American sexual identities. These sexual identities include ‘lesbian,’ ‘gay,’ ‘bisexual,’ and ‘queer.’³⁴ Even though some individuals subscribe to these identities to affirm their sexuality, others refuse to adhere to an identity that defines their sexual behaviors.³⁵ For example, in some parts of Africa, a man who has sexual relations with another man will not self-identify as gay, and he is likely to admit that homosexuality does not exist in Africa. In fact, he would probably claim that homosexuality is an abomination. Marc Epprecht (1998) examines the interrelated discourses of masculinity in Zimbabwe and how the dominant ideology of masculinity contributes to the invisibilization of same-sex relationships in the country. He notes that men who marry women and consider themselves normal, but seek out homosexual relations, are “invisible [even] to themselves” (Epprecht, 1998, p. 635). The invisibility of non-heterosexual relations reflects the current crisis on the continent, where these relations are not expressed as an identity or as a behavior, but

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³⁴ For an in-depth discussion, see Epprecht, M. (2006). “Bisexuality” and the Politics of Normal in African Ethnography. *Anthropologica*, 48 (2), 187 - 201.

³⁵ Epprecht and Altman expand on this concept in the following articles: Epprecht, M. (2009). Sexuality, Africa, History. *The American Historical Review*, 114 (5), 1258 – 1272; Altman, D. (2001). Rupture or Continuity? In John C. Hawley (Ed.). *Postcolonial Queer* (pp. 19 - 41). New York: State University of New York Press.

rather as an un-natural vice. Also, it fuels the growing homophobic discourse on the continent.³⁶ Although some men who have sex with men identify as gay, in *Sexuality of Migration* Lionel Cantu (2009) asserts that there is no single label that best describes men who engage in same-sex relations because they embody different identities.

Sexuality is a complex issue. Epprecht (2009) explains that “to study sexuality is to study everything: power, culture, science, discourse, psychology, colonialism, political economy, health, tourism” (p. 1). Sexuality, he stresses, is “at the core of human being-ness” (Epprecht, 2009, p. 1). Jeffrey Weeks (1986) argues that “sexuality is shaped at the juncture of two major axes of concern: with our subjectivity – who and what we are; and with society – with the future growth, well-being, health, and prosperity of the population as a whole” (p. 34). However, how Africans have come to understand contemporary sexuality on the continent has been influenced by Western sexual ideology. Michel Foucault (1978) posits that sexuality or the study of sexuality is a contemporary phenomenon. It is important to note that the basis of Foucault’s analysis is Euro-centric. However, he rightly emphasizes that the idea of self-labeling or self-identifying, such as a ‘lesbian’ or ‘gay’, is predominantly a Euro-American idea of sexual identity and subjectivity. Language and knowledge are linked to power. Thus, these terms used to describe one’s sexual orientation are rooted in Europe’s conceptualization of sexuality, which in some way maintains their superiority over other racial and cultural groups. In Volume One of *History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) explores the genealogy of sexuality in Europe. He shows how the bourgeois in 17th century Europe were able to gain control of the masses by dictating the trajectory of sexual discursive social practices. He begins by demonstrating the difference of

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³⁶ Ajen investigates how some men in Africa do not identify as gay even though they engage in same sex sexual relations. This shows that the concept of homosexuality as an identity is foreign to many African cultures. Find more information in Ajen, N. (1998). West African Homoeroticism: West African Men Who Have Sex with Men. In Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe (Eds.). *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands* (pp. 129 - 138). New York: St. Martins Press.

sexuality in the 17th century, where codes to regulate the obscenities and indecencies of sexuality were lax, and sexuality in the 19th century, where sexuality was carefully monitored and confined in the private sphere. He argues that the concept of sexuality that existed in the Victorian era continues to influence contemporary sexuality. Sexuality in that period mirrors much of sexuality discourse in Africa today, where sexuality is associated with morality.

The lack of evidence of homosexual practices on the continent has strengthened critics' claim that homosexuality is un-African. The studies on African sexuality that attempt to refute this position have been sparse. Euro-American white men have conducted most of the studies on homosexuality in Africa. From the colonial period, they intended to show that homosexuality is or is not indigenous to many African cultures. Epprecht (2009) notes that European ethnographers and travelers who were a part of the colonial regime wrote accounts about African sexuality and that some of these accounts were not favorable to Africans. Chinua Achebe (1988) in his essay, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" from his book *Hope and Impediments*, emphasizes that travelers such as Conrad were blind to the way Africans actually lived. They simply wrote tales based on their pre-existing perceptions of Africans and were not willingly to see Africans beyond their myopic observations. The legacy of colonial narratives continues to determine how sexuality in Africa is studied and how Africans understand sexuality. Taiwo Oloruntoba-Oju (2011) theorizes "colonial continuities [have] the framework of colonial continuities are fore-grounded as authentic or ancient examples of African sexualities" (p. 4). Thus, what is presently considered pre-colonial African sexual identity, i.e. heterosexuality, is indeed borrowed colonial prescriptions of African sexuality. The split in African sexual identity shows that it is important to examine historical records as well as contemporary attempts to explain sexualities on the continent.

This chapter begins to review how African sexuality and masculinity have been contextualized within a European colonial framework. Firstly, it explores how the discourse of homosexuality was erased from the African cultural memory. Secondly, it examines how religion promoted and maintained regimes of compulsory heterosexuality.³⁷ Thirdly, it looks at the similarities in attitudes to homosexuality between the colonial regime and anti-colonial movements, and how the legacy of colonization continues to promote a singular, distorted and discriminatory sexual ideology on the continent. Fourthly, it analyzes how the ideology of sexuality on the continent influences sexuality discourses in diaspora. The purpose of this chapter is to provide background information on the factors that influence contemporary sexuality discourse in Africa. And how this discourse determines the process by which the men in this study form their identities.

2.1 Incorporation of European Conceptualization of Sexuality into African Culture

The history of African sexuality and African sexual identities is complex and imbued with colonial narratives. African history, particularly African sexual histories, is multifaceted. Bill Pincheon (2000) notes that “African history is the history of a continent in flux and in contact and exchange with the world and as such it is complex and many sided” (p. 41). The “contact and exchange with the world” especially in this period of heightened global identity, renders a “unique” African sexual identity non-existent. The claim, therefore, that heterosexuality, as a normative sexuality, is unique to African sexual identity is inaccurate. One of the ways in which African “other” sexualities were silenced is as a result of Africans’ oral method of transferring

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³⁷ The term ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ was popularized by Adrienne Rich in her essay, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.” Read: Rich, A. (1980). Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence. *Women: Sex and Sexuality*, 5 (4), 631-660.

cultural and traditional values and beliefs. It is difficult to use oral histories to analyze African sexuality because of its vulnerability to various subjective interpretations. However, silence about sexuality in Africa may have been influenced by Victorian sexual discourses. This is evident in Zimbabwe where Epprecht (1998) explains that the problem of homosexuality was erased through indigenous spoken languages. According to him, there are no explicit words to describe same-sex relationships. Words that describe same-sex associations are often disguised as *tsvimborume*, which means “one who possesses a phallus, but has nowhere to put it” (Epprecht, 1998, p. 637); or *shawira*, which means “an intimate male comrade” (Epprecht, 1998, p. 637). Even though these words do not overtly characterize same-sex attraction or relations, gay and lesbian communities in Zimbabwe have adopted these terms to show that in the pre-colonial period same-sex relations existed. Although these terms show that homosexuality did exist, in many cases, homosexual activities were practiced discreetly and were discouraged after the period of adolescence.

European values and beliefs were injected into many African communities, through the process of colonization, to re-modify how Africans not only perceived themselves but also their cultural histories or historical identities. Any evidence about African ‘other’ sexualities has been changed through indigenous discursive practices (such as the case in Zimbabwe with the use of language) and documented by non-Africans who aim either to demonstrate African primitiveness, shame Africans about their “immoral” and “savage” sexuality, or to show their co-patriots in Europe that sexual deviances, such as homosexuality, do not exist in Africa. The outsider status of Western ethnographers and anthropologists “introduces concerns about language, epistemology, and cultural insider secrets” (Epprecht, 2009, p. 1258). Also, these group “consists of European colonists who are seen either as having “imposed same-sex

behavior on black Africans during the colonial era” or as responsible (European missionaries in particular) for mandating that African subjects denounce “filthy practices” that previously had been accepted as part of everyday reality” (Epprecht, 2009, p. 1258). Thus, the principal factor in the invisibility of same-sex practices described in colonial texts may be the limitations of the observer and not the events that transpired in that period.

In addition, by conflating the geographical location of the continent with cultural homogeneity, African diverse cultural identities and sexual identities were collapsed into a unique African identity, i.e., an identity that fell in line with colonial racist and sexual expectations. Several scholars have tried to explore these practices by writing about same-sex practices that existed in different social and cultural contexts. Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe (1998), Signe Arnfred (2004), T. Dunbar Moodie (1994), Epprecht (1998, 2008, 2009), and Oyèrónké Oyěwùmi (2005) have conducted studies that show the diversity of sexual identities on the continent. *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexuality*, edited by Murray and Roscoe, has become a required text on African sexuality. The intent of this text, as explained in their preface, is to dispel the myth that homosexuality is a Western import and show that homosexuality is indigenous to Africa. They argue that the provenance of homophobic claims and tirades by African leaders is rooted in colonial prejudice against Africans. By analyzing various accounts of early European travelers such as Edward Gibbon’s comments and Sir Richard Burton’s accounts about the existence of homosexuality in the sotadic zone, of which Africa is excluded, Murray and Roscoe show how these accounts, among others, have affected contemporary views about sexuality on the continent. In their work, Murray and Roscoe take the reader on a geographical and chronological journey across the African continent, where historical and contemporary anthropological researches describe evidence of same sex

practices and activities. They show that homophobia, not homosexuality, was a Western import. Epprecht (2003, 2008) supports this thesis in his studies which include *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern African* and *Heterosexual Africa?: The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*. *Hungochani*, which means homosexuality in the indigenous chiShona language of Zimbabwe, explores non-heteronormative sexualities in pre-colonial Zimbabwe and examines the impact of colonial experience on contemporary sexuality discourse. On the other hand, *Heterosexual Africa* investigates the origins of the claim that same sex relations are “un-African” and attempts to show how compulsory heterosexuality has been institutionalized. His contribution has enriched the study of African sexuality in general, and this thesis in particular.

Similarly, Signe Arnfred’s (2004) *Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa* endeavors to challenge the construction of the African self and sexuality as ‘other’ to the European self and sexuality. This construction, according to her, is created not only to distinguish the African from the European³⁸ but also to establish the European self and sexuality as superior to African self and sexuality. Arnfred (2004) exposes the root of heteronormative narrative on the continent by examining the tales written by European voyagers and colonizers, and the silences regarding homosexuality in African feminists’ academic research. She reveals that sexuality was “relegated to darker and lower sphere” (p. 62) by Europeans so that it was important to contain and suppress it. This association of sexuality with darkness justified the transformation of sexuality on the continent within a European moral discourse (this will be discussed further in relation to religion below). By providing an analysis of Haggard’s fictional tale, *King Solomon’s Mines*, and

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³⁸ I use “the” here to homogenize both Africans and Europeans in an attempt to challenge the essentialization of Africans and Europeans. That is to challenge colonial narratives that there is a fundamental difference between Africans and Europeans without considering (or perhaps, ignoring) the differences among Africans as well as the differences among Europeans.

recounting the story of Sarah Baartman,³⁹ Arnfred (2004) shows the level of violence inflicted on the African body. Additionally, she stresses that African feminists, except a few such as Amina Mama, have dissociated themselves from writing about African sexuality. They argue that other pressing matters, such as imbalanced gender relations, poverty, lack of infrastructure, political instability, economic stagnation, and among other issues that affect the lives of Africans require attention.

Nigerian scholar, Oyèrónké Oyěwùmi (2005) emphasizes that the West is preoccupied with African sexuality. Oyěwùmi (2005) stresses that gender is important in analyzing the nature of the European construction of African masculinity and the manner in which it grounded the basis of sexuality discourse on the continent. She stresses that the study and conceptualization of gender in Africa is tied to the West and that in African discourses, gender and sexuality do not simultaneously co-exist. According to her, unlike studies of gender in Western academia where gender and sexuality intersect, gender and sexuality in Africa function separately. Along with other African scholars, Oyěwùmi (2005) attempts to challenge and correct condescending discourses of African gender in Western thought and academia, and also to validate Africans' knowledge in the production of social theory. Her work provides a wealth of knowledge about gender, race, power, and other social institutions. Even though it does not extensively discuss the nature of homosexuality in Africa, it provides some epistemological standpoints from African scholars that guide this thesis.

European perception of Africans and of their bodies contained oxymoronic Euro-centric views. On one hand, Africans were depicted as infantile. Achebe (1988) writes that Europeans

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³⁹ Sarah Baartmann, a black South African woman, is a historical tragic figure whose body was abused for the amusement and curiosity of Europeans. In 1810, Baartmann was carried from Cape Town to be exhibited in the cities of London and Paris because of her steatopygic attributes (Osha, 2004a, p. 93). For more information on Sarah Baartman and the effect of her legacy on contemporary black womanhood, read: Gordon-Chipembere, N. (2011). *Representation and Black womanhood: The Legacy of Sarah Baartman*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

did not conceive a possible kinship with Africans. In *Heart of Darkness*, Achebe argues that the only kinship ties awarded to Africans in relation to Europeans was mentioned by Albert Schweitzer, a missionary. Schweitzer commented that “the African is indeed my brother but my junior brother” (Achebe, 1988, p. 11). As a “junior” brother, the African, according to some colonial social scientists, had not developed, psychologically and intellectually, to the point where sexual transgressions could exist. These transgressions include homosexuality. This assumption promotes the notion that sex between Africans was more for procreation purposes than for pleasure. On the other hand, Africans were portrayed as ravenous sexual beasts. Pictorial depictions of Africans that exhibited throughout Europe demonstrated Africans as ugly. Sanya Osha (2004a), whose analysis of the colonial encounter is grounded on sexual signifiers, explains that “the colonizing agent either unduly romanticized the colonized subject by virginising her/him through a powerful process of de-agentialisation and also by objectification or by hyper-sexualising her/him, employing tropes of excess, unrestrained carnality, irrationality and violence” (p. 92). The “steatopygic attributes” of the African woman and the penile⁴⁰ size of the African man were used by Europeans to dissect, objectify, and dehumanize Africans. Through portrayals of “excess” of body parts, the presumed perversity of Africans was exaggerated.

Europe’s (and ultimately the West’s) preoccupation with African sexuality is influenced by the sexualized nature of the colonial conquest. Anne McClintock (1995), Joanne Nagel (2003), Mary Louise Pratt (1992), Sanya Osha (2004a, 2004b), Robert Young (1995), R.W. Connell (2002), and Joseph Massad (2003) liken the colonial and imperial projects to the

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⁴⁰ Oloruntoba-Oju (2011) also reveals that “colonial accounts additionally credited the African woman with dexterity in the ‘arts and wiles’ of the erotic. African male physiology, complete with ‘scientific’ penile measurements that prompted comparison with horses, also helped to conjoin the African male with ‘anima’ in popular Euro-American imaginary, establishing him as apparently the quintessential ‘homo erectus’ of all homo sapiens” (p. 2). The association of bodily parts with sexual excessiveness rendered the African subject a ravenous sexual beast.

deflowering of a virgin. That is, according to them, the projects were phallo-centric, where the lands and its people were feminized and considered “virgins” that had to be penetrated and impregnated with European ideals. Osha’s (2004a) description expands this colonial imagery. She illustrates that “the colonial drive was essentially phallic in which the adventurous empire- the soldier, the administrator, and the missionary- penetrated a seemingly passive geographical space, a virginal wilderness that was awaiting the thrust, domestication and eventual upliftment of Euro-modern civilization and modes of rationality” (p. 93). This metaphorical explanation of the colonial conquest demonstrates that the European male as well as the colonizing male promoted Western civilization and maintained control over non-Europeans for the period of time that it profited them by not only disciplining desires but also by controlling “sexual energies.”⁴¹ Basile Ndirjo (2012) refers to the control of these sexual energies as a sexuality governmentality complex. According to him, the idea of controlling sexual energies originated from the Enlightenment project in Europe, where disciplinary measures about sexuality were created to circumvent lawlessness and disorder from the proletariat. Threatened by the populous underclass, the elites used sexuality as a tool to control the masses in order to sustain and maintain socio-political order. This form of control was strategically deployed and employed in the colonizing process. Outnumbered by African indigenes, European colonizers preoccupied themselves with African sexuality. Thus, the metaphorical (and in most cases, literal) act of copulation between the colonizer and the colonized and their lands signifies the de-agentialization, sexualization and denigration of the African subject. The construction of the otherness of African sexuality was a reflection of “ideas about the [European] self” (Reid and

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⁴¹ Osha (2004b) citing Signe Arnfred (2004) that sexual obscenities were kept in check in order to maintain a specific idea of modernity. That is a particular sexuality was promoted for the purpose of social progress and civilization, see Osha, S. (2004b). A Postcolonial Scene: On Girls’ Sexuality. *Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series 2*. Conducted from Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Center, Lagos).

Walker, 2006, p. 186). Therefore, the images of African sexuality as “pathological, perverse and primitive” constructed the ideas of European sexuality as “healthy, normal and civilized” (Reid and Walker, 2006, p. 186).

Launching from the constitution of Africans as “other” to Europeans, Graeme Reid and Liz Walker (2006) accentuate that the medical field created discourses that were integral in the use of Africans as objects of knowledge. This form of discourse has helped to sustain racial and sexual hierarchal systems, where Africans were considered intellectually inferior to Europeans.⁴² One of the prevailing studies at that time was the imagined servile nature of Africans. The supposed simple-mindedness of Africans, as a result of racialized and racist medical findings during that period, was exploited to support the intellectual ability and rationality of Europeans. Subsequently, it justified the physical and epistemic violence inflicted on Africans. In the context of sexuality, Reid and Walker (2006) write that medical discourse reflects “male sexual imagery of conquest, penetration, and subjugation” (p. 187). This sexual imagery of the colonial encounter characterizes the present crisis in African masculinity and complexity of African sexualities. Medical discourse continues to influence the trajectory of sexuality in Africa. Presently, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has encouraged more studies on sexualities on the continent. However, research within this field of study has concentrated more on the transmission of the

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⁴² Africans in some aspects are still considered inferior to Europeans. The prevailing discourse in Western academia and the increase of the number of Western NGOs in Africa imply that Africans are incapable of handling their social and political affairs. This is not to discredit the good efforts provided by well-intentioned individuals, but to recognize the existence of a Savior Complex. This complex is not without inherent racial hierarchy, where Africans are still instructed on what to do and how to handle their affairs. Barbara Heron (2007) explains that “the ‘Third World’ or ‘developing countries’ are presented in Canada as places of ‘suffering, starvation, and bloodshed’ via persistent magazine and newspaper articles, television programs and news clips, as well as direct-mail and TV fundraising drives by many development organizations” (p. 3). According to her, “these images have the effect of (re)establishing the idea that the South in general and Africa in particular are in need of Northern interventions. This discourse normalizes our centering of ourselves in relation to other people’s needs, not by recognizing how we are implicated in global economic process of globalization” (Heron, 2007, p. 3). For more on development discourses and the imposition of western ideals and values on global South countries, read Heron, B. (2007). *Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender, and the helping imperative*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

virus instead of the subjectivity of Africans in exploring their sexual desires and pleasures. Sexuality, especially homosexuality, is often examined within a pathological context.

The experience of colonialism cannot be separated from the discourse of sexuality. Sexual tropes were immersed in the conquest of Africa and Africans. The view of Africans as primitive and animalistic not only disparaged the African subject but also demonized their sexuality. The naturalization of heterosexuality in the cultural discourses of many African societies today maintains Western heterosexual hegemony as the bedrock on which most gender and sexual relations are grounded. Homosexuality, therefore, was considered aberrant and abhorrent to hetero-normativity.

2.2 The Virile Colonial Male vs. the Effeminate African Male

Most colonial texts claim that homosexuality is not indigenous to Africans. These texts not only try to homogenize Africans' cultural identities, but also imply that the geographical location that houses these identities is a reflection of Africans' backwardness. That is, geographical location implies a historical difference across time. The geospatial and cultural differences between Europeans and Africans underscore the fetishization of African sexuality. Fanon (2008), Osha (2004a, 2004b), Epprecht (2006, 2009), and Reid and Walker (2006) claim that the desire to study Africans provoked an intense fetishization of Africans and their way of life. For example, R.W. Connell (2002) writes that black masculinity poses a "sexual and social threat" (p. 253) to the colonial regime and European masculine hegemony. Thus, it was imperative that black masculinity had to be subjugated through the transformation of customary expectations of masculinity. In an attempt to overpower the African man, European masculinity was hyper-masculinized against the constructed effeminacy of the African male subject. This section

examines how the emasculation of African men in the colonial period led to the present relationship between homosexuality and the threat of feminization.

In the Elizabethan period, homosexuality was considered a crime and comparable to murder in Great Britain. However, “sodomy” as it existed then differs from the homosexuality that is practiced now. Alan Bray (2002) demonstrates that sodomy covered myriad sexual acts, of which same sex practices were only a part. According to Bray, sodomy was not only a sexual crime, but also a threat to the religious and socio-political order of the state. The state is masculinized and a threat of feminization weakens the state. In the 19th century, Foucault (1978) explains that there was a paradigm shift in sexuality discourse in Europe.⁴³ In that period, sexuality began to be associated with morality. As such strict regulations were created to confine and repress it. According to him, “the theme of political operations, economic interventions, and ideological campaign for raising standards of morality and responsibility: it was put forth as the index of a society’s strength, revealing both its political energy and its biologic vigor” (p. 146). Foucault’s (1978) examination of sexuality discourse in Europe is very much applicable in the African context. For example, in Nigeria, there is no evidence of legislation criminalizing homosexuality before the anti-gay bill was passed in 2014. Continuing with Bray’s analysis, in that period the associations of sexuality with morality led to efforts to monitor even suppress homoerotic desires to maintain control. The association of sodomy “with treason” (Bray, 2002, p. 341) is apparent in the colonial encounter, where colonial soldiers and administrators raped in order to control the natives. Rape undermined African masculinity and un-manned them. The feminization of African men, not only weakened African communities, but also marked the homoerotic nature of the colonial conquest. Colonial masculinity, as Henri Chari (2001)

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⁴³ Even though Foucault (1978) focused on the discourses of sexuality in the Victorian era, one can see that the Elizabethan period set the precedence of sexuality in Europe.

highlights, is not based on the binary of masculinity and femininity, but on the relationship between “masculinity and effeminacy” (p. 289). With sexual violence, the African male subject was emasculated so that it was difficult for them to retaliate or revolt against the colonial regime. Through this act of violence, European masculinity became the epitome of manhood for non-European men. To uphold this standard of masculinity, colonizers had to exercise control over their homoerotic desires, especially between them. Heike Schmidt, in the essay “Colonial Intimacy: The Rechenberg Scandal and Homosexuality in Germany East Africa,” shows how masculinity was constructed within a framework of race and class. Using “rumors of homosexuality” (Schmidt, 2008, p. 33), German colonizers were able to discredit the leadership qualities of their colleagues to gain either a social or economic advantage. Within this class framework, homosexuality was considered a threat to the colonial state. On the other hand, in a racial context, African male servants were forced to engage in sexual intercourse with their colonial masters. Schmidt emphasizes that same-sex rape by colonizers of the colonized was not illegal, but sodomy (or consensual sex) practiced between colonizers or between the colonized was.⁴⁴ The power dynamic between the colonized and the colonizer reflects how the colonial event was formed within the frameworks of “white/black, active/passive, logical/emotional, male/female.” The African male subject is transposed as a passive and receptive participant in his oppression, especially in his sexual exploitation. Meanwhile, the European male is portrayed as an active and penetrating agent. European colonizers, therefore, used same-sex rape as a tool to gain control over African men. However, sodomy, where participants willingly engaged in same-sex relations was illegal and considered a threat to masculinity, and thus, the colonial state.

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⁴⁴ Except in some cases where same sex relationships helped maintain the colonial regime. For example, Epprecht (1998) explains that in South Africa, colonizers turned a blind eye to same sex relationships between men that took place in the mines in order to exploit the labor and create incentives for the men to stay.

Of course, this does not preclude the existence of voluntary homosexual practices between European and African men, and between African men themselves. Even though these practices were prevalent, they were criminalized under the criminal codes at that time. Epprecht (1998) reveals that, between the period of 1892 and 1932, 400 cases of homosexual behavior among black Zimbabweans were reported to the court. In that time, the court was instrumental in encouraging the perception that homosexuality was practiced only amongst whites and migrant laborers in Zimbabwe. Epprecht explains that the British created a dual legal system in Southern Rhodesia that served two populations -“civilized” (Europeans, Asians, Coloreds, and urban Africans) and “natives.”⁴⁵ As a result, there was a propensity to exaggerate the homosexual practices of whites and foreigners and understate these similar practices amongst African blacks, especially African blacks in rural areas. This helped promote the idea that homosexuality is a Western import. Also, the illegality of homosexuality during the colonial era has influenced the understanding of homosexuality as an immoral and un-natural practice. In fact, some of these criminal codes continue to set the basis for current anti-homosexual laws in many African countries.

Moreover, the alteration of traditions that abetted customary African masculinity further undermined African men. Cultural expectations of masculinity include the acquisition of land, the payment of dowry for a future fertile wife (in some cases, wives), and providing for the family. Epprecht (1998) emphasizes that the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) that was embraced by African governments to deal with compounding interest rates, was one of the principal contemporary causes that transformed traditional expectations of masculinity. The change in economic system in many African states expected men to work long hours for low wages and at the same time the cost of living was increasing astronomically. Some

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⁴⁵ Natives in this context refer to black South Africans who reside in rural areas.

men could not afford to pay dowry in order to fulfill their cultural expectations. Simultaneously, women were slowly getting economically empowered, so that they did not need to marry or have men provide for them. These examples show that African family systems were not only altered, but also amplified the emasculation of the African man. Epprecht argues that “colonial rule and racial capitalism emasculated African men in the sense that they undermined Africans’ ability to obtain the signifiers of social manhood” (1998, p. 641). This emasculation resulted in changing economies and “ideologies which infantilized or pathologized African men and their sexuality” (Epprecht, 1998, p. 641). Psychological violence and economic oppression were parts of the method employed to undermine the African male subject.

Furthermore, in *Black Skin, White Mask* Frantz Fanon (2008) represents the psychoanalytical destruction of the African self. In this work, Fanon marries some elements of Freudian psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology to theorize how Africans, particularly, the African man, becomes a raced subject. Fanon theorizes in all ramifications, the black man is a doomed subject and the cause of his doom is his penis. Fanon emphasizes, “When a white man sees a Negro, he is no longer aware of the Negro but only of a penis; the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He is a penis” (p. 159). The penis enshrines the differences between the European man and the African man. It becomes the symbol through which the black man is presented and re-presented. As a result of the link between sexuality and immorality, the black penis is perceived as a harbinger of evil deeds.⁴⁶ Fanon, much like Foucault, examines the role sexuality plays in the colonial regime and of the African subject and how the production of knowledge is linked to sexuality and power. By incorporating racial discourse in his analysis,

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⁴⁶ Fanon (2008) writes that “whoever says rape says a Negro” (p. 166). This is evident in discourses where the black man and his penis were a threat to the stability of European states.

Fanon is able to demonstrate the violence imposed on the ontology and epistemology of the African subject.

The process by which African sexuality and masculinity were “othered” to European models of sexuality and masculinity has contributed to the paranoia exhibited by African leaders and religious clerics about homosexuality. For them, an acceptance of homosexuality implies an acceptance of African male inferiority. The idea that Africans are not homosexual or are not keen to identify as “homosexuals” has influenced contemporary policies that seek to “weed” out sexual deviant behaviors. One of the tools used to further the homophobic tirade in Africa is religion.

2.3 Indoctrination of European Mores and the Subsequent Conversion of the Deviant Sexual Subject

Religion and colonial administrative processes simultaneously maintained regimes of compulsory heterosexuality. Christianity, Islam, and animism are some of the religions practiced on the continent. However, Christianity and Islam have come to play major roles in the formation of many African cultural identities. These religions are considered “modern” vis-a-vis indigenous religious practices. Localized religions practiced in many African countries are often referred to as “traditional” or “animist” to reflect their pre-colonial religious expressions. The process of colonization has encouraged many Africans to associate their localized religions with “evil” such that indigenous religions are considered “witchcraft”, “juju”, or “muti”. These associations have forced many Africans to turn to Christianity or Islam for spiritual support. However, Wim M.J. van Binsbergen (2004) argues that these indigenous religions still offer Africans a way of dealing with “global flows” and “modernity’s challenge” (p. 89). In the

spiritual consciousness of the African, therefore, there is an overlap between modernity – Christianity or Islam – and traditional – that is indigenous religions. Western religions as they are practiced now on the continent are influenced by indigenous methods of worship. Religion determines sexual identity formation for many in Africa. It plays a major role of how individuals understand sexuality. For some of the men, it either supports or disrupts their identity formation with their sexuality.

The proselytization of Christianity was founded on the understanding that European men considered themselves spiritually superior to Africans. Africans were only regarded as having a body but lacking a soul. It was supposedly the moral responsibility of colonizers to indoctrinate Africans into Christianity. In order to uphold the moral superiority of Europeans and force Africans to assimilate into this moral discourse, sexual desires, particularly non-heteronormative desires, had to be eradicated from the cultural consciousness of Africans. Fanon (2008) states, “moral consciousness implies a kind of scission, a fracture of a consciousness into a bright part and an opposing black part. In order to achieve morality, it is essential the black, the dark, the Negro vanish from consciousness, hence, a Negro is forever in combat with his own image” (p. 194). To change the African into “his” own image, it was necessary for Europeans to quell their desires by subjugating them into moral disciplinary measures similar to those employed during the Enlightenment era.

Whitening Africans involved not only altering their cultural paradigm, but also completing their spiritual conversion. In much of the theological literature and other colonial texts, whiteness is made synonymous with salvation and nearness with God. To be “white” involves knowing God and following his son, Jesus Christ, in the form of Christianity. Africans who decide to remain true to their “heathen” ways were considered “dark” and therefore, evil. In

this context, whiteness is the quintessence of good, and blackness the personification of evil. Fanon (2008) rightly emphasizes “sin is negro as virtue is white” (p. 139). Africans who convert to Christianity renounce evil that is their blackness, to gain the kingdom of God that is whiteness. The symbolic representation of God in many Christian churches is a white male. Thus, the European male becomes the father of all peoples. He is that standard to which Africans have to aspire to.

C.C. Wrigley (1959) and Kristen Cheney (2012) explore the Christian revolution in Uganda. Wrigley (1959) writes that Christianity was established in Buganda in 1877 and then disseminated to surrounding areas in East Africa. According to him, the Baganda people were the first heathen tribe to convert to Christianity and to voluntarily choose western civilization. He points out that the Buganda kingdom was unique because it was an order of despotism that was rare in Africa. Prior to the infiltration of British imperialism, Buganda had established a similar administrative system like the British where power is distributed from top down. Even though they were willing to learn and assimilate into western civilization, they were also adamant in preserving their “traditional institutions, national self-consciousness and the essentials of [their] own culture” (Wrigley, 1989, p. 33). Although the sexual indiscretions of King Kabaka Mwanga were not mentioned in Wrigley’s article, Cheney (2012), in “Locating Neocolonialism, ‘Tradition,’ and Human Rights in Uganda’s ‘Gay Death Penalty,’” examines the prevailing homophobic crusade in Uganda and how the role of the story of Buganda Kabaka Mwanga functions in this crusade. It is rumored that Mwanga executed young male pages between 1885 and 1886 for refusing his sexual advances. Their conversion to Christianity, specifically to Catholicism, encouraged the young male pages to refuse the sexual advances of the king. As a reward for their bravery, the pages were awarded martyrdom. This exemplifies the dichotomy of

good/evil, normal/perversion, and white/black. The pages renounced the sexual transgressions of their ruler for their Christian faith. In essence, they condemned their blackness, in the form of a sexual deviance, in favor of whiteness.

To examine the extent of colonial violence on the psyche of the colonized, Homi Bhabha (1984) writes that through a “discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry does not merely ‘rupture’ the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence,” where this subject is “incomplete and virtual” (p. 127). The colonial subject exists partially because he functions in an ambivalent space where, for example, he is anglicized and yet not English. He is created in the image of a European that is as a native who is native “in blood and color, but English in tastes, in opinions” (Bhabha, 1984, p. 127). This subject is perpetually under the control – spiritually, psychologically, and aesthetically – of the colonial empire. The legacy of mimicry is evident today, especially in a spiritual form. In particular, the bible was used to naturalize European morality. Its continual presence in the cultural discourses in many African communities typifies the fixity of European colonial influence.

Christianity has come to dominate the manner in which African people see themselves. Heike Becker (2004) claims that gender identities that were annunciated by missionaries in the beginning of the twentieth century were presented as traditional. Becker (2004) explains that missionaries orchestrated the submission of women in Owamboland and other parts of Africa. Prior to colonization and evangelization, recreational sex in Owamboland was common, but procreational sex was regulated. She writes that the young practiced *Ukusoma*, isi-Zulu Natal term for non-penetrative thigh sex, to avoid unwanted pregnancies. The level of sexual freedom women in Owamboland rendered them backward in the eyes of missionaries who visited there.

Marriage, unlike in Europe, was not particularly important to them. This was a problem for missionaries because Christianity preached that sexual freedom or the practice of sexuality, especially outside matrimony, is immoral and sinful. Thus, promiscuity as exercised by women in Owamboland was frowned upon and discouraged. Gender relations, and concurrently sexual relations, began to change with the influence of Christianity. The sexuality of women was especially controlled. Female chastity, according to Becker's analysis, then became the basis for social transformation and development. Also, S. Arnfred (2004) and R.W. Connell's (2002) essay, "The History of Masculinity" from *Masculinities*, complement Becker's examination of Christianity in the transformation of gender and sexual relations on the continent. Arnfred (2004) explains that Victorian and Evangelical Protestant conceptions of femininity and sexuality were imposed on Africans and used as models of modernity. In the same vein, Connell (2002) argues that marital heterosexuality is revered as the archetype of sexuality.

The institution of non-African patriarchy is also manifested in Islam. Most Western societies perceive Islamic states as "backward-looking, oppressed by religion, and inhumanely governed" (Mazrui, 1997, p. 118). However, Mazrui (1997) argues that Islam is more than a religion. According to him, Islam "is a civilization and a way of life" (p. 118). The colonized African resisted and challenged European colonial systems by adopting Islam, an alternative path to modernity (Brenner, 2000). Shobana Shankar (2007), Nehemia Levtzion (1994), Sean Hanretta (2005), and Liazzat J.K. Bonate (2008) explore the patterns of Islam across the continent and examine the effect of Islam on state formation and its influence on social and economic aspects of African lives. The spread of Islam on the continent began in Senegal and in Yoruba-speaking parts of Nigeria. Sheikh 'Uthman dan Fodio, a renowned Islamic scholar and

leader of a *jihad*,⁴⁷ transformed much of northern Nigeria and adjacent territories politically, socially, and religiously. The success of this movement in Nigeria inspired the subsequent Islamisation of other African states. Since the signing of the anti-gay bill in Nigeria, the number of suspected homosexuals has increased in Northern Nigeria, which is predominantly Muslim. Several days after the bill was made into law in January 7th, 2014, different news outlets reported that about a dozen men were arrested in Bauchi, a Northern state in Nigeria, for homosexual-related activities. The police in Bauchi have a list of one hundred and sixty-eight allegedly gay men of whom thirty-eight have been arrested (Bowcott, 2014). Eleven men out of this thirty-eight, ten who are Muslims and one who is non-Muslim, have signed confessions that they belonged to gay organizations (Bowcott, 2014). The Chairman, Musapha Baba Ilela, of Bauchi State Shariah Commission who oversees regulation of Islamic law, claims that community members are helping to “fish out” suspects (Associated Press, 2014). He said “we are on the hunt for others” (Associated Press, 2014). Before the passing of the bill, Shariah law has been enacted to persecute individuals who are of the Islamic faith. However, there were no reports of homosexual activity tried under Shariah law until the passing of the bill into Nigeria’s constitution.

Religion plays a major role in the development of social policy deciding policies in many African states. Although most states are secular, the governing bodies are influenced by religious teachings. Thus, legislative processes contain religious tenets. The following section discusses how anti-colonial movements and the contemporary movements towards “democratic” governance have come to mirror colonizing project.

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⁴⁷Holy war, this is an attempt to convert non-believers or infidels, sometimes through violent means - See Epprecht, M. (2009). Sexuality, Africa, History. *The American Historical Review*, 114 (5), p. 1261; also, Brenner, L. (2000). Histories of Religion in Africa. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 30 (2), p. 143.

2.4 Anti-colonial Movements and the African Masculine Identity Crisis

Christianity, Raymond Hopkins (1966) reveals, helped Africans to “adapt to the new order” (p. 559). That is, according to him, Christianity awakened the national consciousness of the African because the education and skills acquired after conversion encouraged Africans to demand and expect “dignity, equality, and independence” (Hopkins, 1966, p. 562). This assumed that without Christianity, Africans by default were stupid. That Africans could not achieve consciousness without the aid of Europeans in the form of their religion. However, religion not only provided the skills for anti-colonial movements, but also maintained European cultural hegemony on the continent. Although one would like to believe that the paradigm shift from colonial constructions of African sexuality to anti-colonial re-modification of African sexuality would strengthen African identity, unfortunately that has not been the case. Ndjio (2012), Epprecht (1998, 2009), Fanon (2008), and Oloruntoba-Oju (2011) argue that anti-colonial movements were influenced by colonial discursive practices. This led to a system where African elites replaced European colonial masters. There are similarities between colonization and anti-colonial movements.

Anti-colonial movements carried sexual signifiers that mimicked the colonial project. The beginning of newly independent states developed an authoritarian heterosexist ideology, which created an African male subject to challenge colonial discourses of African masculinity. This new African male subject became an idealized African male that embodied characteristics of aggression, manliness, and control. The hyper-masculinity of African men in national discourses borrowed from colonial masculinity where “the powerful, manly, and virile Englishman” was juxtaposed to “the effeminate, impotent, unmanly” African (Chari, 2001, p. 282). To distance African masculinity from the colonial discourse of African effeminacy, anti-colonial movements used similar tropes by using the male body as a metaphorical representation

of the nation-state. A male subject was constructed in contrast to the colonial African male, which Ndjio (2012) refers to as the “Muntu.” The “Muntu” subject ⁴⁸ is described as the “metaphysics of the African self, and more specifically the natives’ specific way of being and existing” (Ndjio, 2009, p. 618). Ndjio (2012) citing the Cameroonian philosopher Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga defines the Muntu as “a man in his African condition, who has to assert himself by overcoming what contests his humanity and puts it in danger” (p. 618). Expanding his analysis of the Muntu subject, Eboussi-Boulaga explains that the African male suffers identity crisis because of the effect of colonialism and post-colonial nativism. In order to recover his selfhood, the Muntu has to fight against colonial and anticolonial narratives. This process of recovery is what Fanon (2004) classifies as the decolonisation. He states, “decolonisation is always a violent event” (p. 1). It is through this violence that the Muntu can win against the narratives that dehumanizes and de-agentializes his subjectivity.

The change in economies in many African states eroded the economic power of some African men. Thus, the discontinuities between cultural expectation of masculinity and economic stability become apparent. Women have become financially independent and in many scenarios, have become breadwinners in their households. This has pushed for a desperate need to strengthen African masculinity. Homosexuality, therefore, becomes a threat of feminization that will “worsen” the state of African masculinity. This has prompted African leaders to curb the “spread” of homosexuality by developing and legislating policies that criminalizes it to expunge it from the national discourse. From the political offices to the least influential of men, government officials have sought to eradicate homosexuality.

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⁴⁸ In his work, Ndjio explains that his use of the term is not to reduce the ontology of Africans to “the sole expression of libido, sexual desires, and use of pleasure.” See Ndjio, B. (2012). Post-colonial Histories of Sexuality: The Political Invention of a Libidinal African Straight. *Africa*, 82(4), p. 619.

African leaders, and others who share similar homophobic sentiments, state that homosexuality is a Western invention used to corrupt Africans and as such, they argue that it should be stopped. The danger of mimicry is evident in this approach; it shows the legacy of colonization. Anti-colonial movements have tried to destroy the colonized mind of the African by attempting to reverse apparent (but less obvious) damaging effects of colonization. However, using similar tools to do so, these movements have further naturalized the colonial legacy and stripped Africans from their subjectivity and agency (Ndjio, 2012). The homophobic climate in many African countries is not limited to residents there, but has extended to African diaspora communities across the Atlantic.

2.5 An Imagined Community of Queer African Men

The concept of diaspora has been and still is contested (Brubaker, 2005). Several schools of thought have argued about what constitutes a “diaspora,” how and what identities are forged to create a “diaspora,” and its relationship with “trans-nationalism, transnational communities, migration, and trans-localism” (Adamson, 2008, p. 2). Since the proliferation of the term, many scholars argue that diaspora has lost its core definition. Rogers Brubaker (2005) analyzes the dispersion of the term in “semantic, conceptual, and disciplinary space” (p. 1) and attempts to de-substantiate the term by “treating it as a category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group” (p. 13). Fiona Adamson (2008) argues that the politics of diaspora is a part of trans-nationalism, which is focused on the “reification and reproduction” (p. 2) of an imagined community. Benedict Anderson (1983) coined the term *imagined communities* to

define and conceptualize the notion of nationhood and nationality.⁴⁹ He argues that imagined communities reflect, to an extent, an oxymoronic representation of belonging, where one desires to be a part of or have an imagined affinity for a group of people - based on a shared history, religion, ethnicity, or language - they have never met or will never meet. Diaspora as a term began to be associated with individuals who had suffered from a traumatic event that resulted in their banishment (for example, German Jews in the 1930s) or individuals who were forcefully removed from their homes (for example, West Africans who were forced and sold into slavery and transported to work on plantations across the Atlantic). In the process of resettling, a collective identity began to emerge to bridge the past, i.e. their homeland, and the future, their new home. Presently, diaspora has come to define “deterritorialized or transnational” (Adamson, 2008, p. 7) populations. This new definition has widened to encompass what Adamson refers to as “non-national forms of transnational imagined communities” (Adamson, 2008, p. 7) that includes other populations such as queer diaspora.

Queer diaspora challenges the ideology of nationalism and deconstructs normative gender identity and sexuality. Paul Gilroy (2000) writes that diaspora problematizes “the spatialization of identity and [interrupts] the ontologization of place [while] ‘queer’ problematizes heteronormative discourses and denaturalizes gendered nationalisms” (2000, p. 122). Correspondingly, David Eng (2003), in “Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas,” discusses the complexities of “belonging” and of identity, and argues that “queer diaspora emerges as a concept providing new methods of contesting the traditional family and kinship structures – of reorganizing national and transnational communities based not on origin, filiation, and genetics, but on destination, affiliation, and the assumption of a common set of social

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⁴⁹ For more information about this term, see Anderson, B.R. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

practices and political commitments” (p. 4). Gopinath (2005) argues that queer diaspora confronts and challenges the hierarchal construction of nation and diaspora, where nation is considered superior to diaspora. Diaspora in relation to nation, she contends, is perceived as a replica, a copy, of the nation. Thus, queer diaspora interrogates this hierarchy, and Black queer diaspora in particular deconstructs the heteronormative constructions and racialized assumptions of nationhood. In diaspora, queer African men are faced with a multitude of identities that they have to navigate through and negotiate with. Residing in a country where the majority of the population is white and where whiteness is the norm poses series of problems for individuals who fall outside this norm. Not only do queer African men have to exist within a non-heteronormative context, they have to deal with issues of race and of class. Studies on the experiences of queer African men in diaspora have been sparse. The first of its kind to be published focused on the experiences of black African men in England. In “‘Elvis Died and I was Born’: Black African Men Negotiating Same-sex Desire in London,” Doyal et al (2008), examines the sexual development of black African men in their country of origin and explores the transformation and negotiation of these sexual practices in England. Their study developed a new way of “seeing” African sexuality, and to some degree African masculinity. The experiences of queer African men, as demonstrated in their study, attempt to provide a different discourse about African sexuality.

African sexuality (and African masculinity and femininity) was constructed in relation to European sexuality. It has been demonized and portrayed as perverse and animalistic. On the other hand, homosexuality has been pathologized and treated as a degenerative condition. Thus, queer identities and black identities are interrelated insofar as these identities operate on the margins and have emerged to challenge white heteronormative identities. Black queer diaspora

studies, then, are important in deconstructing white hegemony. In addition, it provides a critical lens through which the impact of Western hegemony on queer African in diaspora is examined.

2.6 Conclusion

The nature of contemporary African sexual discourse has been highly influenced by colonial sexual discourse. In colonial discourse, Africans and their sexuality carried tropes of excess, perversity, and deviancy. As a result, misrepresentations of African sexual identities were recorded in ethnographic data and travelers' accounts. Colonization processes re-modified sexual identities on the continent, which served to maintain and sustain colonial states. By transposing African sexuality onto European conceptualizations of sexuality, colonial narratives erased evidence of same-sex relations on the continent. Also, the proselytization of Africans spread rapidly to ensure that Africans embodied Euro-centric mores and procreated to further the colonial enterprise. Even though the expectation for men to bear multiple children existed before Christian missionaries arrived, it was further institutionalized through the mantra, "increase and multiply." So that if a man cannot have children then his manhood is questioned. Male virility and female chastity become the emblems in which a singular sexuality is established. Thus, the advent of colonialism homogenized African cultural identities; and the subsequent coloniality⁵⁰ of the African, subjugated their identities to European standards.

To deconstruct this coloniality of the African, anti-colonial movements attempted to distance themselves from the colonial construction of African masculinity in order to determine political and cultural superiority. In the process an idealized African male subject was created.

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⁵⁰ Building from Quijano's (1991, 1998) "colonial matrix of power," Ramon Grosfoguel (2010) describes coloniality as the "cultural, political, sexual, spiritual, epistemic and economic oppression of subordinate racialized/ethnic groups by dominant racialized/ethnic groups" (p. 71).

However, by using similar colonial tropes, they ironically and sadly reinforced the same system that they tried to dismantle. Audre Lorde's (2007) critical essay, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's house,"⁵¹ is an apt title to explain the inability of anti-colonial efforts to challenge the colonial narratives of Africans. In lending their voices, I posit that the diaspora community of queer African men can deconstruct the institutionalization of heteronormativity in Africa and outside of the continent. The following section explores this hypothesis by examining the responses provided by queer African men in Canada.

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⁵¹ For more information, read: Lorde, A. (2007). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley: Crossing Press.

Chapter Two: Living in Canada

This chapter continues to deconstruct the configuration of the libidinal African straight male subject to examine how the construction of this subject affects individuals who identify as gay, bisexual, or queer. In this section, I consider factors such as religion and culture in the identity formation of the men. Also, I explore how the men are able to exist and function in multiple spaces where they are confronted with racism and heterosexism. Furthermore, taking into consideration the concept of home, I analyze how the participants create homes outside of cultural spaces. In addition, transnationalism is utilized to analyze how the men in these homes reproduce new identities. Alan Sinfield (1996) explains the concept of “home” in the following paragraph:

Indeed, while ethnicity is transmitted usually through family and lineage, most of us are born and/or socialized into (presumably) heterosexual families. We have to move away from them, at least to some degree; and into, if we are lucky, the culture of a minority community. ‘Home is the place you get to, not the place you came from’, it says at the end of Paul Moneete’s novel, *Half-way Home*. In fact, for lesbians and gay men the diasporic sense of separation and loss, so far from affording a principle of coherence for our subcultures, may actually attach to aspects of the (heterosexual) culture of our childhood, where we are no longer ‘at home’. Instead of dispersing, we assemble. (p. 280)

In this excerpt, Sinfield (1996) likens the journey away from one’s original homeland to “coming out” for most queer individuals. The heterosexual family, like the original homeland, is positioned as the source of trauma and discomfort. So that a removal from one’s “home” is indeed an arrival into one’s true self, a new “home” or as Sinfield (2000) writes, an opportunity to “assemble” (p. 103). Anne-Marie Fortier (2002) analyzes that the home is not an origin, but a destination, where there is no return, only arrival.

Queer African men who have migrated from their homelands to Canada experience “coming out” differently from queer Canadian men. Queer theorists adopt the diaspora concept to explain the development and emergence of queer diaspora communities. They explore the relationship between diaspora and queerness to describe the hybrid identities that disrupt the stability of normalized identities. Queer diaspora explains two concepts of home: the sense of community and belonging queer men experience away from their heterosexual home and, in this case, the sense of community migrant queer men experience away from their original homeland. Fortier (2002) argues that reducing diaspora to forced dispersal assumes that the “original” home plays a more important role in the formation of new identities. That is, the emphasis on the homeland limits myriad of identities that emerge from the diaspora. Queer diasporic identities, therefore, exist in a hybrid space where racialized individuals not only have to contend with their ethnic identities but also with their sexual identities in multi-contested spaces. Bhabha (1994) writes:

Hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom [...] The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of meaning and representation (p. 137).

The instability of hybrid identities inherent in queer diaspora, Bhabha (1994) argues, creates the possibility for change in the manner in which it challenges and deconstructs existing identities and reconstructs new identities. For queer African men in Canada, their hybrid identity will not only challenge homophobic discourses in their home country but also challenge racial discourses within queer narratives in their host country.⁵² Their experiences, I believe, would improve

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⁵² I am arguing that the queer or non-heterosexual identity that the men identify with challenge the claim that homosexuality is un-African. The idea that homosexuality is un-African has fostered anti-gay laws and policies in

scholarly works which may impact national discourses. The intersecting oppressions they encounter as both black and queer would provide a better understanding of other spaces where multiple forms of oppression come together. Gopinath (1996) also contends that queer diasporas simultaneously challenge the notions of heterosexuality and nationhood “while exploding the binary opposition between national and diaspora, heterosexuality, original, and copy” (p. 11). At the same time, she warns of the dangers that might materialize in contextualizing queer sexuality diasporically. The danger, which will be discussed later in this chapter results from homogenizing identities within queer diasporic spaces while ignoring other marginalized identities that exist and function within these spaces.

Queer individuals are bound together by their sexuality. Their common struggle against the institution of compulsory heterosexuality provides a sense of security and community in which queer individuals can function effectively and productively. Sinfield (1996), among other scholars, consider the assemblage of queer individuals in many parts of the world an ethnic group or a minority community. In order to better understand and explain this ethnic group, the ethnicity model is used. This model, Sinfield (1996) explains, emerged in a period “when ethnicity [...] has offered the dominant paradigm for political advancement” (p. 271) and “aspires to two main spheres of political effectivity. One is a claim for space within which the minority may legitimately express itself [and the] second is through the organs of the state” (p. 275). This ethnicity model, Sinfield posits, provides queer bodies the opportunity to demand their political civil rights in their country. She compares the potentiality of an ethnicity model for lesbians and gays to the strides made as a result of the Black Civil Rights movement. But ethnicity and race, some scholars show, are distinct concepts. Even though ethnicity has encouraged “discourses of

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numerous African countries. However, their existence as men who have sex with men or identify as gay, bisexual, or queer, confronts this idea of the heterosexualized African male subject.

rights and incorporation” into larger social and political discourse, Shane Phelan (1993) argues that “race in the United States has been the mark of the un-assimilable, the “truly different” (Sinfield, 2000, p. 277). For example, newly arrived European migrants assimilate better than racialized bodies, such as African-Americans, who are systematically and structurally constructed as “other”. In queer diaspora, therefore, there are hierarchies based on race, ethnicity, religion, class, and gender. Brah (2005) refers to this as relational positioning, where diasporic individuals, especially racialized immigrants, are pitted against each other –racially, educationally, and economically. Who is the ideal immigrant? How does he/she contribute to the betterment of Canadian society? It is on these bases that immigrants are granted residency. In queer diasporas individuals are also relationally positioned. Who is a better queer black? How does he/she contribute to the political autonomy of queers in general? Transnationalism, in this chapter, describes and explores how the participants negotiate their racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identities in diaspora. I examine how these identities are negotiated in multi-spatial contexts. Also, it incorporates Foucault’s (1988) theory of technology of the self to explore how the participants marry and compartmentalize their multiple identities. It contends that their ability to negotiate is both oppressive and productive.

3.1 Migrating to Canada

Most of the participants felt that their countries did not provide them the opportunity to live their lives according to the way they wished or desired. For most of the participants, they became comfortable with their sexuality in Canada. Migrating to Canada for most of the participants allowed the participants to come out of the closet. The journey of moving away from their homeland to Canada also characterizes their journey of coming out from the closet and living as a gay, a bisexual, or a queer man. For example, Femi, who has been in Canada for four months at the time of this interview, migrated to Canada on a study visa to seek asylum because of his sexual orientation. At the age of twenty-six, he had his first sexual encounter with a man. Since then, he did not feel it was safe in Nigeria to continue any same-sex relationship. Prior to his first sexual experience, Femi was able to police his behaviors in order to conform to cultural expectations of manhood. He had numerous affairs with women, which enabled him to function in the homophobic environment in Nigeria. However, he could not subject himself to the available discourses of masculinity. His sexual relationship with his lover⁵³ prompted him to question his sexuality and his identity as a Yoruba man within this sexual identity. It is from this questioning that Femi realized that he could not reside in Nigeria. When he arrived in Canada, he stayed with his aunt, a Canadian citizen. Femi assumed that his aunt's status in Canada meant that she is "liberal," or "open-minded." Based on this assumption, he disclosed his sexuality to his aunt. Before his disclosure, his family members in Nigeria did not know of his sexuality. His aunt did not accept his sexuality, condemned it as a "Canadian thing," and made it uncomfortable for him to live with her. As a result, he left her house. Homeless, Femi visited the LGBTQ center in Toronto to seek help. He was offered accommodation and counseling at the

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⁵³ I do not know if Femi is still in a relationship with the man he had his first sexual intercourse. He refused to discuss the nature of the relationship with me.

centre. He has been there waiting to hear his appeal. While there, Femi met with other queer Nigerians, an access he was not accustomed to in Nigeria.

Kola left Nigeria for Canada on vacation. However, he found out that his former boyfriend was caught with his pants down with another man at a hotel. His arrest and torture forced him to incriminate Kola, which meant that he could not return to Nigeria. Presently, there is a warrant of his arrest has been issued making it unsafe for him to return. Toyin left Nigeria to seek asylum in Canada. He has lived in Canada for six months. During the time of the interview, Toyin was scheduled to hear his appeal about his stay in Canada. When rumors about his conversion to Christianity from Islam and the nature of his sexuality began to surface and spread, Toyin did not feel safe in his village. The aftermath, the death of his parents, forced him to escape from his village. He fled to Ghana and then to the United States of America to seek refuge.

While in the US, Toyin was detained for two years because he did not have the proper documentation to live in the country. After his detainment, his asylum claim was denied. He had seventy-two hours to voluntarily return to Nigeria or face deportation. He left willingly to Nigeria despite the danger that awaited him there. In Nigeria, he was arrested for homosexual activity. When he was released on bail, Toyin escaped Nigeria to Canada to seek asylum. Since the passing of the bill in Nigeria, there has been an increase in surveillance for homosexual activity. In Kola's case, his lover had checked into a hotel with a man, which raised suspicions about their stay among the hotel staff. Their suspicions were confirmed when they called security and walked in on them engaging in sexual intercourse. If caught, most men and women face humiliation. In one particular case, on the 14th of January, 2013, three men were stripped naked, beaten, and paraded around the village while passersby watched (Ibeh, 2013). Others have been

killed and even sexually molested. Upon his arrest, he was tortured by the police to reveal the identities of his sex partners. He confessed that he had been involved with Kola and other men. His incrimination meant that Kola could not return to Nigeria. Police visited his home and his office to arrest him but he was in Canada. A warrant for his arrest has been issued making it unsafe for him to return. His family members were not pleased with him and felt that he had dishonoured the family name. Kola recounts how he felt about this period in his life:

I felt betrayed because why would he mention my name. If I was in that situation, I won't have mentioned his name. My brother was the one who explained it to me while my mother was crying on the phone. He asked me why I stopped dating girls. That they didn't know I was like this. I lied to my brother that I don't know about it. I felt like my world has come to an end. I called my colleague [after talking to my brother] and he told me that some people came by the office to ask of me. And that he told them that I had gone on vacation. He told me that he heard I was gay, I denied it, telling him that I am not, [and] that the guy is lying.

Even though he was provided with an opportunity to open up about his sexuality to his family, Kola continues to deny his sexuality to his family and friends and does not believe that he would come out to his family. At the time of the interview, Kola claims that he is trying to convince his family that he is not bisexual despite the nature of his refugee claim in Canada. Kola continues to compartmentalize his identities so that he is able to function in different cultural spaces. Even though he is seeking asylum in Canada, he believes that he also occupies a space in Nigeria. It is because of this occupation that Kola believes that he has to maintain a heterosexual identity there. He considers his home, Nigeria, an oppressive space. Oppressive, in the sense, that if he comes out as bisexual, he may be rejected and ostracized. Also, if his application for asylum is rejected, he will have to face the possibility of imprisonment. Thus, the projection of a

heterosexual image is productive for Kola. He is able to navigate his sexuality as a bisexual man in Canada as well as a straight man in Nigeria.

Peter, a Burundi, is also seeking asylum. His reason differs from theirs. Peter did not migrate to Canada with the intention of becoming a refugee. He was in Dubai when he married a Burundi woman, a Canadian refugee. He narrates how he arrived in Canada:

I lost my job [in Dubai] so [my wife] had to sponsor me to come here. When I came, the first month it worked. But the second month, it did not work. Since I had no job then she came to realize that this guy definitely he is gay. She will abuse me verbally. She got fed up when I was waiting for my papers to come through. I think she was pretending to like me. If you love somebody, you love them through thickness and you know. So the moment my money got finished [she changed]. Maybe because sexually as well. But for me it was like a relief. She will tell people, her friends, that I am useless in bed. She called immigration and withdrew her sponsorship. She told them I am gay. But I went there to tell them that she knew everything. I came in February [this year], we got separated in July. Divorce will come after one year. So now I am trying to claim asylum. I cannot travel back to Burundi, [since] she has already spread rumors that I'm gay. Back home, her brother works in National Security, maybe they will harm me. Its criminal thing being gay in Burundi. I can serve five years in jail.

The experiences of Femi, Kola, Toyin, and Peter show that sexual orientation is an important human rights issue. The number of deaths in many African countries because of homosexuality has increased in the past decade. Thus, migrating to Canada to seek asylum is necessary if these men are to live a normal life. However, for other participants, migrating to Canada was not necessarily to escape persecution, but to live freely without condemnation. For example, William has lived outside of Burundi for most of his life – he was born in Belgium and grew up in other countries – but coming to Canada alone as an adult provided him with the courage to come out of

the closet to his family. In Fortier's (2002) "Making Home," she explains that "coming out" is associated with "moving out" for many self-identified gay men. So that the process of migrating for many self-identified queer migrant men is towards a "true" homosexual self. Also, for David, "it's ok to be gay," in Canada. He describes how Canada has been a safe haven for him. Some of the reasons he provided were that there are entertainment areas and social services specifically designed to accommodate queer individuals. David explains that the situation is different in Burundi. In Burundi, David says, "the men who act straight are married. So they can hide and fuck easily because they do not really talk about sexuality. You just do it." He attributes this lack of openness to the criminalization of homosexuality in the country two years ago.

However, any open discussion about sexuality in most African communities is considered a taboo. Also, before the criminalization of homosexuality in his country, men who have same sex desires practiced their sexuality discreetly. Cultural codes may have prevented them from "coming out." Living amongst men who share similar struggles provides a sense of relief for the men. Simon Watney (1995) likens this sense of relief to the safety a gay man or a lesbian feels when he or she is in a gay or dyke bar in a strange city in a foreign country and how this relief is inexperienced by many heterosexuals. Outside of his sexuality, David's outlook on life, as a result of residing in Canada, has changed to an extent that it is difficult for him to relate to his peers in Burundi:

When I go back sometimes you say something it's taken badly like [David makes a facial expression] why are you talking all this or they look at you in a funny way or someone brings you like a huge drama problem to you it's like [David makes a facial expression] 'What, really?' 'Why do you react like that?'

Moreover, William expresses that he feels he can present himself either through speech or clothing without having to self-censor. However, Hamza refuses to come out. As a devout Muslim, he does not drink and so, going to gay bars or pubs is not an option for him. He prefers the comfort of websites that cater to gay men. The idea of “home” or “space” is contested because a sense of belonging differs for the participants. While going to gay bars or bathhouses enables most of the participants to be their true sexual selves, others like Hamza, does not feel at “home” in these spaces.

As abled bodies, most of the participants find Canada an ideal place to express themselves sexually. For Kopano, who suffers from spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a degenerative condition, Canada provides a means to survive and live with dignity compared to his former country of residence, South Africa. In South Africa, resources and services for people with disabilities (PWD) are limited. He began school at the age of seven only after his mother fought hard for the school system to accept and accommodate him. He explains that:

A lack of willingness to want to reconfigure the system or the environment is emblematic of attitude. [Discrimination] may not be overt but justified because of the environment.

As a result of his condition, he began to advocate on behalf of PWD. Existing and “socializing into a world of able bodiedness,” Kopano reveals, has had its challenges. One of these challenges includes rejecting an Ivy League education in the United States of America because the university did not have the necessary services that would enable him to function not only as a student, but also as a human being. The Canadian university he currently attends is accessible for PWD and thereby, ideal for him. Furthermore, it is in this institution that Kopano developed friendships with individuals who made him comfortable with his sexuality. He expresses that the

experience of queerness he had with his friends encouraged him to come out to them. He believes that this experience is important to him and, because of this he chooses not to come out to his mother. He explains that the validation and the support he receives from his friends differ from his mother's because his mother is not queer. So he cannot share his queer experience with her:

I don't share queerness with my mom. I share another relationship with my mom. Therefore, coming out to my mom is very different than a friend of mine who just so happens to be queer.

Also, he believes that coming out to her would reduce his sexual identity to terms such as gay or homosexual so that his mother can better understand him. He feels that if he comes out as queer to his mother without her having experienced queerness, it would trivialize that part of his identity:

When I come out, I won't be coming out as queer because that terminology in and of itself is contested unless understood. I'll have to simplify and reduce my sexuality in terms like gay or homosexual to make my mother understand that it is supposedly same-sex attraction. But queer as this cultural nuanced socio-political identity does not make sense if I'm not able to employ heteronormative tools like gay or homosexual, therein, trivializing and invalidating my real identity which is neither homosexual nor gay, but queer. Trying to convey that message is lost in translation in my feeling compelled to come out every time.

Additionally, Kopano refuses to come out because he believes he is making a political stance and in some way, problematizing the concept of the closet. The position that Kopano has taken is influenced by his interactions with queer individuals in Canada. Thus, migrating to Canada helped him through his sexual identity formation. It is in Canada that he began to understand the nuances of queerness and its intersections with his racial identity and disability. As a disabled man, Kopano believes that in some way he is free from compartmentalizing his identity. His disability already punctuates his difference. Thus, he is not subjected to the measures other queer

African men have to take in order to conform to cultural standards of masculinity. So he is somewhat liberated from employing practices that police his gender and sexual identities.

3.2 Assimilation or Acculturation or Both

Assimilation or acculturation into the society is important for newly arrived migrants to be successful Canadian citizens. Liliane Sayegh and Jean-Claude Lasry (1993) explain that “the psychosocial changes undergone by immigrants, who move from one country of residence to another, have been subsumed under the terms of assimilation or acculturation” (p. 98). They write that these terms are used interchangeably, but their outcomes are different. They describe assimilation as the psychosocial changes that immigrants experience in the third phase of their journey into their host countries which include “the learning of new roles, the transformation of primary group values and the extension of participation, beyond the primary group, in the main spheres of the social system” (Eisenstadt, 1954, p. 98).⁵⁴ Furthermore, they posit that assimilation “always implies a unidirectional process of change, since immigrants are described as being ‘absorbed’ by the host society” (p. 98). Acculturation is used to describe the process in which two different cultural groups connect. Acculturation, then, is considered a bidirectional process where both groups change when they come into contact. Immigrants then simultaneously assimilate and acculturate into their host society.

The processes of assimilation and acculturation, Peter Li (2003) argues, pose a problem for immigrants. He posits that immigrants are more likely to assimilate than they are able to acculturate into Canadian society. In an attempt to deconstruct the discourse of integration in policy statements, migrant debates, and academic writings, Li (2003) shows that this discourse

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⁵⁴ (As cited in Sayegli and Lasey, 1993, p. 98).

promotes a conformity model in evaluating immigrants' level of adaptability. Also, it promotes a monolithic cultural framework where tolerance for Canadian culture is encouraged whereas, cultural difference is considered anti-integration. A number of immigrants are faced with challenges which include language, mannerisms, and oftentimes, cultural clashes (Li, 2003). As an immigrant, I had to deal with Canadian cultural nuances and values and had to learn to adjust. Therefore, I can understand the difficulties an individual whose culture is significantly different from Canadian culture would face. Even though Canada provides a safe space for the men to live their lives how they see fit, there are spaces within Canada where the men feel they have to conform or fear ostracism. These spaces involve religious, diasporic, and Canada society at large. Within these spaces, the men are subjected to compartmentalizing their identities to assimilate as straight man or as a "good" black man.

3.2. a. Religious Beliefs and Sexual Orientation: A Conflict of Interest

For many of the participants, religion is an important factor for self-actualization and self-identification. Melissa M. Wilcox's (2003) book, *Coming Out in Christianity: Religion, Identity, and Community*, examines the conflict between homosexuality and religion, particularly Christian religion. It explores lived experiences of LGBT members, current or former, of the Metropolitan Community Church that are conflicted about their religious and sexual identities. In this book, Wilcox discusses the religious nuances that affect homosexual identity and the prevailing discourses in Christianity that continue to force individuals to choose between their religious and sexual identities. Also, Amy Adamczyk and Cassidy Pitt (2009) show how religion functions to shape attitudes about homosexuality in developed and developing countries. Using a hierarchical linear model and data from the fourth wave of the World Value Survey, they show

that religion determines the level of tolerance towards homosexuality. According to their findings, Adamczyk and Pitt (2009) argue that when nations' value orientations shift from survival to self-expression, then the more accepting of non-normative identities they will be. Economic uncertainty and political instability, Adamczyk and Pitt (2009) contend, may influence cultural and religious attitudes about sexuality. In addition, their study reveals that different religious affiliations have varying degrees of acceptability of homosexuality. According to them, Catholics appear more tolerant than Muslims, but less tolerant when compared to liberal Protestants.

In comparison to their home countries, the participants claim that Canada provides a space for them to express themselves both religiously and sexually. They identify either as Christian, Muslim, or agnostic. Out of the five participants who identify as Christians, two are Catholics and the other three are Pentecostals. Two identify as agnostics and three as Muslims. For most of the participants, indoctrination and socialization into their faith began at an early age. They did not have a choice in their religion. Following the moral conflict some of the participants felt about their sexuality, they decided to discontinue membership to an institution that condemned their sexuality. Some participants who could not reconcile the conflicts between their faith and sexuality abandoned their beliefs altogether. Other participants have been able to resolve the conflicts by accepting that they, like heterosexuals, were created in the image of God. Most of the participants adopt spirituality to deal with the conflicts. However, two participants are still confused on how to go about marrying their sexuality and religious identities.

William, who identifies as an agnostic in spite of (or perhaps because of) his education at a Catholic secondary institution, does not have a religious identity. He is more inclined not to believe in the institution of organized religion than he is not to believe in God. Organized

religion, for him, is an oppressive system made by man. William explains that he has witnessed the hierarchy in organized religions where power is dispersed from the top down. That is, from the authority of the clergy to the obedience of the congregation. According to him, this reflects a dictatorial regime, or more likely a colonial regime, that insists on the subjugation of the masses. Coupled with this organization of most religious institutions, William is appalled by the contradictory messages of sermons about homosexuality. He explains:

For me, it's hard to subscribe to something that attacks a part of who I am. If I listen to what they say about preaching acceptance, preaching the love of God, if I listen to that then I look at what else they say, then I see a disconnect and it makes no sense to me, I check out. God, on the other hand, if you had asked me five years, I would have told you I am atheist completely and then now I feel like I am more agnostic because in moments of desperation, I catch myself thinking [and hoping] that there is something out there.

Outside of the nature of organized religions and the hypocrisy in their sermons, William's lack of interest in partaking in any religious denomination is also influenced by his parents' beliefs or lack thereof. According to him, "my parents weren't very practicing. My mom used to be Catholic, but my dad never went to church when we were growing up." Since his parents are not practicing, William does not have the guilt and pressure that accompanies not being a part of any denomination. Adoption of a religious identity, much like cultural identity, is carried down from one generation to the next.

Similarly, Kopano does not believe in any religious institutions. In fact, unlike William who is trying to figure out his religious identity, Kopano clearly identifies as "spiritual" than religious because of his belief in "the magnificence of the universe." He further expands on this position:

I believe that there is a divine energy. I believe that there are higher powers. I believe that I'm guided by forces whether that be peace, whether that be love, whether that be grace. I believe in cosmic energies. But I don't believe in religion as a political institution. I think religion is a political ideology used to control people. I think there is a God, but the manifestation of God, I don't subscribe to it as God being male or white. I feel like that the construct of God via religious institutions, I think it's problematic. And I don't subscribe. If that's what you mean by God and religion, then no.

Kopano and William, like many LGBT Christians, have adopted spirituality to characterize their relationship with God, or in some cases, a supreme being. Wilcox (2003) explains that spirituality echoes the shift to individualism in U.S religious cultures. According to her, spirituality is “used by people today to describe beliefs, individual practices, heartfelt connections, religious experiences, and more” (p. 61). Moreover, Kopano's beliefs are influenced by his family dynamics. Growing up in a single parent household where religious foundations were not laid, Kopano was not encouraged to adhere to any religious rules. Kopano's socialization process differed significantly from the general socializations other children on the continent undergo. Not only was he socialized in a single parent home where his mother was the head, his family moved from one place to another. This exposed his family and him to different cultures. He expands on this:

The whole family setup was alternative. We did not have a father in the family that makes it alternative. There are so many things that are so non-conventional about my family that I think, it was not a surprise that our conception of God and spirituality was non-conventional [...] my mom has non-conventional children. I have a disability. My brother has a club foot. The shape of his left foot is different. My mom has two kids with disability and so that already made our family very non-conventional that I think that us not

being religious was just normal for us because everything else was so abnormal by normative standards.

Unlike the clarity displayed by William and Kopano about their faiths and sexuality, David is still confused about resolving his faith and sexual orientation in spite of his residence in Canada. He migrated to Canada at the age of seventeen to join his mother and his extended family members. He reveals his religious experience:

Religion is really bad for us. We have all these barriers. They show you what's right or what's wrong. What's normal, what's not. But once you are outside between [sic] those lines, you become a weird [sic], you become outcast.

Even though he feels that religion is “bad for us,” where “us” refers to individuals like him, who are gay, he feels compelled to attend masses. David believes in God but he is not entirely committed and feels confused about his affiliation with his Catholic faith:

I was brought up Catholic, I was baptized and everything and I still go to church. I believe in God but I don't believe in religions. It's weird because I do go to church. I feel better when I go. I practice because for me, I feel like I go to every church. I go to Protestant, Mosque, as long as it's a temple.

He expresses that one of the reasons he is not entirely loyal to Catholicism is because of the condemnation of his sexual identity in his Catholic faith. But other religious denominations he worships also condemn homosexuality. David, like most LGBT Christians, seeks spiritual acceptance and approval. When they do not receive this, they constantly search until the point where they give up entirely and resolve to develop a personal relationship with God. David makes an important point when he says that, “if I don't go to church, I feel guilt, but then if I go

to church, I feel guilty because I am gay. It's really confusing. I am still questioning myself right now. Like what's right for me, what's wrong for me." This is what I refer to as spiritual purgatory, a limbo, in which some LGBT Christians, especially Catholics are unsure whether to continue in their faith or reject it altogether. In order to resolve this conflict, David accepts that he is created this way:

I put myself that I didn't do anything to be gay. I didn't choose it. So be it. It's in the hands of God. My dream [is] to have faith and sexuality and live. [Because] how do you go into a church and they are against how you are [...] it's confusing. So many churches if you go to Burundi, they are the ones who told government to implement something. Because our president is really Christian. Its religion which makes it difficult for people.

To understand David's religious stance, I ask him to explain his childhood. Not only were his parents Catholic, the process of David's indoctrination into Catholicism also took place in secondary school. He attended a European Catholic school in Uganda. However, this educational institution did not only instill Catholic beliefs and values, but served as a way to acculturate him and other students into Europeans. David gives me an example of an encounter with his principal:

It was so funny. We were in international school, which was like the British and we were not allowed to speak out African languages, only English and French. We were punished if we speak any local language. But then most of the kids were from Uganda. So I had to pick it up quickly and so when I did, one time we got caught speaking it and then our head master, we were so afraid of him, he was going to punish us and then, he was like "What's wrong" and they like "there were like speaking Luganda" and he looked at me "David, do you speak the language" I was like "Yes" and then he said, "can you speak" and I spoke. And he was like "Wow! I'm impressed and just for that I'm not punishing you guys". He has been there many years, Father Grimes. In school

they only tell you how to reproduce. We are kind of privilege...you wouldn't talk to someone because they are not from your social class. [At the school], we had to wear the same uniform, same shoes, same everything.

David was taught that failure to attend mass is considered a sin. This may have been a method to maintain membership in the Catholic Church, where members are forced to abide either by the rules “guided” by God or face the wrath of God. So it is understandable why David is conflicted. On the one hand, he is told that his sexuality has reserved a place in hell for him, and on the other hand, he feels guilty for removing himself from a place that fails to accommodate his difference. Even though, David does not reside in his home country, where homosexuality is publicly condemned, his religious affiliation has some influence in how he perceives his sexuality. Within his faith, David expresses that he is unable to compartmentalize his sexual identity. At the same time, he is constrained by his ability to police himself in his Catholic faith. The guilt he feels represents this conflict.

Peter does not feel that his faith conflicts with his sexuality. Though he does not believe there are any conflicts, he prefers a spiritual identity to a religious identity. His preference for a spiritual identity enables him to exist simultaneously as a Christian and gay man. Additionally he observes that the church has become an institution that does not allow spiritual differences:

[For me] there is no conflict. I have got some friends who want to become priest because they're gay; because they want to find an excuse. I have one friend of mine, a priest, he is a good priest. Has always been into god, but I could tell he was gay. The way he was talking, I could tell he was gay. Maybe he is in denial, being scared of religion, [but I'm not scared].

Although, Peter claims that he is not scared by religious views about his sexuality, he married a woman to mask his sexuality and to fulfill his cultural expectation as a man. So his friend may have chosen priesthood because he is gay or he chose priesthood in spite of his sexual orientation. Whatever the case may be, Peter and his friend are still adhering to cultural values albeit differently.

Femi, Kola, and Toyin are Christians who identify as Pentecostals. They attend and are members of a non-denominational church in Canada. From Femi's response, he has a different understanding of spirituality. While others describe spirituality as an individual relationship with God, or a supreme being, Femi understands it differently. For him, being spiritual is likened to being "religious crazy." When I ask Femi to expand on his definition, he explains:

Whatever happens to them, they look at it from the spiritual aspect. In Africa, it is like if something good happens to them, they believe that it is God. And if something negative happens to them, they believe it is Satan. That's how I can explain it.

From his definition, one would assume that individuals who identify as spiritual in Nigeria (or in Africa) are confused simple-minded. However, I beg to differ. The mode of religious practices in many African countries is more complex than the dichotomy of good and evil, heaven and hell, or God and Satan. They are imbued with both colonial influence and pre-colonial cultural beliefs. Femi does not feel that there is any conflict between his sexuality and his faith. He acknowledges that people make that claim, but he has chosen not to accept it:

I believe that I am what I am. I was born to be what I am. God created everything. If it is an evil thing I'm doing, God would not have created me. Based on that, I don't believe my sexuality contradicts my religion. The church I was going to in Nigeria,

preached against homosexuality, but here in Canada, they don't. They embrace it here. They see it the way I see it, that it is a normal thing.

However, Femi reveals that his Pentecostal church in Nigeria condemned his sexuality. Also, he claims that when he came out in Canada, his mother condemned his sexuality by claiming that what he was practicing “is evil.” He explains that he tried to make her understand that he made efforts to change his sexuality. Even though, he does not find any conflict between his faith and his sexuality, Femi believed that his sexuality was wrong and had tried to change it. In trying to change, he felt constrained by his inability to conform. Techniques he employed to act straight and repress his same-sex sexual desires began to fail him. It was his decision to migrate to Canada, a place where he expected he would live a normal life. This decision to migrate to Canada encouraged him to accept and dispel any negative comments about his sexuality. The Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto that Femi attends in Toronto caters to queer individuals. It was founded by Troy Perry (Wilcox, 2013). His intent was to create a space for individuals rejected by other churches and society because of their sexual orientation (Wilcox, 2013). This space seeks to spiritually counsel individuals who have been “psychological injured by their religious upbringing” (Wilcox, 2013, p. 45). Even though, Femi’s acceptance of his sexuality as God’s design is courageous, the journey to religious and sexual freedom was not easy for Toyin. His conversion to Christianity aroused contempt for his family in his village in Northern Nigeria. Discontented with Islam, Toyin felt compelled to leave the faith. The beginning of his journey into Christianity also signifies the beginning of his journey to his acceptance of his sexuality. In the beginning, Toyin explains his religious journey:

I believe that God created me this way because He sees what I don't see. He feels what I don't feel. That is why I say that God is real. It's a taboo in Islam to be gay. They're going to stone you to death if you get caught. You don't have a sense of freedom if you're a Muslim. They want you to be some certain things. It's like you are in a circle, you can't come out of it. That's the way I felt when I was in the Muslim religion. I was not given the opportunity to [question]. Who are you to dare question your parents, your Imam?

Like Femi, he attends the Metropolitan Community Church in Toronto and has accepted his new faith as a part of his identity. In this church, Toyin finds solace. He is able to exist and function as a bisexual man without policing himself. For him, "the Metropolitan church has been able to make me feel like I am welcome."

Kola perceives his sexuality differently. He considers his bisexual identity a sin. He states that, "It's a sin. In the bible I tend to believe that there is no measure of sin. Sin is sin, whether you're lying, whether you kill, whether you have premarital sex." He reiterates the most common biblical story against homosexuality to justify his claim. According to Kola, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of an incident of homosexual activity. He goes on to claim that the "same thing is happening now." He explains that "Now everybody is doing the same thing. Like Canada is exposed. You can sleep with a guy. You can sleep with a girl. You are not hiding anything [...] but in Africa, it's not like that." From his response, Kola demonstrates that most Africans have moral "superiority" to most Western countries because they still abide by some Christian values. And yet, fear of persecution because of his sexuality forced him to seek asylum in Canada. However, further along his interview, he changes his tune. He realizes the contradiction in his response. On one hand, he claims that his sexuality is a sin, but then he explains that it is something that one "feels in the heart," that it is "of the mind." To explain his position in relation to his religious and sexual identities, Kola concludes by

explaining that “I still have that cultural thing in me that [considers] it a sin.” It is clear that Kola is still trying to negotiate his sexual identity within religious dogmas he has been socialized into:

It’s a thing of the mind. Being bisexual, you can’t cheat your nature. You’re like that. You can’t just drift away from it. [Me: if you say you can’t cheat your nature then how can it be a sin?] Maybe that is how we were brought up to see it, and I’m seeing it that way.

From his response, Kola feels obligated to conform. He is unable to differentiate the differences between his religion and his culture and so, he marries the ideals of manhood from his Christian religion and Yoruba tradition. Even though he claims that “being bisexual” is “a thing of the mind,” Kola is torn between his “nature” and his religious and cultural identities. In order to suppress this nature, Kola adheres to rules and regulations prescribed by his religion. At the same time, he asserts that “you can’t cheat your nature.” This suggests that his attempts to portray a particular image of his gender and sexual identities are overwhelmed by his sexual urges. The process of marrying religious identity and sexual identity is a psychological one (Wilcox, 2003). A distance from years of exposure to moral condemnation of homosexuality will be an arduous task for Kola and for many self-identified gay, bisexual, and queer men. Kola still considers his sexuality an aberrant behavior that requires self-control and discipline. Kola does not mention any familial influence in his religious identity. However, judging from his response, one can deduce that there has been a cultural influence in how he chooses to identify his religious and sexual identities.

In the process of coming out, Hussein had to contend with the dilemma of his religion. In spite of his residence in Canada, Hussein, a Muslim, explains that the teachings in his religion preached against homosexual behavior. Slowly, he began to realize that his religion had a

negative impact on how he viewed his sexuality. According to him, “if I did stuff with a guy, I was locked out from ever going to heaven. I would be burning in hell forever.” As a result, he is not a practicing Muslim. But he “does not eat pork,” a significant rule in Islam. Even though Hussein refuses to practice Islam because it rejects his sexuality, he still adheres to some Islamic rules.

Yes [I believe in God]. I try to interpret [Islam] my way. But no, not fully. I don't pray. I don't fast. I don't do a lot of big things like I should. But also, I try to live a good life. I don't steal. A lot of my friends don't see how I abstain so long, it's been 4 or 5 years. I made out with guys that I have met. But I do believe that is one part of my religion I'm sticking to. Staying, trying to find a relationship and not just sleep with anyone. I really want to fall for love. I think since God made me, my own way I believe, as long as I am a good person, I should be good in His eyes.

Hussein does not follow Islam because of the conditions imposed on his sexual identity. He claims that the two great sins in Islam are “murder and homosexuality.” But murder, Hussein explains, is easier to discuss than it is to discuss homosexuality in many Muslim households. He believes that Islam heavily frowns upon sex. Hussein assumes that if he does not have casual sex then he will be considered “good” in the eyes of God. In doing so, he hopes that God will overlook his sexuality. Goodness, from his response, is equated to obedience, discipline, and self-control. Based on his interpretation of Islam, Hussein alleges that these qualities are what his religion requires of him. This shows that as much as Hussein tries to deviate from his religion, he still holds on, albeit subconsciously, to rules that are preached within the Islamic faith:

But then I realized that God made us as long as we are not sleeping around, doing all this stupid things but we are following our heart, doing [sex] with people we like maybe trying to have a lasting relationship or even get married, He's going to look at it differently.

Even though Hussein does not read the Qur'an, he is familiar with its tenets. Hussein attended Islamic school at a young age where he learned the rules of Islam. In Islam, Hussein felt that he could not ask questions because the response he received was usually along the lines of "Here's what God wrote, that's the rule, deal with it." He believes that lack of freedom in Islam to question discouraged him from committing to his faith wholeheartedly. Although, he learned more from his peers in high school about his faith, he does not feel that he is welcome. He explains, "I don't feel I can be myself ever. I can't go to a mosque while I am praying and talk to my friend about the night I had before. It's not a place I would feel comfortable, it never has." The mosque for Hussein is an oppressive space. He believes that visiting this space forces him to comply with Islamic expectations of heterosexuality. Also, frequent visitations to the mosque imply that he agrees with the condemnation of his sexuality. Growing up, Hussein had no choice in his religious faith, but he says "Now that we have a choice, we choose not to go." This echoes Toyin's problem with his Islamic faith, which led to his conversion to Christianity. Although, he does not practice Islam, Hussein has decided to practice his own version of the religion. From his response, however, he still adheres to strict Islamic rules about sex.

Similarly, Musa was socialized into Islam. He expresses that he did not have a choice in his religion, "I didn't choose to be Muslim but Islam chose me. I was born [into] Islam, but I haven't prayed." He began to believe that something was wrong with him and that God had made a mistake. After every visit to the mosque, Musa reports that he would fall into depression and question his existence. Years of self-recrimination began to have a toll on him. He began to have suicidal thoughts. He says, "It was very depressing. I would feel really bad every day then it got to some point when I felt I should just end myself. A lot of times I thought about committing

suicide because I was like, this is too much.” Eventually, he got tired of the homophobia in his mosque and the constant condemnation of his sexuality, “I got tired of hearing that. I got tired of hearing that I was the bottom of the barrel, and we are all going to hell.” Because of this, he stopped his visits to the mosque and renounced his faith completely:

I won't ever go to mosque. I will feel like I'm a hypocrite in that environment. I will not go back because I will be pretending, trying to say I'm straight, which I am not. I wouldn't go back there because I would feel one hundred percent horrible and I don't want to feel anything like that, every again.

Musa refuses to police himself in order to practice his religion. In his inability to compartmentalize, Musa was able to gain his freedom. When he decided to remove himself from his faith, he expresses that he felt liberated. Musa, like Hussein and Kopano, has decided to explore the spiritual path. Like Hussein, Musa believes that as long as he is good and “follow some good things about Qur'an like don't lie, don't cheat, all that stuff,” then he will be able to win God's favor. After arriving at the conclusion that his religion did not serve any positive purpose in his life, Musa began to search for people like him. The search for people like him, reassured Musa that his sexuality was not terrible. He discloses this experience:

I wanted to find people like me out there. I looked for gay communities, trying to find out if there is somebody like me. I would do it through the internet. I wouldn't go physically or try to go to gay [center?] because I was still scared. I was still in the closet. So I will go on the internet to try to find out stuff and search and it turns out that I am not the only gay Somalian and I'm not the only gay Muslim, I am not the only gay black guy [laughs]. It was at that time I started to feel a little better about myself. I started to have a little hope in the future, knowing that it is going to be alright, it's going to be better. And once I get out of high school, I am going to meet people like me, which I did. I tell myself every

day, it's going to be better, so don't worry about it. At this moment, just keep it to yourself. Don't be out; be in the closet and when the time comes, you will come.

The move away from his religious community to a community of self-identified gay men parallels Musa's journey to self-acceptance. Once he realized that there were men like him – Somali, Muslim, and gay – he began to feel better about himself. Musa refuses to compartmentalize his religious and sexual identities. He considers his sexual identity an important part of his identity and so chooses not to employ methods to control his sexual desires for the sake of his religion.

Contrary to Hussein's and Musa's relationship with the Islamic faith, Hamza feels that his Islamic faith defines him more than his sexuality. Because of his faith, he feels that acting on his sexual desires will jeopardize his relationship with God. In order to distract him from his sexual desires, Hamza works hard to sustain and maintain his faith by religiously abiding by Islamic rules and expectations. He verbalizes his relationship with Islam:

I like my religion. And my religion accept [sic] homosexuality. But people don't accept homosexuality. People, les prédicateurs, Imam and fidèle don't accept homosexuality. Je ne veux pas dire que L'Islam accepte l'homosexualité. Mais je dis que l'Islam tolère parce qu'Allah m'a créé comme ça [I do not want to say that Islam accepts homosexuality. But I say that Islam tolerates homosexuality because God created me this way]. Quand j'ai quatre ans [When I have four years] when I have seven years, j'ai commencé à comprendre [I began to understand] the social norms, men and women, religion, [that] I am Muslim. He is Jewish, no good. She is Christian, no good. I don't care about all that. This one, people said. But I know Islam, the religion for peace, for love. But Allah makes me that. I don't choose. Islam tolerates because Allah created me like this.

Hamza reveals that growing up he was taught to differentiate between people based on their religion. He learned that a non-Muslim is “no good.” He began to understand cultural nuances and learned how to exist within this structure. However, he believes that Islam accepts homosexuality, but representatives of Islam, do not. But then he retracts his comment and says that he does not “want to say that Islam accepts homosexuality but that the religion tolerates.” He substitutes “accepts” with “tolerates.” Hamza’s careful choice of words is a reflection of his dedication and respect for his faith. He does not want to appear blasphemous. So Islam must tolerate his sexuality, because “Allah created me like this.” He does not have any explanation for his sexuality and so he resolves to assume that God created him that way. This resolution is the only way he can live with himself as a gay man within his Islamic faith. Furthermore, Hamza explains that there is a difference between Islam and the people who practice Islam. According to him, “they are two things: Islam, people. People because people want to respect les norms societal [societal norms].” Hamza differentiates religion from people, and yet he finds it difficult to separate himself from his faith. If Islam and those who preach it are different, then it is possible for Hamza’s two identities to co-exist resolutely. But this is not the case. Hamza identifies more with his religion than he does with his sexuality. Moreover, he expands on his explanation to say that people do not tolerate homosexuality because they respect societal norms. In order to be a part of society, Hamza feels that he must concede to their expectations. He discloses:

I don’t want exclu [excluded]. No, I like my family. I like people. People want I say, have woman. That I respect norm and I want to respect because I love my family. I love my neighborhood. I love every person in the world. And the people in the world want that I respect generality.

It is difficult to assess Hamza's ability to merge his religious identity with his sexual identity. He claims that despite his upbringing that teaches him to discriminate people based on religious background, he refuses to accept this because "I know Islam, the religion for peace, for love." Yet, he desires to be a part of society because he respects "the norm." In doing so, he is willing to forfeit his sexuality to conform to his cultural, and religious, standards. The contradiction in Hamza's response shows the complex relationship between his religious identity and his sexual identity; not only his difficulty to marry the two, but the warring nature of religion and sexuality. His inability to marry these identities forces him to compartmentalize. He appears as a straight man in his religious circles and other spaces where he interacts with his fellow kinsmen. Hamza is able to subject himself to disciplinary measures by carefully abiding by Islamic doctrines and controlling his sexual urges. He mentions that he avoids bars, clubs, bathhouses, and spaces where he may encounter a gay man. By avoiding these spaces, Hamza believes that he can control his sexual desires and become a faithful servant of Allah.

Even though the men are removed from their countries of origin and reside in Canada, they feel that they have to police themselves in specific environments where homosexuality is frowned upon. While the act of compartmentalizing in their religious spaces was productive for some of the participants because they were able to exist without fear of discrimination, for others refusing to compartmentalize their identities was liberating and in some way fortified their confidence in their identity as a gay, a bisexual, or a queer man.

3.2. b. Home Away from Home

In some societies, religion and culture are not mutually exclusive. The tenets of religious texts oftentimes influence cultural dynamics. Thus, for some participants, a move away from their religion is also move away from their cultural identity. However, for other participants, there is no relationship between the two identities. In this section, I discuss how participants are able to function in their diasporic communities. There is a prevailing assumption that immigrants can settle well in their communities because of their shared heritage. This assumption ignores other identities that are forged within the diaspora. The level of participation in diaspora communities varies among the participants. For some participants, it is important to be a part of their diaspora communities. For others, they choose not to be a part of their communities either due to indifference or fear that they might be excluded once their sexual orientation is revealed.

For example, William, who migrated to Canada to further his education, chooses not to socialize with members of the Burundian diasporic community. He did not feel he is a part of the community because of his sexuality. He explains that he “felt that some people had a problem with it, I didn’t feel comfortable.” He further explains that he has encountered some problems from African men. According to him:

I find that it’s a problem [for them]. I feel like I have a hard time, I feel like there is some sort of discrimination. Sometimes I am wearing something like carrying [a female] bag and I walk [by] and a black man would hiss like you know.

William feels that even though he can express his sexuality freely in Canada, he is policed by black men within his diasporic community and outside of it. His masculinity is often questioned

and mocked. He explains that during a major event in Toronto, he was shoved and pushed by a group of black men of Caribbean descent:

During Caribana, I was pushed off the sidewalk into traffic. I was lucky; cops were close and saw it happening. I think sometimes the way I dress, people identify [me with] a certain way gay men dress. [So] the cop walked me home. Usually I am angry. But I don't fight back because [...] and I have noticed [that] usually these things never happen when there is one person. One person is never going to do something, usually. There is always a group of people, like two or three or four. I am not going to fight with like three people. It is better to do whatever, like fall, or move, and let them get bored and move on.

William explains that he feels he exhibits characteristics or stereotypes that are often associated with “gay men.” People automatically assume he is gay without having him “come out” expressively to them. This shows that a particular masculine identity is apparent in Canada and anyone who falls short from this standard is considered gay. The experience of being treated differently from black men affected William, but he claims that he is able to develop a mechanism to cope with the discrimination. I ask him how he felt about the scenario, he explains that he “is used to it.” It is because of this maltreatment that William does not feel he has to be a part of his community. I ask him why he chooses to ignore this treatment instead of addressing the issue by creating awareness about and putting a human face to alternative black sexualities, William replies that:

The funny thing is as a concept, I think, I feel it would be a good idea to engage and to challenge their assumption but then for me, having grown up in Africa and having to be really defensive about it, fearing for my own safety, for me, it is like a trigger. I don't want to deal with it. Being intimidated with physical violence, I have been punched in the face in South Africa and the worst part is

this is before I was out. But it was an identity that was already determined by other people because I did not act a particular way.

William's inability to conform to dominant discourses of masculinity in Africa and in his diasporic community in Canada enabled him to come out of the closet. Several attempts to conform failed because of the signifiers – his gestures, mannerisms, speech, and style of dressing – he was projecting. He was in a relationship with a girl when he tried to be straight. However, the demise of the relationship encouraged William to come out of the closet. On one hand, his inability to conform freed him from the cultural expectations of masculinity and sexuality. On the other hand, this inability exposed him to physical and verbal violence.

Peter, much like William, refuses to engage with his community. His case differs from William because his community had assumed he was heterosexual. His marriage to a Burundi woman gave his community in Canada and in Burundi the impression that he was not a part of “that life.” However, upon migrating to Canada, and failing to meet up with his cultural expectations of masculinity and sexuality in his home, which includes having sexual intercourse, his wife began to spread rumors about his “impotence.” Not only was he verbally abused by his wife at home, he also had to face homophobic slurs in his community:

I am avoiding them. They know about my [sexuality]. They don't tell me face to face. But they know. In the beginning, it was so painful for what my wife said. She was describing everything we do in bed that I would avoid sex. I would say I am tired. She tells people that she discovered I'm gay.

Although, he is not active in his diasporic community, Peter said that he is happy with the gay friends he has had since childhood who now reside in Canada and the Canadian friends he is

making. This group of people, for him, is his community. In this community, he feels that he does not have to pretend to be straight. He can be himself and exist wholly as a queer man.

On the other hand, David's transition into Canadian society was relatively easy because his family members had already settled there. Also, David is out to his Burundi community, but he explains that he does not want to impose his sexuality on its members. For him, it is important not to insult the cultural conception of sexuality of individuals in his community. However, he goes on to explain that other gay men from Burundi choose not to be culturally appropriate:

The way I am, you take it or you leave it. I never lied. I am honest. I am myself. You like it or you don't. People come to accept that. Even in my community here, at first they started talking behind my back but they saw that it didn't change me. So now they do respect me for that. I don't disturb anybody. I don't go in front of anybody flocking [sic] a gay flag. I am myself. And people can tell when you are not trying too hard. Because we do have some people who are gay from Burundi. They come here and say it's a free country so I can do whatever I want. And they lose their respect. You see two guys kissing, "oh I am in Canada; I can do whatever I want." They were so oppressed back home. So when you are in a free country, [they declare here I am]. [Diaspora community] don't respect them because of the way they act.

David differentiates himself from these men and in some way condemns them for their level of openness. In doing so, he fails to recognize that inadvertently he is policing how they display their sexuality in public. The differentiation David makes between the gay men in his diasporic community and him reflects in some way their abilities to compartmentalize their identities. David expresses that he is able to compartmentalize in order not to offend members of his community, whereas, the men refused to compartmentalize because they were forced in Burundi, based on David's observations, to do so. Even though David claims, "the way I am, you take it or

you leave it. I never lied. I am honest. I am myself,” he still exists under the confines of what is appropriate gay behavior. Also, he is policing himself in a manner that is comfortable for members of his diasporic community. He explains that “people can tell when you are not trying too hard,” which suggests that he is conscious of how he is perceived. At the time of the interview, I had imagined that he would be more sympathetic and express some understanding towards the men. But this is not the case.

On the contrary, Hamza refuses to come out of the closet even though he is not an active member in his Djibouti community here in Canada. He manages to compartmentalize his identity to protect his future career prospects in his country. Along with his faith, he believes that his physical appearance prevents him from opening up to meet men publicly. He confesses that he prefers the comfort and the safety of the online community. He plans to navigate his sexuality in that space until he is comfortable to come out publicly. Cyberspace is an avenue, a different cultural space with its strengths and its limitations, for closet queer men to navigate their sexuality discreetly (Hillier and Harrison, 2002; Reynolds, 2007; Weeks, 2007). For Hamza, three out of the four sexual encounters he has had in his life were with men he met online. He explains how he navigates his sexuality online and offline:

J'ai vais chaque identité appropriée [I have several appropriate identities]. I want to use specific identity for a specific place. I arrive in Canada, January 2012. I met two guys here because Canada is different from France. Homosexuality here is very open. En France, il est difficile [In France, it is difficult]. La France, c'est les Africains blancs [The French are white Africans]. So conservative, French people. Two guys in Canada. One night, one night. One guy I met in gay bar, one time. I was very nervous. He knows I am new because I was alone to go gay bar. He was, he had twice my age. He was 50. After I go with him, he wants to penetrate but I don't like. I say him to stop, he was ok. The other

guy I met him on the website. I like to have man in my life, but it is so complicated.

William, Peter, Hamza and David migrated to Canada and live on their own. They did not have to deal with tensions at home. In contrast to the experiences of William and David, Hussein, whose parents migrated to Canada in 1989 from Qatar, explains that “Canada is home.” In fact, it is the only home he recognizes. It is in Canada that his racial and sexual identities were forged within bi-cultural norms. This created a conflict where Hussein has had to negotiate between the two identities in different cultural spaces. He has had to immerse himself in his Somali culture adjacent to his Canadian culture, and vice versa. Hussein has spent his formative years in Canada so he has been able to adopt Canadian values and traditions as his own. But his father has refused to acculturate and insists on maintaining his cultural identity. Since their migration to Canada, his parents could not go to school to improve their skills because they had financial responsibilities. His parents had to rely on his siblings and him to function in their newly adopted home:

The culture we had to learn ourselves. But most of the communicating we did it for them. Talked to the cable people, anything that needs repairing, we would talk to them on their behalf so that’s how they communicated most of the time. But now my mom is doing it by herself. [My dad] knows enough to get by.

According to Hussein, “my dad doesn’t fully like it here. He wants to go back home. But Somalia, some areas are peaceful; some areas are still in war.” As a result, his father has refused to learn English or understand Canadian cultural norms. Of course, this is an assumption on Hussein’s part. His father might understand Canadian values and systems, but chooses not to immerse himself in them. However, his refusal to fully embrace Canada as his new home, has

affected his family dynamics. There is a friction between Hussein's father and his children. Since Hussein and his siblings are not too familiar with Somali culture even though they exist within it, in a diasporic context, they do not communicate with their father. They do not speak the Somali language and their father chooses not to speak English. Hussein explains:

It sounds cold, but it is the way it is. He talks to my friend that typically we don't say hi to him, that we don't acknowledge him. He would ask us to grab him a bottle of water but most of the times we don't talk to him really. He told my friend that's almost like two strangers living in the same house.

The friction in Hussein's home shows the uneasiness, Fortier (2002) explains, that is often associated with individuals in diaspora. Forced migration, the difficulties of settling and maintaining one's connection to the homeland are fundamental characteristics of diaspora. Also, the friction reflects to an extent the cultural tensions between Canadians and immigrants from countries in Asia, Africa, or the Middle East. The fear of difference develops stereotypes about the "other." For Hussein's father, Christians and whites should be avoided because:

All they do is have their supper and they drink and they go crazy. He really is narrow-minded, not in a bad way. But [he says] just trust Somali people and the people you know and that is it.

Interestingly, Hussein frequents pubs and bars with his queer friends to get drunk:

I got into drinking, partying, that was when I started feeling more comfortable. I would be hanging out with my gay friends and they weren't just the regular typical manly type, there was [sic] different, there would be feminine types, the outgoing types, we were young, we were loud. We would go to Rideau Centre. So our thing was to have fun, we don't care. We get called names like

faggot, we don't care. We were more outlandish, the tighter the clothes, the better.

Inasmuch as Hussein's father tries to dissociate himself from Canadians and "white" people, he can only do so to an extent because his children are also Canadian. The values he denounces in other Canadians have been adopted by his children.

Moreover, Hussein stresses throughout the interview that his father has been hanging out with the same group of friends for twenty years and eats only Somali food and frequents only Somali restaurants. His father's only attempt at assimilation is the purchase of Tim Horton's coffee, which is Canadian. It is not clear whether Hussein considers his father's hold on his culture offensive or his father's unwillingness to adapt to Canadian culture, "old school." So I re-frame my question and ask Hussein several times, if he has ever considered his father's position. That is, if he has thought about the challenges his father faces in losing his culture and having his children adopt a culture that is significantly different from his. He replies that he understands, but that it is important to move forward. Even though Hussein condemns his father's association with his Somali friends, Hussein fails to understand that his father's friends provide for him a concept of "home." In the same vein that Hussein does not consider his home a space of sameness, rather of difference, his father considers Canada, their new home, a space of difference. Hussein does not only have to battle with his Canadian identity in his Somali home on Canadian soil, he also has to socialize within a heteronormative environment. In order to create a "home" away from home, where a similar ethnic identity is shared, Hussein "hangs out" with his queer friends. Thus, he condemns his father for something he himself has been doing for twenty years as well. The numerous efforts Hussein's father has made to inculcate Somali culture in his children is deterred by his busy schedule:

He wants to talk Somalian [sic], teach us Somalian [sic], so that we have strong skills [...] to teach our kids the same culture and everything. But he's never around. It's our mom raising us most of the time.

His mother, unlike his father, is more willing to embrace Canadian culture. She has enrolled in an English course in order to improve her English skills. It is not surprising then that the children have a better relationship with their mother than they do with their father. It is important to consider Hussein's father's position and his resistance to Canadian culture. According to Hussein, the breakdown of their cultural values is what he suspects frightens Hussein's father. According to Hussein, his siblings do not have any desire to live in Somalia even after the war ends. His siblings, based on their relationship patterns, are not interested in marrying a Muslim or a Somali. At the time of the interview, two of his siblings, a male and a female, were in a long-term relationship with white Canadians.

It is important that I write "white" before Canadian to challenge the notion that a "Canadian" is assumed white and non-whites are "from someplace else." Michelle Wright (2013) writes that blackness is one "step away from the authentic source" (p. 10). Also, I attempt to show that dating "whites" for Hussein's father is considered an abomination. He is not aware that his children have been in long-term relationships with white Canadians and would prefer that they marry Somali. The relationship between Hussein and his father metaphorically represents Hussein's relationship with his Somali culture. Even though he grew up within Somali diaspora community in Ottawa, Hussein exists and lives as a Canadian. He is able to forge an identity that is unique to his Somali and Canadian identities. Although Canada is tolerant of same-sex relationship, within his community in Canada, homosexuality is heavily frowned upon. Even though, Hussein has managed to negotiate his racial and ethnic identities in two different

cultural spaces, he has had difficulties with his sexual orientation. Rumors about his sexuality began to spread in his diaspora community. He tells of how he was confronted about his sexuality:

I finished work. Went drinking downtown, and came back. I am ready to go to bed and I get called to the living room. And they were there waiting. Three ladies that were very close to my mom came to discuss the rumors that I was hanging out with all these gay guys. They were telling me: don't hang out with them. It's fine when you are stuck at work with them but when you are outside of [work], go away, do not be associated with gay people. I said I am friends with them, we party, but I never said I was gay because it was the wrong time, wrong people there, so I denied it. They were happy that I didn't [overreact] because that's what most of them thought I would do. Now I wish I can go back in time to overreact because at that point, we were not close, some of their children I didn't like. Why do I care? I cared too much that I stayed in the closet for so long that I was miserable and now that I am happy, I am meeting all these people that I'm having great times with, why am I going to throw them under the bus, why am I going to hide who I am.

During this time of the interview, Hussein was emotional. His voice was raised and I could sense his anger when he was discussing this episode in his life. It was not clear if he was reacting against his past self as the person he is now or wished that his past self was the person he is now. Hussein speaks of the past in the present, “now that I am happy, I am meeting all these people,” which shows that he wished he could be the person he is now at the time he was confronted. But his anger is possibly directed at the heteronormative structures that have forced him to hide his sexuality for so long.

Musa and his family migrated to Canada in 1991. They migrated from Somalia to escape the war. He has had to manage two ethnic cultures. Unlike Hussein, Musa's father returned to Somalia after the death of his mother and he did not have to deal with cultural tensions at home. He had to live with his three older brothers. Much like Hussein, Musa found comfort in his friends. They helped him deal with the realization of his sexual orientation. A friend in

particular, a Somali who is a lesbian, agreed to have sexual intercourse with Musa to help him determine and define his sexual orientation. It is from this experience that Musa was able to conclude affirmatively that he was gay. Queer communities offer a sense of belonging for individuals who have had to deal with discrimination at home. It is not surprising then that most of the participants found their comfort in queer communities despite the racial and cultural differences. For four years, Musa and his immediate brother were estranged. Their relationship began to deteriorate when his brother discovered his sexuality from an online interaction he had with his lover on the family computer. His brother advised him to go back to Somalia because he felt that the Canadian lifestyle was heavily influencing him negatively. He also advised him not to reveal his sexuality to his two older brothers, who are devout Muslims. Musa feels that his brother feared that a revelation about his sexuality to his brothers might result in his death in attempt to restore the family honor.

3.2. c. As A Black Queer Man

Queer diaspora is a sub-culture of diaspora, and black queer diaspora, in particular, is a sub-sub-culture of diaspora. The question of authenticity comes into play when discussions about blackness are raised. Who is an authentic “black”? What is blackness? Who qualifies to claim blackness? Although the participants are of African descent, through their interviews it became clear that there is a distinction between African and black. There is a distinction between blackness and African-ness, where blackness is often perceived as a derivative or copy of African-ness; much as diaspora is considered a derivative of a nation. However, with the intensification of globalization, black American-ness has become a representative of black-hood all over the world. But African identity, whatever it is as there are many cultural identities on the

continent, still trumps all black identities as it lends to authenticate these identities that are forged outside the continent. Wright (2013) writes that “blackness has been fashioned in such a way that not all black people are allowed to be equal in it” (p. 10). Individuals who identify as black or African have to compete against each other for limited resources available to them. One needs to read and listen to the arguments between Africans and African-Americans (or black-Americans) to understand the level of competition about who is a better black in diaspora. However, outside of the narrative that blackness was created as an antithesis to European-ness, it is often associated with heteronormativity. To be black is to be straight. Wright (2013) reveals that heteronormativity “imagines itself as a hierarchy, where the (heterosexual) black male body represents the father or patriarch of the black community/nation” (p. 7 - 8). In diaspora, Wright (2013) explains, the heterosexual African male body has a greater centrality than other African male bodies. Non-heterosexual African male body is inscribed as “other” and exists on the margins even within African (and to some extent, African) communities.

Black identity in North America is an amalgamation of African and other identities, that include European, Asian and indigenous. Black identity in Canada, Rinaldo Walcott (1997) argues, is influenced by other cultural conceptions of blackness. He problematizes black Canadian identity by questioning the idea of a black Canadian identity. According to him, this identity is always in the process of revision and “becoming” (Rinaldo, 1997, p. 103). And so, it is difficult to ascertain a singular black Canadian identity. However, in popular cultural discourse, black Canadian identity is often associated with criminality. George Elliott Clarke (1997) explains the vagueness of race, particularly black identity in Canada. Clarke (1997) provides some examples, in which race has been ignored in order to project an image of Canada as a tolerant and accepting nation in comparison to its neighbor, the United States of America. One

example discusses how a young black man, an alleged fugitive, was chased down by a white mob until he was saved by the police in April 1994. This incident, Clarke (1997) explains, was ignored by the media that initiated the violence by circulating “blurred photographs of a black murder suspect whose only recognizable feature was his dreadlocks” (p. 102 – 103). A liberal columnist, Michael Valpy, for the *Globe and Mail*, blamed violent crimes in Toronto on young black people of Jamaican descent. Because of this, the former socialist premier of Ontario, Bob Rae, demanded that Jamaica accept the return of the “Jamaican” lawbreakers (Clarke, 1997). The Jamaican prime minister replied that the criminals in question were Canadian because they were born and bred in Canada. I decided to include this example in this section to show that citizenship of a racialized body is often questioned and challenged in a country such as Canada. I am positing that racialized bodies, especially black bodies, have to work extra hard to be less “black” because blackness in the West is considered and perceived as delinquent in nature. The Somali participants described how their masculinities are acted through portrayals of black manhood in the media. These portrayals, they express, often depict black men as criminals.

Therefore, limited positive images of black men in the media continue to influence the manifestations of black manhood in North America and outside of the continent and determine the process of identity formation for some of the participants. Also, as queer African men, there are limited to no representations in the media, so the men have learned to forge their identities through their interactions with men like themselves. David discusses the representations of black gay men in the media and his experience with the occupational diversity among queer black men he has observed:

It’s funny in the media when you see [black] gay people they are always entertainers. So you go into a conference where you see

black men, I was intimidated. Usually when you are with black people, they don't talk about sexuality [...] and most of the times in Canada, when you go to gay bars or clubs, its mostly white people, without knowing it, you get comfortable so [seeing the black men at the conference] was intimidating. I was so impressed to see we have doctors, black lawyers, which we usually don't see.

In relation to race, the participants who spent less than a year in Canada claim that they have not experienced any kind of racial discrimination. But participants such as Hussein and Musa who have spent most of their childhood in Canada did not say if they had experienced any kind of racism. Perhaps the articulation of racism in Canada has changed from its blatant and obvious form to a subtle and to an acceptable form. Peter S. Li (2001) argues that racism, especially in Canadian immigration discourse, still exists only more tolerable and less visible. He posits that the manner in which racism has transformed makes it difficult to detect. L. Zong (1997) refers to this phenomenon as the “new racism,”⁵⁵ and F. Henry, C. Tator, W. Mattis, and T. Rees (2000), and Rebecca Malhi and Susan D. Boon (2007) use “democratic racism” to describe the co-existence of democratic values and racism. It is possible that Hussein and Musa do not detect or experience racism because they grew up not having to recognize it.

However, Kopano and William, who migrated to Canada to pursue their education in their adulthood, have faced discrimination as black men. As outsiders, Kopano and William are able to notice the subtlety of racism. Even though queer communities provide a means of escape from their heterosexual world, most of the participants agree that within the gay community, racism is present. According to them, it is blatant. William claims that:

Racism is more prevalent in gay sort of circles, maybe not prevalent but I feel like people are more willing to express [racism] and not see a problem with it because they feel like we are more

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⁵⁵ (As cited in Peter S. Li, 2001, p. 78).

oppressed than you. I don't know what they rationale is. We are a minority so we cannot be racist and gay.

The LGBTQ movement is often compared to the Civil Rights movement, where many black Americans fought against centuries of oppression and prejudice. In my opinion, the struggles are not similar. Being black is not only visible for discrimination but comes with centuries of negative discourses that render it inferior to other races. One can exist as a closet queer individual without facing discrimination especially if said individual is white. But a black person cannot hide his or her skin color and escape the stereotypes associated with it. Black queer individuals face double discrimination. They experience discrimination because of their race within queer communities. Fortier (2002) discusses this falsehood of a “unified and homogenous constituency” that fails to acknowledge power structures that operate within that community. This is the danger Gopinath (1996) warns against. Unifying and homogenizing identities because of a shared history overlook other oppressive power structures.

Additionally, black queers face discrimination in their black communities because of their sexual orientation. Catherine Smith (2007), in her research paper, “Queer as Black Folk,” problematizes the “same-as” mantra. She explores how this mantra ignores the complexity of racial and sexual oppression. She writes, “The white LGBT person who attempts to persuade the black person that LGBT individuals are the same as blacks speaks as if racism no longer exists. The white LGBT individual’s assertion of sameness is often taken as an affront because the black struggle for equality is far from over. In attempting to convince the black person of sameness, the analogy often results in alienation” (p. 391). She further writes that, “The assertion of sameness also denies the unique ways in which discrimination and bias operate against people based on sexual orientation and sexual identities. It gives black heterosexuals a

“pass” on their sexism or homophobia. Being black does not immunize someone from making heterosexual and sexist assumptions; but just as in larger society, black heterosexuals harbor heterosexual and sexist beliefs and exercise heterosexual privilege” (p. 392). Thus, comparing and paralleling these movements trivializes the experiences of individuals who embody multiple identities that are simultaneously discriminated against. William believes that the racism within the gay community is based on the association of gayness with whiteness in Canada:

I feel like gayness in Canada is very very white and sort of like the culture and sort of like the expectation and sort of like dating, I think even in socializing, there is a strong concentration of gay bars in Toronto, I was always aware of that within socializing and within the organization, LGBTQ, the otherness of my black identity. Even if you look at the promotional materials that are given for example for parties, clubs, events, whatever, literally like one of my friends had a visual arts project and you have the same picture of this white blond man with muscles and that's what gayness looks like. It's never a person of color. If you look at Fab magazine, I think they have had like only one or two people of color ever. It is always a white stereotypical like what the desirable gay person is.

The association of gayness with whiteness in mainstream Canada complements homophobic discourses in many African countries, where homosexuality is considered a “white man’s disease.” This trend continues to invisibilize black queer men in their racial and queer communities. Kopano expresses the same concern. He argues that there are provisions for a particular racial group within the gay community in Ottawa. He claims that there are little to no services for black queer men. This has been a problem especially for men who have issues with “coming out.” Chong-suk Han (2007), in “They Don’t Want To Cruise Your Gay Men of Color and the Racial Politics of Exclusion,” argues that the gay community in the West, particularly in the United States of America, has excluded men of color from sexuality discourses and from

assuming leadership roles in the gay community. According to him, this has led to the assumption that gay equals white. He defines this invisibilization of gay men of color in the following:

After all, being a gay man of color is to experience the unnerving feeling of being invited to a potluck while being told not to bring anything since nobody would be interested in what you bring, and then not being offered any food since you didn't bring anything anyway.

The level of disinterest in the experiences of queer men of color has led to their disenfranchisement, not only as queer men, but also as men of color. Furthermore, outside of the racism in the gay community, black men are considered "ugly." The rhetoric that black bodies are ugly is a legacy of colonialism that continues to plague black communities. David describes the preferences that are common in the gay community:

In gay culture you have like the tops, the bottoms, the macho boys, the girly gays, the bears, you have blacks, you have whites, its complex. [They discriminate in the gay community]. I think there is more discrimination in the gay community than the outside. Some people like when you go on the dating sites of the gays, you see the criteria: top, 6 foot 2, straight-acting, not into femmes, not into blacks, not into Asians. They tell you what they want.

The preference for white men is not limited to white Canadian men only. Hamza confesses:

I like gay white but not black. I prefer gay white, not big like me. But not slim, very mannequin (model-looking). But so difficult to found [sic] it. If the guy is gay black maybe we stay friends but no relation [sic].

I ask Hamza several times in different ways why he felt this way and how this feeling towards black men came about. He responds with "I don't know" several times. I may have been

persistent because as Africans, and generally as blacks, we often remind ourselves and other black individuals of our blackness. “Your nose is too broad,” “Why don’t you relax your hair, it is too rough and nappy,” “Your skin is too dark for you to go under the sun,” these are some of the phrases we often hear coming from individuals who look like us. Intra-racism is not unique to Africans in Africa. It also exists in black diaspora communities on other continents. To hear Hamza repeat himself that he is as attracted to black men as he is to women made me uncomfortable and also, for him to express. He stresses:

Meme s’i il est beau, il est divin, il est vraiment tres beau, mais qu’il est noir pour moi, il restera noir. Ce n’est pas que je discrimine, non, I am black. [Trans: Even if he is handsome, he is divine, he is very handsome, but he is black, for me, he remains black. It is not that I discriminate, no.].

Hamza was uncomfortable revealing to me, a black woman, that he does not desire black men. It confused me. However, desiring individuals from other races is common in heterosexual community, where black men often express their adoration for white women and at the same time, their disdain for black women. This has prompted many discussions in the media about the desirability of black women. One article in particular reveals that black women are the least desirable group of women among other races, and black men are considered the most desirable.⁵⁶ Therefore, I was familiar with Hamza’s sentiment even though I did not understand it. Does the preference for white men question the authenticity of Hamza’s blackness? Also, does the reiteration of his “ugliness” reflect his associations to and with “home”?

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⁵⁶ This article has been pulled down due to the number of protests Psychology Today received. In response to his article, Satoshi Kamazawa’s colleagues wrote this blog post, read: Kaufman, S. (2011, May 21). Black Women Are Not (Rated) Less Attractive! Our Independent Analysis of the Add Health Dataset. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/beautiful-minds/201105/black-women-are-not-rated-less-attractive-our-independent-analysis-the-a>

I have some complex on my brain. I say, “I am ugly, I am fat, and my look is so [...] I have many knowledge [sic], but I am not beautiful or I think. I don’t know.

Throughout the interview, Hamza made two connections to home that fell into two oppositional categories – good and bad. His uncle, a Djibouti, sexually molested him at a young age and his grandmother, a French woman, helped sponsor his education in France and provided for him emotionally and financially. I have to be careful in my assertion here but I suspect that the two connections to “home” may explain Hamza’s reaction to black men as a potential sexual or romantic partner. Additionally, Hamza’s desire for white men can be interpreted as seeking white validation, which reiterates past colonial relationship between European and African men. There are complexities involved in his response and these are shown in the difficulties Hamza faced in articulating this preference. On the other hand, the difficulties may lie in the possibility that he does not want to appear to me as a black man who suffers from self-hatred because of his preference.

Before this interview with Hamza, Kopano tells me that usually a black man who hates his blackness date only white men. This is not to imply that Hamza hates his blackness. But that this is often the case. William also expresses a similar sentiment. He explains that in queer communities black men are the least desirable:

There is an unspoken hierarchy of [desirability]. Black men are not viewed as desirable as white men. Unless it becomes like ‘your big black cock’ [then] it becomes automatically more about the penis. It is not the person, but this idea of the “big black penis.” That is a huge problem. And I think that where you find that specifically is online dating or apps. There is an app called grinder, it’s like a hookup app. It’s a gay app. Even on dating sites, where people are

like “no blacks or Asians.” People like list every single ethnicity other than whites like no this, no this, no blacks, Hispanics, Latinos, or Asians, or like Pacific Islanders and I like I get the argument that people make that it is a preference thing. But it is very weird. It is a very weird dynamic. And I find it harder as a person of color to find people that are interested in dating me or having a relationship with me.

The black male is reduced to his phallus (Fanon, 2008; Connell, 2002). The black penis then is perceived as a desirable part of the black male body in both heterosexual and queer communities. Of course, some men use the myth of the “big black penis” to their advantage. But it carries a singular narrative of black masculinity that influences the relationship patterns of most of the participants. For some of the men, within this community, they feel that their only desirable trait is their penis, not their intellect, wit, or companionship. Therefore, they feel that they are not considered suitable for a long-term relationship. I inform William that in the heterosexual community white blue-eyed blond women are ranked highest and dark skinned brown-eyed women are ranked lowest in terms of levels of desirability. He agrees with me, but replies that:

What is desirable is white blond [but] I feel like it’s less explicit in [heterosexual] community. I think people like don’t care, in a way that it is ok to talk about in that sense. I feel like there’s a very strong racist not even undertone, it is like overtone in which gay people and they feel like they are entitled to say whatever they want because they also have been discriminated. [They say that] are not being racist [that] they are being honest and stating a preference. People recognize that it is an issue. Everyone knows that there is this racism within the community. It’s known. Even in like politics, I remember two years ago in Pride, there was like this huge problem. Pride usually has Blackorama, which is like the black entertainment stage and it’s usually in a central location [but that year], they put it in a parking lot, really far away. It was not even close to the venue of anywhere. This is part of the [racism in the community]

William and I discuss the possibility that race may not be the only issue, but class and level of education may play a role in the manner in which black men are perceived in the community. William explains that “it might be the case,” but he does not know. He discusses his personal dating experience and the role of race in these experiences:

I dated like every color of the rainbow except maybe the natives because I have not met a native. I like different people for different reasons. I moved here and dated two white guys. One guy I dated for nine months and I think it opened him up to a lot of things that he did not know were happening. When I was dating him, we went out together to a bar and we were hanging out with our friends. And this person, we didn't know who didn't know we were dating, was trying to hit on my boyfriend and I thought it was funny. I went up after a while, I was like “poor guy, this is taking too long.” I join in their conversation and the guy turned to me and [said] “I am sorry I don't do black people.” My boyfriend was like “what the fuck?” he got super annoyed but I found it funny. For me, I brush it off. It happens often enough that I can't keep getting angry at it all the time. I see it more as a bad reflection on them than letting it affect me. I hadn't realized it [then] that [my boyfriend] was not as exposed to it. My boyfriend got really really angry about it. He started saying how racist he was. The guy was confused. I think through dating me he realized a lot more what people of color in general have to deal with it. I think when people date people of minority [sic], they become aware of what people of color have to go through because they don't have to experience any of those experiences.

William makes an ideal point. Similar to this point, Ratele (2004) argues that,

Young men and women should be encouraged to have good, ‘normal’, sexual intercourse at the earliest opportunity with a person of another race or ethnic group before they reach a certain age. It may be one way of attaining liberated masculinities. Most crucial, though, good interracial sex could have a deep significance for reconstructing our national politics (p. 144).

Even though, Ratele (2004) admits that this proposition is provocative and controversial, in line with William's argument, he may have been up to something. Even though interracial dating or coupling can contribute to a better understanding of racial and sexual relations, it requires more effort to challenge institutionalized racist and sexist structures. Furthermore, William explains that some black men have internalized this disdain to the extent that they prefer white men exclusively:

There is some black gay men that I feel internalize this concept like [they say that] they won't date black people. To me this is beyond self-hatred. Who am I to judge? You often hear the same justifications that they give. It is always a preference thing that they do not find them attractive.

In the quest for "individuality," "freedom," and "modernity," which are all characteristics of neoliberalism, preference for a particular group of people is used to hide the influence of social prejudices. It ignores as well as promotes the legacy of exoticism, hypersexualization, and violent rape of black bodies in colonial narratives. But within the black queer diaspora lies another subculture of disabled individuals. Kopano explains that:

I don't exist as compartments. I exist as one thing. So I am a black Afropolitan queer femme disabled man all at the same time.

Even though, he is provided with the resources to live a dignified life, Kopano feels that he is often asked to compartmentalize his identities:

I am a speaker and people ask me [...] can you speak about disability or they say can you speak about blackness or can you speak about queerness. People come to me who find one thing they

want me to speak about in me. So they want to focus on that one thing. So I am the go to person for all things disability. I am the go to person for all things race. I am the go to person for all things queer. And occasionally, there might be an intersection between queerness and blackness. I have to compartmentalize and at the same time, I resist that compartmentalization. [I resist] in giving an interview [so] I try to problematize about what it means to be African and queer, I try and problematize that, push that element of ability and class, push that, [but] sometimes, I get away with it, sometimes I don't because people insist on only hearing one thing.

Kopano has had to choose to manage his identities in different environments, sometimes these identities overlap, and sometimes they do not. But over time, Kopano began to use his voice as an advocate for change. He has found solace in the power of social media to promote change for persons with disabilities. Through this medium, he has met people who have helped him deal with the complexities of being black, queer, and disabled. For him, it is important that disabled people are part of the discourses of identity. His disability is as much a part of him as his race and sexuality. Unlike the other participants, Kopano does not have the option to apply for permanent residency in Canada. His disability is considered a burden to the Canadian government so he cannot stay even if he wants to. This shows that even though Canada is accepting of “all” persons, there are lapses in the policies that understatedly distinguishes between who is an “ideal” immigrant and a potential Canadian citizen and who is not.

3.2. d. Discussion

The participants, as postcolonial subjects, exist in a liminal space. This space houses their identities as African subjects influenced by the admixture of ethnic and Western values and beliefs. While forming their identities, the men were confronted with challenges that informed

and determined their ability to exist as African MSM in Canada. This process of identity formation was easy for some of the participants, but difficult for others.

The men migrated to Canada for different reasons. In Canada, some of the men were able to better understand and articulate their sexuality. In assessing how the men assimilate into Canadian society, religion was considered a major factor. Even though, some of the men have residence in Canada and are influenced by Canadian values and beliefs, they were also faced with cultural expectations of masculinity within their faith. For example, Hussein and Musa expressed that each time they went to mosque, they were overwhelmed with guilt. They were cognizant of Islam's condemnation of their sexuality. Because of this, Hussein and Musa refused to practice their religion and created for themselves a spiritual identity that complemented their sexuality. However, David was unable to assuage the guilt he feels about his religion's denunciation of his sexuality. He accepted that he was incapable of reconciling the conflicts between his sexuality and religious identity.

Cultural identities, for the men, include a number of factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion. However, the manner in which the men expressed themselves was considered a marker of their identity. For some of them, their mannerisms, gestures, walk, speech were markers that were used to identify them and to reinforce their differences. In order to mask these markers, some of the men performed their gender well to deflect attention away from their sexuality. However, some of the participants did not know how to perform their gender well. William, Peter, and Hussein expressed that neighbors and members of their diasporic communities suspected that they were gay because of their effeminate nature. Failure to perform their gender subjected them to intense scrutiny so that they had to pay careful attention in the manner in which they expressed themselves. William narrated how he was

verbally and physically assaulted in South Africa and in Canada because of the way he spoke, walked, or made hand gestures. Also, Peter was physically assaulted several times in Burundi for acting “strange”. To appear straight, Peter felt compelled to marry. He articulated that even though his parents did not pressure him to marry, he felt he had to conform to cultural expectations of his gender. His migration to Canada signified the demise of his marriage and a reinforcement of his sexual identity. In Canada, he was able to live as a gay man and gained access to communities of individuals like him. Contrarily, Musa, a Canadian citizen, tried to act straight by adopting masculine characteristics. He explained that he deepened his voice, played sports, and showed interest in girls to mask his sexuality. On the other hand, Femi, Kola, and Toyin revealed that they were able to function in Nigeria because they were attracted to both men and women. According to Femi and Kola, they had numerous affairs with women to publicly show their virility while discreetly having affairs with men.

Even though some of the men believed that migrating out of their countries enabled them to live freely as a gay or a bisexual or a queer man, while in Canada the participants were met with two distinct cultural spaces. Some of the participants experienced some difficulties in negotiating not only their sexual identities within their hetero-normative diasporic environments, but also their ethnic identities within Canadian society. For example, in an attempt to marry his Somali and Canadian identities, Hussein forged a unique identity. This new identity emerged as a way for Hussein to contend with the difficulties of his multiple ethnic identities. Furthermore, a loss of Hussein’s Somali identity characterized his Canadian-ness. Hussein and his siblings have assimilated into Canadian society, and as a result, they have little to no interest in their Somali culture. Other participants did not face as much cultural disturbances as Hussein. However, they experienced discrimination in queer communities where preference for white men was

emphasized. Racism is a reality that some of the men as African men had to deal with. Though some of the men did not feel that racism influenced their identity formation as much as heterosexism, others believed that it affected their dating prospects. From their responses, some of the men experienced multiple oppressions simultaneously while others experienced one or none at all. For example, Kopano had to contend with his racial, sexual, and disability identities in one or more cultural spaces. He recognized that power differentials were present in these spaces, and was reflexive of his existence within them. He was able to choose to compartmentalize his identities as well as refused to do so. He felt that he did not have to conform to societal expectations of masculinity and sexuality because his disability was a marker of and for his difference. Thus, his disability made it easy for him to challenge normative identities, including able-bodiedness.

Migrating out of their “normative” homes encouraged participants to forge new identities that resist their marginalization. While some of the participants compartmentalized these identities, others rejected the separation of their identities and sought ways to exist wholly. Compartmentalization involves a state of being where the participants are consciously deciding to exist in a particular space with one or more identities. The use of technology of the self as described by Foucault (1988) enables the men to project an image that conforms to the standards of their existing environments. In doing so, some of the men are able to function productively within spaces that they consider oppressive. However, in the process of doing so, the men reinforce rather than annihilate dominant discourses of African masculinity and sexuality. For example, to challenge and deconstruct the libidinal African straight male that emerged from the anti-colonial movements, it is important that some of the men acknowledge the impact of their compartmentalization.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I showed that the effects of colonialism transformed sexual and gender relations in Africa. The feminization of Africa and African people during the colonial era signified their subsequent dehumanization. The phallo-centric nature of colonization influenced the trajectory of anti-colonial movements where the African libidinal straight male emerged to recover his subjectivity. The experiences of the men in this study were guided by colonial narratives that continue to influence nationalist agendas in their home countries. Moral panics about sexuality in their countries have fuelled a growing disdain towards men who have same-sex desires. In Uganda, for example, the homophobic crusade has its roots in the church where homophobic tirades are preached from the pulpits. This crusade, interestingly, is financed by an American right-wing Church, the Evangelical church (McEwen, 2010). A leading figure of this crusade, Martin Ssempe shows pornographic videos of gay men engaged in sexual intercourse to his congregation (McEwen, 2010). He claims that he will not be corrupted by the West. However, as a postcolonial subject, he fails to recognize that he is, in some way, a by-product of the West. The idea that Africa is homophobic reiterates the discourse of “us” vs. “them”. Africa is pigeonholed once again as backward, traditional, and static and the West as progressive, modern, and changing. This dichotomy of Africa and the West ignores the role of the West in policing Africans and their sexuality. During the colonial era, African sexualities were demonized and were considered savage. In an attempt to put Africans and African sexuality in line, rigorous evangelizing projects and strict laws were carried out. Because of these attempts, heteronormativity seeped into African cultural discourses. Since some countries in the West have accepted homosexuality and have recognized same-sex unions, they have to ensure that Africa is

kept in line once again. The effort to keep Africa's sexuality in line suggests that the West is in fact undermining the politics of queer theory.

Thus, I have come to understand that queer theory is Western-centric and even though it attempts to de-center dominant identities, particularly heteronormativity, it also marginalizes African sexuality. Lack of representation within Western queer theory pushes African sexuality away from, rather than pulls to, the center. This is evident in the manner in which the men subscribe to Western sexual identities to describe their sexuality. Their use of Western sexual identities shows that in some way the West maintains superiority in the production of knowledge about sexuality because it dictates which knowledge is useful and productive. As a result of the invisibility of queer African voices in Western queer theory, there is a reinforcement of a colonial relationship between the West and Africa where knowledge of sexuality is produced in the West and fed to Africans (Clarke, 2013). Hence, African sexual minorities articulate their sexual identities within their cultural context in relation to the West. In order for queer theory to accommodate differences, including racial differences, Douglas Clarke (2013) recommends a decolonization of queer theory. This will allow for the production of new intersections. Otherwise, the normalization of Western queer identities will homogenize non-heterosexual identities and therefore, will ignore the diversity of sexual identities around the world.

I situated this study within queer and postcolonial theories in a transnational framework to contextualize the experiences of queer African men in Canada. I expected that there would be tensions in my attempt to represent the voices of the men as "truths" and at the same time problematize the use of Western sexual identities to describe their sexual orientation. It was because of this tension that I used postcolonial theory to deconstruct the colonial narratives of Africans and African sexuality and to recognize the dominance of the West in queer theory. The

endeavor to coalesce these theories was to explain the othering of Africans and African sexuality during the colonial era and the effort to bring to the center the voices and experiences of marginalized sexualities. As postcolonial subjects, the men as Africans and homosexual men are informed by colonial discourses of African identity and sexuality and also Western queer discourses.

On the other hand, some of the men did not spend their formative years in their countries of origin. Thus, growing up in the West, they were able to understand their sexuality through Western lens. In contextualizing these theories within a transnational framework, I showed that in order for the men to resist and adjust to spaces that were oppressive, they forged new identities. Also, I demonstrated that migration to and settlement in Canada enabled the men to re-contextualize and re-conceptualize their identities while engaging with not only cultural differences but also with racial differences.

This study was guided by the following questions: Firstly, how do queer African male immigrants negotiate their sexual and gender identities in two communities: Africa and in the Canadian diaspora? Secondly, what is the relationship between sexual identity, gender identity, and the concept of “African” masculinity? Thirdly, how do African MSM adapt, negotiate, and resist the limitation of their marginalization based on race, gender, and sexuality in Africa and Canada? Taking into consideration these research questions, chapter one investigated the role of the West in Africa’s sexuality discourse. It outlined how colonial narratives, religious institutions, and the anti-colonial movement constructed African sexuality and masculinity. Also, how they determined the trajectory of sexuality discourse and institutionalized compulsory heterosexuality on the continent. It showed that the anti-colonial movement mimicked the methods used by colonizers to control the masses. The intersectionality of race, sexuality,

gender, and religion in contemporary African sexuality discourse show the colonial affect and effect on the ontological and epistemological disposition of most Africans.

Chapter two looked at the formation of identity by the men and the factors that influenced this process. These factors include family, friends, relationships, religion, and culture. The connections the participants had with these factors confirm that they impact how the men perceive their sexuality and how they are able to negotiate their identities. For some, these factors were safe havens for their identities while for others they were sources of pain, conflict, and discomfort. From their responses, it was clear that as their identities evolved, their relationships with these factors began to change. The men who migrated out of their home countries became more comfortable and confident to open themselves to their family members. Even though, the outcome for some was alienation, the benefit far outweighed the cost of carrying the burden of concealing their sexual identity. Migrating out of their communities implied an acknowledgement and acceptance of their sexuality.

The second section of this chapter explored the role of religion in their sexual identity formation. In some cases, religious identity is often tied to cultural identity. Oftentimes, these identities are merged in ways that it is difficult to separate the two. In many African communities, the vestiges of colonial puritanism continue to influence how Africans seek spiritual satisfaction and how they perceive their sexuality. Most of the men expressed that their religion had a negative effect on their relationship with their sexuality. As a result of the evolvment of their sexual identity, some of the men were able to move away from their religion after much deliberation and thought. They realized that they were not willing to compromise their sexual identity in order to conform. Others were still conflicted and were finding other ways to compartmentalize and negotiate between their religious and sexual identities.

The third section looked at their interactions with members of their diasporic communities. Diasporic communities serve as a home away from home. But for some participants, it was a domain of conflict. Some of the men found it difficult to merge their ethnic and Canadian identities as well as manage their sexual orientation within the heteronormative nature of their communities. In their communities, some of the participants felt that they had to police themselves and appear “straight” for fear of verbal and physical violence. The sense of exclusion experienced by some men challenged their idea of belonging in diaspora.

The final section of this chapter examined how race and racism affected the lives of the men who grew up in and/or have spent their formative years in Canada. I explored the different responses from newly arrived queer African men to men who grew up in Canada and how their individual experiences with racism intersect with sexuality; also, I considered how racism affected their sense of belonging in queer communities and how this impacted their ability to negotiate their identities in other communities in Canada. Racism dictated the desirability of the men in queer communities so that they felt marginalized in a space where they should have felt welcomed.

All in all, a movement towards queering African sexuality and Africanizing Western queer theory is an important and necessary one. This movement will challenge dominant discourses of Africanness and queerness and will attempt to centralize queer African voices.

Appendix A: Biographies of the Men

Kopano – is a twenty-two year old undergraduate student and a self-described social activist. He was born to a South African mother and to a Namibian father. His mother was on a self-imposed exile during the apartheid era. She moved to Namibia where Kopano and his brother were born. After living there for ten years, Kopano and his family left for Cape Town, South Africa. He was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) at two years old. He migrated to Canada two years and a half ago to further his education. He identifies as “queer, femme, black, African, disabled” (Kopano). He is single and actively dating.

Femi – is twenty-eight years old. He is a Yoruba born in Nigeria. He is the youngest of three children. He migrated to Canada on a student visa to live a “free life” (Femi) two months ago. While in Nigeria, Femi gained his Bachelor’s degree in History and International Studies. He knew he was different when he was twelve years old. At that age, Femi was attracted to his male and female classmates. He identifies as a bisexual, but prefers men to women. He does not have any plans to return to Nigeria.

David – is thirty years old. He migrated to Canada at the age of seventeen to join his mother and his extended family members. He was born in Burundi to Tutsi parents. He is the second child of four children. His siblings reside in Europe. David knew he was different at a young age because neighbors told him that he behaved and acted differently from other boys in his school. He attended secondary school in Uganda because of the rising strife in Burundi at the time. While in Canada, David completed a bachelor’s degree at a tertiary institution in Canada. David identifies as gay. He is single.

Peter – is forty-two years old. He was born in Burundi to Tutsi parents. He is from an upper-middle class family in Burundi. He attended elementary, secondary, and tertiary institutions in Burundi. He completed some courses in other African countries and was able to work there. He lived in the Middle East before he migrated to Canada in 2013 to live with his wife. However, after a month in Canada, his wife filed for separation. They are in the midst of divorce proceedings. He identifies as gay.

Musa – is thirty-one years old. He identifies as gay. He migrated to Canada with his family when he was eight and a half years old. They migrated to Canada to escape the Civil War in Somalia in 1991. He is the last child of four children. He knew he was attracted to boys at the age of six. He was in a long-term relationship with a Latino, which ended amicably. He is single and in the process of completing a diploma in healthcare.

Hussein – is thirty-two years old. He was born to Somali parents in Qatar in 1981. He and his family migrated to Canada in 1989 before the First Gulf War. In Qatar, Hussein enrolled in a private school where he was taught English. He is the oldest of seven children. He has a high

school diploma. Hussein knew he was different at eight years old. He identifies as gay. He chooses to remain celibate until he meets the one.

Hamza – is twenty-five years old. He was born in Djibouti to Muslim parents. He has three siblings and he is the middle child. His parents divorced when he was three years and he lived with his aunt. He knew he was attracted to boys at three years old. He acquired two bachelor degrees and two masters' degrees in Europe. He is currently a doctoral student in Canada. He identifies as gay. He prefers the anonymity of cyberspace to search for potential partners. He is single.

William – is twenty-six years old. He was born in Belgium to Burundi parents. He attended several schools in Europe and in Africa. He is presently pursuing a Master's degree in a Canadian tertiary institution. He identifies as queer. He is single and actively dating.

Kola – is thirty-one years old. He was born in the city of Lagos to a Yoruba family. He is the youngest of three children. He grew up in a single parent household, where his mother had to sell goods to provide for his siblings and him. His father died when he was thirteen years old. He gained his bachelor's degree in Accounting from a Nigerian university. Kola knew he was different at a young age. He does not remember the exact age, but he remembers that he was attracted to boys in his neighborhood. He identifies as bisexual, but he prefers women to men. He is currently single. He is seeking asylum in Canada and does not plan to return to Nigeria.

Toyin – is twenty-nine years old. He was born into a polygamous family to a Ghanaian father and a mother, who is a Yoruba born in Nigeria. Toyin grew up in Nigeria with three other siblings, one from his mother, and the other two from his step-mother. He attended primary and Islamic schools, but was not able to finish his secondary school education because of financial difficulties. He knew he was different at a young age. At a young age, Toyin began to realize that he was attracted to both boys and girls. He identifies as bisexual, but he prefers men to women. He migrated to Canada in 2013 to seek asylum. At the time of the interview, Toyin is awaiting his hearing and hopes that he is granted refugee status. He does not plan to move back to Nigeria. He is in a relationship with a white Canadian.

Appendix B: Research Questions

Background

1. Give me background information about yourself: Where are you from, what year were you born, what school did you attend in back home, what is your highest educational level?
2. What were your experiences back home?

Perspective –Gender/Sexuality

1. How do you identify/describe yourself?
  - a. Why do you choose to identify/describe yourself as such?
2. How old were you when you found out you were different?
  - a. How did you know you were different?
  - b. How did you feel when you found out you were different?
  - c. Did anyone in particular help you figure out your sexuality?
  - d. How did you feel about yourself knowing you were different?
3. When and where was your first sexual encounter?
  - a. Who did you have this encounter with?
  - b. How did you feel about this encounter? Before and after?
  - c. Did you discuss this encounter with anyone?
4. Have you had any sexual relationships with girls/women?
  - a. How did you feel about these relations?
  - b. What are the differences between being with a man and a woman?

Perspective –Family

1. Have you discussed your sexuality with anyone: friends, family, etc.?
  - a. Do you think your friends and family suspect your sexuality?
2. How do you think your family members will react when they find out about your sexuality (If they are not out)?
  - a. How did your family react (if they are out)?
3. Do you think you will receive any support from your family/friends to cope with what you are feeling (sexually)? If so, in what ways?

Perspective-Culture

1. What were/are the traditional/cultural expectations of you as a man?
  - a. Do you feel this contradicts your sexuality?
2. What does African masculinity mean to you?
  - a. What are the characteristics of African masculinity?
  - b. Do you think an individual can embody the characteristics of African masculinity and yet have same-sex desires? If so, how?
3. How does your cultural upbringing play a role in how you describe yourself?

Perspective –Faith/Religion

1. Do you believe in God?

2. What is religion?
    - a. Are you religious?
  3. Do you feel your faith contradicts your sexuality? If so, in what ways?
  4. In what ways do your sexuality and your faith come into conflict?
    - a. How do you resolve this conflict?
    - b. Do you think this conflict can be resolved?
    - c. In what ways can they be resolved?
    - d. Do you think this resolution can be applied to everyone with same-sex desires in your home country?
  5. What role did religion play in your coming to terms with your sexuality?
- Perspective –Legal/National discourse
1. How do you feel about the criminalization of same-sex relations in many African countries especially Nigeria, Ghana, etc.?
  2. How do you feel about African leaders' condemnation of same-sex relationships?
  3. Do you think homosexuality is more prevalent in your home country than people think?
    - a. Do you think it is un-African?
    - b. Why do you think people with same-sex desires are afraid to come out?
    - c. Do you think it is possible to organize protests to support gay rights?
  4. Are there any organizations in your home country fighting for rights for same-sex relationships?
- Diaspora
1. Why did you come to Canada?
  2. Are you part of the diaspora community?
  3. What challenges do you face being part of this community?
  4. Do you feel that you are able to be sexually liberated? If so, in what ways?
  5. What support is available to you in Canada?
    - a. How does this differ back home?
  6. Do you feel compelled to negotiate your sexual, gender, and racial identities in Canada? If so, how?
  7. Have you faced any discrimination here in Ottawa? Based on race, sexual orientation, or your 'gender'?
- Future Plans
1. Any desire plan to marry?
  2. Any desire to have children?
  3. Is having a family important to you?
  4. Why is it important that you start a family?
  5. Do you have any desire to go back home? If not, why?

Appendix C: Letter of Information

Carleton
UNIVERSITY

Letter of Information for Participants

Title of research project:

‘God Forbid, You’re Gay!’ Exploring How African Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) Negotiate their Multiple Identities in Canada

Date of Ethics clearance: August 24th, 2012

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: May 31st, 2014

Dear (name of participants) _____ :

My name is Nesochi Chinwuba and I am providing you this letter to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting in fulfillment of my Master’s degree in the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies, at Carleton University. This project is supervised by Professor Susanne Klausen, in the Department of History, at Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

The purpose of my research is to identify the ways African men who have sex with men (MSM) negotiate their sexual and gender identities while residing in Diaspora i.e. in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. This study will explore the challenges, if any, African MSM face in their diaspora communities in relation to their sexual and gender identities, and the ways in which they are prepared to deal with these challenges. I believe that because you are of African descent and have same-sex desires and/or relationships, you are best suited to discuss the various issues I will be exploring in this project.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The interview involves a one-on-one 90 minute between the research participant and me. The interview will be recorded using audio recorder and handwritten notes. The interview will take place at a location agreed between the research participant and me. Reimbursement of the sum of \$30 will be given to each research participant for their time.

At present, given the climate of homophobia in many sub-Saharan African communities, the social risks that may arise from your participation in this study may affect your reputation and social position in your community. Such risks may include ostracization, humiliation, and discrimination. To minimize these risks, confidentiality and privacy measures have been undertaken for the duration of this study to ensure that your status and reputation are not affected and/or compromised.

The interview will be anonymous and the information provided will be confidential and non-attributable to you.

As a research participant, you have the right to request that certain responses and statements that you have provided remain hidden or not connected to you. Your privacy is important and so, all private information will be kept confidential and will be non-attributable to you. Only the researcher has access to personal information. This personal information will be destroyed when the research is complete.

If at any time during the interview you feel upset or uncomfortable, you may choose not to answer any questions. Or you can stop the interview to take a break, reschedule, or withdraw from the study entirely. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you may decide at any time if the information provided should be used or be destroyed.

However, if you decide to participate in this study, the information you provide will be anonymously coded and guarded safely.

Some expected benefits as a result of your participation include contributing to the knowledge production of African sexualities and your perspectives on the ways African men who have sex with men (MSM) are able to negotiate their sexual and gender identities while residing in Diaspora. Your participation in this study is valuable to understanding the dilemmas African MSM face on a daily basis while residing in Ottawa.

Results from this study can be obtained upon request by contacting the researcher at nchinwub@connect.carleton.ca.

If you have any questions about the researcher or her project please contact my supervisor, Professor Susanne Klausen, whose contact details are listed below.

Professor Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
Carleton University Research Ethics Committee
Office of Research Services
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6
Tel: 1-613-520-2517
E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

Researcher:
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Carleton University, Department of Women's and Gender Studies
E-mail: nchinwub@connect.carleton.ca

Supervisor:
Professor Susanne Klausen
Department of History
Carleton University
Tel: 1-613-520-2600 ext.
E-mail: Susanne.klausen@carleton.ca

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix D: Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of research project: ‘God Forbid, You’re Gay! Exploring How African Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) Negotiate their Multiple Identities in Canada

Date of Ethics clearance: August 24th, 2012

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: May 31st, 2014

I, _____, agree to participate in the research study conducted by Nesochi Chinwuba, a Master’s student in the Women’s and Gender Studies Department at Carleton University. This research project is supervised by Professor Susanne Klausen, in the Department of History, at Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

I am aware that the purpose of this research project is to explore the ways in which African men who have sex with men (MSM) negotiate their sexual and gender identities in Ottawa. This study will identify the ways African MSM are able to deal with the challenges, if any, that they face concerning their sexuality (ies) and gender in their home country and in Canada. Also, it will discuss the ways they are prepared to deal with these identities while being part of their diaspora communities.

The interview will involve a 90-minute interview. The interview will be recorded with an audio recorder and handwritten note. The interview will take place at a location agreed between the researcher, Nesochi Chinwuba, and me. The interviews will include discussions about my personal background and my experiences related to my gender and sexual identities in my home country and in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

I am aware that I will receive the sum of \$30 for my participation in this study.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. If at any point during the interviews I feel upset, uncomfortable, or anxious by the questions being asked, I can stop the interview to take a break, reschedule, or withdraw from the interview process.

I am under no obligation to reveal any sensitive information about myself to the researcher (and other research participants). I fully understand that privacy and confidentiality measures have been taken by the researcher to minimize the risks that may affect my psychological and social well-being.

I understand that there are social risks that may arise from my participation in this study which may affect my reputation and social position in my community. These risks include ostracization, humiliation, and discrimination. As such, the researcher, Nesochi Chinwuba, has

assured me that any information provided in the interview will remain confidential and non-attributable to me in this research study or any future discussions and publications.

I understand that I have the right not to answer any questions and if I choose not to continue with the interview, I can withdraw from the study at any time between the start of the interview and up to 2 months after the interview. Also, if I choose to withdraw from the interview, I may request that the transcribed data, audio recordings, and information I provide be destroyed.

I am aware that if I decide to participate in this research study, the information I provide will not be kept longer than required to complete the research. When the study is completed, all data (including audio recordings, transcriptions and interview notes) will be destroyed.

The researcher, Nesochi Chinwuba, has assured me that I can obtain research results and findings from this study by requesting transcribed data or a copy of the thesis. This request can be made by emailing the researcher at the following e-mail address: nchinwub@connect.carleton.ca.

I understand that if I have any questions about the researcher or her project that I am invited to contact her supervisor, Professor Susanne Klausen, whose contact details are listed below.

Professor Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
Carleton University Research Ethics Committee
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Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6
Tel: 1-613-520-2517
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Researcher:
Nesochi Chinwuba
Carleton University, Department of Women's and Gender Studies
E-mail: nchinwub@connect.carleton.ca

Supervisor:
Professor Susanne Klausen
Department of History
Carleton University
Tel: 1-613-520-2600 ext.
E-mail: Susanne.klausen@carleton.ca

I have read the above statements and consent to participate in this study:

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

Date

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