

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU**

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**Can You Hear The Ngochani?**

**An Exploration of How Queer Activists in Southern Africa Reflect on Their Subalternity**

MA Thesis

Supervisor: Viacheslav Morozov, PhD.

Tartu, 2023

*Authorship Declaration*

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

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## **Acknowledgements**

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Viacheslav Morozov for his guidance and support throughout this project. I am also extremely grateful to the academic staff at the Johan Skytte Institute and L'Universite Catholique de Lille for showing the world in the form of theories and applications. I would also like to thank Dr. Ashley Currier and Dr. Adriaan van Klinken for their time and expertise.

I'd especially like to thank Julia Boriero, Giulia Musso, and Cristina Clemente for making this a magical and unforgettable period of my life. I am forever thankful for their love and encouragement throughout this two-year journey. The adventures and shenanigans we have experienced will shine like gold in my memories for as long as I can remember my time at Tartu Ulikooli.

To Ana, Giorgi, Zhibek, Yoshiko, and all my other colleagues in the IRRS program, thank you from the bottom of my heart for sharing your views of the world with me, the discussions, and explorations we have shared have allowed me to grow beyond my simple American mindset.

This research inquiry is inspired by my experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Madagascar. I am indebted to my amazing host family Papa Joseph and Mme Celestine, along with the amazing staff at Lycee Rahevivo-Ramamonjy. Thank you for opening my eyes to the pervasiveness of colonialism, and the dangers of improper western interventions. Mirehareha aho milaza ny tenako hoe betsileo fotsy sy vazaha gasy.

In memorandum of my grandmother, Ladeen Shaw, my love for books and my stubbornness for exploring oddities and curiosities stems from our cinnamon tea talks. Thank you encouraging my inquisitive nature, whether it be about extraterrestrial life, ancient Egypt, or the nature of human morality. I hope you enjoy all the orange sunshine and Fleetwood Mac in the great beyond.

## ABSTRACT

This research focuses on how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity in a postcolonial context. More specifically, it aims to explore whether queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe consider themselves subaltern in the relationship with their own governments and western organizations. The study combines Antonio Gramsci's concept of subaltern, postcolonial theory, and queer theory. My research argues that the study of queer individuals as subalterns are underdeveloped, particularly in Africa, and aims to fill this gap. The research question is how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity as determined by conflicting identifications with the West and their native cultures. This research surveys queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe to explore a potential dual subalternity, where queer activists are excluded from the dominant hegemonic orders of Western imperialism and their government. The thesis also briefly overviews homosexuality in pre-colonial Africa and how colonialism altered African sexual practices, leading to homophobia in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The starting point for the empirical inquiry is a Critical Discourse Analysis of 33 Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles about homosexuality and LGBT activism. It establishes that three primary discourses are occurring related to queer activism: Religious, anti-west, and Public Health discourses. I take these findings and conduct an anonymous open-ended survey with ten queer activists, followed by an autoethnographic reflection. The findings from this survey suggest that queer activists do not feel completely marginalized from mainstream discourses. Additionally, the findings suggest that queer activists maintain that they have support from Western organizations and the media, specifically social media. The findings from both the CDA and open-ended surveys are then integrated together. This research suggests that queer activists reflect on their subalternity in three categories: Dual Subalternity, Contextual Subalternity, and Stereotypical Subalternity. My autoethnographic reflection is significant as it provides a personal perspective on the power dynamics and assumptions embedded in the research inquiry. Specifically, I accentuate the oversaturation of Western scholars in postcolonial studies and the opposition of queer NGOs towards engaging with Western inquiries. This research concludes with caution to Western postcolonial scholars who aim to apply Western concepts to non-Western groups.

*Keywords: Subaltern Studies, Queer Studies, Postcolonialism, Queer Activism, African Studies*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

*We are not gays*, declared former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe at the 70th United Nations General Assembly. What seems an odd and almost comical remark holds a more embedded and problematic relationship. In this research inquiry, I aim to explore how queer activists in Southern Africa, specifically Zambia and Zimbabwe, reflect on their subalternity. Embedded within this research inquiry lie two guiding research questions. First, this research inquiry aims to explore whether queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe consider themselves subaltern in the relationship with their own governments. Additionally, a secondary research question can be formulated in a similar matter to whether queer activists consider themselves subaltern in relations to western organizations. I argue that queer activists have a dual subalternity from state-enforced homophobia and Western neo-colonialism. This research utilizes a critical discourse analysis of Zambian and Zimbabwe news articles and anonymous surveying of queer activists to demonstrate how queer activists reflect on their subalternity. Additionally, I utilize autoethnography to reflect on my research experience/ This research inquiry is heavily rooted in Gramsci's understanding of subalternity, cultural studies, and queer postcolonial studies.

The inquiry attempts to add a nuanced approach for postcolonial studies in International Relations due to the gap in the literature on subalternity in Africa and the intersectionality of colonization and sexuality related to subaltern identities. I aim to give an understanding of the existing research and debates relevant to subalternity in the context of queer activism in Zambia and Zimbabwe. To begin, Subaltern Studies is the one of the theoretical frameworks of my research because it allows me to emphasize the queer people's dual subalternity in a postcolonial setting. Additionally, subaltern studies is a postcolonial critique of modern, European, and Enlightenment epistemologies. This is essential when considering the existing patterns of paradoxical hegemony regarding colonization and its effects on queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The paradoxical hegemony in this application being Zambian and Zimbabwean government's dominance via irrational or contradictory tactics, while being able to control others, specifically queer activists. In addition, this research project supports queer postcolonial literature's foundational notion that homophobia is a colonial import, demonstrating a paradoxical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized regarding gay rights. A core

theoretical notion in this research paper is that colonial legacies are rooted in Eurocentrism and continue to perpetuate Eurocentric ideologies post-independence.

I must stress the importance of my research inquiry. First and foremost, this question is of great interest to postcolonial studies in International Relations due to the gap in the literature on subalternity in Africa and the intersectionality of colonization and sexuality related to subaltern identities. Additionally, this inquiry allows us to explore the neocolonial nature of Western academics via postcolonial studies. Also, the findings of this research inquiry offer a strong critique of Western scholars in the field of postcolonial studies.

Chapter Two of this thesis examines queer activism in Zimbabwe and Zambia while investigating how colonialism affected anti-homosexual laws and attitudes. Despite this, gay non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have developed to assist and defend the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community, including GALZ and SRC in Zimbabwe, Friends of Rainka, and Zanerela+ in Zambia. The chapter also looks at the theoretical frameworks that guided the research inquiry, such as intersectionality theory, queer postcolonial studies, and subaltern studies, and how they can be applied to comprehend how colonialism and sexual oppression of queer activists intersect in these nations.

Overall, this chapter sheds light on the difficulties queer people in Zimbabwe and Zambia confront and the work done by queer NGOs to uphold their rights in the face of official restrictions and media censorship. The theoretical frameworks underpinning the research are also examined, along with their applicability to comprehending how colonialism and sexual oppression interact in these nations. This chapter sheds important light on the struggles the LGBTQIA+ community faces and the value of ongoing support and fight for their rights by studying the past and present of gay activism in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

This thesis then transitions into Chapter Three, where I detail the methodology behind my research inquiry. First, I detail my use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA focuses on group relations of power, dominance, and inequality and allows for analyzing language structures in social practices. Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak offer different approaches to CDA, with Fairclough's three-dimensional framework being the most relevant to my research.

Additionally, I had initially planned to interview queer activists from Zambia and Zimbabwe but found it difficult to get responses from NGOs due to concerns about anonymity. Dr. Adriaan van Klinken, an African studies professor at the University of Leeds, suggested

using open-ended anonymous surveys, which I created based on my findings from my CDA of news articles. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants, and I collected ten extensive responses from queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe. I conclude this chapter by exploring the use of autoethnography for this research inquiry.

Chapter Four allows me to present the findings of my CDA. Thirty-three news articles from four primary news outlets in Zambia and Zimbabwe were analyzed for specific themes and vocabulary used to describe queer activists and homosexuality. Three significant discourses affecting queer activists were identified: religion, anti-west ideologies, and public health, specifically the spread of HIV/AIDS. With the findings from Chapter Four, I then transition into Chapter Five, where I explore the findings from my open-ended survey. The survey asked twelve questions about the participants' experiences as queer activists and their perceptions of support structures in their societies. Among my findings, we see that queer activists might not be as subaltern as initially anticipated.

Chapter Six combines the findings from my CDA, open-ended survey, and autoethnographic reflection to fully answer this paper's research inquiry. In this chapter, I argue that queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity in three categories: Dual Subalternity, Contextual Subalternity, and Stereotypical Subalternity.

## **2. EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

As the introduction has demonstrated, the primary goal of this research inquiry is to explore how queer activists in Southern Africa reflect on their subalternity. To analyze how queer activists in Southern Africa reflect on their subalternity, it is necessary to be familiar with intersectionality, queer identities, queer postcolonial studies, and subaltern studies because these theoretical frameworks offer a lens through which one can examine the complex and intersectional experiences of queer people living in postcolonial contexts. I will highlight the origins and transitions that occurred within Subaltern Studies. Furthermore, I will emphasize scholarly works on queer identity, colonization and sexuality, and queer activism in Zimbabwe and Zambia. I aim to give an understanding of the existing research and debates relevant to subalternity in the context of queer activism in Zambia and Zimbabwe. To begin, Subaltern Studies is one of the guiding theoretical frameworks of my research because it allows me to emphasize the queer people's dual subalternity in a postcolonial setting. Additionally, Subaltern Studies is a postcolonial critique of modern, European, and Enlightenment epistemologies. This is essential when considering the existing patterns of paradoxical hegemony regarding colonization and its effects on queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, this research project maintains the previously established notion from postcolonial queer studies that homophobia is a colonial import which demonstrated a paradoxical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized regarding gay rights. To elaborate, a core theoretical notion in this research paper is the idea that colonial legacies are rooted in Eurocentrism and continue to perpetuate Eurocentric ideologies post-independence.

### **2.1- "WORSE THAN DOGS AND PIGS": QUEER ACTIVISM IN ZIMBABWE**

As previously mentioned, this study examines how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe consider their subalternity. Due to this, an understanding of queer activism in Zambia and Zimbabwe and is necessary, along with a brief understanding of Zimbabwe's colonial history and sociopolitical climate for queer individuals. To begin, we can consider a quote from the charity Oxfam International in which they state that Zimbabwe is a complex country with a colonial history of repression and segregation, such as a long and bloody independence struggle that liberated the country from the British in 1980. (Maseko & Ndlovu,

2015, p.5) Also, the post-independence period was marred by violence including the infamous Gukurahundi massacre. (Maseko & Ndlovu, 2015, p.5) As queer postcolonial studies literature indicates, most anti-sodomy and anti-homosexuality legislation in contemporary Africa stems from their colonial legacy. This is a phenomenon we can visibly and historically see in Zimbabwe. As stated in the academic works of Keith Goddard, the British South African Company imported workers from neighboring countries to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). It was in the 1914 Immigration Act that specific mention of homosexuality first appeared in its administration. Persons convicted of sodomy and other unnatural offenses were declared prohibited immigrants. (Goddard, 2004) Goddard's work also informs us of how the pervasive nature of colonialism perpetuates these anti-homosexual policies. For example, Goddard demonstrates how this specific clause expanded in 1954 to prohibit anyone practicing homosexuality from entering Zimbabwe. This clause resurfaced in the Immigration Act of 1966, 1979, and 1996. (Goddard, 2004).

Zambian and Zimbabwean political leaders have erroneously believed that homosexuality is “un-African” due to the prevalence of anti-sodomy clauses in their contemporary legislation. The previous president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, is infamous for producing such discourses in the political arenas of Zimbabwe. In 1995, Mugabe publicly scorned homosexuality in a speech, calling them “worse than dogs and pigs” (Mabvurira et al., 2012, p.221). President Robert Mugabe has repeatedly stoked antigay attitudes during his twenty-five-year rule. In addition to casting aspersions against gays and their allies in public speeches, Mugabe has blamed LGBT people for Zimbabwe's dire economic situation. (Kretz, 2012, p.227) Since 1995, gays have been attacked on several occasions. In September 1995, the parliament of Zimbabwe fully endorsed an antigay campaign. (Goddard, 2004). Furthermore, another landmark event in Zimbabwe was the imprisonment of a former Prime Minister, Canaan Sodindo Banana, on charges of sodomy in 1997. (Mabvurira et al., 2012, p.221). However, not all Zimbabwean political leaders promoted this homophobic rhetoric. Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangarai, pushed to include sexual orientation as a protected status in the new Zimbabwean constitution in 2013. (Kretz, 2012, p.209). However, the constitutional convention managed to further erode the legal protections of LGBT persons in Zimbabwe, leaving them in a more precarious and dangerous position than when the debate began. (Kretz, 2012. p.230).

As one can see, the political reaction to homosexuality in Zimbabwe has drastically disenfranchised queer people. Thus, queer activists attempted to challenge this oppression. A small assortment of queer NGOs emerged. The first lesbian groups, the Women's Cultural Club (WCC), collapsed and the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) was formed in 1988. (Mabvurira et al., 2012, p.220). The most significant event in the history of homosexuality in Zimbabwe was the Book Fair Crisis of 1995. GALZ applied for a stand at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair mainly because the theme was on human rights. (Mabvurira et al., 2012, p.220). Many queer scholars who have conducted research on Zimbabwe stress the importance of this event. The event revealed to the state the expansion of the gay movement in Zimbabwe. After the 1995 Book Fair events, homosexuality was placed on the national agenda, and attacks from the state intensified. (Mabvurira et al., 2012, p.220).

Unfortunately, the hatred and anti-homosexual discourse emerging from the 1995 Book Fair Crisis caused many queer individuals to hide from the public spotlight. Currently, we really can only see two queer NGOs in Zimbabwe: GALZ and the Sexual Rights Center (SRC). As previously mentioned, GALZ was founded in 1988. GALZ is a membership-based association that promotes, represents, and protects the rights and interests of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and intersex individuals to influence positive attitudes of the broader society. (GALZ, 2023) The NGO hosts a plethora of resources for queer people, such as legal advice, providing safe spaces, offering literature related to the LGBTQIA+ community, and providing health support. In addition to providing valuable services and resources to the queer community in Zimbabwe, GALZ produces an annual report that gives a statistical and descriptive overview of the LGBTQIA+ violations that occur in Zimbabwe. In their 2021 report, GALZ found that the common violations reported to GALZ were sexual assaults (25%) and blackmail (15%). (2022, p.51).

The Sexual Rights Center, or SRC, is a relatively new queer NGO in Zimbabwe. Mojalifa Ndlovu, an openly gay man living in Zimbabwe, decided to put aside his dream of being a nurse to help establish the SRC as an organization focused on promoting LGBTQI+ rights in Zimbabwe. (Mundawarara, 2022) The primary mission of the SRC is to advance and promote the access, voice, agency, and empowerment of marginalized, vulnerable, and key population communities in Zimbabwe to realize quality, comprehensive, and affirming sexual and reproductive health and rights. (Sexual Rights Centre, 2021). SRC provides similar services to

those offered by GALZ, such as crisis management, safe sex commodities, and resources for raising awareness regarding the LGBTQIA+ community. Nevertheless, it is uncommon, if not nonexistent, for there to be any public demonstrations or protests in Zimbabwe regarding the decriminalization of homosexuality or any LGBTQIA+ protections. Thus, queer NGOs in Zimbabwe work quietly and discreetly via structured organizations to connect with the queer population in the country. As we will see, a similar situation is occurring in Zambia.

## **2.2 – WE ARE A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY: QUEER ACTIVISM IN ZAMBIA**

As this chapter will demonstrate, the sociopolitical conditions and post-colonial legacy in Zambia and Zimbabwe are similar, if not identical. When considering queer activism in Zambia, we must analyze the country's colonial legacy. To begin, formerly Northern Rhodesia, the country gained independence from their British colonial masters and gained democracy on October 24, 1964. (Van Klinken & Phiri, 2020, p.2) Like many other African countries, Zambia has inherited the 'sodomy laws' from its former colonizer, Britain. Thus, same-sex sexual activities are illegal. (Van Klinken, 2013, p.524) In 1991, President Frederick Chiluba declared that Zambia was 'a Christian nation' via a declaration enshrined later in the country's constitution. (Phiri, 2003, p.1) Zambia's contemporary state-practiced homophobia is a colonial import, which is being systematically maintained via religious discourses. As the country began to reconstruct itself after gaining independence, queer Zambians aimed to articulate their displeasure regarding Section 157 of the Penal Code. The first public assertions of LGBTI identity in modern-day Zambia were in the 1980s, led by activists such as Francis Chisambisa, a founding member of Zambia's Lesbians Gays and Transgender Association (Legatra). (Fabrini & Director, 2007, p.4) When Legatra tried to register legally, the then Vice President, Christon Tembo, stated that gay lobbyists and other champions of acts against the order of nature will from now on be arrested and charged with conspiring to commit criminal acts. (Shoko, 2017, p.17) Unfortunately, many activists like Chisambisa were persuaded to emigrate for their safety. Thus, queer activism was quickly silenced throughout the country.

The situation regarding Legatra was not Zambia's only attempt to silence queer activism. When LGBT organizers appeared in the newspaper to announce their wishes to register the organization, government officials warned that any attempt to register the group or hold public meetings would be met with arrests. (Fabrini & Director, 2007, p.4) Since LGBTI human rights

organizations cannot legally register, the LGBTI movement negotiates systemic red tape by operating both underground and risking visible operations. (Shoko, 2017, p.18). Also, the Zambian media strongly shapes public opinion on LGBTI human rights. The government continues to clamp down on independent media, ensuring that most voices and perspectives in mainstream media reflect the dominant views of the State. (Shoko, 2017, p.25).

Such a phenomenon is evident when considering the Zambian supreme court case, *The People v. Paul Kasonkomona*. In 2013, Kasonkomona called for decriminalizing same-sex relationships on a late-night television program. (Van Klinken, 2015, p.4) He was arrested and charged under section 178(g) of the Penal Code. The High Court affirmed the Magistrate Court's ruling as the state failed to prove its case beyond a reasonable doubt and that Kasonkomona was exercising his right to freedom of expression. (Global Freedom of Expression Columbia University, 2015) Thus, as one can observe, the Zambian government and Zambian media have constructed an environment that stomps out visible queer activism. Nevertheless, the plethora of human rights violations against queer individuals in Zambia was brought to the attention of the international community, specifically the United Nations.

In February 2012, United Nations General Secretary, Ban Ki-moon, paid an official visit to the country. In his address to the Zambian Parliament, he called upon the country to uphold the "highest standards of human rights and protections for all people regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability". Unfortunately, Zambian political leaders quickly reversed Ban Ki-moon's rhetoric. They accused him of trying to corrupt the integrity of Zambia as a Christian nation. (Van Klinken & Phiri, 2020, p.3)

Nevertheless, support from western organizations allowed some queer NGOs to operate discreetly in Zambia. The two primary queer NGOs in Zambia are Friends of Rainka (FoR) and Zanerela+. FoR is a non-governmental organization that aims to protect, advance, and promote the human rights of Zambian sexual minorities. (Shoko, 2017, p.18) FoR's work includes engaging with the public health sector on key populations. (Shoko, 2017, p.18) Additionally, Zanerela+ is a faith-based group that envisages a society free of HIV-related stigma and discrimination, with religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS. Zanerela+ has engaged journalists on LGBTI issues to assist with understanding LGBTI rights as human rights. (Shoko, 2017, p.18) As the scholarly works of Adriaan van Klinken have demonstrated, Zambian queer activist organizations are not highly visible. Furthermore, the

academic works of Ashley Currier detail how some LGBT movement organizations, such as TRP in Namibia, style themselves as human rights NGOs in particular venues, downplaying their gender and sexual minority rights advocacy and emphasizing their broad commitment to minority rights. (Currier & Cruz, 2014, p.8) Thus, many queer NGOs in Zambia will highlight HIV/AIDS activism to assist the queer community.

### **2.3 – SUBALTERN STUDIES**

The term “subaltern” is considered to be a theoretical invention of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher. Its origins are in military language. As demonstrated in Marcus Green’s exploration of Gramsci’s work, Gramsci uses the term “subaltern” in the literal sense in his first notebook, referring to noncommissioned military troops who are subordinate to the authority of lieutenants, colonels, and generals. (Green, 2002, p.1). However, it becomes evident that Gramsci broadened the concept for his scholarly endeavors. As Green details, Gramsci uses the term figuratively, in nonmilitary instances, regarding positions of subordination or lower status. (Green, 2002, p.1). Like many of the concepts in the Prison Notebooks, Gramsci does not attempt to provide a precise definition of subaltern groups. (Green, 2011, p.393). In this respect, the concept of “subaltern” lacks strict parameters and relies heavily on historical contexts.

Scholars can assimilate this inclination from further works in Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks. For example, Gramsci refers to slaves, peasants, religious groups, women, different races, the *popolani* (common people) and *popolo* (people) of the medieval communes, the proletariat, and the bourgeoisie before the Risorgimento as subaltern groups. (Green, 2011, p.388) The three primary historical contexts Gramsci analyses in Notebook 25 include Ancient Rome, the medieval communes, and the period of the Risorgimento and its aftermath. (Green, 2011, p.394) Considering this, the conceptualization of “subaltern” highly reflects the historical contexts being investigated. Thus, there is no strict definition for the concept of the subaltern as it relates to the works of Antonio Gramsci.

Some scholars, such as Marcus Green and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, have heavily contested the “true” meaning and purpose of Gramsci’s “subaltern” concept. In a 1992 interview, Spivak insists that Gramsci used the term “subaltern” in his prison notebooks out of the necessity to censor himself from using the word “proletariat.” (Spivak, 1985). However, Green argues that Gramsci retained his explicit use of the word ‘proletariat,’ did not camouflage it, and used it one

additional time in his prison notebooks. Both 'subaltern' and 'proletariat' appear together in the two versions of Gramsci's prison notes before and after mid-1932. (Green, 2011, p.389). Thus, Green argues that Spivak's censorship theory is not plausible, as why would Gramsci maintain his use of the word proletariat while simultaneously using the concept subaltern. Consequently, Green and many contemporary scholars see subaltern as a distinct concept from that of Marxist proletariat based on this past research, I maintain this notion that subalternity is not synonymous with the proletariat, and thus do not see queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe as proletarians.

While Gramsci's writings were from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, his works were discovered by the English-speaking audiences only in the 1970s. As a result of this, subaltern studies began in 1982 as a series of interventions in some debates specific to the writing of modern Indian history (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.467). Ranajit Guha and eight younger scholars based in India, the United Kingdom, and Australia constituted the editorial collective of Subaltern Studies. (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.467). The declared aim of Guha's Subaltern Studies was to produce historical analyses in which the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of their own history. (Chakrabarty, 2000, p.472). This, in theory, rectified elitist and colonial bias. Domination, subordination, hegemony, resistance, revolt, and other old concepts could now be a subject of analysis for subaltern studies. (Ludden, 2002, p.16). Subaltern studies later transitioned into a transnational study of colonialism. This was Ranajit Guha's academic home ground, as he increasingly stressed the clash of unequal cultures under colonialism and the dominance of colonial modernity over India's resistant, indigenous culture. Subaltern Studies thus became a postcolonial critique of modern, European, and Enlightenment epistemologies. (Ludden, 2002, pg.20). Scholars, such as Mukul Kumar and Ananya Roy, argued that Guha's previous academic work related to the epistemology of property in Bengal highly influenced his transition and influence on subaltern studies. As stated in the work of Kumar and Roy, Guha's early work prefigures many of the epistemological moves, such as the critique of Eurocentrism and its universal categories, associated with subaltern studies. (Kumar & Roy, 2019, p.58). It is crucial to mention Guha's earlier works as some accounts of subaltern studies fail to stress how Guha's work related to dominance, colonialism, and property allowed subaltern studies to transition into a component of postcolonial theory. Awareness of Guha's works related to subaltern studies is crucial for this research project, as an understanding of epistemology; specifically, the deconstruction of western

colonial epistemologies, is crucial in reflecting subalternity among queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Subaltern Studies arrived in the global mainstream in 1993, after Ranajit Guha's alignment with Bernard S. Cohn had made the project's cultural critique of colonialism an elixir of new vitality for American-style cultural history. (Ludden, 2002, p.23). To elaborate on Ludden statement, Guha's early works were shaped by his interactions with Cohn, both aimed to analyze resistance to colonialism, specifically in Indian culture. Through their research, a new model for integrating cultural and social factors into historical analysis was created. Thus, this gave way to a new transition among subaltern studies, specifically for the introduction of Latin American Subaltern Studies (LASS). As Florencia Mallon discussed in her works, the Subaltern Studies Group organized around their series of collected essays, occasional conferences, and additional monographic publications on India and colonialism provided inspiration. (Mallon, 1994, p.1491) For many Latin American scholars, they felt implored or expected to borrow Eurocentric or westernized frameworks for their scholarly endeavors. Thus, subaltern studies offered a robust and alluring framework for Latin American scholars.

Ilena Rodriguez strengthens Mallon's argument in her works by declaring that Guha's Subaltern Studies validated ancient Amerindian cultures and a desire among Latin American Scholars to unearth their old epistemological ways of organizing the universe and a desire to validate them. (Rodriguez, 2005, p.51). Rodriguez also believes there was a need to link old indigenous epistemologies to new indigenous struggles, which demanded a systemic analysis of capitalism. (Rodriguez, 2005, p.51). Rodriguez highlights that LASS wanted to revisit the past and properly analyze how capitalism and colonialism affected the subaltern in Latin America. However, this was not something that interested Southern Asian Subaltern Studies Scholars. This was considered to a historical juncture for LASS as it demonstrated an epistemological break from the original Subaltern Studies group. Nevertheless, LASS, as a school of thought, found itself slowly "dying out" due to historical, political, and academic distrust. (Rodriguez, 2005, p.58). Furthermore, it is important to highlight North American Subaltern Studies, which is an almost unsubstantial and inexistant body of literature. Eva Cherniavsky highlights how there are many subaltern subjects in North American history, such as Chinese laborers, African slaves, indigenous communities, and Mexican Americans. However, U.S. history is marked by a convergence of nationalism and colonialism, so that independence transfers power from

imperialist interests abroad to imperialist interests on American soil—from white men to white men. (Cherniavsky, 1996, p.86).

I simply cannot offer a reflection on subaltern studies without referring to the works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; specifically, her article titled *Can The Subaltern Speak?* In this article, Spivak argued that the subaltern was not only deprived of the capacity to speak by the dominant order but that the subaltern was defined by its exclusion from representation as such, in both political and aesthetic senses. (Thomas, 2018, p.2) Furthermore, Spivak critiques Western poststructuralist theory as represented by Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze and their tendency to reinstitute the notion of a Western sovereign subject in the act of deconstructing it. (Navarro Tejero, 2004, p.93). Spivak continues her reassessment by arguing that these ‘radicals’ too easily suppose that they are outside of the general system of exploitation of the ‘Third World’ in which western modes of cultural analysis and representation. (Navarro Tejero, 2004, p.93). Spivak’s analysis of the silencing of the contemporary subaltern by western ‘radical’ intellectuals who ostensibly seek to champion those who are most oppressed by neocolonialism points to a major paradox in not only subaltern studies but postcolonial theory. (Navarro Tejero, 2004, p.93).

Spivak offers subaltern and postcolonial scholars a beautiful illustration to visualize her argument. She introduces her readers to a group of Hindu women who participated in Sati. Sati was a Hindu practice where a widow would sacrifice herself by sitting atop her deceased husband's funeral pyre. Spivak would detail in her article that British colonizers outlawed Sati as they believed they were saving women from being burned alive; however, this colonial interference caused Sati women to lose this practice. Furthermore, we do not have a record of their account of these rituals or practices. Thus, Spivak concludes that the subaltern cannot speak. (Spivak, 2015, p.104). Furthermore, Spivak uses this analogy to compare western scholars such as Foucault and Deleuze to the British colonizers who outlawed Sati. Spivak, in a sense, compels Subaltern and Postcolonial scholars to consider the epistemologies they invoke in their works carefully, as they can unintentionally use western frames and western knowledge to analyze non-western subjects.

One final scholar that is crucial to understanding Subaltern Studies is Dipesh Chakrabarty. Chakrabarty is very critical of Ranajit Guha’s formulation of subaltern studies. Chakrabarty has often spoken upon Ranajit Guha's deft readings of colonial records, which drew explicitly from Ferdinand de Saussure, Claude Levi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, Roland Barthes,

and Michel Foucault. (Prakash, 2011, p.80). The reliance on such theorists and the emphasis on "textual" readings arose from, as Dipesh Chakrabarty points out, the absence of workers' diaries and other such sources available to British historians. (Prakash, 2011, p.80). However, Chakrabarty emphasizes the paradox of using colonial records of exploitation and profiteering to critique the west, as these records are produced and censored for the west's benefit. Furthermore, Chakrabarty argues that Subaltern Studies is a premature celebrated effort of the successful decolonization of knowledge. (Prakash, 2011, p.84). Chakrabarty also stresses the importance of history as a discipline for postcolonial and subaltern studies. This is because the dominance of Europe as history not only subalternizes non-Western societies but also serves the aims of their nation-states. (Prakash, 2011, p.85)

Subaltern studies is highly empirical and has no precise definition or strict parameters. One could use the famous American colloquial expression "I know it when I see it", to identify empirical examples of subalternity, as truly a plethora of social situations and oppressed groups can be conceptualized under this theoretical framework. Furthermore, David Ludden argues that it is important to stress that the bulk of research on subaltern subjects has always escaped Subaltern Studies. (Ludden, 2002, p.26). Ludden makes an interesting argument that academic literature is full of subaltern subjects. Many books and articles are related to the histories of English peasants, indigenous people, the Indian lower class, and so forth. In addition, we must consider Chakrabarty's critique of Guha regarding the originality of sources. As a concluding thought regarding subaltern studies, it is evident that the postcolonial and post-structural elements of subaltern studies allow the discipline to function interdisciplinarily and can give nuance to contemporary queer studies. To elaborate, this allows for a more comprehensive understanding of queer people's lives, considering how many different factors, such as race, class, and gender, interact to affect their experiences. This refined approach understands that queer people are not homogenous and that a complex interaction of social, political, and cultural elements shapes their lives.

## **2.4 – QUEER IDENTITIES**

Due to the interdisciplinary structure of queer studies, it can be quite difficult to trace the theoretical lineage behind queer identities. Thus, this portion of the literature review will detail how the theoretical framework behind queer identities stems from British Cultural studies, which in turn allowed for gender studies and social movement theory to form. For intellectual historian

Dennis Dworkin, a critical moment at the beginning of cultural studies as a field was when Richard Hoggart used the term in 1964 in founding the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. (Dworkin, 1997). Hoggart appointed as his assistant Stuart Hall, who would effectively be directing CCCS by 1968. (Davies, 1991). With this in mind, the field of cultural studies became closely associated with Hall's work. (Morley & Chen, 1996). Simply put, Hoggart and Hall both believed that the rise of mass communications and popular forms were permanently changing our relationship to power and authority and to one another. (Hsu, 2017). These scholarly works related to power, authority, and essentially the globalization of mass media were extremely beneficial to scholars who were baffled over the analysis of social movements. Many classical social movement theory scholars had subscribed to the theory of relative deprivation, arguing that people are driven into movements out of a sense of deprivation or inequality. (de Castro, 2009). While this theory is conceivable under the analysis of more-political movements, such as the French Revolution, the American Civil War, and other western domestic conflicts, it ultimately failed to properly analyze the vast social movements of the 1960s. Thus, contemporary social movement theory was born with this new understanding of power and mass communication via cultural studies. It is worth mentioning that the more American-centered structural approaches examined how characteristics of the social and political context enable or hinder protests. (Carroll & Hackett, 2006, p.86) The more European-centered social-constructivist approaches rejected the notion that class struggle is central to social movements and emphasized other indicators of a collective identity, like gender, ethnicity, or sexuality. (Buechler, 1995, p.442).

Evidently, these contemporary social movement theory scholars found that these new social movements, instead of pushing for specific changes in public policy, emphasize social changes in identity, lifestyle, and culture. Francesca Polletta and James Jasper coined the term "collective identity." This concept can be defined as an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connections with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p.285) This theory holds that members of movements ultimately feel more connected and willing to participate when there is a shared collective identity among the group, which can easily be formed via social aspects rather than economic or political aspects. These notions of identity would become crucial to social movement theory and later inspire future theories that we will explore in our overview of queer studies literature.

Simultaneously as cultural studies had influenced social movement theory, analysis of second-wave feminism had inspired further academic contributions to the concept of gender and identity. Judith Butler, an American gender theorist, was influential in showing the academic world that the performance of gender, sex, and sexuality is about power in society. In her book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler aims to break the supposed links between sex and gender so that gender and desire can be "flexible, free-floating and not caused by other stable factors." The idea of identity as free and flexible and gender as a performance, not an essence, has been one of the foundations of queer theory. (Butler, 2012).

Naturally, these academic explorations and scholarly revelations regarding social movements and gender identity led scholars to attempt to analyze the gay liberation movement. Thus, queer studies (also referred to as LGBT studies) emerged into the academic domain. While there are many interesting subfields and academic directions in queer studies, the most notable aspect of queer studies is the inception of queer theory. Queer theory began with Gloria Anzaldúa and other scholars in the 1990s, who were influenced by the work of French post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault. (Goldberg, 2016). Many queer theorists utilize Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* as a primary starting point for queer theory. This is because, in Foucault's work, he explored how concrete socially approved practices and discourses are socially constructed, such as sexuality. Furthermore, Foucault's primary goal in these texts is to disprove the idea that Western society had repressed sexuality since the 17th century and that sexuality was something society did not discuss. (Crossman, 2012) Foucault further demonstrates this argument by examining ancient Greece and ancient Rome, Foucault demonstrates to his audience how the censorship of knowledge or information about sex was merely a bourgeoisie's attempt at gaining power. Thus, giving the notion that power from the bourgeoisie has altered gender and sexuality norms in society. The post-structuralist works of Foucault not only inspired Anzaluda but also inspired the works of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who wrote *Epistemology of the Closet*. In this text, Sedgwick argues that limiting sexuality to homosexuality or heterosexuality, in a structured binary opposition is too simplistic. (Sedgwick, 2008) As scholars explored the social construction of gender and sexuality, along with those scholars who were simultaneously exploring the gay liberation movement under new social movement theory, the invention of theoretical frameworks behind queer identities began to formulate.

Theoretical frameworks and academic contributions regarding queer identities are extremely dynamic. Language and terms that may have been acceptable to conceptualize queer individuals five or ten years ago may have quickly become outdated or obsolete. Thus, this literature review will not attempt to inform the reader of every personal identity that can find itself under the queer umbrella; this is primarily because queer can be conceptualized as an umbrella term that is non-essentialist. Specifically, the term queer can be utilized to describe an anti-essentialist position that rejects the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality. (Miller, et al., 2016, p.443) This rejection of a dichotomous state of sexuality stems from the works of Sedgwick and Anzaluda while simultaneously appreciating Foucault's declaration of sexuality as a social construct. Furthermore, anyone who declares a personal identity that is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex can adopt the collective and broad queer identity. The term can even accept individuals with more specified and nuanced personal identities, such as demisexual, closeted, fluid, omnisexual, and sociosexual. Individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community can adopt many personal identities to specify their gender identity and sexual orientation; thus, the term queer is a broad and uniform way of including everyone to formulate a collective identity.

Additionally, scholars Shaeleya Miller, Verta Taylor, and Leila Rupp explored how the queer identity is primarily a political identity. As stated in their works, queer is a collective identity that connotes a political commitment to the LGBTQIA+ movement. (Miller et al., 2016, p.452) Miller, Taylor, and Rupp gather this notion from the collective identity works of Jasper and Polletta, who argued that claiming a collective identity can provide a social movement with strategic visibility. (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p.301) This collective identity also stems from a unique socialization process. Simply put in the works of Suzanne Walters, we [as queers] are largely born to and raised by those different from us, are not birthed into a ready-made identity, and must actively seek out and construct a community and identity whose existence is predicated on that seeking. (Walters, 2001). Bryan Wuest adds to Walter's research by stating that a heterocentric culture which devalues queerness and deviation from societal gender norms has the effect of implicitly and sometimes explicitly discouraging youth from expressing their newfound self-understanding, either in words or actions. (Wuest, 2014, p.21) Wuest's work, along with various other contemporary queer scholars, demonstrates the importance of media representation to revitalize the queer identity as a personal and collective identity. This is primarily because proper queer media representation allows for visibility and acculturation. Thus, we can

theoretically conclude that the queer identity is a collective political identity that is primarily socialized via media and social consumption.

Sociologists and psychologists have actively created empirical case studies regarding queer identities. For example, in Miller, Taylor, and Rupp's exploration of the queer identities of female student-athletes, they interviewed 125 non-straight women to understand their reflections on their queer identity. (2016, p.448) In addition to the sociological contributions of Miller, Taylor, and Rupp, the contributions of Wuest are very crucial to empirically understanding the queer identity. Wuest conducted a discourse analysis of YouTube "coming out" videos to better understand how queer individuals overcome obstacles in a heterocentric society. It is in this empirical case study that we get a nuanced understanding of the "coming out" process, which is arguably the foundational and most frightening form of obtaining a personal and collective queer identity. Based on this past research, it will be crucial to explore how media representation is perceived by queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The theoretical frameworks, academic lines, and empirical case studies of queer identity are compelling, but it is important to recognize their limitations. Most of these frameworks and examples have been developed and analyzed in a white-centric Western context, which may limit their applicability to non-Western identities. One must consider that homosexual behavior is still illegal in 71 countries and punishable by death in 13 countries worldwide. (Serrano Amaya & Rios Gonzales, 2019, p.1) With this in mind, the process of "coming out" and the ability to adopt the collective queer identity is certainly a western privilege. Furthermore, these frameworks fail to recognize the queer identity as a transnational thought. Thus, many African and Asian scholars have created critiques of the Eurocentric orientation of Western queer studies. They examine the longstanding traditions of sexual and gender diversity, ambiguity, and fluidity in their respective cultures and societies. (Van Klinklin, 2020) Nevertheless, intersectionality theory emerged as a means of recognizing this limitations and can explore multiple forms of oppression and privilege simultaneously.

## **2.5 – INTERSECTIONALITY: WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE**

As demonstrated, the queer identity is a complex concept. However, given the subject matter of this thesis, it is impossible for our conception of queerness to exist independently. An exciting component of my research is the focus on the dual subalternity of queer activists in

Zambia and Zimbabwe. These actors not only find themselves voiceless because of their sexuality, but they are voiceless on a global level due to neocolonialism and the lasting effects of colonial legacies. This simultaneous oppression makes the situation even more complicated, as previous literature has either studied oppression with a singular oppressive force in mind. Kimberle Crenshaw's intersectionality paradigm is exceptionally resourceful for analyzing simultaneously oppressive forces. This next portion of my literature review will discuss the intersectionality paradigm and its applications.

The intersectionality paradigm aims to underscore the 'multidimensionality' of marginalized subjects' lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989, p.139). Intersectionality originated in the late 1980s and early 1990s from critical race studies, a scholarly movement born in the legal academy committed to problematizing law's purported color blindness, neutrality, and objectivity. (Nash, 2008, p.2). Intersectionality, as previously stated, has its roots in critical race studies. However, black feminist thought, a subfield of critical race studies, allowed intersectionality to form and flourish. Black feminist thought emerged in the 1980s primarily because black women were often left behind and disregarded by the White feminists of the gender equality movement. (Taylor, 1998). While the field was making significant process in exploring political systems and their perpetuation of racial inequality, Crenshaw noticed that black women were often left out of the conversations regarding racial and gender equality. Crenshaw created intersectionality to display the disadvantages caused by intersecting systems creating structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against minorities in the workplace and society. (Cho et al., 2013)

It is worth noting that the notion or paradigm of intersecting oppressive forces is not new to social scientists. For example, Patricia Hill Collins' work regarding the matrix of domination is often seen as synonymous with Crenshaw's intersectionality. Collins argued that additive models of oppression are firmly rooted in the dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thought" (Collins, 1990, p.543). Thus, Collins suggests that replacing additive models of oppression with interlocking ones creates possibilities for new paradigms, such as the intersection of race and gender. (Collins, 1990, p.543). Nevertheless, both the matrix of domination and intersectionality emphasizes the racialization of gender and the necessity of black feminist thought in analyzing the interconnection between gender and racial inequality from women's lived experiences. (Limpongog, 2016, p.1)

Initially, the paradigm of intersectionality primarily focused on gender and race. However, many scholars began to apply Crenshaw's metaphor to other examples of intersecting systems of oppression. Thus, fields such as Chicana studies, Asian studies, and disability studies began to emerge. Furthermore, the notion of intersecting oppressive structures highly advanced research in LGBTQIA+ studies, especially when considering the intersection of race and sexuality. For example, we can consider the works of Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Moraga and Anzaldúa published *This Bridge Called My Back* in 1981. Moraga and Anzaldúa's works explored how the intersection of sexual orientation and class with consideration to race and gender added additional nuance to Crenshaw's future notion of intersectionality.

Another notable mention is the methods utilized by Carolina Alday-Mondaco, and Siu Lay-Lisboa. The authors present a qualitative methodological tool called "Intersectional Loom" to graph and analyze the implications of subalternity from biographical interviews. The authors used the word "Loom" to indicate that they weave the identities and responses of their participants together in relations to social structures, mimicking the process of weaving threads together with a loom machine. To elaborate, these scholars give their interviewees a selection of identities and ask them to discuss their access to societal structures. The interviewees are then asked to reflect on their decisions. They present examples obtained from an investigation carried out with LGBT people from Chile, Colombia, and Mexico. (Alday-Mondaco & Lay-Lisboa, 2022, p.1) It would be most beneficial for me to utilize a similar method to explore how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity.

While the intersectionality paradigm provided positive results to black western feminists, non-western scholars felt that intersectionality was not created with them in mind. As stated in the works of Ranjoo Seodu Herr, feminism had assumed that women everywhere face similar oppression merely by their sex/gender. In the late 1970s and the early 1980s, feminists of color residing in the West began to criticize the implicit racism and imperialism of white second-wave feminists. (Herr, 2014, p.3) Furthermore, the works of Chandra Mohanty inform us that only through homogenization and historical reductionism were white feminists led to believe that women are a cross-culturally singular, homogeneous group with the same interests, perspectives, goals and similar experiences. (Mohanty & Torres, 1991, p.33) With this in mind, transnational intersectionality and transnational feminism were created to offer a non-western perspective regarding intersecting structures of oppression.

The academic contributions of Shelly Grabe and Nicole M. Else-Quest are crucial to understanding transnational feminism. In their works, they offer transnational feminism as a response to western feminism placing importance on the intersections among gender, ethnicity, sexuality, economic exploitation, and other social hierarchies in the context of the empire-building or imperialist policies characterized by historical and emergent global capitalism. (Grabe and Else-Quest, 2012, p.159). Grabe and Else-Quest's academic contributions are crucial to my research. Regarding studying how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity, Crenshaw's intersectional paradigm would not appropriately fit due to its use of western epistemologies and disregard for colonial and imperialistic oppression. However, transnational intersectionality, in combination with queer studies, would allow for a theoretical framework to form that could adequately address the primary inquiry of this research inquiry while simultaneously giving nuance to the intersection of oppressive structures that affect queer activists in southern Africa. In addition to transnational intersectionality, queer postcolonial studies offered a plethora of nuance to queer studies and the notion of queer oppression. Queer postcolonial studies emerged to evaluate the relationship between colonialism and human sexuality, amongst other areas of concern. It is crucial to give a recap of queer postcolonial studies, specifically highlighting the relationship between colonialism and LGBT communities in Africa.

## **2.6 – QUEER POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES**

As previously demonstrated, queer postcolonial studies emerge as a critique of queer studies. Specifically, queer postcolonial studies criticize the white westernized central subject of queer studies. Thus, academics began to explore the intersecting relationship between colonialism and sexuality. To further add credibility to this statement, we can consider the academic works of William Spurlin. Spurlin states that homosexuality in non-western societies is, at best, imagined or invented through the Euro American queer identity politics, appropriated through the economies of the west, or altogether ignored. (Spurlin, 2001, p.185) Nevertheless, queer postcolonial studies do utilize many concepts from queer theory and subaltern studies; with this in mind, it is very much rooted in cultural studies. Queer postcolonial studies is a relatively new subfield; however, there are some assumptions that scholars in this field are adamant about. First and foremost, a majority of scholars agree that homophobia, especially in

Africa, is a colonial import. Many African countries did not see gender as a binary in the way that their European colonizers did, nor did they correlate anatomy to gender identity. In no African country prior to colonization do we see any persecution of LGBT individuals because of their sexuality, nor any anti-LGBT laws. (Buckle, 2022)

There are many examples of African sexualities that exist outside of the European conceptualizations of gender and sexuality. For example, the works of Marc Epprecht introduce us to the Ila people, an ethnic group in The Republic of Zambia. Epprecht highlights the findings of early 20th-century anthropologists who observed the Ila people. These anthropological accounts mentioned one Ila-speaking man who dressed as a woman, did women's work, and lived and slept among, but not with, women. The Ila label "mwaami" they translated as "prophet." They also mentioned that pederasty was not rare "but was considered dangerous because of the risk that the boy will become pregnant". (Epprecht, 2021, p.172) Furthermore, the works of Paulla Ebron detail how in many places in West Africa, gender is not something that newborns are fully equipped with. The making of women and men is formally performed through age-grade systems that usher children into women and men. (Ebron, 2007, p.171) We can see a final example among the Shona in Zimbabwe, where same-sex couples could live together as husband and wife without attracting opprobrium. A male in the role of the latter, doing all the public duties and chores that a female wife would do, was known as murumekadzi. (Epprecht, 2012, p.521)

These anthropological works demonstrate quite clearly that "homosexuality", or "queer people" did exist in pre-colonial Africa. These individuals were not oppressed nor targeted for homosexual relations or gender fluidity, and rather, they were accepted into their societies. This brief understanding of pre-colonial African sexualities allows us to understand how colonialism introduced homophobia into African societies. To begin, I will momentarily present Armand Corre's *L'ethnographie criminelle*, which depicts the nudity and sexual license of late nineteenth-century populations in Senegal as an African tradition that is alien to European sensibilities. (M'baye, 2013, p.116) Specifically, Corre condemned the corrupting influence of the local population, which he views as a threat to the colonial soldiers' manhood and probity and as undermining the French civilizing mission and its cult of domesticity. (M'baye, 2013, p.117) Babacar M'baye, a pan-African literature scholar, argues that the French, in the case of Senegal, felt compelled to restrict sexuality in African colonies due to the French medical

proscriptions against nonprocreative sex and the nationalist-colonialist mission civilisatrice. (2013, p.119) Of course, this is not a phenomenon unique to French colonization nor Senegal. In fact, most of the provisions that exist against homosexuality in Africa are based on colonial law. (Ireland, 2012, p.56) Furthermore, the academic works of Patrick Ireland inform us that a British colonial past and the absence of economic freedom and openness explain at least one-third of the variance in sodomy laws. (Ireland, 2012, p.47) Due to colonization, we now see post-colonial states with state-led homophobia. As Ireland expresses in his works, particularly desperate authoritarian rulers see gays as useful scapegoats for drawing attention away from their regimes' poor performance and corruption. (2012, p.55). Systematically, post-colonial states have unstable democracies and insecure economies. The fragile conditions of these states are a legacy of colonialism and results dependent position in the globalized economy.

It is worth stating that queer postcolonial studies does not have a conventional uniform theory, rather, it is a set of ideas and problematizations. One can refer to the works of Patrick Ireland and Babacar M'Baye as an example of this. In addition to these two scholars, we also can utilize the works of Ashley Currier, a sociologist who focuses on LGBT organizations and activism in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, and South Africa. In Currier's book *Out in Africa*, she details her ethnographic experiences in Namibia and South Africa. In her book, Currier explores how LGBT organizations utilize visibility and western terminologies to further LGBT legislation in their respective countries. Currier's works are beneficial for this research project as it gives crucial insights to the operational efforts of queer activists in a post-colonial country. The works of Adriaan Van Klinken are also crucial empirical pieces, especially her works in Zambia related to the intersection of religion and anti-homosexual rhetoric.

What follows next is an intriguing yet paradoxical phenomenon. Many African leaders will argue homosexuality is un-African. A core theoretical notion in this research paper is the idea that colonial legacies are rooted in Eurocentrism and continue to perpetuate Eurocentric ideologies post-independence. Homophobia in Africa is yet another instance of Eurocentrism that is a colonial legacy. M'baye's works highlight how homophobia in Africa is connected to perceptions of same-sex relationships as Western neocolonial threats to the country's cultural, moral, and social equilibrium. (2013, p.112) A final social truth held by queer postcolonial scholars is the neocolonial paradox regarding the West's newfound championing of gay rights globally, in the wake of queer liberalism. (Kapoor, 2016, p.1616) As Ilan Kapoor argues in his

article “Queering the Third World”, colonial homophobia towards the Third World is increasingly being replaced by a high-mindedness that now sees the West judging the Third World as either homo-friendly or homophobic, frequently hectoring them when they fail to protect LGBTI rights. (2016, p.1616) Thus, queer postcolonial scholars not only demonstrate how homophobia is a colonial import but, they demonstrate the paradoxical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized regarding gay rights. The colonizer, who criminalized queer relations in Africa, are now condemning homophobia in the very countries where they planted the seeds for these oppressive and disenfranchising views. Queer people, in this context, experience discomfort in finding themselves stuck between two competing hegemonies: homophobia and neocolonialism.

As I conclude this literature review, I want to summarize what can be learned from the previous sections briefly. To begin, the term "subaltern" originated from military language and was broadened by Antonio Gramsci to refer to subordinate or lower-status groups without a precise definition. Scholars like Marcus Green and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have debated the true meaning of the term, with Green arguing that it is distinct from the Marxist concept of the proletariat. Subaltern studies began in 1982 to view subaltern groups as subjects of their history and rectify elitist and colonial bias. It later transitioned into a postcolonial critique of modern, European, and Enlightenment epistemologies. Ranajit Guha's work on dominance, colonialism, and property highly influenced the development of subaltern studies. Lastly, understanding epistemology, specifically the deconstruction of Western colonial epistemologies, is crucial in reflecting subalternity among queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The following section discusses the theoretical foundation of queer identities and how it originates from British cultural studies and social movement theory. I explain how cultural studies were associated with the work of Stuart Hall and Richard Hoggart, who believed that mass communications and popular forms were permanently changing our relationship to power, authority, and each other. This section also explains how contemporary social movement theory emerged from this new power and mass communication understanding. Second-wave feminism further contributed to the concept of gender and identity, with Judith Butler being influential in showing that the performance of gender, sex, and sexuality is about power in society. This section also explores the inception of queer studies and queer theory, which originated from the works of Gloria Anzaldúa, Michel Foucault, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. These scholars

explored the social construction of gender and sexuality and the gay liberation movement, forming theoretical frameworks behind queer identities.

In the subsequent literature review section, I discuss the intersectionality paradigm and its applications. I outline how this paradigm was developed from critical race studies and black feminist thought and how it aims to highlight the multidimensionality of marginalized subjects' experiences. I briefly detail that while the paradigm was initially focused on gender and race, it has been applied to other intersecting systems of oppression, including queer studies. I also mention the "Intersectional Loom" methodological tool Carolina Alday-Mondac and Siu Lay-Lisboa developed for analyzing subalternity from biographical interviews. However, I recognize valid criticisms of the intersectionality paradigm from non-Western scholars, who argue that it was not created with them in mind. I explore transnational intersectionality and transnational feminism as responses to these criticisms and highlight the contributions of Shelly Grabe and Nicole M. Else-Quest in this area.

I then discuss the emergence of queer postcolonial studies as a critique of queer studies and its focus on non-western subjects. Queer postcolonial studies explore the intersection between colonialism and sexuality and challenge assumptions about non-Western societies' views on gender and sexuality. The text cites examples of African sexualities that exist outside of European conceptualizations of gender and sexuality, demonstrating that "homosexuality" and "queer people" existed in pre-colonial Africa without oppression or targeting. This section introduces the notion that colonialism introduced homophobia into African societies, and postcolonial states now have state-led homophobia due to their fragile conditions, which are a legacy of colonialism. I emphasize that queer postcolonial studies do not have a uniform theory but rather a set of ideas and problematizations. I cite the works of scholars such as William Spurlin, Marc Epprecht, Paulla Ebron, Babacar M'baye, Patrick Ireland, and Ashley Currier to support its argument. In summary, my study is situated within the intersections of postcolonialism, intersectionality, and subaltern studies. It seeks to explore the experiences of queer activists who are marginalized in multiple ways within a postcolonial context.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology employed in the study will be outlined in this chapter, alongside the gathering and analyzing of data procedures, limitations, and ethical considerations. To reiterate, the purpose of this study is to explore how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity. In this context, this study is qualitative and exploratory in its application. Given that this is an exploratory inquiry, it is critical to declare that there are no assumption, arguments, or hypotheses held by myself or embedded in the construction of this research inquiry. The study aims to explore potential themes by employing a critical discourse analysis of Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles, in addition to conducting an anonymous open-ended qualitative survey and utilizing autoethnographic reflection.

To begin, I utilize critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explore how language is structured around LGBTQIA+ related in Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles. I specifically utilize CDA because, as stated in the works of Norman Fairclough, naturalized implicit propositions of an ideological character are pervasive in discourse, contributing to the positioning of people as social subjects. (1995, p.23). Additionally, the works of Teun van Dijk inform us that CDA mainly focuses on group relations of power, dominance, and inequality. Specifically, CDA can explore the ways these discourses are reproduced or resisted by social group members through text or talk (1995, p.18). To elaborate, CDA allows us to view how language structures social practices and even the specific actions of unique actors. This shows me how Zambian and Zimbabwean social practices resist or reproduce the subalternity of queer activists. If I want to explore how queer activists in Southern Africa reflect on their subalternity, then I must understand what social practices are creating this subalternity. In addition, the findings from this CDA are used to craft a more effective open-ended survey which is used to explore how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity. Lastly, a survey is justified to gather data from specific community stakeholders who can offer new insights into these findings.

#### **3.1 – CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

As stated in the works of Norman Fairclough, naturalized implicit propositions of an ideological character are pervasive in discourse, contributing to the positioning of people as social subjects. (1995, p.23) Considering this, I felt it would be beneficial to conduct a critical

discourse analysis (CDA) to explore how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity as CDA allows me to explore local discourses and perspectives. Additionally, the works of Teun van Dijk inform us that CDA mainly focuses on group relations of power, dominance, and inequality and the ways these are reproduced or resisted by social group members through text or talk (1995, p.18). CDA allows us to view how language structures social practices and even the specific actions of unique actors. CDA has a plethora of approaches depending on its application. However, three scholars have offered universal approaches to CDA: Fairclough, van Dijk, and Wodak.

Norman Fairclough's most prominent academic work, *Discourse and Social Change*, offers a three-dimensional framework for conceiving and analyzing discourse. The first dimension is discourse-as-text, the second dimension is discourse-as-discursive-practice and the third dimension is discourse-as-social-practice (Blommaert et al., 2000, pp. 448-449). The first dimension of Fairclough's framework is quite technical, and detail orientated as it analyzes grammar and vocabulary utilized in a discourse. Fairclough suggests that these seemingly unimportant details are crucial to systemically analyzing a discourse to reveal societal ideologies. The second dimension assumes that discourse is produced, circulated, distributed, and consumed in society (Blommaert et al., 2000, p.448). The third dimension, which is most relevant to my research, explores how the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is a feature of social practices. Additionally, Fairclough argues that this dimension shows how discourse can be used to create and re-enforce hegemonic power. Fairclough argues that the way in which discourse is being represented, respoken, or rewritten sheds light on the emergence of new orders of discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power (Blommaert et al., 2000, p.449).

The academic works of Teun van Dijk have influenced CDA by integrating cognitive theories with linguistic and social theories. As stated in the works of Angel Lin, van Dijk uses cognitive schema theory (e.g., context models) as the middle layer to mediate between structures of language and discourse (e.g., lexical choices, rhetorical strategies) at the micro level and structures of society at the macro level (e.g., gender, ethnic, sexual categories). (Lin, 2014, p.215). In his works on racial discourses from ruling white elites, he demonstrates, similarly to Fairclough, that hegemonic authority and power can be used to legitimize potentially oppressive discourses.

Lastly, Ruth Wodak's approach includes the systematic collection of samples of texts. (both spoken/written and visual) on a macro topic (e.g., climate change) over a period. (Lin, 2014, p.217). Wodak's approach also explores the relationship between these discourses and political actions such as policy-making or public opinion. Wodak's approach is influential because it can explain why macrostructures of inequality are persistent and pervasive (Lin, 2014, p. 17). However, this approach has been criticized since the linguistic analysis of this approach is often disconnected from the social theory frameworks it claims to analyze.

For my study, using CDA, specifically Fairclough's model, allows me to view Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles about homosexuality and queer activism as a social phenomenon. It also allows me to explore how power and hegemony affect public opinion of queer activism. Furthermore, the findings from my CDA of Zambian and Zimbabwean news will allow me to craft an open-ended survey that is culturally relevant to my target audience. Additionally, the findings from the CDA of Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles can be used to inform the crafting of an open-ended survey that is culturally relevant to the target audience. By analyzing the media representation of queer activism, I can identify the dominant discourses. This can inform the design of survey questions that are culturally sensitive and relevant to the experiences and perceptions of queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe, enabling me to gather rich data that reflects the complexity of local social realities.

### **3.2 – QUALITATIVE SURVEYS**

Initially, this research inquiry aimed to directly interview queer activists from Zambia and Zimbabwe to explore how they reflect on their subalternity. However, after contacting a plethora of queer NGOs in Zambia and Zimbabwe, and receiving minimal responses, it was evident that interviews were not preferred by these organizations due to concerns regarding identity protection and anonymity. I had corresponded with Dr. Adriaan van Klinken via email regarding potential NGOs to interview, and alternative data collection methods for my inquiry. In his correspondence Dr. van Klinken stated many African LGBTQ activists and organizations feel "over-researched" by Western students/scholars and are unlikely to respond to interview requests. Thus, I decided to switch from interviews to open-ended anonymous surveying in an attempt to gain the trust of my participants while still maintaining the exploratory component of my research methodology. Additionally, open-ended surveys are as beneficial as interviews

because open-ended survey questions can offer greater anonymity to respondents and often elicit more honest responses (Jackson and Trochim, 2002, p.307). The use of open-ended anonymous surveys is more beneficial as it limited the potential to bias the participants.

I utilized my findings from my CDA of Zambian and Zimbabwean news article to make a more relevant open-ended survey. The online survey I created included twelve open-ended questions for queer activists to explain their activism, explore the voice they have in society, and explore the ways neocolonialism and state-enforced homophobia has affected their involvement in political systems. Furthermore, this survey was completely anonymous and did not ask participants for any identifiable characteristics. The purpose of this survey is to gain detailed knowledge about how queer activists reflect on their subalternity, thus I utilized purposive sampling when distributing my survey. I purposely selected queer NGOs who were extremely vocal in media or mentioned by major international organizations. Additionally, I shared my survey with notable activists and NGO directors in Zambia and Zimbabwe via LinkedIn. As previously stated, this survey is anonymous, thus I have no way of verifying or uncovering the identities or affiliations of my participants. Nevertheless, my efforts to recruit participants were successful and I collected ten extensive open-ended surveys from queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe

### **3.3 – AUTOETHNOGRAPHY**

Autoethnography combines aspects of ethnography and autobiography to examine and comprehend the experiences of individuals or groups. It entails the researcher reflecting on and using their research experience as a part of larger social and cultural contexts. Autoethnography, as defined by Ellis and Bochner, uses personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, rethinks and renegotiates cultural meanings. (2002 p.739) Autoethnography can be useful when examining subjects that are frequently excluded or marginalized in traditional research, specifically when referring to the experiences of underrepresented groups or the complexity of identities.

Similarly, Leon Anderson argues that autoethnography allows researchers to explore their own experiences in a way that acknowledges their subjectivity. Additionally, autoethnography acknowledges the role of power and privilege that a researcher has in shaping those experiences. Anderson states that "Autoethnography offers a way to conduct research that recognizes the power relations at play in the production of knowledge, embraces the subjective and personal

nature of experience, and offers a means of speaking back to dominant discourses that otherwise silence, dismiss, or pathologize difference" (2006 p. 383).

As a western academic, it can be argued that my perspective on this inquiry is heavily rooted in western epistemologies that are incompatible with the foundational knowledge of my participants. Additionally, this research is highly reliant on my ability as a researcher to build connections and trust with my participant. This experience of building connections and trust, via email, no doubt gives nuanced answers regarding how queer activists reflect on their subalternity. Considering this, I would argue that an autoethnographic aspect of this research inquiry ties my discourse analysis and anonymous surveys together to form a coherent and realistic narrative related to my research inquiry and embedded research questions.

### **3.4 – DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

One concern I had regarding this research inquiry was related to obtaining legitimate news articles from Zambia and Zimbabwe. However, I obtained news articles for my CDA from AllAfrica, a website that collects and archives African news articles related to African life, politics, issues, and culture. I utilized the website's Boolean search function using keywords such as "LGBT" "Homosexuality" "Queer" "Queer NGO" "Gay Rights" and so forth. From this search, I collected thirty-three news articles from the time period of 2011 to 2021. These news articles were published by Zimbabwe Standard (ZS), Zambian Reports (ZR), The Times of Zambia (TZ), and New Zimbabwe (NZ).

I first read each article and highlighted how queer activism and homosexuality were referred to by the authors. From this point, I made notations on whether the vocabulary and word phrasing in these articles were either positive or negative regarding their perception of homosexuality and queer activism. I then reviewed the articles an additional time to note the themes embedded in the discourse of each article and made note of how these themes relate to hegemonic institutions and their re-enforcement of state-enforced homophobia.

Each article I reviewed was categorized in an excel spreadsheet to highlight its dates of publication, relevant discourse themes, citations, and country of origin. Once I had qualitatively coded each article via the discourses embedded within each publication, I began to inductively construct three primary discourses that were prominent among the thirty-three news articles. As previously stated, I then utilize the findings from my CDA to create a culturally relevant open-

ended survey. I utilized purposive sampling when distributing my survey as I was seeking specific participants with expertise relating to my research inquiry. Once I had collected ten surveys, I analyzed each question via thematic coding and looked for consistent verbiage or themes among the answers of all participants.

### **3.5 – ETHICS AND LIMITATIONS**

The news articles gathered for my CDA were gathered from a public website. This implies that because it is open to anyone, there are no data privacy concerns. However, the conduction of open-ended surveys to an at-risk population did bring of a variety of ethical considerations. My primary concern in this research inquiry is to protect the identities of all my participants to avoid causing harm or risks to the participants of the study. With this in consideration, I made my open-ended survey completely anonymous, this survey does not ask for any identifiable characteristics, nor does it ask participants to specify which queer organization they are affiliated with. As this research inquiry works with anonymized data, it is in full compliance with the Personal Data Protection Act and does not require permission from the University of Tartu Ethics Committee. After I completed collecting my surveys, I downloaded the results from Google Forums, destroyed the online survey, and stored electronic versions of each response on a secure flash drive. To maintain anonymity, each survey was assigned a number for the purpose of referring to it during my research.

This study has faced some limitations. As per my correspondence with Dr. Adriaan van Klinken, queer NGOs are unlikely to respond to interview requests, especially when received online from people they don't know, and who they will not meet in person. They are also aware of security risks of participating in research projects of people they do not know. Therefore, making connections online is hard, and arranging interviews is much easier when you are in the field. To elaborate, the findings of this research inquiry would be more enriching had the researcher been able to conduct ethnographic research in Zambia and Zimbabwe as opposed to online surveying. One critique of this research inquiry may be related to the seemingly small sample of surveys collected. While this research could significantly benefit from a larger sample size, it is important to note that the population of vocal queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe is a quite small and niche community. Based on this, the sample size is sufficient to accomplish the goals of this study. Lastly, by only depending on insiders and activists, bias may be generated

because other queer people may have different opinions. In general, focusing on the perception and reflection of only queer activists does not fully depict how these identities are socially constructed.

## **4. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

For this CDA, I gathered 33 news articles from 2011 to 2021. These articles come from four of the primary news outlets in Zambia and Zimbabwe: The Times of Zambia (TZ), Zambian Reports (ZR), Zimbabwe Standard (ZS) and New Zimbabwe (NZ). I first analyzed each article for specific themes. Through my second analysis, I made notes regarding the specific vocabulary used to describe queer activists and homosexuality. These news articles show three major discourses that affect queer activists. It will surprise no one that the primary discourse structured around homosexuality, and queer activism is that of religion. As you will see, many of these news articles refer to Christianity and religious figures to resist advancements in gay rights. Furthermore, a secondary discourse surrounding anti-west ideologies is constantly perpetuated or reported via news articles in Zambia and Zimbabwe. These news articles present the idea of western interference in a state's approach toward the LGBTQIA+ community as a neocolonial attempt to alter these states' behavior. Lastly, discourses regarding public health, specifically the spread of HIV/AIDS, are prominent in these news articles.

### **4.1 – THE DISCOURSE OF RELIGION**

It should not come as a surprise that religion is one of the primary discourses visible in media regarding the LGBT+ community. As the previous literature regarding homophobia in Africa has indicated, religion is one of the primary systems used to oppose homosexuality. We can return to the works of Patrick Ireland, who states that given the term's etymology, sodomy laws are commonly justified through reference to religious texts. (Ireland, 2011, p.53). Furthermore, Ireland's work is supported by Leo Igwe, the founder of the Nigerian Humanist Movement. Igwe has argued that what we are witnessing in Africa is essentially a religion-based homophobia. (Igwe, 2007).

The discourse of religion aims to use references and structured language regarding Christianity and biblical sources to justify homophobic ideologies. While religious discourses on homosexuality are prevalent in Zambian and Zimbabwean media, they are more apparent in Zambian news articles. President Frederick Chiluba's 1991 declaration that Zambia was "a Christian nation" has practically become a slogan, if not a repetitive rhetoric, to justify anti-LGBTQIA+ opinions.

*TZ6: "Dr Chiluba declared Zambia a Christian nation he took Zambia to the highest pedestal of expectations"*

*TZ7: "The Government has reiterated its position not to recognise gay rights, saying that gaysm runs counter to Zambian culture and is an affront to the Constitution which recognises Zambia as a Christian Nation.*

*TZ7: "Zambia is a Christian Nation and as such we live by the Christian values and we will not be able to recognise gay rights,"*

*TZ4: "As Zambians, we declared that we are a Christian nation and there is no way we can allow this un-Zambian culture. I want to urge all Zambians to rise and denounce this vice.*

As these excerpts from Zambian news articles demonstrate, the Zambian media structures the notion of Zambia as a "Christian nation" as a clear opposition to supporting LGBTQIA+ rights. As one would expect, the discourse transitions into structured language regarding homosexuality and LGBTQIA+ rights as an attack on the Zambian states and its social values, which are reinforced via Christianity.

*TZ1: The Church has unanimously made it clear that from the biblical and cultural point of view, societal norms do not recognise activities of gayism and the Government agrees with this stance.*

*TZ3: What we are now seeing is an attack on the Bible and the Christian faith. It is preposterous for gay people to call society to recognise taboos and immorality in our culture as acceptable lifestyle. It is an attack on the Bible and the African culture.*

*TZ6: It will bear witness to this prophecy of torment and brimstone fire and why the celebrated expanded Bill of Rights will lead Zambia into a catastrophe and anger from God.*

*TZ10: “The only way to legalise and normalise homosexuality is to turn Zambia into a secular state-or, more precisely, a post-secular state. In a secular state, religion has no place in national affairs”*

The previous excerpts from Zambian news demonstrate how Zambian media, specifically dominant news outlets, have structured discourses surrounding LGBTQIA+ rights as opposition to Zambia’s “Christian Nation.” As previously stated, postcolonial queer literature and generic stereotypes regarding homosexuality in Africa make this finding reasonably foreseeable. However, hate language via religion is a discourse that proves quite interesting and prominent in the Zambian media.

*ZR2: “The Home Affairs minister told advocates of gay rights activist to go to hell. “There will be no such discussion on gay rights. That issue is foreign to this country,” he said “Those advocating gay rights should go to hell, that is not an issue we will tolerate.”*

*TZ9: “Even if modern governments decide not to put homosexuals to death, the high suicide rates among gays show that gays are putting themselves to death. The Bible is still being fulfilled.”*

Subalternity, in this context, is created in the discourse above by presenting queer individuals as a group that is marginalized and excluded from Zambian society due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The Zambian media portrays homosexuality and gay rights as a threat to the country's Christian values and cultural norms, which creates a dichotomous opposition between the dominant religious groups and the marginalized queer community. This opposition is reinforced through hate language, used to vilify and dehumanize queer individuals, making excluding them from mainstream society easier. The use of religious texts and symbols further reinforces this exclusion, as it positions the queer community as a deviation from the norm and a threat to the country's spiritual and moral values. The language used in the discourses also portrays queer individuals as a problem that needs to be eliminated. This marginalization and exclusion create a subalternity that limits the agency and voice of queer individuals and reinforces their status as an oppressed group with limited social and political power.

While the hate language constructed towards LGBTQIA+ rights is not violent or vulgar in Zambian news, one cannot refute the idea that these statements affect the subalternity of Zambian queer activists. Essentially, we see the media supporting key government figures who oppose LGBTQIA+ rights, or we have journalists directly implying that if members of the queer community commit suicide, they are “fulfilling the bible.” As we can see, religious discourse is powerful and prevalent in Zambia. However, this is not the case in Zimbabwe. The religious discourse in Zimbabwe primarily constructs homosexuality and gay rights as foreign concepts.

*ZS1: A consultant hired by the National Aids Council (NAC) to review Zimbabwe's response to the Aids pandemic has recommended a review of the Sexual Offences Act to deal with homosexuality and prostitution in a pragmatic way ... Zimbabwe, which is predominantly Christian, also considers both practices alien.*

*NZ3: “Makandiwa said homosexuals are mentally deranged people whom God has “surrendered to their malfunctioning minds”.*

*NZ10: “[Teejay, a transgender Zimbabwean] got worried when he noted that some churches believe being a trans-gender is a result of witchcraft.”*

While the language and vocabulary used in Zimbabwean media are not exactly welcoming or supportive of gay rights or the queer community, the religious discourse is drastically different and not as oppressive as utilized in Zambian discourse. One significant difference in religious discourse between these two countries is whom the media chooses to give a voice to. While Zambian news often spotlights homophobic religious or government figureheads, Zimbabwean news often quotes or gives a voice to queer community members, especially concerning combatting oppressive religious discourses. The religious discourse in Zimbabwe advocates for sympathy and support, for the queer community. Furthermore, the religious discourse in Zambia implies that queer activists are constantly combatting the “Christian Nation” rhetoric to little success. As far as we can see, the idea of gay rights drops entirely off the radar for Zambian news after 2014, and they actively abstain from interviewing queer activists or members of the queer community.

Additionally, as the subsequent discourse will show, queer activists are presented as agents of Western cultural expansion by being associated with homosexuality and gay rights, which are seen as foreign concepts. This portrayal positions them as outsiders bringing foreign ideas to Zimbabwe and trying to change the country's traditional values and beliefs. At the same time, queer activists are also presented as subalterns because they are marginalized and oppressed by the dominant religious discourse in Zimbabwe. This discourse portrays them as mentally deranged or as victims of witchcraft, a way of dehumanizing and othering them. However, we can see that Zimbabwean media gives a voice to queer community members and supports their fight against oppressive religious discourses. This recognition of queer voices in the media is a departure from the dominant discourse in Zambia, where queer activists are not given a platform to speak out. The religious discourse in Zimbabwe also advocates for sympathy and support for the queer community, which is a more positive and inclusive portrayal than the one presented in Zambia. Overall, the portrayal of queer activists in this discourse is complex, as they are simultaneously positioned as agents of cultural expansion and as subalterns who are marginalized and oppressed by dominant discourses. Including queer voices in the media is a positive development, but the negative portrayal of homosexuality and queer identities as foreign and alien concepts highlights the ongoing struggles faced by the queer community in Zimbabwe.

#### **4.2 - ANTI-WEST DISCOURSE**

Anti-west rhetoric is intensely used in Zambian and Zimbabwean media discourses when referring to or opposing gay rights and the queer community. Anti-west rhetoric can encompass many opinions and perspectives. However, this specific CDA conceptualizes anti-west discourse as anything that explicitly opposes the actions or opinions of western countries. Many of these news articles demonstrate how anti-west rhetoric is structured to oppose gay rights. Some articles demonstrate how Zambian and Zimbabwean political leaders refute the west's "gay agenda." They even go as far as to consider the promotion of gay rights in their countries as a form of neo-colonization and a threat to the state's security. Additionally, some articles utilize structured language and robust vocabulary to push the notion that gay activists only support such an awful cause to gain money from northern donors. The emergence of anti-west discourse can be seen in African political leaders such as Mugabe.

*TZ12: [Mugabe] vehemently rejected the imposition of what he called "new rights" for gay marriage that have been advocated elsewhere in the world. "We equally reject attempts to prescribe new rights that are contrary to our norms, values, traditions and beliefs. We are not gays.*

*TZ12: the Western world is using NGOs, university curriculum, the media, entertainment, and several western-approved methods with the same intent of lauding the dictum west is best. It is such cultural imperialism Mugabe is challenging.*

*NZ4: George Charamba also warned local United Nations agencies to know their place and stop thinking that they can "snipe at a sitting Head of State and Government". The presidential spokesperson was responding to criticism of Mugabe by UN agencies and Clinton over his latest homophobic outburst.*

*NZ6: Mnangagwa told the media at the end of the meeting his delegation rejected attempts by the pro-gay west to impose same sex marriages on Zimbabwe.*

As these excerpts demonstrate, the Zambian and Zimbabwean media highlight political leaders who accuse western countries and international organizations of forcing a gay agenda upon African states. Furthermore, we can see how these political leaders firmly refuse western solutions towards gay rights, as they do not subscribe to their African state's culture, values, or morals. Interestingly, the anti-west takes an additional form by arguing that the promotion of gay rights in African states by western entities is a form of neo-colonization.

*TZ10: world powers are dictating to sovereign republics and instructing them to go homosexual, regardless of their existence as nation-states. That is the voice of re-colonisation.*

*TZ10: In 2011, the US and the UK warned they would use foreign aid to push for homosexuality to be decriminalised in Africa. You cannot fail to recognise the revival of colonialism in those threats.*

*TZ12: Since our ill-fated contact with the Western culture, we have been hapless victims of the Western culture which has engulfed our values and norms like a king snake that swallows other snakes for food.*

The language used by Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles connecting western gay rights to neo-colonialism demonstrates the pervasiveness and paradoxical relationship between post-colonial states and their former colonizers. The language utilized in these news articles demonstrates that media producers, and African leaders, have subscribed to western epistemologies regarding sex and gender. As I explored in the literature review of this paper, there was normalized homosexuality in pre-colonial Africa until colonizers pushed western standards of gender and sexuality upon these societies via sodomy laws. Alas, we can understand why post-colonial states would be weary of western entities pushing morals and values upon their societies. In theory, it is comprehensible why they are declaring this neo-colonization. However, in their attempt to forbid western values, they utilized western epistemologies and colonial legacies to justify state-enforced homophobia. Furthermore, many news articles structure the notion that those who support gay rights or pursue queer activism are “gay for pay.”

*TZ1: The Church advised the Government not to fall prey to donors who resolved to only render financial support to countries which have upheld gay rights.*

*TZ4: [Justice Minister Wynter Kabimba] said Zambians should not be influenced to fall prey to homosexual practices because of some international organisations which had pumped in colossal sums of money to sponsor the vice.*

*TZ11: Instead of young men drooling for marriage to old white men; instead of young people accepting donor bribes to form NGOs and yelp for homosexual rights; it is time to push for a proper stake in the national economy.*

The works of Ashley Currier inform us that this notion of “gay for pay” is a common fallacy among African leaders and media stakeholders. In her book, *Out in Africa*, Currier states that some antigay activists allege that lesbian and gay activists are “gay for pay”; this contention

questions activists' integrity by insinuating that activists greedily and disingenuously portray themselves as representing LGBT Africans only to acquire funding and other material support from foreign donors (Currier, 2012, p.124). Additionally, some news articles structure this "gay for pay" notion around the political motivations of its leaders. As the next few excerpts will demonstrate, some *Zambian* and *Zimbabwean* news articles argue that pro-LGBT politicians or government officials have motivations to gain political backing or funding from the west.

*TZ2: Father Bwalya is being used by Western groups who have promised to fund his political career but this is wrong and we will not accept this*

*NZ9: Mnangagwa is keen to woo support in his election bid next month as well as attract assistance from the rich West that has never hidden its desires to see conservative but economically dependent Africa accept gay rights among fundamental citizen freedoms.*

This rhetoric of "gay for pay" is constructed and enforced when activists and members of the political elite aim to gain funding from western entities. Furthermore, those political elites who do show some sympathy towards gay rights are often lumped into this "gay for pay" rhetoric, creating the notion that those who support gay rights only do so to gain money from the west. Furthermore, it creates this notion among anti-gay political elites and media producers that western entities are willing to supply African political elites and queer NGOs with monetary gains to push the gay agenda onto African societies. While previous excerpts have demonstrated how political elites in Zambia and Zimbabwe structure the west's promotion of gay rights in Africa as neo-colonization, they also structure it as a security concern.

*TZ11: Secret homosexuality is now discouraged; officers must be free to disclose their gay sexuality without fear of punishment. That arrangement is a lethal mix because since the dawn of the 1900s, countries like America have been systematically infiltrated by hostile ideologues like communists, jihadists, Satanists, nudists, homosexuals, drug cartels,*

The anti-west discourse that we can see in *Zambian* and *Zimbabwean* news articles created a unique paradoxical phenomenon for postcolonial studies. Specifically, we can see how

African political elites swiftly dispute western values and declare them as an attempt at neo-colonization. However, these political elites fail to see that promoting gay rights can be considered a correction for the anti-sodomy laws enforced during colonization. Nevertheless, the language and vocabulary structured around the queer community have the potential to promote nationalism, sovereignty, and self-determination. However, this comes at the expense of queer Zambians and Zimbabweans. Additionally, the notion of “gay for pay” is a highly effective structured rhetoric utilized to discredit queer NGOs and political elites who sympathize with the gay rights movement.

### **4.3 – PUBLIC HEALTH DISCOURSE**

A final consistent pattern in Zambian and Zimbabwean news is regarding public health discourse. Specifically, these discourses structure a direct relationship between human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and members of the queer community. This is because gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM) represent a key population disproportionately affected by HIV in various settings (Tan et al., 2020, p.2). Interestingly, the Zambian and Zimbabwean media has structured the notion of HIV and AIDS as an epidemic that only applies to the queer community, thus creating a plethora of homophobic rhetoric and misinformation.

*TZ9: Gays cannot escape HIV/AIDS, dysentery, typhoid and other diseases arising from their practices. Fisting, also known as bloodletting, is a practice of inserting the fist in the rectum of a lover. Stones and frogs are also inserted into the rectum. Rimming is the process of oral sex on the anus. Lovers may also enjoy golden showers, where one urinates on the other. Sexual pleasure is also increased, so gays believe, by the humiliation and dehumanization of one lover by the other.*

As we can see in this graphic example, Zambian media, in particular, structures specific narratives around HIV and AIDS with the sexual misconduct of the queer community. Furthermore, describing graphic and exotic sexual acts supposedly socialized among queer individuals is another means of “othering” queer people, thus “othering” the notion of HIV and AIDS as a queer issue. While this misinformation and negative connotations connected to the

queer community create a divide between queer community members and mainstream society, the Zimbabwean government aimed to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic among the queer community.

*NZ2: The government is going to create a specific HIV and AIDS programme targeting homosexuals and sex workers as a way of controlling the infection rate, a senior government official has revealed.*

*NZ2: Dr. Mugurungi said: "Of course we should never forget these small populations of man who have sex with man; of drug users and sex workers. If we deal with the problem elsewhere and forget them then infection will remain a problem ... prisoners were also at risk of transmitting HIV to each other through homosexuality".*

In these excerpts, we can see how the Zimbabwean media structures language around HIV/AIDS that appears supportive and inclusive of the queer community initially. However, the media and the experts they chose to spotlight in these articles lump queer individuals in with “traditional” deviants of society, such as sex workers and prisoners. Thus, the media continues to perpetuate this notion that HIV/AIDS is not only a queer issue but an issue for deviant members of society. Interestingly, Zimbabwean news articles allowed queer activists to comment on the epidemic and combat the misinformation in the media regarding HIV/AIDS and its societal effects on members of the queer community.

*NZ5: [GALZ Programmes Officer, Sylvester Nyamatendedza] said effects of negative reporting/articles had often resulted in suicidal attempts and thoughts by their members and a decrease in health seeking behavior which in turn led to the spread of HIV.*

*ZS2: In terms of support, we are looking at allies in the medical field, the legal field and pop culture as well. We have a lot of talented transgender people that should be contributing to the industry and culture.*

*NZ1: We need to get to a point where gay, lesbian, HIV positive, cancer sufferers, etc. are not viewed as different from the desired norm or standard."*

These news articles from early in the 2010s demonstrate the queer community's willingness to cooperate with current government health initiatives while simultaneously promoting queer-friendly initiatives for combatting the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It is also an interesting consideration that despite the anti-west rhetoric we saw from Zimbabwean media previously, the same media sources are willing to give queer activists a spotlight regarding public health. However, it becomes evident that the queer community was not given a synergistic collaboration with government health initiatives and instead had to make their strategies.

*ZS1: In terms of HIV prevention this is serious, particularly as GALZ is the only organisation in Zimbabwe providing services specifically to the lesbian and gay community and very few other HIV/Aids organisations even consider MSM/ women having sex with women (WSW) in their intervention work.*

*ZS1: Service providers such as doctors and nurses also tend to develop negative attitudes when dealing with LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-gendered) people as a result of lack of information," GALZ said.*

*NZ14: The Gays and Lesbians Association of Zimbabwe (GALZ) says its members are avoiding public Covid-19 vaccination centres because of discrimination.*

*NZ14: "We received information that some members felt wary of going to public health facilities to access the jabs because the Zimbabwean society remains largely homophobic, using the guise of religion and culture, to discriminate and violate LGBTI persons.*

The public health discourse in Zambian and Zimbabwean media, while full of homophobic ideologies and misinformation, is unique from the anti-west and religious discourse. This is because the public health discourse is the only one structured to include direct quotes and opinions from queer activists. This discourse gives an idiosyncratic nuance to the notion of

subalternity as it relates to queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe. This nuance is that queer activists are given a voice in the media regarding public health, which the media structures as a queer or delinquent issue. While the public health theme in Zambian and Zimbabwean media discourse gives us a different perspective on queer subalternity, it raises even more questions. Nevertheless, going directly to the source via surveying queer activists should offer a satisfactory response to these inquiries.

To summarize, the first discourse explores the prevalence of religion in media coverage of the queer community in Zambia and Zimbabwe. This discourse is used to justify opposition to homosexuality and reinforce the idea of Zambia as a "Christian Nation," while Zimbabwe primarily constructs homosexuality and gay rights as foreign concepts. The media structures discourses around gay rights as an attack on the Christian faith and African values. Hate language is also used towards the queer community, which affects the subalternity of Zambian and Zimbabwean queer activists. It is worth noting that the religious discourse in Zimbabwe advocates for sympathy and support for the queer community and often gives a voice to queer community members.

The second discourse explores anti-west rhetoric in Zambian and Zimbabwean media, mainly referring to gay rights and the queer community. Many news articles demonstrate how anti-west rhetoric is structured to oppose gay rights, as some political leaders consider promoting gay rights in their countries as a form of neo-colonization and a threat to the state's security. The language used by the media producers and African leaders demonstrates that they have subscribed to Western epistemologies regarding sex and gender. However, in their attempt to forbid Western values, they utilized Western epistemologies and colonial legacies to justify state-enforced homophobia. Additionally, many news articles structure the notion that those who support gay rights or pursue queer activism are "gay for pay," insinuating that activists are greedy.

The final discourse explores how the media in Zambia and Zimbabwe have perpetuated the idea that HIV and AIDS are solely problems for the queer community. This has led to the creation of many homophobic rhetoric and misinformation. While the Zimbabwean government has aimed to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic among the queer community, the media often lumps queer individuals with "traditional" deviants of society, such as sex workers and prisoners. Queer activists have been quoted in Zimbabwean news articles and have been willing to

cooperate with government health initiatives while promoting queer-friendly initiatives for combatting the HIV/AIDS epidemic. However, the queer community has not been given a synergistic collaboration with government health initiatives and instead had to make their strategies. Despite the anti-west rhetoric, we saw from Zimbabwean media previously, the same media sources have given queer activists a spotlight regarding public health. The public health discourse is unique from the anti-west and religious discourse in that it is the only one structured to include direct quotes and opinions from queer activists.

These findings from my discourse analysis connect the subalternity debate in relation to the queer community in Zambia and Zimbabwe. As previously stated, the first discourse highlights how the media in these countries use religious discourse, anti-western rhetoric, and othering to justify opposition to homosexuality and to reinforce the idea of Zambia as a "Christian nation". Additionally, the media in Zambia and Zimbabwe perpetuate homophobic rhetoric and misinformation, particularly around HIV/AIDS. The queer community is often grouped with "traditional" deviants of society, such as sex workers and prisoners. Despite this, queer activists have been quoted in Zimbabwean news articles and have cooperated with government health initiatives to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The public health discourse is unique in that it includes direct quotes and opinions from queer activists, highlighting the importance of their involvement in addressing public health issues and giving queer activists direct access to mainstream discourses. Overall, this discourse analysis shows how media representation affects the subalternity of the queer community in Zambia and Zimbabwe and how different discourses have perpetuated or challenged oppressive structures.

The findings above provide valuable insights into the media coverage of the queer community in Zambia and Zimbabwe and the impact of various discourses on queer activism and public health initiatives. However, these findings are limited to the specific contexts and sources analyzed in the article, and there may be other factors that should be considered. To better understand the attitudes and experiences of the queer community and their allies in Zambia and Zimbabwe, a survey is justified to gather data from specific community stakeholders who can offer new insights into these findings. The survey explores perceptions of media coverage and attitudes toward queer activism and public health initiatives. This data provides a more comprehensive understanding of the issues facing the queer community in these countries and

could inform us whether queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe consider themselves subalterns in a relationship with their government and Western organizations.

## 5. SURVEYING QUEER ACTIVISTS

This chapter aims to explore the findings of my anonymous open-ended surveys. As mentioned, I collected ten extensive surveys from queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe. This survey does not ask for any identifiable characteristics, nor does it ask participants to specify which queer organization they are affiliated with. Thus, we can also speculate the demographics of my participants unless they felt compelled to include this information in their written responses. The content of my survey asked twelve questions. These twelve questions explore how the participant felt as a queer activist and inquire about which structures in their respective societies support their cause.

### 5.1 - PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

At the risk of being overly repetitious, this survey was conducted anonymously. I have no data on the participants' demographics, such as age, gender, sexual identity, affiliations, or even nationality. This is done to protect the identity of my participants, making activism efforts in countries that have criminalized homosexuality. However, one identifiable characteristic we can analyze from my survey findings is the adoption or rejection of a queer activist identity. As you will see below, many of my participants adopt a queer activist identity when asked if they consider themselves queer activists.

P2: *“Yes, I do. I have always stood up for queer rights, protect them through engaging policymakers and state agencies as well as rights duty holders and bears.”*

P4: *“Yes I do, I serve the community and represent LGBTIQ+ in policy development spaces.”*

P5: *“Yes, I actively advocate for the rights and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community.”*

P9: *“I am seen as an outspoken activist in my country, the NGO I run primarily focuses on lobbying efforts, and the preservation of what little rights LGBT+ people have in Zambia”*

It is essential to understand why and how these participants adopt a queer activist identity, especially given the context of their society. It is crucial to understand the reasons why and the processes by which my participants come to identify as queer activists because doing so offers insight into the complicated dynamics at work in cultures where LGBTQ+ people experience stigma, persecution, and even criminalization. These activists must navigate a hostile environment that could endanger their safety and well-being, so their insights into how to build a more inclusive and equitable society are essential. As we can see, these participants adopt their identity and cite particular acts they do to justify the adoption of such an identity, such as engaging with policymakers, advocating for rights, or helping the community. Nevertheless, some of my participants quietly or hesitantly claim to be queer activists.

P6: *“Sorta, I work at a LGBT NGO doing admin work but, I don’t do a lot of like activism work or protesting.”*

P7: *“A very quiet activist I do a lot of background work.”*

These seemingly insignificant findings demonstrate a vital and unspoken component about adopting a queer activist identity – visibility. Ultimately, as the findings of my survey show, individuals working in queer NGOs will firmly adopt a queer identity if they are visible in the communities they serve. Meanwhile, these two participants mentioned above see themselves as “sorta activists” or “quiet activists” because they are not doing work visible to the communities. It is also important to discuss these participants' services and activism, as this demonstrates how these queer NGOs combat being politically and culturally marginalized from Zambian and Zimbabwean society.

P2: *“We provide information and education to the queer community, public , policymakers and institutional bodies that promotes and protect rights of all citizens nationally, regional and global. We provide evidence for social transformation and cache out advocacy activities.”*

P3: *“Counselling & psychosocial support, research, policy and advocacy, knowledge & documentation of human rights violations.”*

P5: *“Community outreach, such as HIV clinics, psychological support.”*

P6: *“We do alot! Psych counseling, HIV clinics, working with legislation, community outreach, hate crime reporting.”*

P8: *“We offer so many services, I can talk a bit more about the specific service I provide, Crisis management, it is a service that does not get highlighted very often. In my role, I work directly with members of the queer community in times of dire need such as if they are the victim of a violent crime, or if they are experiencing DV, or if they have been disowned by their family. We work directly with the client to offer solutions that give them safety and humanity.”*

P9: *“Our NGO's main goal is to protect, advance and promote the Human Rights of Zambian sexual minorities.”*

In what ways do these NGOs provide support to a marginalized community that aims to subaltern queer people? Unlike Western societies, where there has been a strong movement to legalize same-sex marriage and joint adoption by same-sex couples, Zambian and Zimbabwean activists seek to remediate the effects of a society that has criminalized homosexuality. As we can see, many of these services are related to public health, education, or crisis management. These services hardly interact with the mainstream discourses, representations, and decision-making processes of Zambian and Zimbabwean political structures. This is a crucial element to consider when exploring how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity because, as we can see, their activism and services counterbalance the marginalizing actions of their government.

## **5.2 – EXPLORING THE VOICE OF QUEER ACTIVISTS**

While the previous section may make it appear that queer activists in Zambia or Zimbabwe are completely removed from mainstream discourses, this is far from the truth. Zambian and Zimbabwean queer activists have other means of emerging into mainstream

discourses and structures of authority without legitimizing a political structure. To begin, when asked do they feel they have a voice, this is the response from my participants.

P3: *“Yes, I believe I have and we have. There are platforms that have opened up over the years to give us a voice. Whether on radio, tv, social media or interactive spaces. However, they are some limitations to this as state spaces in all their forms are not accessible, yet they reach a wider audience we need.”*

P4: *“We do have a voice, and society is slowly beginning to be more supportive of LGBTQ+ people, especially the younger generation.”*

P8: *“Yes, while it is oppressive to be queer in my country, we still have a voice, we still challenge the government, we still fight for our right everyday!! The younger generation, especially with social media, has given us such a present voice.”*

P9: *“Most people in Zambia find homosexuality to be immoral, we do have a voice but, we are often villainised for our efforts. The younger generation, even the straight people, are beginning to see how cruel the government is to LGBTQ+ people.”*

If a component of being subaltern is being silenced or ignored, one could indeed argue that queer activists in Zambia or Zimbabwe are not subaltern as they strongly articulated that they have a voice! Nevertheless, it is clear from the literature surrounding the subject of subalternity that access to political structures is something subalterns do not have. I asked my participants what formal structures in their society support queer individuals.

P2: *“National Aids Council through its coordination of HIV programmes in Zimbabwe. The Human Right Commission through its mandate to protect all citizens and have indicated their support for LGBTI and queer people.”*

P5: *“NGOs, Human Rights Orgs, and local media.”*

P6: *“Media and pop culture, NGOs, i feel they do their best to represent our community is a positive light.”*

P7: *“not many but human rights NGOs, small media and independent journalists.”*

P8: *“This is a hard question; besides NGOs and western orgs, I can say social media is a big structure for networking and support for queer people, not sure if it is considered formal”*

P9: *“Independent Media! The smaller journalists and some social media moderators have been our biggest allies! Our organizations must work discreetly, and these smaller media platforms allow us to spread information with some discretion to communities at need.”*

We have already established that while queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe may be oppressed or marginalized. However, from their perspective, they have a voice! We can now see how they access political structures to impact mainstream discourses and policy-making procedures. These findings demonstrate that western organizations and media are the strongest supporters of queer activism in Zambia and Zimbabwe. From my previous discourse analysis, it was evident that the media worked with queer activists in some capacity to support their activism. Thus, it is crucial to ask participants if the media gave them a voice. This is their response.

P2: *“[we] managed to develop a relationship with Journalists and Editors over the years. It took a lot of effort and investment to get to a space where we can now access print and electronic media. We have a limited extend in accessing State media.”*

P4: *“Yes mostly the private media and social media.”*

P6: *“Yes, the media has been an amazing ally for us, mostly social media or smaller media outlets.”*

P7: *“YES, they are our voice, they give us a chance to normalize ourselves to the people.”*

P10: *“Not sure about Zimbabwe but Zambia has at least two to three private television stations that give a platform to queer persons”.*

This component of media is critical to understanding how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity. In a society where the government is strongly advocating against the rights of sexual minorities, these activists have utilized media, specifically social media and more independent journalists, to make themselves heard and represented. While the subaltern might not be able to speak, in this contemporary era, they might be able to tweet, post, and snap their way out of subalternity. To elaborate, the findings from this study suggest that social media can combat subalternity by giving oppressed and marginalized communities a voice, specifically by providing direct access to mainstream narratives and discourses. In addition to media, queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe felt Western organizations supported their causes. As previously discussed, many Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles articulated this notion that Western organizations were promoting homosexuality, specifically framing it as a neocolonial attempt to push Western ideologies. Thus, one of my survey questions stated that some Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles and some political elites have argued that promoting gay rights is a Western ideology. How do you respond to this claim?

P2: *“There is a lot of ignorance in many of our politicians who are fed this by media and former head of state Robert Mugabe. Many lack a reading culture to find more local literature and stories within our state archivers that counter this narratives. Most of our local information in Zimbabwe was also passed orally and lack records to substantiate this. Some local chiefs attest to homosexuality within their villages and chieftaincy. But blame political for exclusion and silencing them on the subject matter as a local issues.”*

P3: *“not true the language used in Zimbabwe "Ngochani" is vintage meaning it has always been there in our Shona culture & there are interventions that were used historically to assist those who were not aroused by opposite sex but this was kept a secret among families.”*

P6: *“It is an insane claim! They argue that we are gay for pay, that we choose to live in violence and fear for western money. Gay rights may be a movement that is associated with western culture but, LGBT people have always existed in Africa, this is not a western thing!”*

P9: *“This is a made-up claim from conservative politicians, Western ideas and colonialism made Africans more cruel to LGBTQ+ people. I would argue that people use this argument to make it seem like it's okay to hurt LGBTQ+ and stop activists from helping.”*

The responses above demonstrate that neocolonialism from Western organizations impacts the marginalization of queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The survey question highlights the discourse in Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles and political elites, who argue that gay rights are not part of their indigenous cultures and are being imposed by Western organizations. However, the responses from participants challenge this claim by pointing out that homosexuality has always existed in their cultures, and it is not a Western import. The lack of historical records to substantiate this claim and the ignorance of political elites and media in understanding their cultural history contribute to this discourse. Additionally, the support from Western organizations gives queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe a level of legitimacy and agency that political elites and governmental structures cannot suppress. This highlights the impact of neocolonialism on queer activism, which is viewed as a threat to traditional African values and cultures. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that political structures and religious institutions would be the most potent agents of oppression and marginalization for queer activists, as they use cultural and religious rhetoric to justify their actions.

However, the influence of international organizations and NGOs on the discourse around queer rights cannot be overlooked, as they are also significant players in the marginalization of queer activists. This influence can justify opposition to queer rights and create a backlash against queer activists. International organizations and NGOs may also face resistance from political elites and religious leaders who view their actions as an attack on African culture and values, as we have seen in the anti-west discourse. This can make it difficult for queer activists to gain traction and support in their communities, as they are often seen as being influenced by Western organizations. Furthermore, some international organizations and NGOs fail to understand the cultural and political contexts in which they are situated. This can lead to actions that are not

fully informed or have unintended consequences and inadvertently contribute to the marginalization of queer activists, even when they intend to promote queer rights. Given all that has been said in this chapter, is it an obvious assumption that political structures and religion would be the most potent agents of oppression and marginalization for queer activists? Thus, I asked my participants what formal structures in their society they believe oppose or harm queer individuals.

P2: *“Religious, Law enforcement, primary & tertiary institutions, politicians.”*

P3: *“The Chief’s Council, Religious fundamentalists, Politicians.”*

P5: *“Easily religion and government, the way our politicians speak of us is so very harming. Consider the words of Mugabe who called us dogs and pigs, those words stick to our political system whenever an LGBT initiative or organization pushes for rights.”*

P9: *“Our government, the political leaders spread hatred and fear, they constantly throw the penal code and religion in our faces. Our justice system also incarcerates young men and women for acts of sodomy.”*

Again, at the fear of being repetitious, we can see that the participants believe that government and religions are the most prominent agents of oppression for their activism. Government and religion are spoken about as if it is a combined and unified forces. This, however, is not shocking when considering former Zambian President Chiluba’s declaration that Zambia is a Christian nation. Also, let us not forget the rhetoric from my discourse analysis that shows the entanglement of government and religion. Nevertheless, the findings from this question demonstrate that Zambian and Zimbabwean state-enforced homophobia attempts to subalternate queer activists. However, this paper strongly argues that a dual subalternity affects queer activists via colonialism. Thus, I asked my participants if they believed British colonialism affected how their country approaches gay rights.

P2: *“British colonialism left a legacy of repressive laws that continue to hunt us today as a people and worse off as LGBTI people. But also, the North South power dynamics to date and some approaches to queer rights have also fueled the Western Narrative.”*

P4: *“Definitely, they criminalised sodomy and Zimbabwe inherited these laws.”*

P5: *“Yes, this is where the penal code state-enforced homophobia emerged from.”*

P9: *“British colonialism brought Western ideas about sex and gender that made some Zambians think being gay is wrong and not African.”*

P10: *“Colonialism has continued to negatively affect most aspects of the Zambian societies. The Public Order Act is one such laws that we inherited from the colonial administration, the anti homosexuality laws were enacted by the colonial administration. I believe if this law was not in Zambia's statutes, I doubt if we could have enacted this law but because they enacted them in all the African countries it is easy for them to enforce them.”*

As we can see from the findings of this survey, queer activists view governmental institutions and colonialism as primary sources of marginalization and oppression. While this statement in and of itself is not monumental nor innovative, the narrative being painted between these two agents of oppression as it relates to queer activism is quite intriguing. Queer activists see British colonialism as a factor when considering the oppression and marginalization they face. Some even demonstrate that this colonist intervention ultimately started the conundrum of state-enforced homophobia in Africa. However, queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe sometimes fail to produce a singular narrative that connects the marginalization and oppression from both colonialism and current government institutions. Interestingly, they are almost treated as separate factors to their oppression, with governmental oppression and marginalization being their focus.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

The previous two chapters provided much information regarding how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity. Additionally, an abundance of crucial details related to the social and political systems that aim to either help or hinder queer activists was also explored. Nevertheless, it is time to finally answer the question: How do queer activists reflect on their subalternity? What overall findings do I aim to proclaim in this paper? In this chapter, I will argue that queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity in three categories: Dual Subalternity, Contextual Subalternity, and Stereotypical Subalternity.

### **6.1 – DUAL SUBALTERNITY**

Concerning queer activists, we can see a dual subalternity based on their sexual orientation and the history of colonialism. The findings from my discourse analysis and open-ended survey demonstrate that queer activists, and Zambian/Zimbabwean media, recognize the dichotomous tension between their colonial history and their oppressive postcolonial governments. This is a phenomenon that needs substantial elaboration. To begin, we can see that colonialists began the process of marginalizing queer individuals via the introduction of Western gender and sexuality norms and establishing a penal code that criminalized homosexuality. Thus, colonialism was the initial source of subalternation for queer individuals in Zambia and Zimbabwe. As we can see, new postcolonial governments continued this subalternation by re-enforcing colonial penal codes. From this point, we see how queer activists are subaltern via state-enforced homophobia from postcolonial political systems. Queer activists were subsequently open to new allies like Western human rights organizations and international organizations that could help non-Western marginalized populations overcome their subalternity and gain a voice, but they were also wary of the structural phenomenon of neocolonialism, which perpetuates existing hierarchies of power.

Ironically, the colonizing countries who initiated state-enforced homophobia in Zambia and Zimbabwe ultimately criticized these countries for their human rights violations and lack of LGBTQ+ inclusivity. These queer activists now become influenced by these neocolonial institutions via the predominance of Western epistemologies and utilization of northern donor money, putting them in a similar situation to their country previously during colonialism. Thus,

this creates a dual subalternity where queer activists are oppressed and marginalized via Western neocolonialism and state-enforced homophobia.

Admittedly, the findings of my open-ended survey demonstrate that Western NGOs give queer activists a voice. It is an undeniable truth that these Western organizations help queer activists via resources and visibility; however, as stated by one of my survey participants,

*P10: They tie aid to the implementation of queer programmes thereby creating a rift between the political establishments and the church. This is helping but only hurts the queer communities.*

Also, previous participants recognize that the north-south relationship between countries affects western narratives of queer activism in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Queer activists are highly reflective of how their political institutions remove them from mainstream discourses. They can see themselves becoming subalterns via the government. Nevertheless, these queer activists must rely on Western resources to resolve issues caused by state-enforced homophobia. This relationship between queer activists and Western institutions is a more benevolent duplicate of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Furthermore, using Western resources causes Zambian and Zimbabwean political institutes to further mistrust queer activists and continue the act of subalternation. Thus, queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity as they recognize the colonial implication of accepting Western aid while simultaneously trying to combat a political government that criminalizes them.

## **6.2 – CONTEXTUAL SUBALTERNITY**

Gramsci's original works on subalternity painted the concept as a static identity pinned on the oppressed and marginalized via peasants and the Italian working class. Of course, as subaltern studies became a field, the concept was shaped to be more evolutionary and dynamic. Subalternity, instead of being a title for specific groups, is now considered to be influenced by gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, which can intersect and create unique power dynamics. Nevertheless, there seems to be a notion that if a group is labeled subaltern, they are subaltern in every context.

The findings from my open-ended survey contest this notion. In contrast, it is evident that queer activists find themselves voiceless and ultimately subaltern when interacting with political

and religious institutions. In this context, queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe are a textbook definition of subalterns. However, as my survey findings have demonstrated, queer activists gain access to mainstream discourses and representation via the media, specifically social media and more minor journalists. Thus, this begs the question, can subalternity be contextual?

My survey findings demonstrate that queer activists are highly reflective of what institutions and systems are likely to oppress and marginalize them. To elaborate, homosexuality is forbidden and demonized in both Zambia and Zimbabwe, and people who identify as queer must endure prejudice, harassment, and violence. Because mainstream culture does not recognize or accept their identities and endeavors, queer activists in these countries must navigate a subaltern setting. Thus, these activists have found new strategies to access mainstream discourses and culture.

As previously discussed, most of my participants see the government, politics, and religion as their main opposers. Naturally, in the context of the government and political systems, queer activists are unquestionable subalterns as they have no say in decision-making processes or discourses related to criminalizing or decriminalizing homosexuality. However, most of my participants articulated that they believe they have a voice, a characteristic inconsistent with the typical subaltern. My participants findings demonstrate that the media had given queer activists a voice, platform, and access to mainstream culture. Furthermore, my participants demonstrate that they utilize various media outlets such as live television, news, social media, independent journalists, etc. Our “subaltern” queer activist does not appear so subaltern in the media context.

Queer activists have reflected on how political institutions oppress and marginalize them. What is interesting about this reflection is the fact that queer activists sought out different structures and systems to combat this marginalization. This phenomenon adds a nuanced notion to the concept of subalternity, as literature has always stuck the label of subaltern on a social group and interpreted it as a fixed element. Nevertheless, applying subalternity to queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe demonstrates that social scientists need to contextualize precisely under what circumstances their subjects are characteristically subaltern.

### **6.3 – STEREOTYPICAL SUBALTERNITY**

This final reflection of queer activists subalternity comes less from the findings of my discourse analysis and survey but instead from my autoethnographic reflections. As previously discussed, gathering participants, and establishing a working relationship with queer NGOs was arduous. Once these relationships were established and participants were gathered, my findings suggest that queer activists do not see themselves as subalterns. Thus, it begs the thorny question of why it was assumed this group was ever subaltern in the first place.

While we can see that the Zambian and Zimbabwean governments and political institutions are huge agents of oppression towards queer activists, they are not the biggest instigator. Instead, I would argue that the most significant agent of “subalternation” is the white academic who attempts to apply Western concepts to a group that has already been traumatized and marginalized by these concepts. Subalternity is not a western concept due to the scholarship of Chakrabarty, Guha, and Spivak. However, the concept of subalternity has its roots in the Western intellectual tradition via Gramsci. Additionally, many great subaltern scholars such as Spivak, Guha, and Chakrabarty were socialized and educated under British imperialism; I would argue that even in their attempt to theorize subalternity, they still unintentionally re-enforced Western epistemologies.

What I see here is the act of stereotyping someone as a subaltern. We assume that a group must be marginalized, oppressed, voiceless, and unable to access discourses. However, this research inquiry, and its earlier proposal, never dared to question whether the subjects of interest were subaltern or even oppressed. This may be because Western scholars tend to impose assumptions and stereotypes onto groups who are perceived as marginalized or oppressed. This claim may shock and even perturb some academics. However, allow me to retrace my research attempts to explore this reflection in more detail.

To begin, I emailed every NGO related to queer activism in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Additionally, I messaged these groups on various social media platforms. In the early stages of my research, I was quickly met with silence. Initially, I had assumed this was due to security concerns and a lack of credibility. However, it became evident during my correspondence with Dr. Adriaan van Klinken that the subfield of queer postcolonial studies is highly oversaturated with Western scholars. In response, many queer NGOs choose not to interact with western academics because they find their inquiries highly misguided or downright offensive. This claim can be witnessed in my correspondence with various queer NGOs that I established a working

relationship with. While some were very excited to see the results of this survey, others would straightforwardly ask me, "Why do you believe we are subalterns"?

An exciting dichotomy I saw while researching this inquiry is the intentions of academics and queer activists. Academics tend to root themselves in postcolonial theory. They strive to understand the pervasiveness of colonialism and how these theories can be applied to "fix" Africa. However, and with full honesty, this need to fix or explore Africa via theoretical frameworks is, unfortunately, another neocolonial form of the White Savior Industrial Complex. To elaborate, the White Savior Complex describes the western desire to perform charitable or philanthropic deeds, frequently motivated by superiority and privilege, to "rescue" people of color from their troubles. Postcolonial academics who are socialized in Western countries often ignore the power dynamics embedded in their research, especially considering their attempt to apply Western concepts to non-western groups.

While I am not arguing that we should not attempt to apply Western concepts globally, it is crucial to look beyond the surface and question assumptions and power dynamics embedded in the initial research question. Something myself and many postcolonial scholars are guilty of ignoring. Queer activists clearly demonstrate this need in their interaction with my research inquiry. Western scholars may need to stop stereotyping the other as subalterns.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This research inquiry explored how queer activists in Southern Africa, specifically Zambia and Zimbabwe, reflect on their subalternity. This research inquiry argued that queer activists must interact with a dual subalternity from state-enforced homophobia and Western neocolonialism. By utilizing a critical discourse analysis of Zambian and Zimbabwe news articles and anonymous surveying queer activists, I demonstrated how queer activists reflect on their subalternity. This research inquiry was heavily rooted in Gramsci's understanding of subalternity, cultural studies, and queer postcolonial studies.

First and foremost, this question is of great interest to postcolonial studies in International Relations due to the gap in the literature on subalternity in Africa and the intersectionality of colonization and sexuality related to subaltern identities. Additionally, this inquiry allows us to explore the neocolonial nature of Western academics via postcolonial studies. The current thesis attempted to offer a nuanced approach to postcolonial studies. As we can see, applying Western concepts to African societies mimics the relationship between colonizers and colonized. As our white ancestors forced African societies to accept their gender norms and laws, are we any better by forcing them to interact and adopt more Western concepts? However, this thesis offers some unique and nuanced explorations of subalternity in an African and queer context.

This research inquiry offers a plethora of findings regarding how queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect on their subalternity. My discourse analysis of Zambian and Zimbabwean news articles discovered three main discourses related to homosexuality and queer activism: Religious discourse, Anti-West discourse, and Public Health discourse. Religion is used in African media to oppose LGBTQIA+ rights by justifying homophobic ideologies through structured language and religious references. In Zambia, the media portrays the country as a "Christian nation" opposed to supporting queer rights, using hate language to vilify and dehumanize LGBTQIA+ individuals. Zimbabwean media views homosexuality as a foreign concept with less religious opposition. This use of religious discourse and hate language marginalizes queer individuals, limiting their agency and reinforcing their status as an oppressed group with limited power. Additionally, Zambian and Zimbabwean media use anti-west rhetoric to oppose gay rights and queer communities. This rhetoric accuses Western countries of forcing a "gay agenda" upon African states. It portrays the promotion of gay rights in Africa by Western entities as a form of neo-colonization. The language utilized in these news articles demonstrates

that media producers and African leaders have subscribed to Western epistemologies regarding sex and gender but also use colonial legacies to justify state-enforced homophobia. Additionally, some news articles state that those who support gay rights or pursue queer activism are "gay for pay." Lastly, the public health discourse discusses the Zambian and Zimbabwean media's portrayal of the queer community concerning HIV/AIDS and how it perpetuates homophobic ideas and misinformation. However, the media also gives queer activists a voice in the discourse on public health. The queer community is willing to cooperate with government health initiatives and promote their queer-friendly initiatives. The media lumps queer individuals with other "deviants" and perpetuates the idea that HIV/AIDS is not just a queer issue but a deviant issue. Despite this, queer activists can combat misinformation in the media and bring attention to the issue.

I took these findings and established an anonymous open-ended survey which I justified based on gathering data from specific community stakeholders who can offer new insights into these findings. My survey found that many participants adopt a queer activist identity and engage in activities such as advocating for rights and engaging with policymakers. However, some participants hesitate to identify as activists due to a lack of visibility. My survey findings also highlight the services provided by queer NGOs in Zambia and Zimbabwe, such as counseling, HIV clinics, and crisis management, which aim to support marginalized communities in the face of the criminalization of homosexuality. These services are not part of mainstream discourses or decision-making processes, and they counterbalance the marginalizing actions of the government. My survey then explores the experiences of queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe, highlighting their struggles for representation and access to political structures. While they may be oppressed or marginalized, queer activists argue that they have a voice and have found other means of emerging into mainstream discourses, such as through media, especially social media and smaller independent media outlets, and Western NGOs. My findings support the notion that social media can combat subalternity by giving oppressed and marginalized communities a voice and providing them with direct access to mainstream narratives and discourses. My survey also explores the role of Western organizations in supporting queer activism in Zambia and Zimbabwe and responds to claims that promoting gay rights is a Western ideology. My survey finds that promoting gay rights is not a Western ideology but rather an issue of human rights. Many politicians in these countries are misinformed

regarding the local history and cultural practices that counter the narratives of homosexuality being a Western construct.

By combining the findings from my discourse analysis and open-ended survey, we can find three ways queer activists reflect on their subalternity. Additionally, these findings give us some perspective on whether queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe consider themselves subalterns in a relationship with their own governments and Western organizations. First, my research finds that queer activists are dually subaltern via their governments and the neocolonial effects of Western organizations. My findings show that colonialism started the marginalization of queer individuals through the introduction of Western gender and sexuality norms and the establishment of penal codes that criminalized homosexuality. Postcolonial governments continued this subalternation by re-enforcing colonial penal codes, making queer activists' subaltern via state-enforced homophobia from postcolonial political systems. Queer activists were subsequently open to new allies like Western human rights organizations but were also wary of neocolonialism perpetuating existing hierarchies of power. The relationship between queer activists and Western institutions is a more benevolent duplicate of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonist. Using Western resources causes Zambian and Zimbabwean political institutes to further mistrust queer activists and continue the act of subalternation. Thus, decolonizing queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe is necessary to solve this paradox.

Additionally, my findings support the evolution of the concept of subalternity and challenge the notion that subalternity is a fixed identity pinned on oppressed and marginalized groups. My open-ended survey findings show that queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe are subalterns in some contexts but have gained access to mainstream discourses and representation via social media. My survey findings demonstrate that queer activists in these countries reflect on the institutions and systems that oppress and marginalize them. They have sought out different structures and systems to combat this marginalization. These findings add nuance to the concept of subalternity and highlight the need for social scientists to contextualize the circumstances under which their subjects are characteristically subaltern. While queer activists in these countries may be oppressed and marginalized by their governments, they do not necessarily see themselves as subalterns. Additionally, queer activists see how allying with Western organizations further marginalized them despite the best intentions of Western organizations.

Finally, my findings suggest that queer activists do not see themselves as subalterns despite being marginalized and oppressed by their countries' governments and political institutions. The concept of subalternity has its roots in the Western intellectual tradition, and Western academics, who attempt to apply Western concepts to groups that have already been traumatized and marginalized, are the most significant agent of subalternation. I also reflect on the assumptions and stereotypes that Western scholars tend to impose on marginalized groups and how this can perpetuate neocolonialism through the White Savior Industrial Complex. I conclude by findings that academics must look beyond the surface and question assumptions and power dynamics embedded in the initial research question.

My findings contribute to subaltern studies and queer postcolonial studies by providing insights into the experiences of queer activists in Zambia and Zimbabwe and their struggles for representation and access to political structures. My research inquiry explores how queer activists are dually subaltern from their governments and the neocolonial effects of Western organizations. My research also challenges the notion that subalternity is a fixed identity and highlights the need for social scientists to contextualize the circumstances under which their subjects are characteristically subaltern. Additionally, my research reflects on the assumptions and stereotypes that Western scholars tend to impose on marginalized groups and how this can perpetuate neocolonialism through the White Savior Industrial Complex. Lastly, my research would encourage future research on decolonizing queer activism, the role of social media in combating subalternity, the intersection between queer activism and human rights, and the impact of Western institutions on marginalized communities.

Rudyard Kipling authored a beautiful poem titled *The White Man's Burden*, in which she criticizes the West's assumption that they must educate and civilize non-whites. This ideology would later transition into the public sphere via the White Savior Complex, where absent-minded westerners go abroad to help "disenfranchised" and "oppressed" victims of colonization. While Western academics may not be forcing children in the Congo to perfect their English for the tourism sector or building libraries in agricultural villages, they perpetuate these savior notions in their research. Western scholars assume they are uncovering the pervasiveness of colonialism and helping Africans. However, let us ponder this, where are all the African scholars who experienced colonialism? Why are all the major postcolonial academic conferences in Berlin or

Bremen instead of Lagos or Kampala? Instead of asking if the Subaltern can speak, we should ask if the Western academic can stay silent.

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## APPENDICES

\*Data sources used in CDA

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