GAY RIGHTS ADVOCACIES IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses international gay rights advocacies in Africa, using the country Ghana as a focal point. Gay rights by their mere sound, seem a concept that all should embrace without questions or qualms. Yet, there are not many concepts that have seen so much controversies, complexities and ironies than gay rights; especially in Africa. This thesis attempts to understand what gay rights are; how they have been received; and the reasons that underpin such receptions in an African country. It argues that, the intrinsic complexities embedded in gay rights advocacies require a cautious socio-legal unpacking beyond the easy and lazy racial stereotyping that currently characterises the debates. That systematic unpacking of the events of the (colonial) past and (postcolonial) present in order to make sense of the future is the central objective here.

Using qualitative empirical evidence from primary and secondary sources, this thesis juxtaposes the philosophical realms of human rights theory, postcolonial theory and queer theory to the everyday and practical realities affecting gay people and stakeholders alike. It holds that, perhaps it is through engaging these theories holistically; and transposing them meaningfully to the contextual dispositions, could we make sense of the enormous

issues (like the sources and effects of homophobia) that confront us.

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DEDICATION

To all who suffer for the sake of love or the lack of it.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

Background and Research Questions

> Whoever has unnatural carnal knowledge... of any person of sixteen years or over with his consent is guilty of a misdemeanour...Unnatural carnal knowledge is sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal (Section 104, Criminal Code 1960 (ACT 29).
>
> AD, 1892

The above is a section of the 'Ghanaian' Criminal Code, originally drafted by the British colonial authorities based on the English Criminal Code and the common law traditions as far back as 1877 (Ellis, 1971). This law was then exported to the geo-political jurisdiction currently known as Ghana in 1892 (see also Daniels, 1964). The word Ghanaian above is in inverted commas for a reason. It is to highlight how this law is Ghanaian only in name. Since its enactment and exportation from Britain in 1892, it has seen no wholesale amendment by Ghanaians who took over the realms of power from the colonial authorities in 1957 (Read, 1962, p. 272). In the 1990s (Ame, 2011, p. 143) and the 2000s (Boafo-Arthur, 2007, p. 39), the Criminal Code saw some amendments like the Criminal Code Amendment Acts of 1994, 1998 and 2001; but those had nothing to do with this particular law quoted above. The 1994 Criminal Code Amendment Act (Act

484) which criminalised female circumcision; and the 1998 Criminal Code Amendment Act (Act 554) which criminalised ritual or harmful cultural practices are examples that show where some of the focus of amendments were (see Ame, 2011).

The name of this law to date remains the 1960 Criminal Code of Ghana; probably reminding us of another year it saw some amendments. Even then, we are told by Read (1962, p. 272) that, those amendments were not intended to bring material changes to the law itself but just the way it was presented. Thus we see the Criminal Code remains true to its colonial origins. The outmoded language the law uses (like unnatural carnal knowledge) only shows that it is living up to its age. Its ambiguities in relation to whether or not it blatantly criminalises gay sex or relationships are discussed in chapter 4. For now, and in order to bring out the salient points when we get to that chapter, let us say (not necessary admitting) that this law is widely deemed to criminalise same-sex intercourse and relationships in Ghana (see for e.g., The Council for Global Equality, 2010).

AD, 2016

In the year 2016 (after nearly 125 years since this law was exported to Ghana), the current President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama travels to Britain to address the Members of Scottish

Parliament (MSPs) amongst other activities (The Herald 2016a). Upon arrival, he is refused applause by sections of the MSPs and wholly 'snubbed' (to borrow the description used by *The Herald* (2016a), a Scottish Newspaper). Part of the reasons given for his embarrassment is that as the President he 'has given full support for the horrific discriminatory laws towards the [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] (LGBT) community in his country'. It is that particular phrase 'horrific discriminatory laws' that makes it necessary to state an obtrusive irony even before the thesis provides details in the next chapter. That, the very (British) people who used that description ignore or selectively forget that it was the British colonial authorities who enacted this law in the first place.

As expected this event attracted several reactions, mostly from fuming Ghanaians (see for e.g., the comments section of Peace FM, 2016). Two reactions that came from unlikely sources are worthy of a brief mention. The first was from a black Ghanaian called Mac-Darling Cobbinah, who is the founder of a pro-gay rights advocacy organisation called the Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights, Ghana (CEPEHRG); as well as its director (Cobbinah, 2014). Strikingly, he does not applaud but decries the event and argues that what happened in a far-away

Scottish Parliament is likely to lead to backlashes against gays in Ghana:

> I...want to stress that the pressure on president Mahama was uncalled for. We, the LGBTI communities of Ghana, never asked for it and the Ghanaian government does not merit it, as it has relatively been supportive...Far from helping the LGBTI communities in Ghana, this incident has generated exactly what we are hoping to avoid. What it has done is to generate an anti-LGBTI moral hysteria and backlash with allegations that a 'homosexual lobby' is trying to impose its values on Ghana (Erasing 76 Crimes, 2016).

The second reaction came from a white British citizen and the moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, Rev David Robertson (Freechurch.org, 2014). He stresses how such strategies used in this case against a sitting African President are tantamount to racism amongst other negative repercussions:

> In my view... some...MSPs, were rude, childish, hypocritical and indeed came with more than an alarming tinge of racism, that comes from the moral superiority of the white liberal elites, who just know that they are at the top of the progressive evolutionary tree (quoted in The Herald, 2016b).

Let me prompt readers to mind the differences in terms of geography, ethnicity and opinions of the two people who gave these reactions. These examples illustrate how the debates on gay rights have become internationalised.

In-between the years AD 1892 and AD 2016 much has happened in Ghana in relation to (homo) sexualities. Although the law quoted above has not seen major changes, understandings, meanings, connotations and expressions of sexualities have undergone several changes with time. For instance, in the year 2006, there were active gay rights advocacies where some Ghanaian homosexuals sought to challenge the status quo by demanding legal and cultural recognition (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2006a; Justice.gov, 2008). From that year onwards, powerful names from global politics like David Cameron, the British Prime Minister and Barack Obama the President of the United States (U.S.) added their voices to the international advocacies (see Daily Mail, 2011 and Ghanaweb, 2011a; respectively). The former actually went to the extent of threatening aid cut to Ghanaians should they not embrace gay rights (Daily Mail, 2011). Again, reactions ensued particularly from the religious elites arguing against gay rights advocacies (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2006d 2006e; 2006f).

It is important to add that, since 1892, some aspects of Ghanaian sexualities remain static. We should not look far for examples as the fact that a law enacted in 1877 still exists is an example in itself. Also some aspects of sexualities like progeny,

potency, polygyny, patriarchies, etc., still persist. Many examples are provided in chapter 4 where Ghanaian sexualities are discussed. For now, what I wish to bring to the fore is that, even with this brief background in the preceding paragraphs, tensions abound. As the debates on gay rights commence from the colonial, through the postcolonial to the recent, they have already provoked tensions in the international and the local arenas.

It is based on these inherent complexities that this thesis seeks to explore the following research questions:

What are the complications of gay rights advocacies in Ghana?

What are the complications of the resistances to gay rights advocacies?

The word 'complications' used in framing the research questions presupposes that there are issues with both the advocacies and the resistances. The thesis commences from that position because, it is clear even from this brief background that complications abound. The purpose of the thesis is to tease out holistically, these complications with the critical scrutiny they deserve. By 'complications of the resistances to gay rights advocacies', I am also hinting at the inherent but neglected issues that come with anti-gay rights resistances. That part has been

latent and hence largely unrepresented in the literature. Ultimately the thesis goes a step further by suggesting ways by which some of these complications could be negotiated.

Literature and Theories

There have been studies before this one that looked at sexualities in Africa in general. Names of students of sexualities in Africa like Adriaan van Klinken (2015a), Marc Epprecht (2013), Patrick Awondo (2010), Ryan Thoreson (2014a), Sylvia Tamale (2011), Kapya Kaoma (2012), Basil Ndjio (2012), etc., come to mind. Yet this particular study occupies a unique place in the literature because it concentrates on a country in West Africa. The claim is not that there have not been studies in that sub-region as examples are found in Ukah, (2016); Rodenbough (2014); etc. The point is: that part of Africa has not seen much attention when compared to the southern parts of Africa. For example, Epprecht's (2004) important book centres mainly on homosexualities in Southern Africa. Its title- *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*- is telling.

Additionally, most works also appreciate the complications of gay rights advocacies in Africa but do not highlight the problems with the resistances to gay rights from the same continent. A case in point is Kaoma's (2009, 2012) discussions of how anti-gay

stances from the U.S. are becoming Africanised. He provides examples of how priests and politicians from the U.S. influence anti-gay stances in Africa. I draw on his work extensively, going further than he does to probe the claim to 'Africanness' which is often trumpeted as the main cause of anti-gay sentiments on the continent.[1]

In the specific case of Ghana, the reality is that sexualities have been studied extensively by authors both local (see for e.g., Sarbah, 1897; Nukunya, 1969; Sarpong, 1977; Oppong, Oppong & Odotei, 2006) and foreign (see for e.g., Rattray 1923; Christensen, 1954; Goody, 1956; 1967; Hawkings, 2002; Miescher 2005). Suffice to add that generally the subject of homosexualities has been neglected by both categories. Exceptions are found in Bleek (1976) and Ankomah (2004) only that, the latter draws on the former and concludes that homosexuality was/is rare in Ghana. This assertion by earlier writers and current ones is vehemently challenged by this thesis. Further, whilst this thesis argues with examples that homosexualities existed/exist in Ghana, it does not stop there.

[1] By 'claim to Africanness' is meant where some African leaders (like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe) insist that there are distinct African sexuality and African culture that are purely heterosexual in nature with no traces of homosexualities (Mail Online, 2015).

It will provide explanations as to why previous and current academics either neglected/neglect the subject or even relegated/relegate it to the realms of the unspokenness. Unlike Bleek (1976) and Ankomah (2004), O'Mara (2007; 2013) and Dankwa (2013) like this work establish that there are traces of homosexualities in Ghana. Nonetheless both O'Mara (2007; 2013) and Dankwa (2013) do not account for the resistances to gay rights in Ghana or Africa that resonate with those in the U.S. for example. Nor do they engage holistically with the alternative approaches that have been used in Ghana in tandem or in place of gay rights to protect gay people.

From Western countries come as numerous works as there are academics who contribute to the theorisation of sexualities (for e.g. Foucault, 1978; Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Halperin, 1995; Irvine, 1990; Plummer, 2015; Sedgwick, 1990, 1993; Stein, 1992; Weeks, 1985; Witt, 2011) and rights (for e.g. Donnelly, 2003, 2007; Dworkin, 1977; Finnis, 1979; Fredman, 2008; Freeden, 2013; Gewirth, 1996; Hart, 1958; Ingram, 1994; Locke, 1962; Steiner, Alston, & Goodman, 2008; Wacks, 2015; Wellman, 1995; Yowell, 2007). The richness of the scholarship makes them hard to ignore but like many other disciplines, the examples and nuances have mainly and at times solely taken into accounts the

socio-cultural dynamics from the Western world. This means that, the theories may be crucial but the lack of contextual specificity in relation to an African country like Ghana makes this study worthwhile.

This thesis mainly draws on postcolonial, queer and human rights theories which are discussed expansively in chapter 3. Postcolonial theory in this regard refers to the body of literature that traces the understandings, connotations and manifestations of sexualities in present day Ghana in particular and Africa in general to their colonial and postcolonial accounts (see for e.g. Loomba, 1998; McClintock, 1995). It is nearly impossible to write about sexualities in any part of Africa without references to that theory, given that numerous legislations relating to homosexualities are traceable to colonial rule in Africa. Gay rights debates have also been internationalised and dominated by former colonial powers. Nonetheless, this work does not merely refer to postcolonial theory; it also challenges some of the problematic assumptions that are embedded in popular postcolonial discourses.

It is important to therefore state that postcolonial theory as defined and used in this work is dichotomous from popular postcolonial discourses which are to do with how some Africans

evoke some aspects of postcolonial theory to underline distinct African identity and sexuality whilst resisting Western imperialism. So, although such claims may have postcolonial characteristics, this thesis critiques the discourse because of the selective way the theory is evoked. Hence, postcolonial theory is used in this thesis as a double-edged sword to critique popular discourses, that is both the Western discourse on Africa and African discourse about 'Africanness' and 'foreignness'.

For instance and as the example above shows, many in the West view Africans as inherently homophobic and consequently rebuke them at the least opportunity (see also for e.g., Smith, 2014; Mills, 2011; Holmes & Scott, 2015). Indeed Africans have not stood watching. They respond in numerous and diverse ways. Several examples are given in the empirical chapters to show how some African leaders (like Robert Mugabe, Mail Online, 2015) claim that gayness has no place in Africa. Others say gayness is a white man's disease and that, it is un-African to be gay (see Hoad, 2007, p. 68; Pullen, 2012, pp. 70-71). The common denominator found in the exchanges between the sections of the West who accuse and the sections of the Africans who defend is this: both have inherent racist undertones. That, in itself makes the 'popular' postcolonial discourse found in the resistance to gay rights

problematic. The same logic transposes to the vehement insistence of gay rights propositions from some Western stakeholders.

To effectively engage the problematic dimensions of the intermingling of sexualities and the postcolonial discourses, I resort to queer theory. Queer theory challenges the narrative that sexuality is natural and suggests it is rather constructed through discourse, socialisation, language, culture, nurture, etc. (Jagose, 1996, p. 76; Turner, 2000, p. 34). In doing so, queer theory does not accept but questions the basis of well accepted categories like men, women, gays, straights, lesbians, etc., and calls for their decentring. Warner (1993, p. xxvi) argues that queer theory problematises the meanings, distinctions and play of power in the uncontested, oversimplified and popular aspects of culture. To an extent, the focus of queer theory is to debunk, denaturalise, decentralise and deconstruct naturalised positions in relation to gender and sexuality. By doing so, queer theory questions the claim to a universal or global gay identity that at times underpins gay rights activism as we will later see. In the same spirit it questions the resistances to gay rights advocacies found in an existential claim to a 'distinctive' Africanness.

The fabric of gay rights advocacies rests on the notion of the universalism of human rights. In plain and brief terms, universalism of human rights means that, all human beings are entitled to inalienable rights by the mere virtue of being humans. That is to say that, human rights are for everyone with no geographical or cultural limitations (Donnelly, 2007, p. 38). However, this viewpoint has not gone uncriticised. Critics (like Panikar, 1982) contend that universalism claims of human rights have their roots and conceptions from the West. They therefore reflect realities from that part of the world and that alone makes them inapplicable in other societies where those realities may be absent. Similarly, Pollis and Schwab (1980, p. 13) reject human rights and argue that they are designed by and for Western societies only to benefit. Mutua (2004, p. 58) maintains that perhaps the reason why human rights are extended to Africans is to do with the West's preoccupation with civilising Africans in line with their ideals.

Although they play central roles in this research, both the relativism and universalism strands of human rights theories have not adequately accounted for the resistances within gay rights advocacies. Generally both theories suggest that those who oppose gay rights are likely to be Africans or non-Westerners (see

Freeman, 2011). In other words, the proposal of gay rights and their resistances fit into a binary where the West is associated with the former and the rest with the latter. What the theories to a large extent fail to identify with this grand narrative is the westernisation and/or the internationalisation of the resistances to gay rights, to the point that is almost universal in nature. It is therefore my thesis that, perhaps when we speak of universal (gay) rights; we should immediately speak of universal anti-gay resistances. I unpack this point in the next chapter where I contend that, the resistances to gay rights advocacies are very much Western as they are African.

Definitions and Scope of Usage for Main Terms

> I…in language as plain as A, B, C, hold up truth to your eyes (Paine, 1776).

Following Locke's (2001, [1690]) advocacy on plain speaking, this thesis is full of explicit, sensitive and emotive words. Locke informs us to be unambiguous with words as this could lead to the 'abuse of words' which in his estimation could further lead to the abuse of rights:

> that the use of words were made plain and direct; and that the language, which was given us for the improvement of knowledge and bond of society, should not be employed to darken truth, and unsettle people's

> rights; to raise mists, and render unintelligible both morality and religion (chapter 10, paragraph 13, p. 409).

Crucially, being plain with words in this context allows close reflection on the very nature of the debates on gay rights which are at times explicit, sensitive and emotive. Hence, sexually explicit terms like anal, anus, breast, intercourse, penis, oral-sex, penetration and vagina are used; purely to reflect the explicit nature of the discourse and also in keeping with the qualitative data collected for this thesis. Anyone who would like to be politically correct may avoid 'sensitive', 'untouchable' and even 'offensive' words/phrases such as black people, white people, racist, homophobic, stooges, demonic, dogs, backward, childlike, etc. These words cannot be avoided when writing about gay rights advocacies, for, they in specific contexts and modes of usage mirror the sensitive and acrimonious nature of the debates. Also the appendices are inclusive of unedited sample comments by my survey respondents. This is so that readers see the mixed emotions as well as the (empathetic and offensive) tones with which there were written.

Beyond the three main theories highlighted earlier this thesis also draws on debates of concepts such as autonomy, nationalism, evangelical Christianity, imperialism, homonormativity, heteronormativity, cultures, etc. I clarify these concepts and how

they have been used in this work as I write along. However, four key words/concepts/phrases need to be clarified immediately in this introduction in terms of how they have been used in the thesis. They are the word Western; the phrase gay rights advocacies; and the categories of words such as gayness, homosexualities, bisexualities, queer, etc.

Western

Following Lewis (1998, p. 100), 'the term 'Western' relates mainly to liberal democracies': notably in this thesis to the U.S. and the United Kingdom (UK). I use the word 'Western' in numerous ways and at numerous times. The meanings of words such as 'Western' have limitations, contradictions, contestations and variations across contexts. It gets even murkier when a word like 'Western' is combined with other complex ones like 'gays', 'rights', 'identity' and so forth. Phrases like 'Western gay rights' and 'Western gay identity' may be used frequently.

On the surface, such phrases point to unified, essential or self-evident practices only to be unsettled by real-world experiences. That is, even within countries that are geographically or politically labelled as Western, there are different conceptions, meanings, understandings, attitudes, perceptions and histories about gayness and gay rights. The larger point here is that, the

use of words like Western are used with cautiousness, lest they sound like polemic generalisations. This caveat is important; without which this thesis might appear as self-contradictory by challenging generalisations with generalisations.

So, recognising these inherent variations and nuances, any reference to the term Western is advisedly and loosely used in relation to contemporary gay rights advocacies that have originated geographically, historically and politically from some European countries (like the UK) and the U.S. In this sense, Western gay rights advocacies for instance depict specific symbols of identification, struggles and specific demands that have been associated with some Western countries. Common characteristics of these advocacies are the idea of coming out of the closet; gay pride matches; recognition of civil partnerships; gay marriages; adoption by gay couples; etc. (Signorile, 1996). These dimensions seem to reflect certain core principles, interests and struggles in those countries. Despite their specificities, these core parts of gay rights advocacies seem to be internationalised. Below, I provide models of how specific developments from the West, particularly the U.S. often end up appropriating (if not arrogating) the status of the international or the universal.

Altman (1996, p. 77) relates this paradigm to what he calls the 'global gay identity' and defines it as the 'apparent internationalisation of a certain form of social and cultural identity based on homosexuality'. He further stresses that, this global gay identity is

> more accurately the expansion of an existing Western category that is part of the rapid globalisation of lifestyle and identity politics.

Similarly, Massad, (2007) describes this internationalisation of gayness and gay rights advocacies as the 'gay international'. He criticises the process as assimilationist, meaning that, because of their dominant disposition, they have the tendencies of suppressing other forms of sexualities that may not fit the sexual epistemology from the West:

> the Gay International… both produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist, and represses same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology (pp. 162-163).

The problems that attend on the use of words like 'Western' to emphasis dominant trajectories are illustrated by two 'global' gay rights advocacy groups namely, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) and OutRight Action International (OutRight), formally known as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

(IGLHRC). On its website, ILGA (2013a) prides itself for being a 'worldwide' federation campaigning for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex rights. But with a secretariat in Switzerland; founded in England; with founding nations mainly from Australia, Europe and the US; receiving sponsorship from the Dutch government (ILGA, 2013a, 2013b); and promoting themes like 'coming out of the closet' (ILGA, 2013b); one cannot help but take only scant cognisance of its appropriated worldwide status. In order words, ILGA's origin, history, perspective, activities and politics cannot be entirely dissociated from the West.

OutRight (2016a) is another well-known global gay rights advocacy organisation. According to this organisation, it works

> with those self-identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) and with those whose identities do not fit the LGBTI paradigm, such as those who call themselves tongzhi or hijra (IGLHRC, 2014).

But, with the head office in New York, most of its board of directors and staff either living/working in the U.S. or Europe (OutRight, 2016b); and receiving sponsorship from U.S. corporations like the Ford Foundation and Levi Straus & Co (OutRight, 2016c); it would not be an exaggeration when detractors (like Oquaye, 2011; Massad, 2007) suggest that, 'international' gay rights advocacies are Western; at least in their origins. These features are not bad

in themselves. The main challenge with them as we will see in chapter 6 is that, a global quest to fight the hatred found in homophobia could be reduced to the specifications of the West. Manalansan IV (1995) talks about how the emergence of modern gay identity and gay liberation has come to represent a global (or Western) gay identity that inevitably masks differences.

What is it? Gay/Homosexual/Lesbian/ Bisexual/Queer?

I use and interchange words such as 'gays', 'homosexuals', 'lesbians', 'straight' 'heterosexuals' 'bisexuals' and 'queers'. By extension I also use, interchange and at times pluralise words and phrases like 'gayness', 'homosexuality', 'lesbianism', 'heterosexuality', 'bisexuality', men who have sex with men (MSM), etc. I have purposefully positioned them in inverted commas to underscore how they have diverse meanings over different time periods and in different contexts (see, McConnell-Ginet, 2011). For example, the term queer can exemplify how sexualities have different meanings over time and contexts (Jagose, 1996). It has been used derogatively for homophobic abuse; but also to signify a sense of belongingness:

> Once the term 'queer' was, at best, slang for homosexual, at worst, a term of homophobic abuse. In recent years 'queer' has come to be used differently, sometimes as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at other times to describe a

> nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies (Jagose, 1996, p. 1).

Thus, I am not using the terms in their strict definitions as this will not be practical. Instead, I am using them interchangeably simply because in the context within which this thesis is located that is how they have been used. For instance, the reports from Ghana tend to use words like gays and homosexuals interchangeably (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2015). Likewise, all my interviewees used the words gays and homosexuals interchangeably. In effect, although I recognise their variations, my quest in this thesis is not to define these words individually. I simply used them as they have been used in the empirical side and also for convenience and easily recognition purposes. I also use the term 'queer' interchangeably with gays or bisexuals simply because the thesis is mainly situated in queer theory. Therefore, I use all these terms not because I necessarily endorse the cultural, social or political meanings and at times the derogation they imply. Actually, it is the fundamental disagreement I have with the history and politics of some of these words that makes me theorise this thesis within queer theory.

I shall not use other related terms like androgyny, androsexual, asexual, bigender, binary gender, binary sex, biological sex, bisexual, cisgender, cis-man, cis-woman, closeted,

cross-dressing, drag king, drag queen, dyke, faggot, genderless, genderqueer, gynesexual, gynephilic intersex, pansexual, transgender, transsexual, transvestite, trans-man and trans-woman. Surely, the list could be extended. This is not because I claim people who may fit the definitions of the terms do not exist in the research setting- Ghana. Instead, the term queer as an umbrella term captures all of these terms, thus both within sexuality and gender (see Jagose, 1996). Again, such terms are barely used in the socio-cultural context of Ghana. For instance going through more than 50 pieces of various Ghanaian newspaper archives published on gayness, these terms were barely used in any of them.

This study focuses on male homosexualities rather than other equivalents like lesbianism. This is not to downplay the issues around lesbianism in Ghana. It is because, it seeks to identify and highlight the wider and most trumpeted issues which in the Ghanaian case are male homosexualities. For instance, the laws on incest, rape, sex, sodomy, indecent assault, sexual harassment, etc., have all looked at males as (active) initiators and females as (passive) recipients. Hence the laws do not capture females inherently. Some Ghanaian lawyers even argue that, the Ghanaian laws on 'sodomy' do not capture or seek to punish

lesbianism inherently (see for e.g., Joy Online, 2013a). That is to say that, to an extent, the jurisprudence of the Ghanaian laws on sexualities is masculine in outlook; in that, male sexuality has become the orbit around which everything else revolve. For example, the Ghanaian Criminal Code would not admit there was rape without evidence indicating there was penetration (by the male genital organ):

> Whenever, upon the trial of any person for an offence punishable under this Code, it is necessary to prove carnal knowledge or unnatural carnal knowledge, the carnal knowledge or unnatural carnal knowledge shall be deemed complete upon proof of the least degree of penetration (Section 99, Criminal Code 1960 (ACT 29).

This is reflective of a society established on patriarchal ideals where the whole sense of being is centred around; and stratified in favour of males at the expense of females (Oduyoye, 1995). The reasons for this are discussed in a subsection in chapter 4 which looks at gender stratifications in Ghana. Not unrelated to this, is to do with HIV concerns. Here the debates and studies are usually associated with gay men (see for e.g., Ghana Aids Commission, 2012). Gay men are branded in the HIV circles as 'most at risk groups' suggesting they are likely to contract the disease than people with different sexual orientations. A senior

officer at the Ghanaian Ministry of Health told me that it is MSM who have been identified as part of high risk groups. He takes this to be the explanation for the concentration on male homosexualities rather than lesbianism (Interview, Salifu, 20.1.15; see also Ghana Aids Commission, 2012). Possibly, this offers some explanations as to why there is dense concentration of studies by the Ghana Aids Commission (2012) focusing on MSM. Studies do not seem to capture in an equivalent detail, issues on lesbianism. Apart from the above, this thesis needs to be kept in manageable bounds and cannot discuss all aspects of female homosexualities.

Gay Rights Advocacies

Generally, an advocacy is an umbrella term used to define coherent demands for changes in policies and practices on a particular issue (Becker, 2012; Evans, 2005; Klausen, 1995). From the above and for the purpose of this thesis, gay rights advocacies are demands or requests or claims individuals or groups make to governments and/or civil society; for favourable policies; favourable legal changes; and favourable attitudinal changes; for and on behalf of gay people (see Gash, 2015). Gay rights advocates (those who make the demands) could either be foreigners or nationals; although in reality there have not been

that clear distinction. As will be discussed in chapters 2 and 6, this is because, even locally-based advocacy groups (like CEPERHG) are usually externalised to foreign-derived identities (see O'Mara 2007).

The strategies used in making gay rights demands vary. The ones used by international governments (like the UK) have included the threat of broad sanctions and or aid cut or reduction (Daily Mail, 2011). I discuss this approach in particular and the attendant complications with examples in chapter 6. Within the context of Ghana, the strategies include forming alliances; planning meetings; engaging the media; lobbying public institutions; lobbying United Nations' (UN) agencies; etc. Several examples are provided in the course of the thesis but let me quickly mention one. A Ghanaian-based gay rights advocacy group relays to me what strategies have been used so far:

> CEPEHRG has granted media interviews emphasising the existence of the LGBT community and the need for recognition by governments when issues of human rights and health services are discussed. Another approach has been channelling our issues and needs through UN agencies in Ghana who engage government in decisions and policies that should reflect the issues of LGBT (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14).

The Nation of Ghana as a Case Study



Ghanaian Administrative map, Source: University of Texas Libraries

Ghana: A Brief History

There are aspects of the Ghanaian polity that need to be discussed briefly in order to provide the underpinnings that shed light on the issues arising later in the thesis. Ghana is in the sub-Saharan African region boarded by Togo to the east, Ivory Coast to the west, Burkina Faso to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the south (Nations Online, 2015). There are ten administrative regions in Ghana, namely Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta and Western Region (Ghana.gov, 2015). According to the 2010 population and housing census the Ghanaian population is estimated to be 24,658,823 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

Formerly the Gold Coast, Ghana became the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve independence from European colonial rule in March 1957 (Bourret, 1960; UNDP, 2015). Ghana enjoys a stable democracy and practices multi-party system (Haynes, 1993; BBC News, 2012a). In recent past, the country has seen five successful, free and fair elections from 1996 to 2012; yielding four different Presidents (Asamoah, 2014; UNDP, 2015). Monitoring agencies have attributed the stable democracy Ghana enjoys to the absence of prolonged civil wars in the country (BBC News, 2015).

With this established democracy in place, the Ghanaian press enjoys a high degree of press freedom (Reporters without Borders, 2015). Experiencing no fear of intimidation and reprisals, the private press often criticise the government and keeps it in check (UNDP, 2015). Radio and Television (TV) stations are the most popular media, providing avenues for information sharing and the gathering of public opinion (National Communications Authority (NCA), 2014). This is partly the reason why Ghana is constantly ranked amongst the top for freedom of speech in Africa. According to the Freedom of Press Index, the Ghanaian press is ranked 22nd in the World and second in Africa for press and speech freedoms in 2015 (Reporters without Borders, 2015). This performance mirrors the positive impact of an improving atmosphere for democratic governance and improvement in public institutions as indicated by the World Bank (2015).

The same successes gained in the area of democracy cannot be said of the Ghanaian economy. The World Bank (2015) development indicators estimate that 24.2% of Ghanaians are living below the national poverty lines. People living below the national poverty lines, set by the World Bank to be below $1.25 dollar per day are deemed as extremely poor (Global Monitoring Report, 2015). Poverty in Ghana can be partly explained by what

commentators deem as economic mismanagement and high levels of corruption by successive governments (IMF, 2012). Hence, Ghana has been depending on donations, loans and grants from richer countries and global financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank to balance the national budget (IMF, 2015).

The Ghanaian constitution and the laws recognise and guarantee the human rights of individuals (see for e.g., chapter 5 of the Ghanaian Constitution). However there still exist some practical challenges, particularly with regard to protecting children, women and persons with disabilities; amongst others. The USAID (2015) reports that there are harmful cultural practices that are still in place like widowhood rites, female genital mutilation and accusation of witchcraft that mainly affect women. Also child abuse and child labour still persist (U.S. Department of Labour, 2013). It has been reported that 21.8% of children aged between 5 and 17 are involved in child labour (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). On persons with disabilities, the Human Rights Watch (2012) reports that, they still experience name calling, abuse and discrimination.

Religions in Ghana

It is nearly impossible to have any coherent and meaningful discussions about anything in Ghana without reference to religion

(Gyekye, 1997; Owusu, 2006). The relationship between Ghanaians and their religions is so significant that it has become the organising framework upon which any other aspect of social, economic and political life is ordered (Busia, 1967). This is in part why discussions on sensitive issues like homosexualities are often underpinned by religious beliefs (see Ghanaweb, 2015). This is also in part reflective of a country where most of the people belong to one religion or the other (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). According to the Ghana Statistical Services (2012, p. 6), 71% of the Ghanaian population are Christians; 18% follow Islam and 5% adhere to traditional religion. The position of the various religions is clear in that, they condemn homosexualities in the strongest stance. Sheik Sharubutu (the chief Imam of Ghana) has urged Ghanaians to refrain from endorsing same-sex relationships because they are contrary to the teachings of Islam (Ghanaweb, 2006d). The churches in Ghana call on the government not to entertain gay rights because they are contrary to the teachings of Christianity (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2006f; 2006g).

Although there are three main religions, this thesis pays attention to Christianity. This is not because Islam and the traditional religions are not significant. But as seen above, Christianity is the dominant religion in Ghana. Moreover, the main

reason why Christianity is afforded more space in this thesis than Islam for example is that, Christianity is the bridge that connects the colonial history of Ghana to the present ('postcolonial') dispensation with regard to gay rights advocacies and resistances. I am particularly interested in how gayness, homophobia, human rights and gay rights are all linked to Christianity.

Thus, in Ghana, Christian missionaries and colonial authorities have contributed immensely to the sexualities we know today. The sheer numbers of Ghanaians who adhere to Christian principles attest to this paradigm. Today the popular discourse on Christianity continues to provide the most formidable anti-gay stances as discussed throughout the thesis. So, although Islam for example is not insignificant; it is neither wholly linked to the West in terms of its origin. Nor is it linked to Ghana in the strict terms of its colonial history and establishment of sodomy laws.

Talking about Christianity here requires a crucial qualification. This thesis has to be kept within reasonable bounds and cannot exhaust the sophistications of an important religion such as Christianity on the continent. That aside, it is not the central focus of the thesis to discuss the entirety of gayness and Christianity in Ghana but to draw on aspects of the discourses in

relation to the responses to gay rights advocacies.[2] In that respect, the larger representation of the popular discourse of that religion is that of a religion that is perceived as anti-gay as discussed in the next chapter. Any other representation(s) of the Ghanaian case (in particular) as found by this thesis would be gross distortion of the events. For this thesis merely reflects how the dominant discourse on gayness by Christians in Ghana has been negative.

This is not to say that, Christianity is inherently and universally anti-gay and that there is only one response from all Christians in the world to gay rights. Neither is the aim to simplify a complicated religion with many branches and several interpretations. This is why it is made apparent in chapter 2 that this exegesis does not subscribe to such depictions but interrogates dominant narratives. This thesis further acknowledges that, it is possibly due to the multiplicity of interpretations; and the many different forms of Christianity, that have inspired the philosophy of some authors who somewhat pluralise and call it African 'Christianities' in place of the singular 'Christianity' (see for e.g. Kollman, 2010; Metogo, 2006).

[2] For detailed discussions on the particular subject matter of Christianity and gayness; and Christianity in Ghana/Africa in general, see van Klinken, 2015a; 2015b; Chitando & van Klinken, 2016; van Klinken & Chitando, 2016; Meyer, 1998; Bediako, 1995; Gifford, 1998; etc.).

I am aware that elsewhere in Africa, studies have shown the multifaceted and the complex nature of the relationship between Christianity, gayness and homophobia (see Chitando & van Klinken, 2016). Chitando & Mapuranga (2016, p. 171) for example ask us to be mindful of the 'positive interactions between LGBTI activists and church leaders in Africa'. van Klinken (2015a) studies Zambia and invites us to view religions particularly Christianity in Africa not only as a tool for homophobia and oppression but also as integral to agency and empowerment. In another work titled 'African Christianity- Developments and Trends', van Klinken (2015b, p. 146) gives a nuanced account of Christianity in Africa; making the argument that, despite prevailing challenges, there are important Christian voices that speak positively about and for gay people:

> there are several courageous Christian leaders in Africa- most famously Desmond Tutu in South Africa, but also Bishop Christopher Senyonjo from Uganda, and pastors from various denominational backgrounds who provide pastoral support to LGBTI people and address homophobia from a Christian perspective. This illustrates, again, the different theological strands and trajectories in African Christianity and how these impact on the ways in which Christianity engages with public and socio-political issues.

We will see in Chapter 7 how some important voices from Ghana have spoken in defence of protecting gay people. Yet such voices have not been dominantly 'Christian' in the Ghanaian case.

Selecting the Case: Why Ghana

Observing gay rights advocacies and resistances in Africa, two main narratives emerge. The first, which is echoed the loudest focuses on reports from countries in Africa who have recently updated rather ambiguous laws on gayness to explicit ones condemning gay people to several years of imprisonment. Past British colonies like Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe immediately spring to mind. Reports indicate that, these countries have rekindled and updated almost defunct and colonial 'sodomy' laws to stringent and punitive ones to the shock of the international community (see for e.g., The Huffington Post, 2014a; BBC News, 2012b). Like Ghana, Nigeria for example inherited its entire criminal law from the British colonial authorities as far back as 1916 (Mwalimu, 2005, p. 385; Morris, 1970). Unlike Ghana, Nigeria has since updated the laws criminalising 'unnatural carnal knowledge' as recent as 2014; including up to 14 years terms of imprisonment (The Telegraph, 2014).

The second narrative is represented within the context of African countries who are implementing changes toward

embracing gay rights. For instance, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Central African Republic and Mauritius have either signed or signalled their intention to support the UN General Assembly's resolution to include sexual orientation within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

It is my argument that, Ghana does not fit perfectly into any of the two main categories. Ghana presents an alternative view of Africa that has largely been unexplored in the academic scholarship. The challenges of institutionalised anti-gay sentiments where laws are changed to disfavour gay people have not been witnessed. Yet, on the other hand, Ghana has not embraced gay rights advocacies. Although this dimension places Ghana on the middle ground, it is not just that quality alone that makes that country peculiar. It is the ways in which the Ghanaian government uses alternative approaches found in public health to proactively but discreetly protect gay people that make the country a unique case worthy of a study. The observation is reiterated by Robertson (2009, p. 1) when he argues that,

> Ghana...is distinguished from most countries in sub-Saharan Africa... by the level of activity addressing MSM. With the support of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), ground-breaking…programming...has been developed in the country…officials

> have also not prevented the development of…interventions despite the legal prohibition of homosexual behaviour.

I commenced this study with the purpose of contributing to gay rights debates by subjecting both the 'ideals' and their resistances to theoretical and empirical scrutiny. But as there are several countries that compose West Africa, the decision to focus on Ghana was further influenced by the features below:

1. Language

The importance of language in any research cannot be over-emphasised. In the sensitive area of sexualities, especially in the context of an African country, language remains even more important (see Bucholtz and Hall, 2004). Language is so significant in relation to (human) rights (see May, 2012) that, Pupavac (2012, p. 1) argues that the whole talks of rights could have little meaning if they do not relate to our (native) speech/language. Perhaps this is because understanding the languages spoken by the subjects being researched, carries its advantages; particularly when the researcher in this case appreciates key aspects like sexual jokes, teasing, insults and lexicons (see for e.g., Eder, 1993; Braun & Kitzinger, 2001) attached to everyday speeches. Hence, my ability to speak the *Akan* (at times referred to as *Twi*) languages came as a huge bonus. The *Akans* constitute the largest ethnic group in

Ghana; according to the Ghana Statistical Service (2009, p. 1), thereby making the *Akan* languages the most widely spoken language in Ghana (Yvette La Pierre, 2004, p. 47). Below is how my command over the *Akan* languages became a useful tool in the research process:

a. Accessibility, Comfortability and Trust

Because I can speak *Akan*, I could access different groups of people and information for the research. My fluency in the *Akan* languages enabled me to reach different sets of people less likely to be the target of international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO). Thus my embedded understanding of the local scenes enhanced my sociological imagination in that, I could appreciate every day or casual or street or bus or bar overheard conversations and exchanges (see Mills, 1959). And so apart from the elites, I was able to engage several other people including some gay men who spoke to me in *Akan*. I was also able to engage other Ghanaians who cannot speak English and were unwilling to grant interviews but nonetheless provided useful information in *Akan*.

My command over the *Akan* languages helped a great deal in relation to trust and confidentiality issues. Interviewees spoke to me freely without inhibitions. Even the elites would switch to *Akan* when they needed to make a point they could not find the

English equivalent for. For instance, although she studied in England and spoke English fluently, Maame, one of the interviewees could not find the direct English equivalent to the word *supi* which could loosely be translated as lesbian sex or relationship (Interview, 13.1.15). I could immediately understand what she meant when she used that word; because I have heard it used several times in Ghana. I could also relate to the word, its understanding and the connotations it has.

Perhaps it was through the mutual trust and confidentiality that emanated from speaking the same language that made some of the interviewees who self-identified as gay men reveal 'hidden' and 'insider' information. At one point, I was told some of the terms and phrases gay people use to identify or communicate with other gay people just to be certain that they would not be betrayed. Ali, one of such men, told me that phrases like *woyɛ boys* translated literally as 'he 'does' boys' (author's translation) are used within the gay community (Interview, 01.12.14). He told me that such phrases are used to purely identify others and it would be only gay people who are likely to understand the term. So, when such terms are used, an eavesdropping member of the general public might not understand their meanings. Later in

chapter 4, I shall discuss how such 'new' phrases/words (language) are being developed and used by gays in Ghana.

Furthermore, all the above meant that I could to do all the translations and transcriptions without the need of an interpreter. Whilst there is nothing inherently wrong with using one, the meanings of words could be lost in the process because they may be incommunicable and untranslatable (Pupavac, 2012, p. 118; Polkinghorne, 2006). I have already alluded to how words like *supi* have no direct English equivalent and are untranslatable with one word. Without my embedded understandings of the context and language, it would have been very difficult to get the actual inference of the word. And even if it was translated for a researcher who does not speak the language, it would be difficult for such a researcher to appreciate its real meaning within the context of Ghana. Thus *supi* as we will later see in chapter 4 is invoked derogatively to offend lesbians by Ghanaians.

b. Monitoring Radios and TV Stations

Another crucial aspect of this research was to do with monitoring views and opinions about homosexualities on Ghanaian radio and TV stations. Most of these stations spoke *Akan* and so the ability to speak the language was instrumental. Most of the

content analysis of the programmes of the various radio stations to evaluate perceptions about gay people and responses to gay rights advocacies had to be translated from *Akan*. According to the National Communications Authority (NCA), the body in charge of regulating the activities of radio and TV stations in Ghana (NCA, 2010), there were 293 radio stations in operation in Ghana as at the first quarter of 2014 (NCA, 2014). Out of these, 179 are based in *Akan* speaking regions. Understanding the meanings and connotations of some of the terms used on radio stations became easier for me.

This meant that I could listen to a live or recorded programme from any *Akan*-speaking radio or TV station and gain insights into public perceptions. For instance, a commonly used word on such programmes on TV and radios is *trumutu* (see for e.g., Adom TV, 2015). *Trumutu* could be used colloquially to refer to anal intercourse between men. But it was through monitoring its usage and connotations from radio stations that I realised that it is also evoked explicitly and deliberately to offend gay men. These 'actual' meanings and connotations of such words may be missed by an outside observer, who cannot speak or understand the *Akan* language.

2. Local Knowledge and Field trip to Ghana

As a citizen of Ghana, it made academic, ethical and cultural sense to base my fieldwork in a geographical terrain I am familiar with. Anthropologically and ethnographically speaking, the importance of local knowledge to research cannot be overemphasised. Perhaps it is for this reason that anthropologists and ethnographers spend several months (even years) in unfamiliar territory (at times risking their lives) just to familiarise themselves with the context of study (see Spradley, 1980). For me, my background, local knowledge, cultural affiliations and understandings massively paid off as that influenced my appreciation of the sensitive nature of the topic and the human subjects I dealt with. A way of appreciating the nuances that should accompany such a sensitive topic is to be familiar with the context of study very well.

Researching in the context where I could understand the language, perspectives and local knowledge was crucial and provided a comparative advantage over a terrain I did not know. My initial thought was that choosing a familiar terrain was also to help facilitate sources of information, access to contacts and other matters that relate to collecting data. This decision did pay off and this was the case in most part of my research. So, I understood

when I was told by a confidant that to get a very tight-lipped potential interviewee I had to travel to Ghana and wait for a Sunday church service to come to a close to get introduced to this man. I also perfectly understood that to diffuse any potential tension, my confidant and I should go with the gentleman to an *ɛmotuo joint.*[3]

Anyone familiar with Ghana might know that it has almost become routine, that many Ghanaians converge (at a *chop bar*), typically on a Sunday afternoon after church service to have *ɛmotuo*; making the chop bar, a place where acquaintances are frequently established (Salm & Falola, 2002, p. 108). In England (and true to that perception), I am but a student and therefore with limited resources. In Ghanaian terms, I am a bɔga.[4] With that (*bɔga*) status, comes roles. One of them, in this case, was that I had to foot the bill for the expenses incurred when having the *ɛmotuo* with my will-be-informant and confidant.

3. <u>Silences: Don't ask, Don't tell</u>

I knew little about gay rights advocacies before starting the PhD. I occasionally heard about gay people and gay rights

[3] *Ɛmotuo* (at times spelt omotuo) is a Ghanaian dish of large rice balls mainly eaten with groundnut soup (Salm & Falola, 2002, p. 108). The *joint* or a *chop bar* is where people gather to have this dish in Ghana (La Pierre, 2004, p. 17).
[4] Bɔga is a Ghanaian term/slang used to describe a Ghanaian who is returning from a Western country (Neilson, 2015).

advocacies fleetingly in the Ghanaian news when they manage to make the headlines. I realised that issues around gay rights cropped up every now and again although people dissociated themselves from detailed discussions. Despite these developments, there are few comprehensive studies done on homosexualities and gay rights in Ghana. The work already done is mainly by health service experts from the Ghana Aids Commission and the Ghanaian Ministry of Health (see for e.g., Attipoe, 2004). This is partly reflective of the general nature of discussions around homosexualities in the Ghanaian society, where talking about it could almost pass for a taboo. These deafening silences encouraged me to explore the rather avoided but important subject. The reasons for the silences and unspokenness around homosexualities in Ghana are discussed in chapter 4.

Ghana was chosen as a single case study and the justifications for doing so have been provided. Yet those justifications do not altogether replace some of the advantages of a comparative approach where at least two (country) cases are juxtaposed to establish key symmetries and asymmetries. To dissipate the criticism often associated with a single case study, I draw on the experiences and examples from other African

countries like Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Cape Verde, etc. I also analyse how gayness and gay rights advocacies have been reported in three phases – before the year 2006; the year 2006 and after; through to the year 2013. Thus, I look at a 10 year period and analyse how homosexualities have evolved and been reported. This has been useful in multiplying the facets of the analysis within a single-country design (Porta & Keating 2008).

Methodology

Before going on to describe how the key data was collected, organised and analysed, I shall briefly talk about an unexpected aspect of the PhD process which is to do with the emotional roller-coaster I experienced. The emotional imbalances encountered during this study were neither given any consideration by myself nor captured by the university's ethical processes. These imbalances were at their peak during data collection and analysis stages. As a black African researching gay rights, I was faced with several personal and intimate questions on a regular basis. As a self-funded PhD student, my immediate family, colleagues, friends and even research respondents have often asked and wondered why I have dedicated 4 years of my adult life studying homosexualities (of all subjects) and spending nearly £100,000 in the process. Others put their questions quite bluntly. I have lost

count of the number of times I have been asked either jovially or seriously this question: Are you gay? I have also lost count of the number of times people associate or link me directly to the topic by asking if I am promoting or against gay rights advocacies.

I am a Ghanaian. Yet to many other Ghanaians, I am also a *bɔga*. This implies to them that, I have been 'westernised', and hence they at times externalise me to foreignness. So often, whenever I mention gay rights, Ghanaian friends, acquaintances, interviewees, survey respondents, etc., think I am promoting gay rights. This is despite the reality that my research, as we will see to some extent actually critiques gay rights advocacies. In England, being a black African male studying gayness meant something else on the other hand. I am often approached with two options. The first is that I am aligned with those Africans who challenge gay rights by reifying cultural positions. The second is that as an African, now 'westernised' by the mere fact that I live in England and have studied/study in English universities, I am perceived as seeking to promote gay rights in my country of origin. In both cases, it takes several conversations (and at times still fail) to convince some people that I seek to do none of the above.

Although these questions were unexpected and emotionally draining, they helped in the quest for reflexivity. Given my

background, the setting that I write in, and the topic involved, being reflexive was an important aspect of the process. Several definitions have been given for the term 'reflexivity' (see Hertz, 1997; Finlay, 2002). The one given by Yip (2008) is particularly relevant to this thesis because of my situated knowledge of the research context, its impact on the fieldwork, how data was analysed and the key ethical considerations involved. Yip (2008) defines the term in broader terms as follows:

> reflexivity refers to the researcher's commitment to producing situated, unalienated, and reflexive knowledge that is sensitive to her/his own ideology and partial location, as well as the presence and working of power in the research process, particularly between the researcher and the researched, and other associated ethical considerations that structure the production of knowledge.

Practically, reflexivity brought to mind that, my own ideology, sexuality, background and socio-economic dispositions were crucial to the knowledge that I sought to produce. The insider/outsider dilemma that is recounted above in many ways helped shaped the production of the knowledge in this work. As part of being reflexive, these dynamics force the researcher to self-confess her own inclinations and biases. As argued by Adkins (2002), it becomes necessary for researchers to confess and out themselves as prove of their reflexivity. This 'self-narration'

argument holds here. None so prominent than my sexuality. I had to constantly remind people of who I am and my sexuality. I am a doctoral student seeking knowledge on gayness, gay rights advocacies and their resistances. The rationale for embarking on such an (educational) journey was that gayness is an important academic endeavour that ought to be taken on. But I am not gay.

Some of my informants seemed enthusiastic about the prospects of my research topic and were keen on a black African researching on gayness in an African country. Yet others (especially some of the gay men and the pro-gay activists) were 'disappointed' about my sexuality and saw me as an outsider. They held that mostly it is gays who tend to study gayness. Some claimed that gays might appreciate the issues better than someone who is not gay like me. And that my 'straightness' might influence my position on the subject area. Although these contentions were far from my intentions, they made me mindful of my tendency as a researcher to have ideological leanings when it comes to the gay/straight dichotomy (a dichotomy that this research is theoretically opposed to).

Yet being mindful of a situation is half the problem solved. The insistent reminder of my research respondents of my sexuality and its influence on the research made me constantly look for ways

to mitigate that tendency. For example, apart from the theoretical grounding that required familiarising with several pages of queer, gay and lesbian and sexuality literature, I listened to interviews by Ghanaian gay men, watched pro-gay rights videos, followed (gay) events in Ghana, and observed gay websites to enhance my understanding about the case under study.

Whilst I grew weary with the above, I will later learn that it is very common that those who work on sexualities are usually linked directly to the subject of enquiry. One of my elite interviewees relays to me how even people who work in a professional environment that involves gay people are often stigmatised and called names although they may not self-identify as being gays (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15). Additionally, some of the gay men I interviewed recounted the harshness of their everyday lives. Most of their stories have underlying economic issues. The sheer poverty witnessed would make the toughest of persons concerned. To me, it was an academic exercise. To them, it was time to pour out some of the frustrations that even went beyond my research demands. This pointed out my own relatively privileged position of being able to live my everyday life studying and travelling between the UK and Ghana without such socio-economic pressures.

The sense of my own powerlessness in the face of real challenges hit home when one of the interviewees asked what I could do to help him. Hopefully this academic exercise embarked upon influences international and local stakeholders in Ghana and Africa as a whole to find meaningful solutions to some of the issues that this thesis raises. Yet his immediate concern addressed directly to me and framed in a rather simple question of what I could do to help till date remains unanswered. With this out of the way, I turn to the key aspects of the methodological processes.

Qualitative Case Study

The thesis is centred on finding out the complications and resistances associated with gay rights advocacies. To that end, I used qualitative methodology in light of its purpose of producing knowledge by understanding aspects of social and/or political phenomenon (Marshall & Rossmann, 1999, p. 7). After gaining understanding into the phenomena, a qualitative research seeks to provide explanations using words as the unit of analysis (Manheim, Rich & Willnat, 2002, p. 315).[5] The specific method employed was a qualitative case study which refers to an empirical

[5] Qualitative research is usually contrasted from a quantitative one where the same aim may be reached but numbers become the main unit for analysis (Manheim, Rich & Willnat, 2002, p. 317).

research which seeks to investigate a phenomenon in its real-world framework (Yin, 2003, p.13).

Data Gathering

Three main methods were employed to collect data for this case study. They are qualitative interviews, a qualitative survey and contextual data

Interviews

The purpose of interviewing is to gather information and understand what people say about notions, events and things (Kvale, 1996). As articulated in the literature by different authors, the best way and at times the only way to learn about how and what people think of a particular phenomenon and how they come to have a particular opinion is simply to ask them (see for e.g., Babb, 2012; Kvale, 1996; Yin, 2003). This is because interviews allow researchers to grasp not only what people say or do but also the reasoning behind the reactions, rhetoric, politics, and expressions. In this specific case, the main aim was to find out how people perceive, understand and explain gay rights, gayness and the resistances to gay rights.

I had to find out from the people who are in the position to offer insightful thoughts on the demands for gay rights and their resistances. Elite interviews proved essential for this quest. Elites

in this sense are people who occupy important professional or political positions and are able to provide well-informed information on gay rights and gayness (see Babb, 2012, p. 301). In the end, I spoke to former or current senior officials of government agencies like the Ministry of Health, the Ghana Aids Commission, the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I also spoke to experts who are advocates for gay rights in Ghana and Africa and are part of a wider network of pro-gay rights groups. For example I spoke to senior officials from pan Africa ILGA and CEPHERG. Other officials who work with gay people in Ghana but are neither from pro-gay rights groups nor government agencies were also interviewed. Finally, I spoke to gay men who are ordinary Ghanaians on whose behalf the request for gay rights are being made. Apart from these ordinary Ghanaian gay men who spoke to me on how it is like to be gay in Ghana, some of the elite interviewees were also gay.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic discussed, semi-structured interviews and conversations were used. As the prefix 'semi' suggests, this kind of interview allows informal (but also formal) conversations which encourage interviewees to speak freely (Wengraf, 2001, p. 5; Yin, 2003, p. 89). This also allows interviewees to add personal experiences and their personal views

outside official positions. For example, at the end of every interview, I asked interviewees for any generic views and opinions about gay rights and homosexualities in Ghana. In some cases, this was when key information was mentioned. With the interviews, as revelations came to light, I inculcated them into further points of enquiry to better understand issues that were initially not considered. When I realised from one expert that public health was an integral aspect of issues around gay rights, I adjusted questions to draw from that area.

Qualitative Survey

I have qualified the word 'survey' with the adjective 'qualitative' simply to differentiate it from the predominantly quantitative ones. As explained above (about qualitative research) and not unlike interviews, the purpose of a survey is to gather information and understand what people say, feel and react to a phenomenon from a small number in order to make inference of a larger population (Babb, 2012, p. 135; Yin, 2003). As the interviews targeted specific (elitist) people and gay men, the survey was for ordinary or every Ghanaian. The reason for this was to find out what ordinary Ghanaians think and feel about gayness and the explanations behind their thoughts and feelings.

More importantly, it is not always politicians, the clergy and gay rights advocates who express their views on gay rights. Ordinary Ghanaians are very much interested in the debate and also express their opinions every now and again. For instance, I cite in chapter 5 how a controversial gay discussion received 508 responses from ordinary Ghanaians (see Ghanaweb, 2008b). Moreover, as discussed in chapter 7, some instances of attacks on gay people have been instigated and carried out by ordinary Ghanaians. These attacks have ranged from verbal abuse to violent (physical) ones. It is therefore important for anyone interested in gay rights issues to get insights from ordinary Ghanaians. So, I eventually set out using self-administered questionnaires to gather their responses.

Following conversations from the Ghanaian and the international press, I drafted the survey questionnaire based on the frequently asked questions by Ghanaians on gayness. The broader areas that these questions sought elucidation on are, what gay rights are, why gayness is linked to the concept of foreignness, and the general thoughts of people on sexual relationships. The framing of the survey questions involved some contentious words like 'natural' and 'normal'. The aim was to make the survey questions simple and reflect the everyday usage of those words by

informants given that they are ordinary Ghanaians. This thesis however goes further to challenge such usages through the perspective of queer theory.

The survey questions were first pre-tested using a small representative sample of the target population to establish that questions would be interpreted correctly and items produced desired results (see Babb, 2012, p. 136). This exercise proved worthy. After testing them with people who had different backgrounds, it remains invaluable the feedback they provided for me. Their feedback was further revised and final questions and answers were reframed.

Contextual Secondary Data

Contextual secondary data is simply a phrase used here to describe all other information that were already available and focused on homosexualities and gay rights in Ghana and Africa (see Bryman, 2012). Examples of those are reports from the local and international press, reports from international NGOs, reports of human rights monitoring organisations like the Human Rights Watch, state reports like that of the U.S. Department of State, etc. All of these secondary data were available to the general public and so I did not need special permission to access or reproduce them.

Recruitment of core research informants

As indicated, the survey was intended to reach as much people as I could, given the time and resources. Unlike the interviews that targeted experts and gay men, there were no criteria attached to the selection of respondents. Any Ghanaian was eligible to complete the survey, which garnered 122 responses at the end. Respondents were reached through internet contacts like Facebook and emails. With the interviews, professional and political elites were targeted. There are not many elites specifically working around gayness and gay rights in Ghana. Perhaps this is due to the societal stigmatisation that comes with the job as explained by one of them (see Interview, Ama, 21.2.15). For the same reason, even the few elites involved are hesitant in granting interviews. So, looking for respondents proved very challenging.

Apart from the stigma attached to working with gays, another possible way of explaining this challenge (or low interviewee numbers) could be reflected through the silences that overshadow discussions about homosexualities in general. Hence, many of the elites did not want to talk; not least recording and codifying their opinions. The second part of the interview targeted Ghanaians who self-identified as gay men. This category of people was even harder to identify. This is because, even when it was whispered to

me that someone could be gay, it was very difficult to approach them with personalised questions on their sexuality. Again, as I later learned, some gay men in Ghana are not use to answering interview questions. In light of this difficulty I was able to reach 3 of them. However, some of the interviewees who were categorised as elites were also gay men. Even then, the point still remains that the small number of gay men interviewed is reflective of the regime of don't ask, don't tell governing sexualities in Ghana.

In the end, it was through the snowballing technique that I got in contact with interviewees. This technique, also known as the referral technique is where one interviewee mentions another potential interviewee or connects them to the interviewer (Vogt, 1999). Snowballing helped in this case because, once I gained the trust of one, I got recognition in terms of trust and confidence from the others. A total of 15 interviews were conducted.

Data

By the end of the interviews I had close to 25 hours of audio recordings. I also had unquantifiable long hours of informal conversations with different people on the subject of homosexualities and gay rights in Ghana. I amassed more than 50 pieces of hardcopies of different Ghanaian newspaper reports on homosexualities and gay rights during my visit to Ghana. These

hardcopies were mainly from *The Ghanaian Times* (a Ghanaian-based newspaper) and other newspapers from Ghana like *The Spectator* and *The Daily Guide*, etc. They mainly included newspaper publications that I physically held because most of them could not be accessed from online. As some of this information could only be retrieved from the libraries of the newspapers, I was allowed to make photocopies of them with the help of an informant in Ghana. There were unquantifiable amounts of online data accessed from other reports. Different websites were visited but a website called ghanaweb.com was particularly useful. This is because that website specifically catalogues most Ghanaian press' data on homosexualities in a chronological order (Ghanaweb, 2015a).

All interviews were recorded and transcribed from audio to written words. Some of the interviews were conducted in *Akan* or a mixture of *Akan* and English. These had to be fully translated into English, making the transcription process exceedingly tedious.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is aimed at understanding and explaining a phenomenon by using the information or data available (Manheim, Rich & Willnat, 2002, p. 212). In my case one of the most challenging aspects of this process involved sifting through the

tons of information amassed through informal conversations, interviews, observation, survey, reports and monitoring radio and TV stations, to establish common patterns. I used thematic analysis which involved using codes to categorise similar occurrences and patterns in relation to specific topics. I then paired the various answers and the themes that fitted my initial interview questions. For instance, the responses provided were grouped under themes like sexualities in Ghana, the notion of foreignness and gay rights, etc. There were other insightful information and data that were not fused into these categories but had different coding. These were done to categorise the information that could not be matched with the others.

For example, at the end of each interview, I asked interviewees to speak freely about gay rights and gayness. The information they provided varied significantly and so had to be coded individually. With the survey, I created charts to establish percentages of people agreeing or disagreeing on a particular topic. In addition, I had a specific code for the general comments section of the survey. This section was extremely useful because I could analyse comments from respondents that included personal and generic views they wanted to add in relation to the topic. Analysing some of the general comments on the survey questions

as well as the interviews further granted me intimacy with the data collected. The range and tone of the comments received reminded me of the sensitivity of the subject that I have purposed to study.

Ethical Considerations

The nature of the research topic made ethical considerations one of the most important aspects of this PhD. In this respect, ethical considerations refer to acceptable moral obligations and behaviours a researcher has to consider in the course of her research (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012, p. 17). Ethics relates to the norms of conduct that are acceptable when making decisions about methods, data collections, data analysis procedures and perspectives in line with academic integrity and quality (see Iphofen, 2009; Gregory, 2003). These include respondent's right to know; right to protection; right to privacy; right to confidentiality and anonymity; and accurate reporting of results (Babb, 2012). Several meetings were held with my supervisors and annual reviewers to think through the ethical issues thrown up by a study of this kind and how to adequately resolve them.

Within the social sciences, minimal or no physical harm is expected on participants and researchers compared to the physical sciences (Babbie, 2013). Yet the socio-cultural context within which the chunk of the data was collected presented various

challenges. Tension builds up as soon as the word 'gay' is mentioned in any conversation. Also, some of the key respondents and elites I contacted were hesitant to meet or speak to me face to face. So in the end it was decided against exclusively having a pen and a paper in my hands and asking questions about gay rights in Ghana. My supervisors, academic reviewers and I concluded that conducting interviews over the phone, through skype and/or face to face (upon deeming it suitable) were the best options. In the end all these options were used based on the situation and the preferences of informants.

On behalf of the interviewees, there were significant considerations toward beneficence or the avoidance of harm (Burnham et al, 2008, p. 286). A primary ethical consideration in light of the potential for stigmatisation, discrimination, harm, loss of jobs, and other harms was the need to safeguard personal data. To minimise such risks, several measures were put in place to protect the privacy, security and safety of the respondents and interviewees. For instance, recorded interviews and transcriptions were stored with passwords which I changed every month. Additional ethical precautions were observed when necessary. For example, some of the elites requested to see sample questions

before granting interviews as part of their own ethical and communication procedures.

Others requested the transcribed versions of the interviews they have granted. One self-identified gay man I spoke to told me that, he did not want anyone to hear him discussing gay rights and would like to talk only in a secluded place at a certain time. I had to keep trying until he found a location where he deemed safe enough for him to speak freely. Some of these constraints within which some of the interviewees found themselves put them in distressing moments, particularly when recounting their (gay) stories. I used varied means to avert fears and also assure them about the safety of the information they were providing and the protection of their identities. With the online survey, no demographic questions like names, age, sexuality, gender, etc. were asked. This was in line with the quest to guarantee the anonymity of respondents. The above reasons offer explanations as to why pseudonyms have been used throughout the thesis.[6]

Finally, the data, conversations and interviews were granted to me free of charge. All the people who contributed anyhow during and after my trip to Ghana did so voluntarily. I fully

[6] In qualitative research terms, pseudonyms are to do with the use of fictitious in place of real names by a researcher in the quest to protect the identity of her respondents (Bryman, 2012).

recognise my inability to ever be able to pay back in full the gift of knowledge they presented to me. I will therefore be always grateful to all who generously participated in this study.

Overview of Thesis

The second chapter looks at three key areas. The first part raises questions about the narrative from Western media that depicts Africans as inherently homophobic. Whilst it is admitted in the chapter that there is homophobia in Africa, it still holds that there is more to homophobia on the continent than the sheer backwardness attached to its inhabitants. In the second phase, the chapter questions the resistances to gay rights advocacies from Africa by problematising the phrase 'African culture'. It contends that what is usually termed and romantically held as 'African culture' is historically flawed. The third aspect of the chapter argues that the clash between the West and 'African culture' is overstated. This is because, once scrutinised, the antagonisms between those who propose gay rights and those who resist them do not follow geographical boundaries. As already indicated, the resistances to gay rights are as 'universalised' as their propositions.

The third chapter discusses the main theoretical groundings of the entire thesis namely postcolonial, queer and human rights theories. The main argument in that chapter is that, much as these theories are helpful for this thesis and many other works, they have their own shortcomings. The chapter argues for instance that, popular postcolonial discourses have the tendency of claiming a distinct Africanness that could be separated from the rest of the world. Much as this argument partly holds because of the commonalities found in the colonial history of many African countries, this thesis argues that, such claims contribute to the (racist) exchanges that pitch Africa against the West.

On human rights theories, the fundamental argument made is that, the theoretical antagonisms found in the universalism and relativism claims are inconsistent with the practical issues that arise from the resistances to gay rights. This is because the debates seem to suggest that the West propose gay rights, whilst Africans resist. Yet as international examples demonstrate, anti-gay sentiments are vibrant in the West as they are in some African countries.

Chapter 4 introduces in detail the country of study (Ghana). It looks at the history of Ghana in relation to sexualities. The chapter further discusses the socio-cultural construction of

sexualities in Ghana by highlighting key areas like marriages, family, sex, sex education, gender stratifications and homosexualities. The chapter posits that although there are prevailing heterosexualised and gender biased aspects of Ghanaian sexualities, there is nothing natural about them. That is, sexualities in Ghana have undergone different phases of the precolonial, the colonial and the postcolonial; and each stage had its own ruptures and continuities. And so the sexualities in Ghana we see today are socio-culturally constructed in or out of harmony with the vicissitudes of urbanisation, social change, globalisation, economic changes, policy directions, and so on.

The fifth chapter focuses on the subject of homosexualities for a period of ten years (2003-2013). This ten-year period is crucial because it reveals the three main ways in which homosexualities are expressed in Ghana. I call them the old, new, and hybrid manifestations. Each of these has their specific timeline and outlook. The period from 2003 to 2005 represents the old manifestations where homosexualities were not talked about or publicly expressed in Ghana. The new manifestations commenced from the year 2006. That year is the watershed year that will break the silences and inconspicuousness found in the old manifestations. In that year, some gay men from Ghana

demanded rights and public recognition leading to public discussions of gayness and gay rights. The hybrid manifestations are to do with the mixture of both the old and the new from the year 2007 onwards. They are characterised by a mixture of silences where some gay people still live their lives incognito; and coming out of the closet, where some gay people mirror the Western conceptions and features of being gay and proud.

Chapter 6 discusses the notion of gay rights. It seeks to ascertain in detail what gay rights mean; what principles undergird them; what theories underpin them; and where they come from, etc. It further looks at the complications associated with gay rights and outlines those complications. The chapter also offers explanations from the empirical side as to why there are such complications. It finally accentuates other alternative approaches of protection for gay people that have been used in Ghana outside the demands and assertions of gay rights.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter. In that chapter, the main findings of thesis are reiterated. Using the knowledge acquired in the course of the study through interviews, survey and monitoring public opinions on the subject, the chapter presents some of frequently asked questions that are on the minds of many Ghanaians and those interested in gay rights advocacies.

Additionally, the chapter makes recommendations. As debates are localised and internationalised the recommendations target both local and international stakeholders. For all Ghanaians, it goes further by providing elucidation on the repercussions of homophobia. It concludes that homophobia does not affect only gay people but all Ghanaians.

Chapter 2 -THE NOTION OF FOREIGNNESS AND GAY RIGHTS ADVOCACIES IN AFRICA

Introduction

This chapter has a tripartite purpose. First, it questions the narrative particularly within the Western media that Africans are homophobic. Whilst there are elements of homophobia on the continent like anywhere else, a careful scrutiny reveals that there is more to homophobia in Africa than critics have allowed. For instance there is evidence that suggests that a key fuel for anti-gay politics in Africa is driven by Western (particularly American) influence (Kaoma, 2009, 2012). I unpack this point in different subsections with examples below. Second, the chapter delves into the problematic claim that homosexualities are un-African by problematising what 'African culture' means and if such phrase should even exist. Thus, I attempt to peel away the layers that encrust the definitional controversies around African culture to reveal some underlying complications. One of such complications is that, the claim to an 'African culture' which is the most trumpeted reason for rejecting gay rights could be historically flawed.

This is partly because, what is often passionately held and simplistically defined as 'African culture' is highly dosed with the influence of Christianity. Implicitly it remains increasingly difficult to at times decipher between 'Western' Christianity and 'African culture' although the two might sometimes appear as diametrically opposed. Consider for instance that, if we removed the word Christianity from the phrase 'Western Christianity'; and the word culture from the phrase 'African culture'; what is left is Western versus African. The West and Africa on the surface may have nothing in common when it comes to gay rights. Yet within gay rights advocacies and resistances in Africa, the two are intrinsically linked with the popular discourse on Christianity serving as the bridge that links the two worlds.

This leads to my final purpose where I explore the consequences of placing gay rights debates reductively and simplistically into two opposing themes namely 'African culture' versus Western imperialism. I argue that it is purely by going beyond the overstated clash between 'Western' gay rights advocacies and 'African culture' that we could appreciate that a debate that could have taken shape within national boarders have been unwittingly internationalised and politicised. To state it another way, the preoccupation with the quest for the monopoly

of truth by both gay rights advocates and proponents of a distinct 'African culture' and sexuality have taken the debate to the international realms; leaving important national contexts (like socio-economic issues) unaccounted for. In fact it is due to this very problem (and not by sheer preference) that I have to write this chapter under African themes rather than the particular Ghanaian case for the thesis. Consequently, although I question this paradigm, it is impossible to commence a specific country case study without speaking and writing within African and global realms.

This is because most arguments within the gay rights circles are usually placed in African and not national contexts. For example, almost all the people I interviewed used phrases like 'we Africans' although I spoke to them specifically on Ghana. The complications with this paradigm are manifold but the situation where national and ethnic voices are submerged by global and supranational dimensions is commonplace. On the theory side, gay rights advocacies and resistances raise key questions about how we define the concept of autonomy which I attempt to bring to the fore in subsequent paragraphs.

What is Foreignness?

Before untangling the above contentious points, first there is the need to clarify what is meant by foreignness and how it has been used in this chapter. To understand foreignness, the word foreign has to be defined. This is because foreignness can simply be defined as being foreign (see Oxford Dictionaries, 2016a). The word foreign is defined as 'Of, from, in, or characteristic of a country or language other than one's own' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016a). So, to be foreign means to be different in all or some aspects from one's own identity.

Whether it is through Hegel's (1977) *Master-Slave Dialectic* where the relationship between slaves and their masters is conceived and maintained through perceiving each other as wholly dichotomous with no similarities; or Sartre's (1943) *Being and Nothingness*, where we mainly perceive ourselves purely by separating who/what we are, from 'others' who are unlike us; or Beauvoir's (1949) *The Second Sex* wherein females are 'created' to give form or existence to males; the resounding denominator is that foreignness is mainly evoked to highlight a distinct separation between the 'us' and the 'them' that emanates from a claim to a particular ethnic, tribal, racial or sexual category (Witkowska & Zagratzki, 2014).

Thus, foreignness could be used as a device that gives a particular form to or that which threatens existing political communities by highlighting and negating what 'we' are not (Honig, 2001). The foreign figure is generically linked with such categories as the outsider, madness, anarchy, boundary crosser, outlaw, repository of irrationality, and so on (p. 8). In relation to sexualities, the foreign figure is likened to erotic excess, homosexuality, sexual deviants, etc. (Altman, 2001).

Foreignness has been used in different ways but it is the versatility of the usage of that notion that makes it intriguing. By the 'versatility of the usage of foreignness' I refer to the probability of diametrically opposing parties to concurrently invoke the same principle (of foreignness) albeit to different ends. In other words, foreignness has a double-edged effect that makes it a powerful theoretical and political notion to evoke. On the one hand, nationalists find in foreignness a vehicle of renationalisation.[7] For instance, a recurrent theme throughout this chapter is that of what it means to be African and the sexual expectations that come with it, without which one becomes automatically branded as foreign.

[7] Nationalist is used here to refer to those who identify with a sense of patriotic disposition that beckons on individuals to become attached to their nation and protect its ideals (Hutchinson & Smith, 1994; Kedourie, 1993). Renationalisation is the romantic process of revisiting nationalist ideals or activating them (Porter & Teich, 1988).

On the other hand, cosmopolitans find in foreignness a necessity for denationalisation.[8] Here there is a call particularly by the international community to overlook what it culturally or locally means to be part of a nation or a continent and rather appeal to a global and a 'higher' international moral imperious (Delanty, 2000; Heater, 2002). It is through this feature of foreignness that Africans are able to import aspects of other cultures like Christianity; forgetting it is not native to their indigenous peoples in terms of its origins. And at the same time they are able to export 'unwanted' 'vices' like homosexualities by saying that they are foreign. This two-faced evocation of foreignness is eloquently articulated by Honig (2001, p. 3) as follows:

> Sometimes, the figure of the foreigner serves as a device that allows regimes to import from outside (and then, often, to export back to outside) some specific and much-needed but also potentially dangerous virtue, talent, perspective, practice, gift, or quality that they cannot provide for themselves (or that they cannot admit they have).

[8] Cosmopolitans in this context refer to those who believe in the essence of international society where people are linked through global social bonds and a sense of global community (Bell, 2010; Brown, 2009). Denationalisation is the process of doing away with the idea of the nation-state and building communities internationally (Irving, 2016; Weil, 2013).

The Types of Foreignness Associated with Gay Rights

Risking oversimplification, I identify four main forms of foreignness that are commonly used within gay rights advocacies in Africa. These types of foreignness resonate with the themes that I discuss in this chapter. They are the foreignness of the advocacies; the foreignness of the advocacies' benefactor; the foreignness of the advocacies' beneficiary; and the foreignness of the advocacies' resistance. The foreignness of the advocacies is to do with the claim that international gay rights demands are not African in origin and could be traced to specific socio-cultural events in the West particularly the U.S. It also means that the advocacies do not always reflect the realities of being gay in Africa. Foreignness of the advocacies' benefactor is where all those who argue for gay rights irrespective of their origins are linked with the outsider perspective and called names such as foreigners, stooges of the West, unpatriotic, traitors and national enemies (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14).

I use the phrase 'foreignness of the advocacies' beneficiary' to show how all those perceived to benefit from gay rights advocacies are also tagged foreign or outsiders. This is mainly seen in the debates on whether you can simultaneously be a true African and gay. Finally I take a keen interest in the foreignness

of the advocacies' resistance where the source of anti-gay sentiments in Africa could partly be instigated from the U.S. (see Kaoma, 2009, 2012). This is where I point out the often neglected aspects of homophobia in Africa which have roots from Western countries. I discuss for instance in one section how Africa has become the battleground for American culture wars on gay rights.

Theoretical intersections: Citizenship and Autonomy

Citizenship

The concept of foreignness and gay rights in Africa cross with three main theoretical concepts namely transnational citizenship; global citizenship; and autonomy. Foreignness and citizenship have a relationship that could be described as symbiotic. As citizenship depicts the 'us' (Bell & Binnie, 2000), foreignness is about externalisation and portrays the 'them' (Honig, 2001). The two concepts are diametrically opposed but it is through one, that the other is organised and vice versa. This means that, it is through the perspective of citizenry (what we nationally are) that the foreignness of others are made bear. In this same spirit of symbiosis, foreigners are contrastable from locals or citizens. Before going on to the mapping of these theoretical standpoints, let me first clarify briefly what is and how I am using the core term,

citizenship. To be a citizen in this sense is about belonging or being a member of an ethnic group or a state (Bell & Binnie, 2000). Citizenship in turn is to do with the processes involved in becoming such a member.

Two main traditions namely civic republicanism and civil liberationist provide the generic underpinnings for theorising citizenship. By 'republicanism' is meant a constitutional system where emphasis is placed on some form of power distribution to avoid concentrated arbitrary and dictatorial government (Heater, 1999, p. 44). 'Civic' is to do with the participation of citizens in the public affairs to the benefit of both the community and the individual (Heater, 1999). Under civic republicanism, the emphasis is placed on duties and obligations that are often mediated through political participation in common affairs (Bell & Binnie, 2000; Turner, 1990; 1993; Bulmer & Rees, 1996). The overall purpose is to have freedom in the republican state through communal belongingness, friendship, fraternity, patriotism, and concord (Heater, 1999, p. 52). Some of the major thinkers associated with this type of citizenship are Aristotle (1948); Marcus Cicero (1959); Niccolò Machiavelli (1998); and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1968).

Contrasted from its republicanism variant, civil liberationist tradition is rooted in rights (Heater, 1999; 2004). It consists

mainly of the relationship between an individual (the right holder) and the state; where the latter is expected to honour the civil rights of the former. Anchored in civil liberties and legal statuses of individuals, it is primarily concerned with tenets such as freedom of speech, right to vote, right to fair trial, access to legal system, etc. (Bulmer & Rees, 1996; Turner, 1990; 1993). John Locke's (1962) *Two Treatises of Civil Government* is widely regarded as providing the exegesis for this type of citizenship (see Heater, 1999, p. 5).

Apart from rights and liberties, another way of thinking about citizenship in this sense is found in T. H Marshall's (1950) articulation of welfare rights where the state plays the parental role of securing the wellbeing, happiness, safety and comfort of its citizens (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992). Marshall stresses the importance of the provision of welfare to citizens in order to reduce the unavoidable disparities found in social inequalities (p. 7). It is important to stress that in both civic republicanism and civil liberationist understandings, the overriding account of citizenship is framed classically from the point of view of the state; where it plays a parental role of providing the environment within which members mingle in rights and responsibilities.

Sexual Citizenship

Contemporary discourses on citizenship have moved away from the definitions given above. 'Contemporary discourses' here denote other recent branches and additions or even critiques of citizenship theory as we know from the formative explanations given above (Seidman, 1998, p. 189). One prominent area where this shift has taken place is where the notion of citizenship has been broadened in scope to include the realms of sexualities. The name given to the branches of the literature connecting citizenship and sexualities is sexual citizenship, which is premised on the understanding that sexualities are central to the conception of citizenship theory (see Bell & Binnie, 2000; Evans, 1993; Richardson, 1998; Weeks, 1998). Intersecting sexualities and citizenship is complex but in simple words, the concept infers that, to be counted as a citizen is primarily centred on the conformity of one's sexuality in line with the approved, normalised, and therefore dominant modes within a given society.

Writing on sexual citizenship, Richardson (1998) offers a critique where she posits that, the notion of citizenship as we know from its foundations is unfavourably gendered and by extension heterosexualised. 'Gendered and heterosexualised' signify the normalisation found in citizenship where men are privileged over

women and heterosexuals over homosexuals. Riding on the back of patriarchies and heteronormativity, the former category are held in high esteem to the detriment of the latter. 'Claims to citizenship status,' writes Richardson 'at least in the West, are closely associated with the institutionalisation of the heterosexual as well as male privilege' (1998, p. 88).

This implies that, to belong to a nation and enjoy the rights therein as a citizen is to conform to the prevailing heteronormative and patriarchal conditions. So the resounding justification for the articulation of sexual citizenship in Richardson's eyes is that, it should be inclusive of those who may sexually differ; be it in homo or hetero ways (p. 96). Sexual citizenship within gay rights advocacies is also about equal entitlement and/or equal recognition and demands for civil rights; access to welfare provisions; and rights to marry, etc. (see Sullivan, 1995; Warner, 1999).

In effect, sexual citizenship invokes the tenets of citizenship by highlighting equity, justice, enfranchisement, inclusion, and belongingness of sexually marginalised groups that were not included in the foundational definitions of citizenship (Weeks, 1998, p. 39). That is to say that, the articulation of sexual citizenship condones the ideals of inclusion and belongingness

where citizens find commonalities as the basis of belongingness. On the flip side, it also provides new understandings to inclusion which imply acknowledging and embracing those who do not share the (sexual) commonalities with other citizens. Another way of viewing this is through the shift in the debates around citizenship where there is concentration on 'differences' rather than 'sameness' as the condition for being a citizen (Bell & Binnie, 2000). Along this line, Calhoun (1994, p. 21) remarks that

> The issue of resistance to imposed or fixed identities has encouraged many quarters a shift from identity politics to a politics of difference.

Gay Rights in Global Citizenship and Transnational Citizenship

Interestingly, the foundational theories establishing citizenship, found in the works of Aristotle, Marcus Cicero, Niccolò Machiavelli, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke and TH Marshall all view citizenship with a geographical limitation. Thus citizenship understandings be it civil liberationist; civic republicanism; and even a queer quest for the redefinition and decentralisation of that notion, despite their disagreements, place the term within the geographical enclose of the state. Yet it is observed empirically (as we will see) within gay rights advocacies that, the concept of citizenship is (re)conceptualised beyond national borders. This

implies that, citizenship has been reconceived beyond explanations that require the state to provide the environment to foster a sense of belongingness. Yuval-Davis (1999) captures this prototype when he brings to fore that, the idea of citizenship should be multi-layered; constructed and articulated from the different strands- local, ethnic, national, state, trans-state and global.

Global citizenship foregrounds the demands for internationally 'recognised' or idealised norms (see, Delanty, 2000; Heater, 2002; Dower, 2003). It broadly is a concept that appropriates the ideals of citizenship and operationalises them beyond the confines of a state but within the global community. This kind of citizenship has theoretical roots in Kant's (2006) advocacy for the extension of citizenship (and hence, human rights) not just to nationals but also to foreigners. In what is known as citizens of the earth, Kant sees the possibility of individuals having rights wherever they go instead of within a particular state. As global simply means the world, global citizenship could be thought of as world citizenship (Fox, 2005). Although global citizenship has a normative appeal, there are practical challenges within gay rights advocacies and resistances in Africa. Like most rights claims in general, claiming rights by

evoking global normative convictions are problematic as claims may not be justiciable (Steiner, Alston, & Goodman, 2008). To illustrate, it is overly complicated for a Nigerian, Ugandan, Ghanaian, Sudanese or a Gambian man to claim a right to marry another man although freedom of choice (for a life partner) is implicit in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN, 1948).

So although gays could claim rights, such rights may be denied with impunity at the national level where constitutional provisions may be rigorously enforced against such claims. One possible explanation for the complications with global citizenship instantly comes to mind. This is in relation to a long-standing critique where global citizenship is linked with the West's tortuous preoccupation with civilising-cum-universalising and integrating the non-Western world (Bowden, 2003). So although gay rights advocacy groups like ILGA and OutRight stretch the ideals of citizenship to have a global appeal in furthering the course of gays, such approaches are resisted in the African context. However, the quest to expand the theoretical space of citizenship beyond the state has not been one-sided. Africans have articulated their version of citizenship trans-nationally for long time. Yet is increasingly becoming more noticeable within the resistances to

gay rights and sexual citizenship. As already hinted, although people resist gay rights advocacies within one African country, the common theme is that homosexualities are not African. It is therefore implicit that to be gay is not to be a true African. Or to be a true African, one cannot be gay.

Commonsensically, transnational means cross-border and implies trans-state (Fox, 2005, p. 172). Transnational citizenship therefore takes the ideals of citizenship that have been described above leaving behind the autonomy of states and granting them to a collection of states (Bauböck, 1994, 2003). It is important to clarify that although transnational implies cross-borders, it does not seek the global realm and so it is usually regional or continental. In summary, transnational citizenship is not analogue but dichotomous to global citizenship therefore reflecting the distinctions often made between the global versus the transnational (see Florini, 2000; Keane, 2003; Tarrow, 2005). As we will see below, many Africans resort to a sense of transnational citizenship by claiming what is African or not in regard to sexualities. The possible explanation for this is not found in transnational citizenship *per se* but in how African postcolonial leaders view the concept of autonomy.

The Concept of Autonomy in Africa and its Discontents

Autonomy could simply be defined as the condition or right to self-governance (see Christman & Anderson 2009; Downie & Telfer, 1971; Dworkin, 1988 for detailed explanations of the concept). Other apparent synonyms with the concept of autonomy are self-determination, self-rule, internal-rule, liberty, freedom and self-sufficiency (see Worger, Clark, & Alpers, 2010). Within the African decolonisation context, autonomy implied freedom from external governance or control (Hargreaves, 1999). In Africa, there has been a conceptual stretching of the term autonomy. Postcolonial African leaders stretched the meaning of autonomy beyond national self-governance by insisting that, the whole of Africa be freed from colonial shackles. Kwame Nkrumah the first President of Ghana and a very influential African icon credited with playing an instrumental role in the decolonisation of Africa continually stressed how he was not content with the autonomy for Ghanaians unless it resonates with other African countries. And so as far back as 1957, he stood in Ghana to declare a vision for an autonomous Africa:

> We are going to see that we create our own African personality and identity. We again rededicate ourselves in the struggle to emancipate other countries in Africa; for our independence is meaningless unless it

> is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent (BBC World, 2000).

Julius Nyerere the first President of Tanzania calls this version of transnational autonomy 'African nationalism' and insists it should be expanded to include the diaspora: 'African nationalism is meaningless, dangerous, anachronistic, if it is not, at the same time, pan-Africanism' (Mwakikagile, 2007, p. 197; Nyerere, 1967, p. 194). Likewise, Nnamdzi Azikiwe, the first President of Nigeria envisioned a 'United State of Africa' (Azikiwe, 1949). Today, the African Union (AU) still rides on the backdrop of this transnational version of autonomy instilled by the founding fathers of African unity. In its vision, the AU stresses an objective for an integrated Africa; with political unity toping the lists of its priorities by the year 2063:

> a Peaceful, Prosperous & Integrated Africa' by amongst other aims having 'integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance' (African Union, 2016).

What this means is that, from the onset the very idea of autonomy was conceptualised transnationally or continentally by African leaders like Kwame Nkrumah (BBC World, 2000); Julius Nyerere (Mwakikagile, 2007, p. 197; Nyerere 1967, p. 194);

Nnamdzi Azikiwe (Azikiwe, 1949), etc. In effect, there was a neglect of the bucolic aspect of citizenship and autonomy. A possible justification for this is that, African leaders seek to protect the continent against the onslaught of an equally continental approach taken on by some Westerners where the former feel that the common aspiration of individual countries are threatened by external forces (Sithole, 1989). And so it would be through a united front that they could offer any formidable opposition. What needs undergirding here is that gay rights advocacies and resistances have proceeded right from the start beyond the nation-state in the African case.

Homophobia and the Paradoxes of Blaming

Homophobia could be described as the dogmatic revulsion against same-sex behaviours, acts, relationships and thoughts (Epprecht, 2013, p. 225; Kantor, 2009). This prejudice may be informed by the perception that homosexuals are genetically disturbed, defective, unfortunate misfits, and deserve to be pitied as they contradict laws of nature and may be generally inferior to heterosexuals (Blumenfeld, 1992, pp. 3-4). This may lead to feelings of fear, discomfort, dislike, hatred, or disgust toward homosexuals. Homophobia could be internalised when

homosexuals have the same negative perceptions and feelings toward themselves. This is known as internalised homophobia (Berzon, 1996; Kantor, 2009). There are several references for homosexuals who experience internalised homophobia (see for e.g. Kantor, 2009, Berzon, 1996; Blumenfeld & Raymond, 1993) but a primary encounter during this study is hard to forget. Whilst conducting interviews one of the striking comments made by a self-identified Ghanaian gay man was when he told me that, he always prays and wishes his homosexuality away although the effort has been futile (Interview, Adu, 13.12.14).

Negative Focus on Africa

> Western liberals eager to see the best in Africa must face an inconvenient truth: this is the most homophobic continent on Earth (Smith, 2014).

There is a narrative particularly within some Western media outlets that Africans and their cultures are inherently homophobic. Examples and references of these could fill several pages but for the economy of space I shall list a few of them. To establish this narrative, David Smith an English reporter does his best to convince everyone who reads *The Guardian* (an English Newspaper) as to 'Why Africa is the most homophobic continent' by citing events and examples mostly from Uganda and Zimbabwe (Smith, 2014). Smith's polemic declaration which I quote at the

beginning of this section is symptomatic of this paradigm. Scot Mills, an English gay British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio 1 Disc Jockey travels to Uganda and returns with interviews and footages upon which he makes the grand conclusion that, that country is 'The World's Worst Place to Be Gay' (Mills, 2011).

Another report by *The Telegraph* (an English newspaper) generalises this perception with its title: 'Homophobia at 'dangerous levels' in Africa' (The Telegraph, 2013). Kristen Holmes and Eugene Scott of the Cable News Network (CNN) remind Americans and all who can access CNN of how its President Barak 'Obama lectures Kenyan president on gay rights' on his visit to Kenya (Holmes & Scott, 2015). The above headlines are typical of what is likely to be read, heard or watched in the Western media about homophobia in Africa. The above narrative has been sustained by using the continent of Africa synonymously or interchangeably with countries like Uganda or Zimbabwe as if they have no fundamental geopolitical differences. Thoreson (2014a) argues that such (racist) depictions of the continent simplify the complex nature of the situation at hand and lead to the dismissal of Africans as inherently hostile to gay people:

> By lumping disparate incidents together, these framings homogenize complex responses to sexual acts, identities, and politics. Decrying a

> wave of homophobia in 'Africa' also elides local specificity, and bolsters racist dismissals of the Global South as inherently hostile to queers… By glossing both 'homophobia' and 'Africa,' these tropes leave little room for the nuance and specificity of sexual politics in postcolonial settings (p. 24).

The imbalance in the reports about Africa where countries like Cape Verde that have responded positively to gay equality with avid interest and tolerance are neglected is often the norm not the exception (Epprecht, 1998). It has been reported of Cape Verde that in one year there were no instances of reported official or private discriminations against LGBT in that country:

> No antidiscrimination laws apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons. There were no reported cases of official or private discrimination against LGBT individuals in employment, occupation, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care, and there were no reported incidents of violence against LGBT persons (U.S Department of State, 2013).

Not many countries including those from the West could boast of such reports. African countries like Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Central African Republic and Mauritius have either signed or signalled their intention to support the UN General Assembly's resolution to include sexual orientation within the UDHR (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

Interestingly, there are still homophobic issues in Europe and the U.S. and makes one wonder why there is such negative focus on Africa. In a recent survey by the European Union (EU) where it engaged 93,000 respondents, it was shocked by the high level of stigmatisation, discrimination, harassment and violence toward LGBT in Europe (EU LGBT Survey, 2013). Likewise, whilst President Obama lectures Africans on how to treat homosexuals, many Americans could benefit from that same lessons as we are told by the Pew Research Centre (2012) that, although there have been some improvements, to date, views on homosexualities remain sharply divided in America. What needs to be foregrounded from the statistics and the dynamics is that, homophobia is a global problem not an exclusive African problem.

The Paradox of the Law Giver

The paradox is that, Westerners who point the accusing fingers at Africans by calling them homophobic (selectively) ignore an important anthropological actuality. It was the colonists (or Westerners) who institutionalised punitive codes that criminalised same-sex intercourse in many parts of Africa (Dynes, 1983). The Ghanaian Criminal Code that criminalises 'unnatural canal knowledge' is a case in point. As highlighted in chapter 1, the entire law remains true to its colonial origins as it has not seen

major amendments since it was wholesomely exported from Britain to Ghana. In Africa these (colonial) laws were further entrenched through explicit Christian missionary propaganda and draconian punishment for same-sex couples (Dynes, 1983).

Today, abrogating these laws has become a major impediment for anyone wishing to fight the canker of homophobia on the continent (Epprecht, 2013, p. 225). Yet, in a 'u turn' manner, the law-giver in this case the colonist reappears in the form of Western gay rights advocates as if to say that the previous laws on sexualities that were given to Africans were on a wrong premise and so should be revoked. Thus in a way it appears that there is a 'need' for new laws just as they were in the colonial days to regulate African behaviours toward sexualities, only this time, they are in the form of gay rights. It is unclear, for some years to come, whether gay rights like previous laws on sexualities would become useful or redundant in the African context.

What is clear and perhaps complicating the situation is the racialisation of sexualities where the West is accused of historically perceiving Africans as deviants in need of regulation in the sexual arena (see Wieringa, 2009). Thus, there is to an extent a preoccupation with sexualities in Africa. Part of Bhaba's (1983) work- 'The other Question'- speaks to this puzzle. According to

Bhaba, Western preoccupation to ensure a pre-set point of identification, even when deployed supposedly in anti-colonialist points of view, ends up functioning within the Manichaean opposition where there is the white positive and the black negative. A parallel argument could be found in Said's (1978) *Orientalism* where a similar point is transposed to the Arab world. In the African case however, scapegoating of Africans has frequently been associated with racial stereotyping, with specific hysteria around (HIV) positive African men and the fear that they might spread the virus (Altman, 2001). In the end, this mistrust of the West prompts demagogic speeches from politicians and citizens who often associate opposition to gay rights advocacies with nationalism, patriotism and afrocentricism (Epprecht, 2012). It is such responses that lead to the second paradox.

The Paradox of the Law Keeper

The West is often blamed for many issues - poverty, impoverishment, lack of infrastructure, civil wars, economic dependency, etc., in Africa (see for e.g., Collier, 2007). A section of a whole field of developmental literature (see for e.g., Davidson, 1992) is dedicated to this perception. One particular book sums this body of literature up with its title - *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Rodney, 2012). Homosexualities are

another branch of the many controversies between African countries and the West that have received a fair share of this blame. The West is often blamed for bringing homosexualities to Africa where homosexualities may be branded as the 'Whiteman's disease' (see Hoad, 2007, p. 68; Pullen, 2012, pp. 70-71). Blaming homosexualities on white people and the West is a pointing reminder of the racialisation of sexualities where racial stereotypes abound. Only this time, the stereotype is ironically done by Africans against Westerners, the former failing to recall that it suffered/suffers from such stereotyping. Further, blaming homosexualities on Westerners may perhaps be explained by the understanding that gay rights advocacies in Africa are politicised and externalised.

Although claims of the foreignness of homosexualities could be flawed, they may be viable to some extent in the area of gay rights advocacies. This is partly because gay rights advocacies are mainly led by (white) foreigners. Commenting on this issue in Africa, Epprecht (2013) argues that the visible face of the gay rights advocacies in Africa is disproportionately white and foreign. Even activist who are black and locals are accused of aiding imperialism and are externalised.

Reflecting on this paradigm, a gay rights advocacy group in Ghana told me that, their activities have been branded foreign despite the fact that locals are involved:

> Fighting for the rights of LGBTS has not received any support from our traditional or political rulers. Majority of the organisations enforcing human rights are NGOs and it is believed that foreign donors fund them, and so unfortunately, regardless of the locals involved it is still perceived as we are pushing activities to support a foreign agenda (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14).

Gays then become the victims and ready scapegoats for long-standing disagreements and are consequently externalised to Western derived identities or foreignness. Altman (2001) highlights how there is a long history of scapegoating around sex where prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases and homosexualities are commonly linked with every other nationality but the speaker's own. The resultant negative attitudes often arise from moral panics where the metaphor is obvious: fear of homosexualities merges with a general and more amorphous fear of being 'recruited' by foreigners (Altman, 2001).

The paradox here is that some Westerners like David Cameron, and Barak Obama argue for the abrogation of anti-gay laws that were instituted during the colonial era. In the African

context, one of the main objectives of Western-based gay rights advocacy groups like ILGA (Interview, Betty, 12.10.14) and OutRight (2006) is the abrogation of these laws. Yet many Africans (see for e.g., BBC News, 2012b; The Huffington Post, 2014a) resist this gesture and call it imperialism, chastising the West for telling them how to run their countries, whilst holding on to these laws as if they have no umbilical cords to the colonial. And as if that was not ironic enough, many Africans resist gay rights mainly on the backdrop of Christian principles; sometimes forgetting that, that religion too is of foreign origin (see for e.g. Advocate, 2014; ChurchMilitant, 2015).

To reiterate, I do not seek to conceptualise Christianity monolithically and so the phrase that needs underlying in the pretext is, 'of foreign origin'. It defeats the object of this thesis which is at core against monolithic depictions to maintain that there is only one Christian response to gayness in the whole of Africa and that Christianity remains a foreign religion. This is because Africans have appropriated Christianity and inculcated that religion into their cultures in diverse ways and for numerous reasons. Far from being a static religion, it could be argued that Christianity after several years of existing in Africa has become African as it is Western. Bediako (1995) partly makes this point in

a sophisticated manner with his telling book title: *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Perhaps this is what van Klinken (2015b, p. 146) points out when he postulates that,

> Far from being a 'colonial leftover', through complex processes of religious change that are intricately connected to broader cultural and socio-economic dynamics, Christianity has become an African religion, in the sense that in its various manifestations it speaks to the needs, concerns and aspiration of many people of Africa.

Despite these assertions, the argument still holds in terms of the origin of Christianity in relation to the colonial and postcolonial dynamics in the African region. In effect, although Christianity could be branded African too, the irony in branding homosexualities as foreign whilst embracing Christianity as local and authentic in relation to its (colonial and postcolonial) histories and origin is hard to comprehend. It is possibly due to this inconsistency that van Klinken (2015b, p. 145) after making these nuanced and comprehensive arguments about the dynamics of Christianity in Africa still admits that

> Pentecostalism has…contributed to…the emergence of popular homophobia and the introduction of new anti-homosexuality legislations in various African countries.[9]

To return from this unavoidable parenthesis and to conclude, an imaginary scenario springs to mind with the two main paradoxes explained above. I illustrate them below with imaginary past and present conversations between the West and Africans:

> AD, 1835 to 1941
>
> Colonists: Dear colonial subjects, we declare for you new laws criminalising gayness.
>
> Africans: No we do not want any laws whatsoever and demand self-government.
>
> AD, 2016
>
> The West: Dear Africans, you were right, the anti-gay laws we gave you several years ago are dangerous, get rid of them.

[9] According to Meyer (1998, p. 321) Pentecostalism is to do with churches that 'share a particular set of religious ideas and practices, such as baptism in the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues (glossolalia), divine healing, and a strong emphasis on personal prayers. Their services have a similar liturgic form, and congregational life is organized along more or less the same patterns.'

Africans: No, no no. you were right, we love those laws and prefer keeping them.

The way Awondo, Geschiere & Reid (2012, p. 159) advance a similar point is compelling and therefore deserving of a long quote:

> It is striking that the current image of one monolithically homophobic Africa has been adopted by both African 'traditionalists' and Western observers –that is, by African political and religious leaders who contribute to the image and insist on the need to protect Africa against this imported vice and by Western news media and activists who feel they have to combat homophobia as a given on the continent…both views assume a radical opposition between homophobic Africa and a supposedly tolerant West. Thus they ignore different points of view and policies within Africa. But they also overlook the reality that homophobic practices and utterances are part and parcel of everyday life in even supposedly tolerant countries (for instance, the Netherlands, which is known as a 'guide country' for gay emancipation).

Are Homosexualities African?

The claim that homosexualities are un-African is one of the most common arguments raised by different people against gay rights advocacies. The variety of people found in churches, streets, market places, parliamentary houses and cabinet meetings who make this claim often with little or no direct research on the topic

is remarkable (see for e.g., BBC News, 2001; CBC News, 2014; CNS News, 2015, Epprecht, 2004; Zabus, 2013). In the sensitive area within which I write it is crucial that the use of words be held accountable to their full meanings and implications. So to unpack the controversies and the complexities inherent in the claim that homosexualities are un-African, a definition of African cultures (not culture) is eminent. For, to claim a singular or a monolithic culture for a whole continent is dubious and lacking in cogency as discussed in this section. This is partly because we can always refer to the statistic stating that, prior to colonisation on the continent, Africa had up to 10,000 different states and autonomous groups with distinct languages and customs (World Atlas, 2016; nationsonline.org, 2016). Today the continent is made up of 54 individual countries (World Atlas, 2016) with 1500 to 2000 languages spoken (nationsonline.org, 2016).

Returning from this unavoidable digression, perhaps the best way of attempting a definition for the loaded phrase - African cultures- is to break the composing words into two; by defining what Africa is; and what cultures are. What unite these two words however is that their definitions may be persistently revisable but also stubbornly static. This is to say that although the meanings of these two words have been susceptible to the onslaught of time,

history, and contexts, some meanings associated to them may be held in a way that could be sacrosanct and perhaps thought of as unchangeable or untouchable.

What is Africa?

Africa means different things. Geographically, Africa is simply a continent (World Atlas, 2016). Africa is just not any continent but the second largest in the world; according to the World Atlas (2016). It is also the second most populous continent in the world (National Geographic, 2013). In global economic ranking terms, Africa is one of the poorest continents (see World Bank, 2012). Observers and commentators have attributed poverty in the region to corruption (Collier, 2007; Cullen, 2008); poor leadership (Mills, 2011; Warburton, 2005, p. 127); and a long history of civil wars (Collier & Sambanis, 2005). In (pre and post) colonial circles, Africa was/is known as the Dark Continent (Hibbert, 2002; Jarosz, 1992; McCarthy, 1983). The word 'dark' signifies an 'unknown' place inhabited by 'uncivilised' savages and brutes. This perception allowed/allows colonists/Westerners (respectively) to 'rescue' Africans by assimilating if not imposing, 'sophisticated', 'scientific' and 'civilised' ways of organising society on them (Boone, 1995; Hawley, 2001; McClintock, 1995; Osha, 2004; Wieringa, 2009, p. 216).

This leads to another definition of Africa within the domination and colonial realms where it is seen as a continent that has seen enslavement and colonisation (see Klein, 1998; Pétré-Grenouilleau, 2004). A point to bear in mind from these definitional ruptures and continuations is that Africa is historically a derogative Eurocentric term associated mainly with negativities. Suit to mention that, pioneer African freedom fighters like Kwame Nkrumah (BBC World, 2000), Nnamdzi Azikiwe (Azikiwe, 1949), and Julius Nyerere (Mwakikagile, 2007; Nyerere 1967) then and current African leaders like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe (Mail Online, 2015) and Daniel arap Moi of Kenya (ILGA, 2009) now embrace these definitions, ignoring their undesired and racist conceptual overtones.

Cultures in Africa

Many words are difficult to define in the academic arena but not many are so embedded with intricacies and controversies than the word cultures (Smith, 2001, p. 1). Defining cultures in detail with all the deserved nuances would require a whole book. When the American anthropologists, Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) sought to define the term, they ended up with a full book with compilation of 164 lists of critically reviewed concepts and definitions of for that one word. This could be partly connected to the variety of

ways in which cultures have been used in different intellectual disciplines and systems of thoughts (Smith, 2001). In the framework that I write, cultures refer to the ways of life of a group of people emanating from their collective deposit of attitudes, languages, experiences, beliefs, meanings, values, hierarchies, religions, knowledge, etc. (Smith, 2001; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Triandis, 1994). These include what sexualities entail and notions of how to have sex, what is sex; what is normal sex; and the list could be extended (Parker, 2001; Parker, Herdt & Carballo, 1991; Rushing, 1995). African cultures are simply therefore, the numerous cultures of the peoples occupying that continent (Döring, 2002; Middleton, 1971).

So critically probed, the claim that something, an act, an ideal, etc., is incongruous with African culture is often undermined by some self-inflicted controversies. It is impossible to have a single 'African culture'; let alone African sexuality. For, to claim so in this sense denotes that all Africans have one culture and consequently a distinct sexuality. Yet it is almost impossible to pinpoint or define this distinct continental sexuality or culture. For those who have tried, often end up reducing it to exclusive heteronormativity in spite of the anthropological evidence suggesting the exact opposite (see for e.g., BBC News, 2001; CBC

News, 2014; CNS News, 2015). In doing so, the Africans (like Mugabe, Museveni, and Moi) amongst them have ironically borrowed from some Westerners, the chauvinistic and crude definitions that came from the colonists often depicting the extreme, hyper, childlike, barbaric, outmoded and backward Africa (Wieringa, 2009, Osha, 2004; McClintock, 1995; Boone, 1995; Hawley, 2001).

Its normative foundation is even worse. A closer look at what is often referred to as 'African culture' points us to that very religion-Christianity- influencing every aspect of it. Any curious observer should not look far for examples but within the resistances to gay rights advocacies where it is consistently claimed that many African countries are Christian countries (see for e.g., Advocate, 2014). To state it another way, (the popular discourse on) Christianity (specifically Pentecostalism), a religion that once sought and still seeks to diabolise being 'African' (see Meyer 1998) appears to controversially reverse the paradigm. That is, in the quest to resist gay rights advocacies, the popular discourse on Christianity has become the narrative that is paradoxically providing an integral underpin for contemporary cultures in Africa.

A crucial preliminary caveat is necessary here. I do not disregard some of the commonalities found in the cultural ideology- the tenet of the community, solidarity and humanness- shared by many Africans (Sithole, 1989; Tamale, 2011). More importantly, the phrase 'African culture' may be used politically to highlight the shared historical legacies and commonalities instilled on the cultures and sexualities within the continent by the forces of colonialism, capitalism, imperialism, fundamentalism and globalisation. Nonetheless, the absurdity in the claim to 'African culture' as authentic against the un-Africanness of homosexualities remains puzzling.

So, this denouncing of homosexualities as a result of Western 'decadence' overlooks the homoerotic backgrounds found in African histories (Altman, 1996). For instance, Christensen (1954) asserts that homosexualities were tolerated in parts of Ghana. In *Queer Religion*, Boisvert & Johnson (2012) recounts the famous story of King Mwanga II of Buganda who continually requested sexual intercourse with his male servants (see also Kirkpatrick, 2008). The *Mugawe*, a male spiritual leader of the Meru in Kenya wore female clothes routinely; and frequently had same-sex intercourse (Needham, 1960). Besmer (1983) reports of some Hausa male (gay) prostitutes in the Katsina city of Nigeria.

Other traces of homosexualities are found amongst the Ottoro of Nubia (Nadel, 1955); the Tanala of Madagascar (Linton, 1933); the Wolof of Senegal (Crowder, 1959, p. 68; Gorer, 2005); the Azandes of northern Congo (Evans-Pritchard, 1951); the Ovimbundu of Angola (Hambly, 1934); etc.

In *Boy Wives and Female Husbands*, the sheer number of references provided by the editors Murray & Roscoe (1998) and the contributors is more than enough to refute this claim that homosexualities did not exist in Africa, but for contact with white people. Similarly, Greenberg's (1988) book on *The Construction of Homosexuality* provides numerous examples of homoerotic cultures in Africa. Amongst other negative aspects, the claim that homosexualities are un-African ridicules and renders redundant the quest to engage the current trends of gayness and gay rights holistically and robustly.

African Sexualities

Matters get more complex when there is a claim to a distinct and singular African sexuality, which is supposed to be on the backdrop of 'African culture'. Tamale (2011) recognises the complexities of terms such as sexuality and Africa put together and how they invoke comprehensive concepts and notions of the

political, theoretical and the historical. Opting for the plural term sexualities instead of the singular sexuality, she and other African queer theorists therefore embark on the academic quest to

> deconstruct, debunk, expose, contextualise and problematise concepts associated with African sexualities to avoid essentialism, stereotyping and othering (Tamale, 2011, p. 1).

This is because the evidence from Africa does not support grand claims about a distinctive and a timeless 'African sexuality' that is exclusively heterosexual in nature. Rather, it appears that African men and women have made (and still make like other humans in the rest of the world) wide ranges of sexual decisions in response to the full gamut of human emotions as well as sexual laxity (Epprecht, 2004, p. 223). This includes youthful curiosity, affection, physical lust, altered consciousness on account of alcohol or other substances, altered consciousness on account of deep feelings of spirit possession or enchantment, desire to humiliate or hurt others, hopes for economic or political gain, fear, laziness, etc.

Nonetheless, a critical observation of this same anthropological evidence invites us further to interrogate what homosexualities mean; stand for; and how they manifest in different contexts in Africa. It enables us to rethink the historical

and socio cultural contexts within which such statements are made. This is because renunciation of, ignorance about or blindness toward indigenous homosexualities appear to have more complex roots and elusive manifestations than critics have allowed (Epprecht, 1998). This is to say that, despite my reservations about the dangers of claiming that homosexualities are not African, questions about different understandings of the nature or manifestations of homosexualities are worth engaging. It must be clarified that it is the manifestations of homosexualities I discuss here.

So the day to day ways in which homosexualities are understood, explained and expressed may be contextualised and at times dichotomised from Western interpretations and understandings. Writing nearly 50 years ago, McIntosh (1968) reminds us that homosexuality (here in the singular) is a social construct which when viewed from a Western perspective may not exist in many societies. For those societies we may find them existing, they do not manifest in the same ways as we see in Western societies. In her estimation, it is only when we set aside our steep cultural views and ethnocentric biases could we appreciate this point:

> The current conceptualisation of homosexuality as a condition is a false one, resulting from ethnocentric bias. Homosexuality should be seen rather as a social role. Anthropological evidence shows that the role does not exist in all societies, and where it does it is not always the same as in modern western societies (1968, p. 182).

This means that, insisting on certain manifestations of gayness and the accompanying gay rights politics give underserved credence to those who hold that, that kind of gayness are un-African. In effect, gay rights advocates entrapped themselves in some self-inflicted controversies when understandings and gay rights politics are based on the Western gay identity archetype. By the 'Western gay identity archetype', I mean when homosexuals in Africa are socially and politically expected to identify with certain well-known features in the Western gay world like coming out of the closet, gay pride, gay radical, gay communities, etc. (Signorile, 1996). These features maybe politically relevant for the politics elsewhere but seeking to (forcibly) assimilate them into other uncorresponding cultural and political systems could be counter-productive (Epprecht, 2013). Carrier (1980, p. 120) cautiously state this point in a unique way:

> What is considered homosexuality in one culture may be considered appropriate behaviour within prescribed gender roles in another, a homosexual act only on the part of one participant in another, or a ritual

> act involving growth and masculinity in still another. Care must therefore be taken when judging sexual behaviour cross-culturally with such culture-bound labels as 'homosexual' and 'homosexuality'… From whatever cause that homosexual impulses originate, whether they be biological or psychological, culture provides an additional dimension that cannot be ignored.

Epprecht (2004) suggests for instance that, homosexuality as an identity or an exclusive life choice did not exist in many parts of Africa, particularly when the pressures to have sex for reproductive purposes were so over-determined by material, political, spiritual, and other cultural considerations. If we were strict with words and naming choice then bisexualities would come close to describing same-sex relations in many parts of Africa. As explained in chapters 4 and 5, in the midst of strict heteronormative outlooks, an 'open' gay life was/is overshadowed by the simultaneous option of 'hiding' behind the façade of having a wife and having gay lover(s). Hoad (2007) captures these nuances when he criticises the Euro-American politics of moral outrage against Africans that usually ignores the context of those gays and lesbians they purport to protect:

> The Euro-American politics of moral outrage that only lingers long enough to establish shared 'gayness' and does not care enough to learn

> the worldings of those it purports to help does little more than shore up the moral credentials of the outraged (p. xiii)

Africanising the American Culture Wars

To many casual observers, it appears that the popular culture of America has spread all over the globe. Wagnleitner & May (2000, p. 1) submit that one could easily contend that, the myths, icons and products of popular culture in America represent 'the most unifying and centripetal cultural force for the global triumph of the American century'. Huntington (1993) notes that, American cultures, habits and styles are increasingly popular among the mass of other people from different parts of the World. In relation to gayness and gay rights, Altman (2001) posits that, although within the West, there are different brands of attitudes and understandings toward the assertion of gay identities, most of them seem to reflect the American situation. The almost unanimous acknowledgment by gay rights advocates that the Stonewall riots which took place in the U.S. are the cradle of the gay rights movement is a testament to this.

Hence, although gay rights have seen much progress in northern Europe, the dominant cultural and political models for the rest of the world are from America (Altman, 2001; Blasius &

Phelan, 1997; Merin, 2002). Far from suggesting that the American cultures meet no confrontations from other alternatives, it would not be an overstatement to acknowledge how the American cultures have permeated and dominated other cultural standpoints. The wider implication is that, the issues that accompany the clash of cultures within America could be mirrored in other places. It is not surprising that, hard fought wars in America on sensitive battlegrounds issues like abortion, gay marriages, gay rights, capital punishment, euthanasia, pornography, prostitution, etc., seem to influence debates on same matters in many parts of the world (Huntington, 1993; Wagnleitner & May, 2000). These clashes or disagreements in the cultures of the U.S. have been loosely termed culture wars (Buchanan, 1992; Hunter, 1991).

The American culture wars came to public attention when in 1992 Patrick Buchanan, once a Republican Presidential Candidate hopeful made a call to arms in his speech titled 'The Culture War for the Soul of America'. Buchanan (1992) adumbrates that the culture war generally is about who and what has the moral legitimacy to inform American citizens on the moral questions of rights or wrongs; good or bad; and approved or disapproved aspects of life:

> is about power; it is about who determines 'the norms by which we live, and by which we define and govern ourselves.' Who decides what is right and wrong, moral and immoral, beautiful and ugly, healthy and sick? Whose beliefs shall form the basis of law?

Relating the culture war dynamics specifically to gay rights, Buchanan (1992) evokes tenets of the holy bible, nature and the enlightenment and argues that majority of Americans find gays as immoral or as people who have medical problems:

> Americans are a tolerant people. But a majority believes that the sexual practices of gays, whether a result of nature or nurture, are both morally wrong and medically ruinous. Many consider this 'reactionary' or 'homophobic'. But our beliefs are rooted in the Old and New Testament, in natural law and tradition, even in the writing of that paragon of the Enlightenment, Thomas Jefferson (who felt homosexuality should be punished as severely as rape).

It was James Hunter who established C*ulture Wars* in academic scholarship with his 1991 book of the same title. To Hunter, disagreements on variety of issues that result in culture wars could be traced ultimately and eventually to moral authority. He defines moral authority as the

> basis by which people determine whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, and so on (p. 42).

The quest for moral authority leads to irreconcilable and polarising philosophical impulses often found in opposed moral systems.

On the nature and outlook of opposing moral systems, Hunter further introduces what he calls the impulse towards orthodoxy and the impulse towards progressivism as the basis of entrenched disagreements (p. 43). Orthodoxy is characterised by a commitment by adherents to external, definable, and transcendental foundations of (objective) moral authority (Binns, 2002). Often establishing the source of this moral authority in God, nature or the supernatural, there is a monopoly of truth claims within orthodoxy. This means that, once an ideal is established as truth based on God, nature or the supernatural, nothing else can change it. With progressivism, moral authority by contrast tends to be defined within the tenets of rationalism and subjectivism (Hunter, 1991; McCarraher, 2000). Rationalism and subjectivism are used here to explain a moral authority which changes with historical conditions and the limitations of human knowledge (Hunter, 1991; Solomon, 1972). Thus, that which is deemed rational (proper) is subjective and hence based on prevailing conditions (contexts).

My interest lies in how the Christian right and the Republicans are shaping gay rights resistances not only in America

but also in Africa. I borrow the phrase 'Christian right' from Herman (1997) in her book titled *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right.* Herman uses this phrase for convenience and also with limitations to America to refer to

> a broad coalition of profamily organisations and individuals who have come together to struggle for a conservative Christian vision in the political realm (p. 9).

For this purpose, conservative Christianity could be defined as the branch of Christianity that defends the core of Christian and national (in this case, American) values against the attacks of secular cultures that could trump the sense of belonging to a nation and/or a religious sect if left 'unchecked' (Greeley & Hout, 2006). Although other orthodox believers of different faiths may oppose gay rights with similar vehemence, Herman concludes that it is the Christian right which proactively dictates and instigates antigay agenda in America (1997). This could be in part attributed to the religious demographics of America where over 70% identify as Christians (Pew Research Centre, 2015).

The American Christian right takes advantage of the global Christian demographics to exert its moral influence by projecting and sustaining anti-gay views in Africa (Kaoma, 2009). The statistics demonstrate that evangelical Christianity is rapidly

growing in Africa.[10] In a survey by the Pew Research Centre (2006), it was established that many people in Africa have conservative views on sexualities and their explanations for this are centred on biblical ideals on chastity and self-control. Leading African philosopher and theologian, John Mbiti (1992) argues that this could be attributed to the understanding that most Africans embrace religions and make them central parts of their lives.

These explanations and the religious demographics imply that, it is easier for many Africans to have more in common with elements of the American Christian right than Western human rights campaigners even those that are faith-based (Kaoma, 2012). Thus, it is increasingly becoming easier for people to connect on religious terms with others in far-away countries than even fellow countrymen. Hence, the culture wars which are fought by Americans against Americans to control the moral authority are internationalised or exported verbatim to Africa. There are several patterns that demonstrate these occurrences. For example, apart from the remarks made by Buchanan about homosexuals that have been quoted above, the 2016 Republican Presidential

[10] Evangelical Christianity is a type of Christianity that seeks (righteous) separation from the broader culture by emphasising individual conversion, strict adherence to Christian doctrines; and missionary activities (see Hankins, 2008; Kyle, 2006; Smith, 2002).

Candidate, Ben Carson sums his opposition to gay rights and marriages with strong words (Carson, 2016). He labels gays and transgenders as few and perhaps 'abnormal' people who want their 'extra' rights imposed on everyone:

> it has beyond ridiculous that you take the most abnormal situation and then you make everyone else conform to it…That's one of the very reasons that I have been an outspoken opponent of things like gay marriage… when you now impose your value system on everybody else and change fundamental definitions and principles of society, I have a big problem with that… And when we start trying to impose the extra rights based on a few people who perhaps are abnormal, where does that lead? (Carson, 2016).

Hosts of similar statements from respected American politicians and the clergy could be cited. In fact a website called rightwingwatch.org (2016) catalogues some of these anti-gay stances from influential people in America. The point here is that although these statements were made in America, they have been mirrored with similar justifications in Africa. They are for similar reasons because, the statements made in America were in response to call by other Westerners to respect gay rights. We will see below that similar calls by Westerners to Africans had similar reactions as if the responses have been scripted. Let me quickly refer to an obvious case in point. Rick Santorum, a U.S.' senator

and Robert Mugabe, a President of an African country (Zimbabwe) both compare gays to dogs in defence of Christian principles (see, USA Today, 2003; and Maclean, 2012, respectively). Although the latter argued from a mixture of issue emanating from autonomy, sovereignty and national cultures, it is clear that the common denominator in both cases is the quest to protect cherished Christian principles on family, marriage and progeny. Other models from Africa would help illustrate how the two worlds relate.

I shall leave out the usual examples often cited from African countries such as Uganda (see for e.g. Mills, 2011); Zimbabwe (see Maclean, 2012) and Nigeria (see for e.g. The Huffington Post, 2014b) as they have received in-depth attention and would not benefit from my duplication, and provide others elsewhere on the continent. Gabriel Namulambe, a Zambian foreign affairs Minister, describes gay rights as an affront to Zambia, a country he describes as a 'Christian nation':

> I want to make it very clear here that… Zambia is a Christian nation and as such we live by the Christian values and we will not be able to recognise gay rights… This is because it is untraditional to our culture… as Zambians, we shall remain a Christian nation (quoted in Advocate, 2014).

Palmer-Buckle an influential Ghanaian Catholic archbishop makes it clear that although homosexuals should be treated with compassion, they undermine the institutions of family and marriage (ChurchMilitant, 2015).

The point I wish to undergird has already been partly made for me by Kapya Kaoma. He has dedicated his works to these dynamics in the gay rights advocacies and resistances in Africa by establishing a link between antigay stances in Africa and that in the U.S. and how the former thrives on the latter. Like Kaoma (2012), this work concedes that there are elements of anti-gay and homophobic sentiments in many places in Africa, but insists that there is something American about them. He notes for example that anti-gay legislations and constitutional provisions in Africa are currently drafted by American trained African conservatives who are ideologically mentored. It does not surprise him that these draft legislations reflect realities in America and not Africa.

He intimates that there are draft legislations that seek to prohibit same-sex marriages and adoptions in Africa even when gay marriages and adoptions have not been on the agenda of African advocates themselves. In *Globalising the Culture Wars*,

Kaoma (2009) reveals instances where some African priests condone homophobia in order to receive favours from wealthy conservative Christians in America. Another case in point is the linking of the American evangelists Scott Lively, Don Schmierer and Caleb Lee Brundidge to the Ugandan anti-gay bill; an allegation for which Scott Lively currently stands trial (Centre for Constitutional Rights, 2016; Thoreson, 2014a, p. 28). In effect, Africa has become a kind of a 'collateral damage' of the American culture wars, replicating the antagonisms in that state (Kaoma, 2009).

Conclusion

Although Kaoma's works are crucial and I draw upon him heavily, our points are not wholly and strictly the same. He luminously provides the evidence that connects the American culture wars to anti-gay stances in Africa. I however posit that we simply need to ask two basic questions. First we should ask what inform anti-gay stances in Africa. To answer that, it has been established that the reasons for homophobia may be several, but the evidence demonstrates that religions in general and (evangelical) Christianity in particular are the strongest amongst them. The next quest (ion) is for us to find out the origin or source of Christianity in Africa. A quick glance at the history books would

jog our memory to the glaring fact that, Christianity was one main religion that accompanied the colonisation of Africa (Carey, 2011; Robert, 2008). If we agree that Christianity has a foreign element so far as Africans are concerned then it could be concluded that homophobia is partly foreign to Africans. The source of homophobia today on the continent is also partly foreign as shown in the ways in which the American cultural wars are exported to Africa.

I must be very quick to add in order not to repeat the mistakes of those who point accusing fingers and blame the West for every ill in Africa, an equally important aspect. Often cited is the fact that homosexualities are against African cultures and hence foreign. Often forgotten is the fact that a significant contributor of what we know as African cultures today is Christianity. Any reason may be given for homophobia, but claiming that gayness is foreign, white and Western whilst at the same time embracing Christianity (here in relation to the colonial history of Africa) as local, black and African is contradictory. And even if we shifted Christianity out of the equation, that phrase 'African culture' is a Eurocentric term that has many negative connotations to Africans. Yet like the popular discourse on Christianity, the claim to a distinct monolithic African culture and

sexuality is vehemently evoked with pride and an inviolable romanticism as if they have no connections to the colonial. It is only fair however to restate another crucial caveat that goes with these ironies that occur. That paradoxically, some Westerners also forget the colonial histories by blatantly labelling Africans as inherently homophobic. They do so without recourse to the colonial and missionary legacies of instituting anti-sodomy laws in many parts of the continent in the first place.

What this means for the theory is that there is a considerable disjuncture between theoretical placements and empirical expectations. This is because heated exchanges between Western gay rights advocates and African resistances have given a whole meaning to the concepts of citizenship and autonomy. Explanations anchoring the two concepts have been stretched beyond the jurisdiction of the state to the realms of the transnational and the global. This expansion of the theories has been done by Westerners who wrote the colonial histories and the Africans who later perpetuated/perpetuate them. The latter category perpetuates such histories because they did not seek to rewrite their version of the history but kept the cradle of the definitions associated with Africans. In the end, practical problems abound. It leaves crucial and specific aspects of the nation-state

in relation to autonomy, citizenship and sexualities unaccounted for. This signifies the neglect of significance state-apparatus that could contribute to the practical aspects of the debate. With the indispensability of political will in the protection of all minorities, the nation state remains crucial and should not be relegated. In chapter 6, this final point is discussed in detail where explanations on how the Ghanaian government through the ideals of citizenship and constitutional rights, protect gay people within the nation are provided.

Chapter 3 - THEORIES: QUEERING RIGHTS AND THE POSTCOLONIAL

Introduction

This chapter forms the theoretical basis for the thesis as a whole. As an interdisciplinary study, this work involves theoretical themes from law, political science and sociology. Specifically the main literatures used are situated within human rights, postcolonial theory and queer theory. These notions vary substantially. Consequently this review cannot be wholly exhaustive. To discuss postcolonial, queer and human rights theories thoroughly with all the nuances they deserve in one chapter is impossible. Hence I focus on the relevant aspects of these enormous bodies of literature to my present task of looking at the complications of gay rights advocacies.

Universalism and relativism theories of human rights are important because human rights provide the academic and political platforms upon which demands for gay rights advocacies and their resistances are built. Tracing the histories and theories establishing gay rights, we will see later in chapter 6 how gay rights have been used interchangeably with the concept of human rights itself. This chapter zeros in on the debates between

universalism and relativism of human rights because it is one of the areas where the antagonisms between gay rights advocacies and the accompanying resistances manifest significantly. Within this arena, 'plausible' universalism claims on human rights are met with stiff resistances mostly grounded in relativism arguments; generally. In particular, once human rights arguments are brought to the area of sexualities in the form of gay rights, things get even more complex. This is because at issue is not just being human and possessing inherent rights, but also about spirituality, personhood, cultures, languages, religions, politics, sex, love, sexual identity, gender roles, intimacy, sexual perceptions, sexual expressions, feelings, and so on (Plummer, 2015; Weeks, 1985; Weeks, Holland & Waites, 2003).

One equally complex theory that helps in unravelling the inherent theoretical issues between sexualities and rights is queer theory. Queer theory is important because it illuminates on the oversimplified and even 'naturalised' positions within the gay rights mode of theorisations and activisms. It does so by problematising the often assumed and simplified understandings about sexualities like marriage, sex, love, parenting and calls for their redefinitions. Postcolonial theory is an implicit and unavoidable theory given that I am writing within a country

context of Ghana (an African country). However, as indicated, I equally highlight the complications of the dominant discourse on postcolonial theory in relation to its tendency to make essentialist claims (about a distinct African culture or sexuality) that inform gay rights resistances.

Essentialism

Before delving into the main theories, another concept called essentialism needs to be mentioned. This is because, historically, explanations grounded in essentialism have played an instrumental role in the sociological and biological theorisation of sexualities (see for e.g., Kinsey, 1953; Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1948; Masters & Johnson, 1966). Essentialism has branches in several subject areas like race theory (see, Barkan, 1992; Boxill, 2001; Isaac, 2004) psychology (see, Richards, 1997; Thomas & Sillen, 1972) gender (see Grosz, 1995; Witt, 2011) etc. With this in mind, the branch which relates to the theorisation of sexualities (and to a minimal extent gender) is the focal point here. In this respect, essentialism is the view that categories of people like homosexuals and heterosexuals, men and women, or even people belonging to a particular ethnic group or race have an intrinsic nature that makes them distinct and therefore strictly

dichotomous from others (see, Boxill, 2001; Grosz, 1995; Kinsey, 1953; Witt, 2011).

Essentialism in regard to sexuality rests on the backdrop that certain phenomena (like sexuality) are inborn, natural, biological and consequently inevitable (Irvine, 1990; Stein, 1992, p. 325). When the psychologist Dr Karoly Benkert, coined the term homosexuality as far back as 1869, a reference was made to an inborn and subsequently non-repressive drive to define it (Benkert, 1997; 2002; Morin 1977). Based on this conviction, Dr Benkert wrote an open letter to the Prussian Minister of Justice arguing that homosexuality should be decriminalised as it is innate (Benkert, 1997). Her theory which informed her action is a key reminder of how essentialism has been used to provide the justification for identity theorisation and politics from many decades ago. Today essentialism remains relevant as some gay rights activists often claim that gays are born to be gay. For instance, Vitagliano (2012) collects first-hand accounts and pictures of 100 different people who share their childhood memories of how they were born as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer (LGBTQ) (see also Murray, 2015; Wilson and Rahman, 2005).

Postcolonial Theory

I briefly define colonialism and imperialism as they are crucial to discussing the postcolonial. The purpose is not to discuss them meticulously due to the economy of space but to stress that they are points of departure for clarifying the postcolonial. In other words, a way of appreciating the postcolonial would be to understand the post and the colonialism that compose the term. Colonialism is simply a practice of control, which entails the subjugation of a people and a place by others (Horvath, 1972, p. 46; Loomba, 1998, p. 2). In effect, the action phrase 'to colonise' implies to bring under partial or complete control, conquer, master, enslave or to make submissive others through direct territorial acquisition. Imperialism relates very close to colonialism as they possess similar characteristics (Loomba, 1998, p. 1). However, imperialism may not always involve direct territorial acquisition by means of force but also through subtle (economic) cohesion (p. 6).

So, as colonialism could be given a timeline and a geographical border, imperialism could be timeless and borderless. Loomba (1998, p. 7) puts it this way: 'Imperialism can function without formal colonies…but colonialism cannot'. It has been argued that during the colonisation of Africa, there was

imperialism as both concepts mean the same thing in that context (Boehmer, 1995). Today, although we may not be able to pinpoint a currently colonised country on the continent, accusations of imperialism are often heard. For example, some aspects of the features of human rights (Chandler, 2002; Mutua, 2002); gay rights (Mills, 2011; Maclean, 2012; BBC News, 2001; CBC News, 2014; CNS News, 2015; Rao, 2015); gayness (Puar, 2007; Massad, 2007); global political economy (Chomsky & Herman, 1979; Harvey, 2005); international relations (Chomsky, 1999; Ignatieff, 2003; Acharya and Buzan, 2010); etc., have been branded as possessing Western imperial tendencies, thereby signifying the ongoing nature of imperialism.

Finding a definition for the term 'postcolonial' has been a subject of protracted disagreements (Loomba, 1998; McClintock, 1995). This may be due to the inter-disciplinary nature of the term. From the above, the commonsensical and ready inference of the term would be that, it refers to the period, occurring after the end of colonialism (Childs and Williams, 1997, p. 1). In a more complex appreciation of the term, it is where one wishes to position the postcolonial in relation to colonialism and imperialism that makes it difficult to define. It is possibly due to this time-bound feature that makes Childs & Williams (1997, p.1) ask the

question ‘When is the postcolonial’ in their quest to highlight the confusion the term can cause (see also, Shohat, 1992, p. 103). As we will see below, the term has to do with the past (colonial era and after independence), the present and the future. Young (2001, p. 5) captures brilliantly what the postcolonial is theoretically, but also relates it to what its practical challenges are in forms of imperialism:

> The postcolonial is a dialectical concept that marks the broad historical facts of decolonisation and the determined achievement of sovereignty- but also the realities of nations and peoples emerging into a new imperialistic context of economic and sometimes political domination.

Thus, the word ‘post’ serving as the prefix for the term ‘postcolonial’ could be misleading. The post part of the postcolonial might suggests that the colonial is a thing of the past. McClintock (1992; 1995) reminds us of the tendency to prematurely celebrate the pastness of colonialism and the risks of ignoring the (latent) continuities and discontinues of the colonial and imperial power manifesting today. Loomba (1998, p. 9) similarly shares that sentiment, but highlights it within global economic redistribution:

> The term ‘postcolonial’ does not apply to those at the bottom end of this hierarchy, who are still ‘at the far economic margins of the nation state’ so that nothing is ‘post’ about their colonisation.

This perhaps explains why postcolonial theory intermingles the past with the present. In a sense it is aimed at the active transformations of the here out of the clutches of the then (Davies, Nandy & Sardar, 1993).

Sexualities in the Colonial/Postcolonial Equation

Despite doctrinal and methodological differences, most scholars agree that sex, sexuality and Christianity were important factors in the colonial equation (Aldrich, 2003; Carey, 2011; Robert, 2008; Phillips, 2005, Said, 1978). Aldrich (2003, p. 4) holds that Europeans set out to create respectable empires, and in this scheme dissident sexualities (homosexuality in particular) were to be expunged from the colonial equation. He argues apropos:

> Colonialism and imperialism, in theory, aimed to set up respectable, loyal and profitable European outposts overseas and to impart European (generally Christian) virtues to 'savages' and 'heathen'; in this design, homosexuality had no place.

This was attained through the convincing power of Christian principles which provided the moral underpinnings for the regulation of sexualities to benefit the preferences of the colonial authorities and missionary proselytisers. This is because the colonial and the postcolonial were/are partly about power, discipline, regulations and control in all areas of an individual's life,

none so prominent than the area of sexualities (Phillips, 2005, p. 291). The way Stoler (2002, p. 43) puts it is compelling:

> Colonial observers and participants in the imperial enterprise appear to have had unlimited interest in the sexual interface of the colonial encounter. No subject is discussed more than sex in colonial literature and no subject more frequently invoked to foster racist stereotypes of European society.

Sex then became what Manderson (1997, p. 373) terms the 'moral logic of colonialism'. Extending these arguments, it is argued in this chapter that sex also became the moral logic for postcolonial nation-building projects. With colonialism, the sexualisation of Africans legitimated the rapid and absolutist invasions into the continent (Phillips, 2005). The sexualisation and sexual degeneration of the ethnic others in the quest for policy inventions and rationalisation are well-known universal and ubiquitous features that applied to many postcolonial nation building projects (Nagel, 2000, p. 124). Ghana was/is not an exception to this model of colonial legacy. This is to say that, it is impossible to ascertain how Ghanaian sexualities have come to suit the description provided in this thesis without references to the colonial and postcolonial power relations that constantly influence the histories of those sexualities. In a sense, the colonial in particular is a cradle for commencement for analysis, without

which any account of sexualities in Ghana would be a gross distortion of history.

In Africa in general, the colonial regime gave two outlooks of sexualities. There was the one that presented native sexualities as childlike, naïve or virgin. Here, the coloniser romanticised the colonised subject by virginising her/him (see Boone, 1995). Scholarships on the colonial and missionary vision is rife with white patriarchal colonial fathers who were 'burdened' with the moral duty of 'clothing' the bare breast and buttocks of the childlike African pagans or natives' (see Wieringa, 2009, p. 216; Osha, 2004; McClintock, 1995; Boone, 1995; Hawley, 2001). Osha (2004, p. 93) argues that in the process, the colonial missionary, official or soldier

> penetrated the seemingly passive... virginal wilderness that was awaiting the thrust, domestication and eventual upliftment of Euro-modern civilisation and modes of rationality.

Likewise, McClintock (1995, p. 30) remarking on the myth of the virginity that is intrinsic in this type of colonial imagination explained how it is not only sexualised but also gendered. Thus to be virgin, is to be void of desire and to be literally begging for the infusion of some sort of existence, language and even reason:

> The myth of the virgin land is also the myth of the empty land, involving both a gender and racial dispossession. Within patriarchal narratives, to

> be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency, passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason.

The other one presented the native sexualities as hyper, excess, irrational and violent. Here, there is a sexual hysteria about the aggressively potent African males and seductive African females (see, Wieringa, 2009; Caldwell, Caldwell & Quiggin, 1989; Stoller, 2002, pp58-59). The former was perceived as creating grave dangers for white women (Stoller, 2002; Wieringa, 2009); whilst the latter was thought of as (what Stoller, 2002, p. 49 calls) 'bed-servants' to white settlers. This way, the justification for colonisation was centred on the 'moral imperative' to rule and bring this hyper sexuality into control or the world faced the 'consequences' therein.

The central role of sexualities in the political and social organisations was not peculiar to the colonial era but the postcolonial too. The examples cited throughout the chapters highlight the continuity of the tropes employed by the colonist and missionaries in the quest to normalise heterosexuality as the basis of political power. Only that, this time, a critical adjustment emerged. It was not just only the white colonial men dominating the normalising scene, but black postcolonial political leaders. Thus despite this critical adjustment, not much changed in terms

of social organisation. Indeed, Fanon (1967) has already put this in perspective by discussing how black (skinned) postcolonial leaders wore (white) mask. This in his estimation meant that, the former were only black in skin colour, but in practice they looked more and more like the white colonial officials in terms of how they governed their newly gained 'independent' nations. In relation to sexualities, Wieringa's (2009, p. 219) study recaps this undercurrent in a captivating way:

> The fictional heroes in the political theatre changed colour but not tactics. During the protracted and bloody shift of power, they might even use the same discourse and metaphors-usually that of a patriarchal, omnipotent father who knows best for his subalterns.

This translates into the Ghanaian case in practical terms. That is, when Ghana gained independence in 1957 (Bourret, 1960; UNDP, 2015), the postcolonial Ghanaian political leaders who took over the affairs of running this new state have a lot in common. Their commonalities I argue are important because they in many ways drove Ghanaian sexualities in a particular direction. All the democratically elected Ghanaian Heads of State either trained in colonial or missionary schools or studied in some of the top universities in England (Gates, Acheampong & Niven, 2012). In fact one particular school- called Achimota School- unites most of them. But for few exceptions, almost all the democratically elected

Presidents of Ghana trained or taught at this school (Achimota School, 2015). Kwame Nkrumah, Edward Akuffo Addo, Jerry Rawlings, John Atta-Mills are all past Heads of State who went to Achimota School. The current President of Ghana, John Mahama, also went to Achimota School. This school also saw other African Heads of States like Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Dawda Jawara of Gambia passing through its doors as students.

The University of Oxford and the London School of Economics became another breeding ground for Ghanaian Heads of State. Kwame Nkrumah, Kofi Busia, Edward Akuffo Addo, Hilla Liman, John Kufuor and John Atta Mills, etc., went through these institutions (Gates, Acheampong & Niven, 2012). Moreover, apart from Hilla Limann, whose religious affiliation is unclear, all the Heads of State of Ghana were/are Christians and males. The larger point here is that, trained in English at English institutions and with their religious dispositions, these leaders became more and more like the colonial authorities they have driven away only by distance, not by worldview. Their dispositions perhaps made them continued and entrenched the heteronormative tropes left behind by the colonists and missionaries.

I discuss these dynamics in details in chapter 4 but Wieringa (2009, p. 208) has already called this paradox the 'postcolonial

amnesia'. An amnesia which connotes the process whereby those who control the mechanisms selectively and strategically memorise certain aspects of the past whilst overlooking the aspects that are politically inconvenient in the quest to create a hegemonic model of society. Postcolonial decency meant these leaders had to employ a convenient amnesia where emerging national leaders constructed the nation as an 'always-already' patriarchal and heterosexual entity' (p. 219). Hence, heterosexuality became a central component of ethnic and national ideologies. So the very idea of citizenship became sexual. Good citizens were those who conformed not just to the legal, but the sexual norms of the land. Nagel (2003, p. 30) describes this in the proceeding way:

> good citizenship relies on appropriate sexual behaviour and proper gender performance. Good citizens are heterosexual, voliant (in the case of men) and virtuous (in the case of women). Sexuality and gender, thus, are important building blocks of the nation.

Finally, postcolonial theory is imperative because it calls for the elimination of the powerful imperial influences that hijack discussions and relegate debates and suggestions by third world countries to footnotes. Both postcolonial and queer theories intersect in many ways in that they challenge dominant assertions on gender, sexualities and race (see, Hawley, 2001). However,

queer theory might look at how postcolonial theory may be selectively evoked as a popular discourse with a critical eye purely because of the latter's tendency to emphasis the authenticity of a distinct ethnic, national or transnational (African) identity and sexuality over others. This is tantamount to essentialism. In the preceding chapter, I have shown for example how evoking distinct African culture and sexuality in ways that naturalise the narratives within gay rights resistances are problematic. In a way although postcolonial theory is unavoidable in the quest to talk about sexualities in Ghana, its accompanying essentialism is 'queered' for the purpose of debunking fixed positions found in the claim to distinct, static and timeless African culture and sexuality.

Queer Theory

The idea that sexuality emanates from inborn and genetic traits has been challenged by social constructionists' perspectives on sexualities. Generally, social constructionism is often used loosely to refer to a specific theoretical paradigm with the fundamental explanation that reality is not naturally but socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann 1991; Burr, 2006, pp. 2-3). Theories like Gagnon & Simon's (1973) symbolic interactionism and Foucault's (1980) discursive analysis may use different

approaches.[11] But they conclude that, anything can be sexualised and that sexualities have no innate genetic trait. Out of social constructionism, springs many sub-theories, of which one of them is queer.

The term queer is difficult to define as it is fundamentally broad. Chief amongst the numerous reasons for the complexities in defining the term is that, queer and its usefulness keep shifting; hence the uneasiness in pinpointing exactly what it signifies (Jagose, 1996, p. 1). Queer is able to offer explanations and even challenge normative understandings of gender and sexual identities but does not necessarily claim what exactly it is, thereby leaving room for future contestation and constant revision. Turner describes this feature of queer in the following way:

> 'Queer' has the virtue of offering, in the context of academic inquiry into gender identity and sexual identity, a relatively novel term that connotes etymologically a crossing of boundaries but that refers to nothing in particular, thus leaving the question of its denotations open to contest and revision (2000, p. 35)

[11] Symbolic interactionism is the view that sexual meanings are constructed in social interaction and so a homosexual identity is not inherent, but socially created (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Discursive analysis is the understanding that sexuality is consequently a history of our discourses and that the experience of sex is not the inhibition of discourse but a constant and historically changing, deployment of discourse on sex (Foucault, 1980).

Elsewhere, Sedgewick (1993) traces the changing nature of the term by highlighting that, although it provides names for several branches of sexual possibilities, it leaves gaps that make it possible for definitional ruptures. She consequently relates queer to

> the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically (p. 8).

Perhaps, this explains why Hall (2003) would not risk using the singular (queer theory). He opts for the plural (queer theories) thereby calling into attention the different strands that make up the term:

> what is often called 'queer theory' must be rendered plural now, given its many forms and insights, hence 'Queer Theories' (p. 5).

The above characteristics have not discouraged the theoretical quest to provide a definition for the term. The everyday use of the term may describe a person or an event in relation to being strange, odd, unusually different, unconventional, suspicious, questionable, shady, weird or eccentric from a conventional viewpoint (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016). From the theory point of view, my interest lies in how the word is used as a

verb to indicate the need to spoil, ruin, to put in a difficult position, destroy, decentralise, denaturalise, deconstruct, debunk and problematise; but also redefine fixed, constructed, scripted, and naturalised positions in relation to gender and sexuality. What is common amongst theorists who offer definitions is that, they agree on the inherent complexities and the near impossible task of having a one-fit-all definition.

Therefore, the definitions given capture the different aspects of queer depending on where the author is arguing from. In this light, Warner (1993) provides a representation of queer where he holds that, the term problematises popular and unchallenged aspects of culture that are often oversimplified in terms of their meanings, distinctions and play of power. 'Unchallenged aspects of culture' relate to the names and meanings granted to categories such as women/men, old/young, able/disabled, black/white, etc., that are often accepted and uncontested. For that matter, queer is focused upon ripping apart the modern theory practice of division into comparative binaries:

> 'Queer' represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalisation; it rejects a minoritising logic of toleration or simple political interest representation in favour of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal (Warner, 1993: p. xxvi).

Jagose (1996) defines queer broadly by weighing in on how the term has developed from gay and lesbian studies and sexual identificatory coalitions. In her assessment, queer is used as

> an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies (p. 1).

Queering (Sexual) Identity

Historically, queer theory was born out of its frustration with gay and lesbian movements that were seen as adopting an assimilationist approach aimed at seeking the approval of dominant heteronormative societies rather than disrupting the cradle of such dominance (Rimmerman, 2002, p. 11). Rather than accepting them, queer theorists typically wish to investigate the cultural and historical basics of nouns such as gay, lesbian, straight, women and men (Turner, 2000). Queer theory take this a step further and complicates the meanings attached to pairs of categories such as man/woman (Butler, 1990), hetero/homo (Sedgwick, 1990), rich/poor (Zmroczek, 2004), white/black (Gates, 1985; Somerville, 2000); etc. As Turner (2000, p. 34) puts it,

> Rather than accept a naturalised ontology according to which such terms simply reflect existing distinctions in the world among persons, queer theorists insist that persons do not divide so neatly into binary categories.

It is through queering them that we would see that such categorisations are classed. By classed, I do not refer to just their classification for easy recognition purpose but their hierarchy. For example the distinction between men/women, white/black, straight/gays, etc., reveals how the latter occupies the lower half of the hierarchised binary (Zmroczek, 2004). It also reveals how those in the first category define and even negate the second. This prejudice that characterises this binarisation has been captured by Hall (2003, p. 13):

> To be a woman is to be lesser version of a man. To be 'of colour' is to be lesser version of being 'white.' To be effeminate man is to be a lesser version of masculine man. To be a homosexual is to be a lesser version of a heterosexual.

So, queer is the end product of the theoretical and cultural pressures which increasingly raise questions about gay and lesbian identity and why people adopt the meanings that gender and sexuality provide (Jagose, 1996, p. 76, Bristow & Wilson, 1993). Turner (2000) discusses the complications of the issues embedded in the creation of identity categories which also provoke practical

issues. To mention one, he highlights how groups not only created their own exclusion but made such exclusion legitimate by claiming and clinging unto the specificity of their sexual identity to the point that it is naturalised and incontrovertible:

> Those whose admission to the charmed circle of universal identity would cause untold practical problems also lacked the requisite capacity for reason: Their exclusion became legitimate. That virtually all of the political and scientific leaders who disparaged the reasoning abilities of women, blacks, and sodomites happened to be presumptively heterosexual, white men made no difference-those leaders drew their conclusions from the universal, incontestable laws of reason. A very neat system indeed (p. 16).

Queer offers an alternative that deemphasises identity creation and emphasises differences (Bristow and Wilson, 1993). That is to say that instead of stressing on the common identity that gays have by erstwhile gays liberations groups, there should rather be emphasis on how we manifest our sexualities in different ways. From that point of view queer offers a rereading of identity as a conglomeration of unstable and even multiple positions.

Judith Butler

Any review of queer (gender and sexuality) literature would be incomplete without specifically highlighting the contributions of

Judith Butler. Butler's contributions have become the root from which numerous academic discussions within gender and sexuality sprout. Below, I analyse in necessary brief fashion some of her vital contributions that are ingrained in queer theory and their usefulness in terms of how they directly or indirectly inform queer theory and politics in Ghana. Before Butler, let me mention the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault as his works have influenced many queer theorists including Judith Butler (see Fuss, 1989, p. 97).

Central to Foucault's contribution to queer theorisation is discourse. Language, unspoken belief, images, prejudice, laws, scientific concepts and any other means by which human values are communicated; even naturalised and reproduced is what he meant by it (Foucault, 1972). Foucault shows how one discourse can be drawn upon to serve diametrically opposing ambitions. He calls this paradigm the polyvalent capacities of discourse (p. 100). He uses the category of homosexuality to demonstrate this by highlighting that, that category was constructed both within the structures of not only power but also resistance to power.

This feature of discourse is often informed by the networks of power. Networks mean that power is exercised from innumerable points to no programmed consequence (Foucault,

1978, p. 94). This way, Foucault (re) conceptualises power as not always one-dimensional between oppressors and the oppressed (see also Halperin, 1995, p. 17). Since he does not admit power to be always one-dimensional and always repressive, Foucault's (1978) stance would contradict the 'liberationist' approach of gay and lesbian groups. He offers that, the critique within the discourse of oppression for example by gay and lesbian groups does not correctly identify the mechanisms of power. This is because the resistance by such groups emanates from the view that power is always repressive against 'marginalised' sexualities like gays and lesbians.

Activists through resistance break known norms and 'speak out' against such operations of power. Ironically, Foucault suggests that, this strategy becomes a component of the same historical network (of power) it seeks to denounce by branding it as repression (p. 10). This is because such groups through their resistances may become operators of power, not just state power, but also non-state localised power by creating their own identity and 'liberationist' strategies. In practical terms, marginalised sexual groups in his estimation are not just victims of the operation of power. Rather they are produced by the same operations of power and the resistances they generate:

> There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pededsty, and 'psychic hermaphrodism' made possible a strong advance of social controls in this area of 'perversity'; but it also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified (Foucault, 1978, p. 101).

In summary and in simplistic terms, Foucault's analysis as it relates to sexuality is that, there is nothing natural about it. It is rather produced by discourse. As discourse is fluid, it does not only produce sexuality, it also produces 'perversity' through the resistances to dominant discourse. In line with queer theory, Foucault's thesis is that, the resistances (found in for e.g., homosexuality) to dominance discourse (for e.g., on normalised heterosexuality) are employing the same vocabulary of naturalness that created their often ignored category in the first place. Perhaps it is through Butler that we see the operationalisation of these theoretical points in the realm of activism.

Butler draws on Foucault's (1972; 1978) arguments, particularly about the operations of discourses (not nature) that

produce sexuality although she largely frames her work in gender. Butler (1993; 1990, p. 129) adumbrates that, the narrative about sex and gender are intertwined if not the same in terms of their claim to naturalness; their identity centred politics; and their attempts to maintain their existence through reinscriptions and recitations. Reinsriptions and recitations are crucial to Butler.[12] These two words which are also to do with repetitions and reiterations are employed to debunk the foundational definition of gender where it is seen as what we are (a noun) rather than indicating (as a verb) what we sequentially do (Salih, 2002). With these features in mind 'Gender' is (re) defined by Butler as

> the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being (1990, p. 33).

Butler compares the rationality of this argument for gender to the area of sexuality where she holds that, but for endless reinscriptions and recitations, heterosexuality which is bound to fail still lingers:

[12] Reinsriptions mean to make permanent, fixed and even natural by conspicuously evoking durable characters, speeches, images, markers, etc., about societies' ideals about sexualities (Butler, 1990, p. 129). Recitations are to do with the processes of persistently (re)summoning, (re)bringing into attention, (re)adducing proof and (re)deploying either by force or otherwise, ontological norms into prevailing discourse (Butler, 1993, p. 15; Salih, 2002, p. 62).

> heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own phantasmatic idealisation of itself- and failing. Precisely because it is bound to fail, and yet endeavours to succeed, the project of heterosexual identity is propelled into an endless repetition of itself. Indeed, in its effort to naturalise itself as the original, heterosexuality must be understood as a compulsive…repetition that can only produce the effect of its own originality; in other words, compulsory heterosexual identities, those ontologically consolidated phantasm of 'man' and 'woman' are theatrically produced effects that posture as grounds, origins, the normative measure of the real (Butler, 1991, p. 21).

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler causes theoretical trouble by problematising long-standing and highly cherished theoretical underpinnings that held that gender and sexuality are natural (1990). Calling for the decentralising, denaturalising and defixing of well-known meanings, Butler posits that, terms like heterosexuality in her reading are regulatory fictions and do not denote naturalness (Butler, 1990, p.17). This means that whatever sexuality we orient ourselves to, is not natural but as a result of the same reinscriptions and recitations of dominant discourse. She points us to how gender functions as a regulatory construct that marginalises other 'categories' in favour of heterosexuality (p. 33). This we know already from the many scholarships that raise questions about how heterosexuality is likely to be privileged over other kinds of sexual orientations (see,

Hawkes & Scott, 2005; Toulalan & Fisher, 2013 for e.g.). What makes Butler's works exemplary is that she starts her critique from home. By home, it is implied that Butler (1990; 1991; 1993) indirectly problematises the naturalness of not just heterosexuality but homosexuality too; thereby bringing into scrutiny the (identity) politics of gay and lesbian movements that have been claiming the naturalness of homosexuality for a long time.

In what is to become one of Butler's most accomplished and influential experience, she further shows how the decentralising, denaturalising and unfixing identities of the normative prototype of gender make legitimate the gay and lesbian subject-positions (1990). So, for Butler, feminists and gay rights activists who accept naturalness as the basis of identity formations and activisms become part of the process of deployment of terms like homosexuals which unintentionally recreate the normative associations between gender, sex and desire that favour heterosexuality (1990). Thus in a self-incoherent manner, disparaged identities are complicit with those same identificatory systems they seek to oppose.

Performativity is another important terminology introduced by Butler that is relevant for both gender and sexuality theories (p. 128). The term depicts that there is no natural gender identity

behind the expressions (or the performing) of gender. That is, it is only through the performance (of gender) that the word gender is given meaning. Another way of looking at performativity in this sense is that, it is through the day to day expressions (of gender) that we constitute our identity and not the other way round. In Butler's (1990, p. 25) own words,

> there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results.

The same argument could be juxtaposed to the realms of sexualities in that when someone claims he is gay, Butler might answer him that he was not born gay; he is rather living to suit the features of the script society has engraved upon him through reiterations and recitations.

Butler is suggestive on how her theories could be appropriated in the real-world to make a difference. She proposes that, the repetition of gender norms (otherwise described as performativity) should be parodied. Parody here signifies a resistance strategy that aims to show that the domains of gender and sexuality are not centred on originality but through endless and heavily regulated possibilities of performativity (Butler, 1990, p. 138). With parody, the implication is that, the very notion of the

original should be challenged by imitating (parodying) another original:

> The critical task is… to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitutes identity and therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them (Butler, 1990, p. 147).

Stressing the need to unsettle this status by putting on a disruptive performance of both gender and sexuality she specifically shows exactly how to operationalise this parodying. She makes this point in her work titled 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination':

> Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalised, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the limitation itself (Butler, 1991, p. 21).

All in all, the mimicked version of gender and sexuality would reveal a crucial aspect. It would challenge the base of the underpinnings of any identity structure to reveal that, there is no naturalness or originality to the commonly held assumptions that privilege certain genders and sexualities to the detriment of others.

Finally, the term 'queer' is not commonly used in Ghana. Having gone through more than 50 pieces of hardcopies of various Ghanaian newspaper archives published on gayness, the term barely surfaced. The online media writing about gayness in Ghana had a similar reflection where the term was almost non-existent (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2003b; 2008; 2015). As a subject of conversation, queer is not used or understood as a word. None of my interviewees used the word although some of them are themselves queer or work closely with those who identify with queerness. Thus, although the term queer captures in a unique way most of the descriptions associated with gayness and gay rights politics, it is used with such infrequency in Ghana that could pass for the non-existent. Yet queer is ironically suitable in terms of what has been written regarding the dynamics of gayness and its manifestations in Ghana.

The unfixed nature in which old terms and new terms are used to describe gayness in Ghana is very queer in nature. Local, new and 'borrowed' terms and jargons are used to describe same-sex relationships and intercourse. Terms like *boys-boys* and *Yaa Asantewaa*, which are relatively new, are co-existing and at times supplanting older equivalents like *Kodjo besia, ɔbaa barima, supi* and *piu*. All these terms have different meanings and connotations

implying that some are evoked with a sense of pride, whilst others are derogative and I explained them subsequently in the next chapter. What was striking during the empirical studies is how the unfixed nature and ever-changing definitions of queer is mirrored in the Ghanaian case. One of my interviewees kept referring to the 'homos'. I asked what that meant and he told me that, it is how some people recently call self-identified gay men in Ghana (Interview, Adu, 13.12.14). He also told me how new terms like *sasu* and *gee*, are used by young gay men to identify themselves. These dynamics as we will see later in chapters 4 and 5 are very queer in nature.

In effect, this work is in line with Butler's theory because her quest to challenge dominant (international) models of gay identity where essentialising gayness becomes the norm is one of the main inspirations behind theorising within queer theory. With the empirical dimension only confirming the theoretical anxieties, this work in Butler's spirit problematises the essentialist assumptions in international gay rights advocacies. Only that this thesis takes this a step further. It does so by problematising the same essentialist arguments that are found in the resistances to gay rights advocacies where cultural and religious standpoints are often the cited justifications (see for e.g., BBC News, 2001; CBC

News, 2014; CNS News, 2015, Epprecht, 2004; Zabus, 2013). So although Butler's context of writing and focus are different from mine, she still challenges the dominance and truth claims justified by religious and patriarchal ideals often informing what is called the African culture.

On the practical effects of her theory in Ghana, we will see in chapters 4 and 5 how gays are politically 'queering' the social space in their own localised ways with their own languages in Ghana. Butler's work therefore rings true not only for this work but in a broader sense where naturalised understandings are subjected to scrutiny. It is not surprising that her works enjoy considerable attention in many disciplines and are frequently cited. Even those who critique Butler attest to her immense academic influence (see for e.g., Benhabib et al. 1995; Hood-Williams & Cealey, 1998; Prosser, 1998).

Universalism and Relativism of Human Rights

The relationship between universalism and relativism has been branded by Freeman (2011, p. 120) as the 'most controversial topic in human rights'. This is because universalism claims and alternative perspectives that are presented in the form of the relativism of human rights appear to have intrinsic differences that seem irreconcilable. The differences are discussed

below but before that I shall provide their definitions under four main themes namely, context, standard, priority and applicability. This is because although the concept is very broad in the area of human rights, these themes have the tendencies of reoccurring and are the building blocks of definitions and contentions as discussed below.

Universalism of Human Rights

Universalism relates to the fact of possessing characteristics (of truth) that are prevalent and applicable everywhere in the world (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016c). In the context of this thesis two brands of universalism are noteworthy. The first is to do with moral autonomy where the individual is seen as having the capacity for freedom and to act autonomously if given freedom to do so (see Berlin, 1969; Dworkin, 1988; Schneewind, 1998). This type of universalism is anchored in freedom of choice of the given individual and non-interference by other individuals, the state or external (Western) intervention. The second is to do with the universalism grounded in external (Western) intervention where other states are expected to intervene to prevent the breach of human rights (see Ratner, Abrams & Bischoff, 2009; Kultgen, 1995). Within international accountability, here the individual is seen as requiring third person advocacy, protection and external

empowerment to realise human rights standards. Both are important because we will see later how the two underline both local and international advocacies for gay rights in Ghana.

In relation to context, universalism simply means that, all human beings possess inherent rights regardless of origin, colour, sex, language, culture, place, gender, religion, political affiliation, etc. (Donnelly, 2007, p. 38; Gewirth, 1982, p. 1). Other closely related concepts in relation to this are equality and non-discrimination. Equality and non-discrimination as universalism are important building blocks of international human rights system and they depict that all human beings are equal and for that matter, no one should be discriminated against on any grounds (Arnardóttir, 2003; Sen 1992; Westen, 1990). The above leads to another definition of the concept of universalism in relation to human rights standards. An appeal to international moral imperatives informing certain standardised behaviour or treatment is what is meant by them (An-Na'im, 1992; Forsythe, 2000). Here states are expected to set aside individual and contextualised standards and engage in the international arena where there is an appeal to norms, ideals, and morals that 'supersede' that of any ethnic, national or cultural viewpoints (Holfer & Slaughter, 1997).

On the universalism of priorities, the logic is that, that which is deemed crucial and accorded the status of human rights by international stakeholders trump national or ethnic objectives (Koch, 2009, p. 1; Macklem, 2015). Common features associated with the universalism of human rights in terms of priorities are their indivisibility (incapable of being divided), interdependent (mutually dependent on each other) and interrelatedness (intrinsically connected) (see also Whelan, 2010). In effect these three principles denote that all human rights once acknowledged as such should be granted equal measure of significance in terms of their applications. Universal applicability of human rights basically means that human rights are or should be applicable everywhere without limitations (see Risse-Kappen, Ropp & Sikkink, 1999).

Robust and sophisticated arguments have been made in favour of the universalism of human rights. Jack Donnelly is one of such authors who provide useful nuances and different perspectives on universalism. Describing human rights as 'rights that one has simply as a human being' and tolerable in all societies, Donnelly (2007) defends what he calls conceptual universalism (p. 38). Drawing on the humanness of the human

being that cannot be changed wherever one goes, he professes that,

> Human rights are also inalienable rights, because being or not being a human being is an inalterable fact of nature, not something that can be earned or lost (p. 38).

Highlighting the theoretical convictions in favour of the universalism of human rights whilst at the same time acknowledging implementation complexities, Donnelly (2007) further differentiates between universal possession and universal enforcements. The former holds that, the universalism of human rights is only relevant and appreciable theoretically. He divulges the latter as relative and contextual:

> Notwithstanding the (conceptual or substantive) theoretical universality of human rights-that is, even if everyone does have the same human rights-implementation and enforcement of those rights are dependent on sovereign state and thus are highly relative (p. 39).

Like Donnelly, there is a compelling argument made in favour of the universalism of human rights by Booth (1999). Booth admits that there might not be universalism in the present time, but he sees no reason why any society should not aspire for one because of the potentials it carry:

> I want to argue for a discourse of human rights embedded in the potentialities of human sociality, a politics of emancipation, and a philosophy of universality (p. 32).

As his aim reflects in the above statement, not to pursue universalism would be to give in to what he calls the tyrannies (of human rights) where everyone would be at the peril of communitarian, traditional and cultural identity-referents (rather than dynamic, fluid, progressive and emancipatory) values (p. 37).

Relativism of Human Rights

In relations to human rights the simple definition given by the Oxford dictionary is encapsulating for a rather complicated word. According to that dictionary, relativism is simply the 'doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute' (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016b). In other words, for any concept, ideal or a view to be relative is to be rid of any embedded universal, uniform and standardised features. Relativism therefore, involves the practice of taken into consideration the values, cultures, beliefs, and practices of a given place from the standpoint of that place (Audi, 2007; Hales, 2011; Krausz, 2010).

With regard to standards, relativism of human rights means that, actions should be measured and/or judged by the actor's own distinct standards and not by the standards of others (Mayer, 1995). Thus, the relativism of human rights standard means that, there cannot be universal, one-fit all human rights standard applicable cross-culturally because of the distinct nature of every society. And even if it is agreed that such standard should exist, questions on who defines those standards leave room for political contestations (Osiatynski, 2009, p. 145). This is because standards are different from society to society and deciding whose and which to use could politicise any concept. It is partly due to this reason why we have universalism and relativism antagonisms in the first place. This position is reminiscent of long-standing intellectual proposition from moral relativists like Franz Boas, Ruth Benedict, Gilbert Harman, Melville Herskovits, Clifford Geertz, Richard Shweder, etc. Moral relativism is the view that moral judgments are only relative to specific (cultural or historical) perspective and that no one standpoint should exclusively be privileged over all others (see, Audi, 2007; Hales, 2011; Howard, 1983; Krausz, 2010).

When we transpose the same reasoning to the relative prioritisation of human rights, it is understood that the decision as

to which rights are to be deemed basic, absolute or crucial and accorded high value should only be left in the hands of those the rights in question directly affect (Hollenbach, 1998; Howard, 1983). This is in line with long-standing debates about what rights are given priorities, which are linked with the categorisations of rights into generations, core and periphery, absolute and non-absolute (see Fredman, 2008; Gewirth, 1996; Fried, 1978; Waldron, 1993; Arat, 1991). I specifically look at rankings of rights in chapter 6 but for now the implications of these prioritisations and categorisations in relation to relativism is that, because conditions are not the same in all contexts, practical applications of which human rights are given priority become problematic. Based on the above points, the relativism of human rights application is the view that it is difficult to apply human rights universally as conditions are not the same everywhere (Brems, 2001).

Prominent amongst the history of those who make a case for the relativism approach to human rights was when the Executive Board of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) issued statements against the risks of universal intentions of international human rights as far back as 1947 (AAA, 1947). The statement concluded that, due to the dividing cultural

backgrounds, standards, norms and values could only be relevant to any given culture and so there could not be universal applicability of human rights. Without this consideration, universalism claims risk imposing perceptions of human rights from the standpoint of America and Western Europe on everyone in the World:

> How can the proposed Declaration be applicable to all human beings, and not be a statement of rights conceived only in terms of the values prevalent in the countries of Western Europe and America? (p. 539).

Those familiar with the literature might remember that the AAA in the year 1999 in a complete turnaround went against its original statement in favour of the relativism of human rights (see, Engle, 2001). Arguing in favour of universalism this time round, the reason given by the AAA is that despite cultural differences there must be a commitment to universal human rights that is consistent with international principles. Yet, the point made in the original statement by the AAA in 1947 remains relevant today and questions about whether human rights are specific only to the West persist.

For instance, in 'Human Rights: A Western Construct with Limited Applicability', Pollis & Schwab (1980, p. 13) criticise human rights as culturally and ideologically ethnocentric with a

self-imposed universal status. They argue that Western-and therefore relative-origins of human rights are not only inapplicable and of limited validity, but meaningless to third world countries (see also Panikkar, 1982). The explanation for this is that, the historical, political and economic impetus from which human rights evolved has been absent in most third world countries. On the universal applicability of human rights, Sajo (2004) has crucial things to say. For him, the utter impracticability of human rights is a self-imposed limitation. He does not find the wisdom in human rights philosophies largely couched in universalism languages and tenets whilst at the same time seeking cross-cultural validation:

> The model of individual rights with its underlying individualism is counterproductive if used for other goals such as communal or welfare policy (2004, p. 5).

He underscores that, consequently, the promise of universal human rights is hence facing fierce challenges in its applicability as it does, conceptually and philosophically:

> Unfortunately, human rights movements not only follow incoherent patterns intellectually, but perhaps even more disappointingly, practical application, too, seems at best disjointed. Further, human rights thinking and action often suffer from the predominance of double standards, arrogance, and incompetent absolutism of bystanders (Sajo, 2004, p. 5).

Sajo has a suggestion for believers of universalism of human rights. He admonishes them to revisit the core definitions of human rights anchored in universalism, now that its operations seek worldwide validity.

As seen, the claim that human rights are universal because they exist in all cultures, religion and creeds throughout the ages have been seriously challenged. Whilst such a claim is normatively appealing, it is not free from controversies. It at best alludes to and elaborates on different societies' interpretations of protecting human dignity that exists in almost all cultures. At worst, such argument is ironically defending the relativism standpoint, the very notion universalism stands against by holding that, there are contextual meanings and implications of what human rights are.

This epitomises the highest forms of ironies. Gaete (1993) brilliantly captures this irony in human rights history where ideas (like human rights) after claiming to be unquestionable, absolute and transcendental, tend to look more and more like the ideals they vehemently oppose ironically. Gaete reminds us of the initially claimed triumph of the universalism of human rights and how that perception is gradually diminishing:

> The celebration of their final victory has been sober, quite unfitting for a triumphant ideology which is still relatively young. It is as if, on arrival, the promise of human rights has prematurely aged among the debris left in the wake of modernity... But after so many mirages a certain irony is understandable. History is full of examples of principles of legitimacy that purport to be based upon unquestionable, ageless truths which are however controlled by the rhetoricians of power (1993, pp. 2-3).

A case in point can be sourced from the Vienna Declaration (1993). The Declaration asserts in universal terms only for it to add, paradoxically some (relative) qualifications; all happening in one sentence:

> All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated…the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind.

Finally, Mutua (2004, pp, 62-63) believes that, the universalism views on human rights are imperialistic and hegemonic; aimed at civilising the non-Western world. Imperial and hegemonic imply unequal balance of power in relation to conceptions, interpretations and executions of human rights norms between the West and the rest of the world (Freeman, 2011, p. 121). In Mutua's estimation, human rights are conceived and projected to solve Western problems and the reasons for

extending them to the rest of the world is to align the latter to the 'civilising' ways of the former (Mutua, 2002). It is crucial to add that, despite his misgivings about universalism of human rights, Mutua does not reject human rights altogether. A sub-section in chapter 7 discusses how he explicitly comes out to support LGBT human rights.

In a similar way, Brems (2001, p. 35) argues that, the histories and philosophies of universal human rights have the needs, concerns and values of the West at heart. Because of this, they may neglect equivalent concerns from the non-Western world. Although for different reasons and in different ways, both Mutua (2002, 2004) and Brems (2001, p. 510) raise concerns about situations where the distinctive (cultural) assertiveness raised against human rights are taken as a critique against the West and may be ignored (Brems, 2001, p. 510).

Practical Meanings

At this point, I pause to look at what all these mean and reflect on the particular cases of gay rights advocacies; their resistances; and the country Ghana. Despite the enormous scholarship on the debate between universalism and relativism perspectives on human rights, an age long echo is reheard: 'the

West versus the rest'. Following the patterns of retold narratives, here the West is seen as 'proposing' universal human rights whilst the rest 'oppose' them. Indeed the propositions (linked to the West) and the oppositions (linked to the rest) may be in different forms, but they are reflected in the universalism versus relativism arguments. It is not surprising that, the body of literature that raises concerns against the universalism of human rights like Asian values and African perspectives has been at times called non-Western perspectives (see for e.g., Brems, 2001, p. 1; Mutua, 2002, 2004; Osiatynski, 2009, p. 154; Preis, 1996, p. 291). To equally match such categorisations, the body of literature defending universalism of human rights has been branded Western (see for e.g., Booth, 1999; Donnelly, 2007; Gewirth, 1982; Orend, 2002).

The political and cultural aspects of the debate are common knowledge but it appears that the debate also has a geographical twist. By this I mean certain principles and assertions are aligned not only politically and culturally but geographically. In this case, it is common place (albeit empirically unsupported) that Africans (often labelled as relativists) oppose gay rights whilst Westerners (often labelled as universalists) propose them. This is not unusual as it is linked with larger debates where those in the latter category

are mainly perceived as foreign, individualistic, progressive, pro-gay, whites and secular. The former category, where Ghana falls within is on the contrary associated with locals, communitarians, conservatives, anti-gay, blacks and religious. I have deliberately listed these words systematically and correspondingly to highlight how pairing them against each other with the word 'versus' reveals mainly one thing. Their pairings divulge what has been made to appear as a strict dichotomy but also enmity between the two worlds. For instance, they could be categorised as white versus black; progressive versus conservatives; the West versus Africa, etc.

My participation in the dialogue is that although this categorisation and strict binaries between universalism and relativism are useful and speak to lager debates, the real-world experiences are neither that unsophisticated nor strictly dichotomous. This is because, the heated exchanges between relativism and universalism do not account fully for the resistances to gay rights. Thus, often the resistances to gay rights are assumed to fall into the relativist view (or rejection) of human (in this case gay) rights. What is often missed is that the resistances are as universalised as the proponents of (universal) human rights. In other words, there is a universalism perspective on the

resistances to gay rights that may elude the most curious of observers. By this 'universalism perspective', I am not only referring to the sheer multitudes of the perspectives on the resistances to gay right across cultures. I am also referring to the scattered but common themes of religions and the common rhetoric of protecting the institutions of family, marriages and progeny that are found in different cultures used against gay rights advocacies. Let me use the example of Christianity to help unpack this point.

Christianity presents a double-edged sword that makes the simultaneous enactments of universal human rights and their resistances clearly visible. Many would agree that Christianity gave the natural, metaphysical, supernatural and foundational underpinnings upon which the notion of the universalism of human rights was built. So although authors have presented ideas of human rights that could be found in Islam (see An-Na'im, 1992) Asian values (Sharma, 2006) and African perspectives (see Cobbah, 1987), they are often classed as relativist viewpoints (see Vyver, 1998). Consequently, human right conceptions and their codifications within the UDHR systems are intrinsically linked to Christian principles although they may be couched in secular legal wordings. Recent (like Moyn, 2015; Witte & Alexander, 2010) and

past (like Finnis, 1980) works confirm the relationship between Christianity and natural/human rights showing how the latter have been built on the former by evoking the transcendental nature of the Christian God 'Himself' to justify human rights philosophies.

So, if it could be claimed and vehemently defended that human rights are universal, then so too are their resistances. This is because, today, religious principles (Christian ones in particular) are often cited as one of the main reasons for anti-gay stances in Africa. And their united front, the similarities of the rhetoric and the absence of a geographical limitation in relation to these resistances make them universal in outlook. A real-world example that demonstrates this paradigm is found in how oppositions to gay rights in Africa have similar echoes to those in other parts of the world, particularly America. The point is that religions are uniting anti-gay sentiments beyond geographical lines by making the universalist/relative divide negligible. And so Freeman (2011, p. 123) is correct when he drives home a similar point:

> The supposedly non-Western values are often conservative values that many Westerners support. Likewise, many non-Westerners support Western, liberal values.

These dynamics show how there are anti-gay sentiments in the West as they are in Africa; making it universal in outlook.

Conclusion

The three main theories that are relevant to the thesis are universalism and relativism of human rights; queer; and postcolonial. These theories vary in different ways. As established, they have intrinsic oppositional views. Despite this, one theory, namely essentialism connects them. Essentialism connects them in ways that either highlight their similarities or differences. To claim the universalism of gay rights is to claim implicitly that, there is something essential (inborn, natural, innate) about sexualities that validate such universalism. In the same way, but in relation to the popular postcolonial responses to gay rights advocacies by African leaders, to make a claim to a distinct African culture and a distinct African sexuality is implicitly an essentialist assertion. Here, themes cutting across natural, fixed and unchanging features are attached to a whole continent, millions of people and their sexualities. The point is that, both gay rights advocacies and their resistances have integral essentialist components in them.

Due to its theoretical significance and the controversies embedded in essentialism, it leads to counter theories. One of such oppositions within the area of sexualities, gender and race is queer theory. As established, queer theory simply holds that there is nothing natural about being gay, straight, bisexual, transsexual,

boy, girl, man, woman, etc. Such has not been my focus of attention, but in relation to the postcolonial, queer theorists might argue that there is nothing natural about being black or white. All these categories (like gayness/'straightness') are constructed socially through discourse, language, reiteration and recitations. Hence, as essentialism places emphasis on nature and inborn traits, queer theory highlights socio-cultural dynamics as the basis of human existence. In other words, we are not natural in what we are but we socio-culturally evolve into what we are presently through what we do daily. Thus, as essentialism recognises universal attributes and uniformities in gayness across cultures, queer theory debunks these narratives as ignoring diversity and fostering ethnocentric based identity politics that may not be beneficial to gays in all contexts.

It is important to note however that, the relationship between essentialism and queer theory is not always adversarial. In gay rights advocacies, both have been pragmatically invoked. For instance, activists (see for e.g., Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14) argue for the universal application of equality and non-discrimination principles in favour of gays in that, they are to be considered primarily as human beings with moral autonomy and should be treated with dignity (see also, Time.com, 2014;

Vitagliano, 2012). In doing so, they play the 'essentialist' card by insisting that some people are born gay and therefore cannot control who or what they are (see Drucker, 2015; O'Brien, 2014; Post, 2010).

Hence, upon the admission of the 'being born that way' argument, society is required to be tolerant and accept such dispositions bestowed upon gays by nature. At other times the argument has been placed between queer and essentialism in a way that reflect the complexities of human sexualities (see, Blumenfeld, 1992; Kantor, 2009, Berzon, 1996). The argument holds that some people are born gay or become one through numerous ways and for numerous reasons. Either way, the resounding message from activists intermingling essentialism and queer theory is clear: no one should be discriminated against, stigmatised, insulted, beaten, tortured or killed over their sexualities.

Chapter 4 – THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF SEXUALITIES IN GHANA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to paint a historical picture of sexualities in Ghana. I do so with a broad brush. Painting a picture of sexualities is complex on its own, not least that of a country. This is because sexualities are broad, encompassing and intertwined with many several aspects like the spiritual, personhood, cultural, religion and politics (Weeks, 1985; Weeks, Holland, & Waites, 2003). It may be defined in relation to sex, love, sexual identity, gender roles, intimacy, sexual perception, sexual expression, feelings, and so on. It is for this reason that the plural 'sexualities' is preferred to the singular sexuality; a strategy for definition borrowed from Plummer (2015).

The plural is fitting for a country like Ghana that has colonial and postcolonial sexual histories as already hinted. Moreover there are several ethnic groups that preceded and proceeded colonialism with their numerous languages, cultures and artefacts, thereby making pluralisation inevitable (nationsonline.org, 2016). For the present task, this chapter concentrates on sexualities within the

sub-components of sexual relationships and sexual cultures, and discusses the aspects of Ghanaian sexualities that are pertinent to the thesis. It also highlights how different terminologies, meanings, connotations and expressions of homosexualities have evolved in Ghana. It particularly pays attention to the Ghanaian laws and discusses its relationship with gay people and gay rights.

Ghana could be described as a heteronormative society. This is because the term heteronormative denotes the view that upholds heterosexualities as the normal, natural or the desired sexual orientation (Green, 2002, p. 542; Connell, 1992). The description of Ghanaian sexualities provided below reminds us of how heteronormativity has become the mundane, day to day ways that heterosexualities are taken for granted as natural and normal; and hence privileged over other sexualities (Martin, 2009 p. 190). This conscious and/or unconscious ways in which heteronormativity is equated to the 'natural' is known in the literature as normalisation (see Jackson, 2006; Kitzinger, 2005).

Normalisation in this regard therefore includes the practices, norms, affirmations, reinforcements and enactments that approve heterosexualities. The normalised heterosexual and gender biased sexualities that the subsequent paragraphs describe have not happened perchance. There is a relative power relation of the

various stakeholders in the racial or ethnic transactions that determines what are deemed normal sexualities. This thesis however contends that there is nothing natural, innate, and essential about them. They are a reflection of the social constructions of sexualities of a country that is made up of numerous ethnic groups put together only from the year 1957 (Bourret, 1960; UNDP, 2015).

In relation to the study of sexualities, social constructionism is the notion that the features attributed to social categories such as men, women, homosexuals, heterosexuals, and their associated binaries (often found in status and roles) are all culturally defined through historical conditions, power relations and ongoing social processes (Nagel, 2000, p. 114; Hartsock, 1983; MacKinnon, 1989, Jagose, 1996). Simply put, all are man-made and so there are histories of power relations and control that undergird them. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) for example draws on Foucault's arguments, particularly about the operations of power and resistance and points out how gender functions as a regulatory construct that marginalises other 'categories' in favour of heterosexuality.

Marriages, *Mpena* and Children

Marriages

Before discussing marriages, let me explain the concept of *abusua* (family, lineage, and kinship). Despite their similarities and their use in this section, family, lineage and kinship have their differences (Fox, 1967). I however use and interchange them because the *Akan* concept of *abusua* captures all of them (see Yankah, 1995). *Abusua* may be used to describe a small family unit (e.g., father, mother and children) as well as the extended family like lineages and kinship (p. 61). Thus, it is inclusive of siblings, parents, cousins, nephews, nieces, uncles, aunties, grandparents, etc. (Bleek 1976, p. 8; Fortes, 1950; Clark, 1999). The *abusua* may be prioritised over the union between a man and his wife as a central point of belongingness and social security.

In his extensive study about Ghanaian sexualities, Bleek (1976, p. 88) contends that, married people found security with their extended family rather than the marriage relationship. He summarises that, it is therefore not a good idea (particularly for a woman) to invest too much into her marriage. During her field work in Ghana, Clark often heard the women of Kumasi saying 'you can get a new husband, but not a new brother' (1999, p. 723). It is therefore held that, a woman who overlooks the

significance of her *abusua* over her marriage is either irresponsible or below normal intelligence, according to Clark (1999). As Ghanaians practice the extended family system, this could be in part explained by the importance of the *abusua* as the fundamental unit of social, jural and political organisations (Pellow & Chazan, 1986).

Primarily, marriages in Ghana can be defined as an arrangement between two families (Miescher, 2005, p. 115; Amoo 1946, p. 228). It must be stressed that marriages go beyond the man and his wife and it is seen as a union between two kinship groups (Radcliffe-Brown & Forde, 1950, p. 51; Miescher, 2005). There are three types of marriages in Ghana that are recognised by the Ghanaian society and the laws (Salm & Falola, 1966, pp 130-131). They are marriage under the marriage ordinance, Islamic marriage under the marriage of Mohammedans ordinance and customary marriages. Marriage under the marriage ordinance is a monogamous marriage that could by officiated by a registered Minister of religion, a Registrar of marriages or under a special license (KMA, 2016). Islamic marriage is a polygamous marriage contracted between two families based on Islamic teachings. Customary marriages as the name suggests are marriages contracted based on the customs of the ethnic groups from which

the couple come from (Amoo, 1946; Gaisie & De Graft-Johnson, 1976). As there are several ethnic groups in Ghana, the nitty-gritties of customary marriages differ from groups to groups. The common denominator amongst all these groups is that for a marriage to be accepted on customary terms, two vital prerequisite must be fulfilled (Gaisie & De Graft-Johnson, 1976). There has to be a bride price presented by the man and his *abusua* in the first instance (Salm & Falola 1966; KMA, 2016). Secondly, the bride must be asked if the price should be accepted. If she answers in the positive, then the customary marriage is approved and established.

Marriage in Ghana is an important institution; and the pressure from the *abusua* and society as a whole on both men and women to get married is huge (Frimpong-Nnuro, 1994). A man who is 'successful' in all areas of his life without a wife is ridiculed and disrespected (Amoo, 1946). Marriage therefore becomes, in the words of Frimpong-Nnuro (1994, p.94) 'the 'unofficial' necessary qualification to high office' in Ghana'. In the book titled the *Making of Men in Ghana*, Miescher (2005, p. 14) describes how adult male masculinity is mainly marked by the sole act of marriage:

> In Kwawu, adult masculinity was signified by marriage. As in other Akan societies, men reached adult masculinity by taking 'the role of material providers and protectors of families.

Marriage confers certain immunities and privileges for women without which, their social standing is demeaned (Frimpong-Nnuro, 1994). A Ghanaian woman highlights this point: 'If you are of age and you do not marry, you lose your self-respect' (quoted in Anarfi, 2006, p. 170). Apart from the reasons stated above, the prominence of marriage can also be partly explained by the fact that it is inextricably intertwined with the quest to have children (Clark, 1999). Therefore, to marry is to a larger extent linked to the preservation and continuation of the *abusua* and the *ɔman* (nation). In tandem with this, the emphasis placed on children and polygyny is one of the most distinctive features of marriages in Ghana.[13]

Mpena

Apart from marriages, the term *mpena* in the *Akan* language captures non-marital love relationships between males and females involving (or has a future potential of) sexual intercourse (Bleek, 1976). Usages and meanings range from long term committed relationships to casual relationships. *Mpena*

[13] Polygyny is the practice where a man can marry more than one wife at the same time (Atman & Ginat, 1996).

relationships abound and may even be encouraged in Ghana (Bleek, 1976; Pellow, 1977; Goody 1973, p. 68). This could be due to the fact that the *mpena* relationship could lead to marriage and/or pregnancy and as explained, both marriages and progeny are highly regarded in Ghana (Clark, 1999; Anarfi, 2006). More so, although premarital relationships are encouraged, it is not an expectation that they all result in marriage; hence, the lover relationship is enjoyed in its own right (Bleek, 1976; Pellow, 1977; Goody, 1973, p. 68).

One of the ironies around Ghanaian sexual relationships is that, although there are high moral expectations around chastity, premarital sex is not roundly condemned customarily. Girls for example, are expected to remain virgins until they are married; yet there are no customs that plainly prohibit pre-marital sex (Anarfi, 1993). This in part explains why in reality the 'ideal' of taking the sex out of premarital relationships has not seen much success. In a survey on sexual behaviour, it was established that, by the age of 24, 90% of Ghanaians are likely to have had sexual encounters (Anarfi, 1993). As indicated, this could be partly due to the absence of stringent and punitive measures against pre-marital sex in Ghana.

Children

There are no formal pronatalist policies in Ghana, but there are extreme pressures from society on people to have children (Clark 1999, p. 717). It follows that, sexual relationships are mainly targeted at having children. When Fortes (1949, p. 101) and Goody (1956, pp. 38-64) studied northern Ghana, they concluded that, the emphasis on marital sex is targeted at procreation. Similar arguments are advanced by Miescher (2005, p. 151) when he studied the Kwahu people of Eastern region; Clark (1999, p. 717) when she studied the Ashanti Region; and Christenson (1954) when he studied the Fantis of Western region. Children are the sign of a woman's normality, femininity, and healthiness as Bleek's (1976) study of rural Ghana attest.

This is mainly because the humiliation and the paramount stigma that accompany childlessness cannot be overstated. When a woman gets married, she brings honour and respect to herself and her *abusua* as already discussed. But the absence of children threatens the conjugal bond and she risks being divorced without them (Miescher, 2005; Clark, 1999). In other words, it is not the conjugal bond but the expected children therein that provides stability for the wife.

Indeed men also receive a share of the ridicule that accompanies childlessness. A man without children is disregarded and is less likely to be considered for any high office (Miescher, 2005, p. 151). Goody observes amongst the LoWiili people that 'The desiderated state of male existence includes…an abundant progeny' (1967, p. 48). That is, a man's political and social status within his lineage decline with the decline of his progeny. To rectify this shame and restore dignity, a man may claim paternity to the children of his unfaithful wife although they may biologically belong to another man. This was one of the revelations that intrigued Cardinal when he studied the northern territories of Ghana as far back as 1920. Similarly Fortes (1950, p. 281) describes how an Ashanti husband may sue for compensation from his adulterous wife and also claim paternity for the child conceived in the adultery.

Apart from the status that accompanies progeny, there are also economic reasons (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). Rural economies are dominated by subsistence crops and animal farming. In this regard, the reliance on many children and many wives to provide the labour is significant (see also Amamoo, 2011). In crude terms, the more children (labour) the more economically secured. Perhaps this helps in explaining why many

Ghanaians resist an open gay lifestyle where men are supposed to stay with other men permanently and not have children. In a chapter 7, I discuss why anti-gay reasons must be taken seriously and not be taken as sheer backwardness. Indeed if children are not merely socially and politically crucial but also means of livelihood, then concerns raised about procreation in regard to resisting gay rights must be approached with caution.

Sexual Cultures

Sexual cultures refer to the systems of beliefs, meanings (of knowledge) practices, and norms about sex (Rushing, 1995, p. 249, Parker, 2001). By extension, sexual cultures bring to light the relationship between an array of socio-cultural systems like religion, politics, economy, and sexualities (Parker, Herdt & Carballo, 1991, p. 79). Describing sexual cultures includes dichotomising between 'cultural ideals vs. actual practice, public vs. private conduct, and prescribed vs. voluntary behaviour' to employ the categorisation used by Parker, Herdt & Carballo, (1991, p. 79). This means that, the set of prescribed and idealised sexual behaviours may be dishonoured by real-world occurrences. As hinted, virginal brides are important part of Ghanaian society's quest to maintain women's 'dignity'. Yet their scarcity per the statistic quoted above only shows how this expectation is dashed

in real life experiences. My concern with sexual cultures is with three main areas namely sex and play; sex education; and gender stratification. I also seek to underline what systems of sanctions and prohibitions are put in place to regulate sexual behaviour.

Sex and Play

> in the night you can both fondle each other but that is not sex. Sex only happens when you use your penis (quoted in Anarfi, 2006, p. 172).

Understanding and contextualisation of the meanings attached to the action oriented phrase 'to have sex' (which I simply call sex in this section) is of paramount importance (Paterson & Meuhlanhard, 2004). It cannot be assumed that there is consistency and that people share a common definition of sex cross-culturally. This is why other studies elsewhere seek to assess how individuals define sex (see for e.g., Bogart et al 2000; Randall & Byers, 2003; Richter & Song, 1999; Pitts & Rahman 2001; Sanders & Reinisch, 1999). What all these studies demonstrate is that people have complex range of social and cultural meanings attached to the definitions of sex. Ghana is no exception. To define what sex means for an entire nation is challenging as individual understandings and meanings are diverse and numerous. Yet it is important to establish from the empirical studies what the broad consensus is.

In Ghana, sex can be defined as a penal-vaginal intercourse with the intent of having children (Fortes 1950, p. 280). For an act or intimacy to amount to sex in Ghana, there has to be the penetration of the female vagina by the male penis. Sex should also be 'ideally' targeted at procreation. When I asked 122 Ghanaians, 98% said that a normal sexual relationship should be one between a man and a woman (Ghanaian Sexuality Survey, 2014). Anarfi (2006, p.172) after his thorough research on 'Talking and Deciding about Sex', makes an argument not dissimilar:

> People related the place of sex in male-female relationship to the need to procreate. In that respect, the general feeling was that sexual intercourse must always end with penetration otherwise it will amount to unfinished business.

In this spirit, other physical intimacies like oral sex, fondling, kissing, cuddling, mutual masturbation may not be classified as sex. They may rather be categorised as *agorɔ* (play) because sex is predominantly thought of in genital terms (Geest, 2006, p. 227). An elderly woman speaking *Akan* actually uses the word *agorɔ* (play) and distinguishes it from 'real' sex. She tells her interviewer that: *Na yɛedi* agorɔ *ansa na sɛ yɛ bɛyɛ biribi a yeayɛ*' (quoted in Geest, 2006, p. 224). (I was able to play with him before we did anything). 'Did anything' as used here, represents sex involving

penetration but she avoids the word. She rather finds an alternative word that she deems suitable (in this case- 'anything'). The use of various euphemisms to represent sex is very common in Ghana (Bleek 1976, p. 48). This is because it is regarded as improper to use certain direct words when it comes to sex (Bleek, 1976, p. 59).

The definitions, meanings and understandings accorded to sex and its distinction from 'playing' are crucial in relation to same-sex intimacies. They help explain why gay sex is not usually mentioned in most discourses on sexualities. Indeed it is known that, boys and other boys 'play' as we will later see. Such 'plays' may involve anal sex but may be overlooked by society. Ali, a self-acclaimed gay man I interviewed told me how gays themselves call their sex 'play' because it is not 'real' sex: 'People usually refer to it as…'play'…even most gays themselves often use the term 'play' (interview, 01.12.14). Boys may not brag about such play (s) as they would do about their 'real' sex with girls. Hence, gay sex was not given any attention so far as men performed their societal roles by getting married and having children. This point is discussed later in this chapter where explanations are offered as to why there are silences and discretion surrounding homosexualities in Ghana.

Sex Education and Prohibitions

Sex education is the process whereby someone is taught the desires, roles, sexual feelings, and practices quintessential of individuals of their category in their society (Herdt, 1987; 1989). Traditionally, girls and boys in Ghana are not allowed to have any knowledge about sex until they reach puberty (Sarpong, 1977). At the puberty stage, it is thought that the girls in particular have the psychological and physiological aptitudes to receive sex education. In some communities (for e.g., the Akans, Nzemas and Krobos), sex education is peaked during the performance of special womanhood initiation rites like *bragorɔ* (see, Okra, 2003); *dipo* (see, Steegstra, 2006); and *aziziele* (see Frimpong-Nnuro, 2006); etc. There are several processes involved in these rites where girls are ceremoniously transitioned into womanhood and duly acknowledged as such. These processes and ceremonies are different from ethnic groups to ethnic groups but one common feature is that, girls receive in-depth trainings on sexualities; and how to be responsible women in society. Sarpong (1997) for instance describes *bragorɔ* as a ceremony that introduced a girl officially to the community and also legitimated her fertility after her first menstruation (see also Clark, 2010, p. 24).

Sex education through the rites named above is partly a way of prohibiting prenubility sex. This means that, these rites are in place to deter girls from having sexual intercourse before their first menstruation. In some communities, a girl who does not go through these rites before having sex or getting pregnant gets punished. For instance amongst the Ashantis, an undesired equivalent rite called *kyiribra* is performed for a girl who has not undergone the honouring bra*gorɔ* rite.[14] With regard to some of these prohibitions and restrictions on sex before puberty rites and how they relate to premarital sex, there is a compelling argument made by Caldwell, Caldwell & Quiggin (1989). They argue that ceremonies like *dipo* and bra*gorɔ* are not in place to prevent premarital sex but to encourage them. So whilst they may target the prohibition of prenubility sex, they encourage premarital sex.

This perception has not only been conceived by Western anthropologists and ethnographers like Caldwell, Caldwell & Quiggin (1989) but also by Ghanaians themselves. Steegstra (2006) writes a detailed description of the *dipo* rite and establishes that, many Ghanaians perceive it as granting sexual permissiveness for the girls initiated. *Dipo* is therefore thought of

[14] *Kyiribra* is a disgraceful rite performed for a girl who has sex or gets pregnant before undergoing the initiating rites to womanhood (Okrah, 2003, p.110).

by many as the 'license to indulge in premarital sexual activities' (p. 59). Confirming this assertion a Ghanaian girl reiterates what she was told during her sex education:

> They said when you menstruate you can give birth as mothers do. As for that if you sleep with a male it does not matter, but if you have not started menstruating and you do so, it is bad (quoted in Essah, 2006, p. 198).

The womanhood rites and ceremonies like *dipo* and bra*gorɔ* mentioned above are gradually losing their relevance. Arthur (2013) partly attributes this to increased urbanisation where many children and youth leave the small towns and villages and cluster around the streets of the major cities seeking greener pastures. With urbanisation comes new ways of imagining life including the understandings of sexualities beyond what have been held by the older generations.

As some Ghanaian girls go through robust and traditionally established modes of sex education, there are no such restrictive customary guidelines for boys. With boys, Adomako Ampofo & Boateng (2007) tell us that sex education is uncomplicated. They profess that, boys usually have their sex education informally from their friends. For that reason, knowledge about sex is therefore mainly acquired from sharing stories with other friends who have either experienced sex or are more knowledgeable about the

subject. The emphasis placed on girls in relation to sex education, other than boys is perhaps reflective of a country where gender is stratified in such a way that boys relatively enjoy wider ranges of sexual freedoms. Gender stratifications and how this entrenched dichotomy between boys and girls play out are the focus of the next subheading.

We are informed by Ankomah (2004) that, although in the formal sector, sex education is included in the Ghanaian curriculum, in practice, teachers avoid the subjects. This has been attributed to the fear of backlashes from religious groups some of whom may argue that knowledge about sex invokes its practice. And the practice of sex is what religious authorities want to avoid in the quest to promote chastity. So although the government is proactive in promoting sex education, there remain practical challenges often coming from religious and cultural principles that may contradict policy positions.

Gender Stratifications: Boys v Girls

Another aspect of Ghanaian sexualities that is worthy of analysis is to do with how it is stratified in terms of its gender relations. Gender stratifications can simply be viewed as men and women's unequal access to power, prestige and resources on the basis of their sex (Blumberg 1984; Boserup, 1970; Sanday, 1981).

Perhaps there is no better arena to look for how gender is stratified than in the area of sexualities and how men and women relate to that concept. As indicated, both the colonial and the postcolonial authorities constructed and perpetuated respectively, patriarchal and heteronormative ideals which centred on women's (sexual) subservience and the neglect of the emphasis on men's autonomy in Africa (Wieringa, 2009, p. 208).

In Ghana, for instance, there is double standardness; in that, unchastity is unforgivable amongst women but excusable and justified amongst men (Awusabo-Asare et al, 1999). As plurality of sexual partners is almost regarded as 'rights' for boys, there is high ascription of value to female virginity and virginal brides. Anarfi (1993) surveys sexual behaviours (of the Akans, Ga-Adangbes, the Ewes and the Northern Tribes of Ghana) and concluded that, over 70% of his respondents think women should remain virgins until marriage. In the same study, it was established that over 80% of parents think their daughters should remain virgins until marriage. The fact that rites like *kyiribra* are exclusively for girls with no equivalent rites for boys is telling.

Gender stratifications are further demonstrated in the marriage institution. Customs and attitudes on extramarital affairs favour men (Caldwell, Caldwell & Quiggin, 1989; Rushing, 1995).

That is, it is for example accepted by many that men can have extramarital affairs during post-partum period abstinence of a wife (Caldwell, Caldwell & Quiggin, 1989). There is a different side to this stratified outlook when it comes to married women. It is reported among the Dagabas of Ghana that, it is a taboo for a pregnant woman to commit adultery (Kaye, 1962, p. 45). Nukunya (1969, p. 68) found out that there are very low level of adultery by Ewe women. Even the few ones are highly kept secrets and treated with caution as they could lead to marriage break up or societal shame. The taboos, fear and panic instilled on women with the repercussions of extramarital affairs are far reaching. Ankomah (2004) describes how a wife's adultery, among the Anlo Ewe, is believed, could cause not only her but her husband's death. As precautionary measures against this perceived misfortune, Anlo Ewe men would use charms to prevent any adulterous intentions of a wife.

There could be several reasons as to why gender is stratified in relation to sexual behaviours in Ghana but two main ones stand out. The first is economic. There are economic imbalances where women occupy the lower half of the economy with men occupying the influential positions. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2013), 73.8% of women earn less than their husbands. This

economic inequality reinforces the subordinated positions of women in the area of sexualities. It could be summarised with the saying that goes like 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. Thus, sexual relationships and marriages are negotiated with men being the 'pipers' deciding the tunes- terms and conditions. Consequently, a woman losing her boyfriend or husband could imply losing her livelihood. When Adomako Ampofo (1999, p. 152) interviewed one woman, she expressed how leaving her unfaithful boyfriend could be a bad decision because she depended on him financially. She has to put up with him until he marries her. For it would be through marriage and the prospective children therein, that her subsistence is guaranteed:

> He was a womaniser already when I met him so really I need to be patient until the time that he will perform the marital rights.

Secondly, gender stratifications are explicable through the primacy of patriarchies. Patriarchies can be described as societies where men dominate and have precedence over women in all aspects of the economic, social and political organisation (Henslin, 2007; Lener, 1986; Goldberg, 1973). In Ghana, the statistics demonstrate that men dominate the top of the economic, social and political ladder, whilst the bottom half is occupied by the women (see for e.g., Statsghana.gov, 2006). In the *Akan*-speaking areas, were descent is based on matrilineages, women

are highly regarded in traditional politics and occupy key positions like queen-mothers (Rattray, 1923; Laue, 1976; Clark, 1999).[15]

Even with these groups, the men remain kings, chiefs and family heads (Laue, 1976). Invariably, the economic and political positions of the few wealthy women have not changed their social rankings favourably in relation to the men. Akan men are customarily permitted to take more wives and concubines and the women are expected to oblige (Caldwell, Caldwell & Quiggin, 1989; Rushing, 1995). Within the patrilineal groups like the Ewes, Krobos and parts of northern Ghana; patriarchy is even more entrenched (Huber 1963; Nukunya 1969; Tait, 1961).[16] This is because, as descent is through the father's side, boys are systematically regarded and favoured over girls. So, patriarchies in Ghana are partly made possible by the existence of customs that regulate sex, sexual behaviour, marriages, descent and inheritance. It is also made possible by the privileged economic, social and political positions men enjoy.

Queer theorists (Butler, 1990; Hall, 2003; Jagose, 1996; Sedgwick, 1993) challenge the assumptions about nature and content of sexualities that divide men/women. Perhaps the most

[15] Matrilineages are descent groups traced through women on the maternal side of a family (see Meuwissen 1966; Clark 1999).
[16] Patrilineages are descent groups traced through men on the paternal side of the family (see Nukunya, 1969).

forceful argument posited by queer theorists is raising question about the essentialised sexual binaries between men/women and its implanted conjecture of compulsory heteronormativity. Almost collapsing the very foundation of essentialism and naturalised binaries, Butler (1990, p. 1) wonders whether or not there should be such people called 'women' and probes what dangers might lie in supposing the existence of such category. To her, to accept that one could be categorised or born as a woman is to accept the inherent and normalised stratifications.

As described above in the Ghanaian case, to be called a woman implies the likelihood of occupying the bottom half of the social, economic and political ladder. It also means she is more or less bound to be a (house, second or third) wife, bear children, or do low paid jobs. Hence, it is upon her husband and her children that a woman finds her agency and at times her subsistence. Butler and others (like Sedgwick, 1993, Irigaray, 1985; Wittig, 1992) might conclude that, this dimension is problematic because women's invisibility and marginal status affirm men's dominance and centrality and further normalise men's privileged position. To ratify this, they suggest that, one way of promoting equality is to do away with the very categorisations that separate us into men/women.

Homosexualities in Ghana

Like the many other words in this thesis, the plural- homosexualities- is preferred to the singular- homosexuality. This is to highlight and reiterate one of the core stances of this thesis; which is that, there are different understandings, connotations and expressions of homosexualities even within one country. To speak of a singular (homosexuality) would mean endorsing the normalisation of particular understanding and expression. That position is tantamount to essentialism- a theoretical position that is to a greater extent incongruous with the queer theory upon which this thesis is underpinned. As argued by Weeks (1981; 1986), the fact that the conceptions, understandings and expressions of homosexualities keep changing poses a challenge to anyone who makes essentialists claims over the concept. To Weeks, there is no single trans-historical notion of homosexuality that is evident in all societies.

His reasoning is that, in any particular culture, different meanings are given to same-sex relationships by the society and also by those who participate in that relationship. Moreover these already varied conceptions are bound to witness further ruptures by younger generations; for example. This classically epitomises the Ghanaian case. Below as I trace some of the terms that have

been used to describe homosexualities in that country, it is evident that new terms from younger generations intermingle continuities with ruptures in relation to understandings, perceptions, connotations and expressions. The (gay) terms described below are some of the most widely ones used by the Ghanaian media and the general public. Others are new and insider terms used by self-identified gays and lesbians.

ɔbaa Barima (The Female Man)

The *Akan* word *ɔbaa* means a female (author's translation). *Barima* in that same language means a male (author's translation). *Barima* is also used to signify male potency, bravery, virility and strength (Clark, 1999). Hence, literally translated, *ɔbaa barima* means the female man. In a more complex appreciation of the term, it is mainly used to describe a female who 'behaves' in 'manly' ways (Dankwa, 2013). 'Manly ways' used here imply that, the female in question disregard the prevailing division of labour (in gender terms) where certain roles or jobs are traditionally ascribed to males and females. That is, instead of being the bearer of children, a housewife or retailer of fish for example; the *ɔbaa barima* may rather choose occupations conventionally reserved for males like commercial driving, hunting, shoemaking, etc.

Like the boys, the *ɔbaa barima* may have a girlfriend with whom she has homo or bisexual relations. Christiansen (1954) uses another similar term- *Ama banyin* (female man) - amongst the Fantis of Ghana and described her as 'an extroverted female, or one with homosexual tendencies' (p. 92). It is key to add that, the sexual behaviour and the masculine tendencies of the *ɔbaa barima* were not suspect and may actually be perceived as brave or economically self-sufficient (Clark, 1999 p. 722). In fact, she may be ascribed spiritual superiority and be described as a female with a strong *sumsum* (spirit) that compares or even surpasses that of a male (Christensen, 1954, p. 92). In effect, it could be argued that unlike the derogatory tendencies that are attached to the term lesbian, the *ɔbaa barima* enjoys to some extent, societal acceptance and respect.

However, it could also be held that such societal respect ascribed to the *ɔbaa barima* emanates from her male tendencies and not her female agency. Thus, unlike the term lesbian where perhaps a female equality and superiority are projected, the *ɔbaa barima* ironically, does the opposite. It does so by evoking the long-standing reputation of the *barima* (man) which as aforementioned depicts male potency, bravery, virility, strength and leadership. Hence, whilst the *ɔbaa barima* may be highly

regarded, Butler (1990) like Beauvoir's (1949) might insist that her very existence is male-centred, and that is cause for concern. This is because, in simple terms, she exists purely because she is a male (or strives to be one) and not upon her being a female. Perhaps this is why queer theorists problematise the male/female dichotomy by highlighting how such dichotomy makes the former superior to the latter as discussed above.

Kodjo/Kwadwo Besia

Kodjo is a name given to a male child born on a Monday.[17] *Besia* is the Fanti version of the Ashanti's *ɔbaa* which translates as a female (author's translation; Berdie, 2016). In the quest to describe the dominant female character or behavioural traits in a male, *Kodjo besia* in *Akan* and *nunjo* in *Ga* is used to refer to a male who behaves or walks like a female (Berdie, 2016). My informants tell me that *Kodjo besia* is a popular concept and try to describe him but one Ghanaian film of the same title gives a broader perspective and so I shall summarise the movie in tandem with what was told me by informants. In that popular movie, the Kodjo besia (2015) is well-known in his neighbourhood. He is

[17] In Ghana, although not all ethnic groups, parents give their children their first names based on the day of the week they are born (Kaye 1962, p. 57).

popular with his neighbours partly because as a male, he talks, walks and behaves like a female.

In one particularly interesting scene, his female friends wonder why he has not got a girlfriend and mount pressure on him to find one. In another scene and perhaps succumbing to that societal pressure, the *Kodjo besia* is alone with his 'girlfriend'. He romantically assures the lady of his perpetual love and care and promises to do all he can to make her happy. The seemingly unhappy lady responded by arguing that what she wants from him is sexual intercourse and that in spite of his kindness to her she needs him to make love to her. She therefore started making sexual advances toward him.

Bearing in mind the distinction made in this chapter between sex and play, the *kodjo besia* ignores the lady's plea for sex which normally happens between men and women. So as the lady earnestly pleads for sex with him, he is unconcerned probably because a *kodjo besia* may have a 'boyfriend' with whom he normally 'plays'. This is possibly why it was rumoured in the movie that the *kodjo besia* has been fulfilling his sexual pleasures with other men by 'playing' with them. Although it may be common knowledge as shown in this film that the *kodjo besia* may have a boyfriend with whom he 'plays', he did not need to live in fear as

this is overlooked. My informant makes this exact point when he argues that, in the past the *kodjo besia* lived in harmony with others: 'when we were younger…those people were never suspected…but now the society has become suspicious' (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14). He maintains that this may be due to the hyped attention given to gayness in Ghana that has resulted in polarisation.

Finally, in this movie, the *Kodjo besia* is an excellent cook and operates a popular *chop bar* (restaurant). Hence he is affectionately called *barima nkwan* (a soup made by a man, author's translation) by neighbours and friends because operating *chop bars* are generally thought of as women's job. A woman's job depicts works and activities that are primarily done by women in the Ghanaian society and typically range from domestic work to commercial or remunerable ones (Lloyd & Gage-Brandon, 1993). Examples of women's job in this regard are cooks and hairdressers. When men do such jobs, they attract public attention. When I visited Ghana for fieldwork, I was told of a popular restaurant called *barima nkwan* in Kumasi. Perhaps this was what O'Mara's (2007, p. 40) interviewees told her when they said, 'gays that live in villages and small towns…are cooks'. They also told her that gays could also be employed or be self-employed

as hairdressers or do other jobs that may be regarded as a woman's job.

Supi

This is one of the most widely known terms used to describe sexual intimacies between females (Dako, 2003, p. 201). It often connotes affectionate and sexual ties forged usually in all-female boarding schools (Dankwa, 2013 p. 172). Other terms like 'my dear' and '*piu'* have been used in a similar manner to describe lesbian sex or relationships. An elderly woman I interviewed told me how the term has existed for a long time:

> I attended an all-girls' secondary school… I remember whilst some secondary schools called it *supi*, our school called it *piu*…I got to know that it is girls wanting girls in that act... as far back as 1971 (Interview, Maame, 13.1.15).

Unlike *ɔbaa barima*, *supi* is evoked to offend women who have sex with women. Perhaps, this is because, the term does not centre on male primacy as seen in the *ɔbaa barima*. Thus, as the *ɔbaa barima* is rooted in male potency and leadership, the *supi* is seen to be frowned upon by society partly because it merely describes lesbian sex. This could also be explained by the fact that *supi* ties are fostered in schools, where sexual discipline is instilled. In effect, it could be professed that the effort by educational

authorities to curb the practice resonates with societies' quest to regulate sexual behaviours, thereby making term unpopular.

Trumutu/Trumu Trumu

Trumu translates as buttocks, anal or anus (Author's translation). *Trumutu* may be used to describe boys who have anal sex (or as discussed anal 'play') with other boys (Ghanaweb, 2011b; 2015b). This term is popular in single-sex boys' boarding schools. In a sense, *trumutu* is the male equivalent for *supi* sex (Ghanaweb, 2015b). This term is mainly used by the public, radio and TV stations to describe gays or gay sex (see for e.g., Adom TV, 2015). Unlike *barima nkwan* and *kodjo besia*, *trumutu* is used with negative connotations. There are even songs made to this effect. In one of them, the singer, singing in *Akan* describes the act in the most repulsive terms anyone could possibly muster (see Gay Ghana, 2012).

Yaa Asantewaa

Gays and lesbians in the quest to invent insider terms and also appropriate some positive aspects of Ghanaian folklore have adopted names like *Yaa Asantewaa*. *Yaa Asantewaa* was the warrior queen-mother of Ejisu in the Ashanti region (Boahen & Akyeampon, 2003). Her name is in the Ghanaian history text books for leading a rebellion against the British occupiers in 1900

and 1901 when the men were afraid (McCaskie, 2007). In a sense *Yaa Asantewaa* is regarded as an *ɔbaa barima* with stronger *sumsum*. Due to its versatility, *Yaa Asantewaa* is used by both self-identified gays and lesbians. For the gay men, it is an insider term used to discretely describe other gay men who are seen as the 'girlfriend' and hence assumes the 'female' roles like cooking, in the relationship (O'Mara, 2007). Terms like *Maame* (mother) and *Hajia* (an influential woman) are used in a likewise manner.

For the lesbians, *Yaa Asantewaa* may be used in ways similar to the *ɔbaa barima*. It depicts a female who is brave and has a strong or a 'manly' spirit and also has a girlfriend (Dankwa, 2013). Her girlfriend performs the 'woman's duties' in the relationship. In mutuality, the female *Yaa Asantewaa* reciprocates by performing the male roles like providing for her girlfriend; buying her gifts and paying for romantic trips. Dankwa (2013) describes how the *Yaa Asantewaa* further protects her girlfriend to the extent of fighting others over her.

Boys-boys

The first time I heard '*boys-boys'* was when one of the informants used the term in a conversation (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14). He relayed to me that in a night club, a gay man could spot a male they are attracted to but may be unsure if he is also

gay. To find out, he may ask *'ɔyɛ boys-boys anaa'?* (Does he like boys?, Author's translation). Although this enquiry is publicly made, it is likely that only the members of the gay community understand what it signifies. He further told me that, terms like *gee* and *sasu* (buddy) may be used in a similar way.

Secrecy: Don't Ask Don't Tell

I still do it secretly…I feel normal (Interview, Adu, 13.12.14).

Ethnographers and anthropologists with foreign names like Robert Rattray (1923); Wolf Bleek (1976); James Christensen (1954); Jack Goody (1956 and 1967); Sean Hawkings (2002); Stephen Miescher (2005); etc., did extensive studies in different parts of Ghana. None of them discusses homosexualities in detail (for a rare exception see, O'Mara, 2007, 2013). Wolf Bleek in particular wonders why works before him barely mention homosexualities in Ghana. Because of this, he was 'always attentive' to the possibility of its practice and spoke to students about it (Bleek 1976, p. 50). Yet he managed to provide only one paragraph on homosexualities out of his brilliantly articulated 343 pages (1976 pp. 50-51). He concludes that 'homosexuality among boys is extremely rare, so rare that they hardly have any idea of it' (p. 50). Possibly, Bleek like the others before him missed the

realms of unnaming and unspokenness that regulate homosexualities, particularly amongst males.

He had fallen with the many others into the trap of easily and conveniently 'virginising' native (African) sexualities and calling them child-like. Little wonder few years later, Bleek (1987) in a graceful manner raises questions about his own key findings and methods that could make his entire thesis on Ghana doubtful. He complains of the possibility of informants lying to anthropologists and ethnographers like him who were of foreign origin. Below is what Bleek (1987, p. 319) has to say in his work titled 'Lying Informants: A Fieldwork Experience from Ghana':

> I discovered that six women… had taken part in the survey. They had been interviewed without realising that their responses would eventually come under my eyes. When I compared their answers with what I knew about them, I was abashed. They had lied lavishly... Some of their answers were so far removed from the facts as I knew them that I was confounded. Although I know that things may not always be so far removed from reality, these six Kwahu women have filled me with a lifelong distrust of questionnaire research.

For these theorists who are not Ghanaians, it does not surprise that they did not hear much about homosexualities. Indeed if they looked for the 'signs' like those described by Signorile (1996) where gay men 'came out of the closet' by self-naming and disclosing their sexualities to others, then it does not

surprise that they had nothing or not much to report. As O'Mara (2007, p. 39) notes, 'the western concept of coming out is not used. None of the subjects acknowledged knowing its meaning' in Ghana. Yet she was told by one of her Ghanaian self-identified gay and lesbian informants that there are many gays and lesbians in Ghana, only that O'Mara (2013, p. 189) with her (foreign) eyes cannot see them: 'We have everything, everyone here, darling! But you cannot see it.' This statement highlights the researcher's inability to spot homoeroticism that surrounds her. Consequently, it was only through a trusted Ghanaian informant that O'Mara (2013, p. 189) came to the conclusion that, 'Ghana has homoerotic practices and relationships and even common places of gathering compared to other countries only you cannot see them.'

This was not peculiar to the foreigners who studied the Ghanaian society. Studies by Ghanaians, like John Sarbah (1897); Godwin Nukunya (1969); Peter Sarpong (1977); Kofi Busia (1950); etc., were also silent on homosexualities. Let us say that these groups wrote quite a long time ago. Yet even recent studies on Ghanaian sexualities have avoided the subject whenever possible. To state one example, an important book by Oppong, Oppong & Odotei, (2006) discussing *Sex and Gender in an Era of AIDS* with tons of first-hand accounts and data from the field

overlooks the subject of homosexualities. For the Ghanaians who wrote about sexualities, there was little or no point discussing homosexualities as we will see in the proceeding paragraphs.

Discretion, silences, inconspicuousness and non-verbalising tactics are not in vain. They are explainable in line with some of the main features of sexualities as discussed above. For instance, why talk about gay sex when it was not sex anyway? It was pointless to discuss boys who are only 'playing' with other boys especially when there is a preoccupation amongst boys about potency in relation to male and female genital sex. To talk about gay sex openly is to shoot oneself in the foot. This is because of the status attached to men's sexual freedoms, potency, and polygyny as seen above. Moreover, when boys 'play' with other boys, it does not bring them children. Neither could such relationships result in the unity of two *mmusua* (kinship groups) in matrimony. This helps explain why male homosexualities were overlooked so far as the boys who 'played' with other boys still got married and had children with women. Once the societal expectation of marriage and procreation are fulfilled by men, they may have more wives, secret extramarital affairs or secret same-sex lovers.

In a sense, gay life could still exist behind the façade of having a wife and children (Epprecht, 1998). One of my informants puts it this way: 'there are even some who get married to females to avoid pressure from people' (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14). In line with this, Mensah (2006), a self-identified gay man emphasises how a secret gay lifestyle could be beneficial. He contends:

> I do not think we need western style militant gay rights campaigns and demonstrations in Ghana. The status quo is fine for many gay men. They live their lives quietly and incognito, and have no wish to marry each other. Yet they enjoy the local gay scene in their own way without anyone parking their nose in their affairs… As an African man, I have no wish to proclaim my private, adult, consenting bedroom life from the rooftops. And quite frankly, it is no one's business to come digging, anyway.

Whilst this line of argument by Mensah has its own merits complications and deficiencies, it points out a particular irony. That is, some gay men having been socialised into cultures where patriarchy and heterosexuality dominate share those values of their culture proudly. As already mentioned, the attachment to the *abusua* and the emphasis on progeny remain precarious and are primary sources of security. This applies to gay men too and the reality is that some prefer fulfilling those aspects of their personal and communal life but concurrently keep secret boy lover(s). My interviewee confidently tells me of how he is in gay relationships

secretly and sees nothing wrong with being invisible: 'I still do it secretly…I feel normal' (Interview, Adu, 13.12.14).

Gays and the Laws

With regard to homosexualities and the protection of fundamental human rights in Ghana, the focus here is on two main laws. They are the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution and the Ghanaian Criminal Code. Let us first look at the sources of these laws as they put in context the colonial and postcolonial backgrounds from which the arguments of this thesis commence. Article 11 of the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution lists the laws of Ghana as consisting of the Ghanaian Constitution; enactments made by or under the authority of the Ghanaian Parliament; orders, rules and regulations made by any person or authority under a power granted by the constitution; existing laws; and the common law. Coming from the postcolonial angle, it is worth citing how the constitution defines common law. Article 11 (2) of the same constitution defines it in the following way:

> The common law of Ghana shall comprise the rules of law generally known as the common law, the rules generally known as the doctrines of equity and the rules of customary law including those determined by the Superior Court of Judicature.

The resounding point is that, Ghana to date relies on the doctrines of equity and common law which are mainly English in origin (see Caenegem, 2004; Wary, 2009). This thesis therefore contends that the Criminal Code in particular could pass for a colonial legacy in terms of its origin. Bearing in mind that this is the law that supposedly 'criminalises' unnatural canal knowledge and handles several other criminal offences in Ghana, it has seen minimal upgrades since it was first imported to Ghana by the British colonial authorities in 1829 (Read, 1962). So, unlike the Ghanaian constitution which was drafted in 1992 where we still see the inputs of Ghanaians who constituted the consultative assembly (Princeton.edu, 1992), the Criminal Code remains a hangover from colonialism.

As explained in chapter 2, the paradox is that this 'sodomy' law that was exported by the British colonial authorities into the legal books of Ghana has been condemned by many (for e.g., ILGA, 2011; Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14) including the same British people (see for e.g., BBC, 2011a; 2011b; The Herald, 2016a) as backward and redundant. It has been further argued by these key institutions and countries that, section 104 of the Ghanaian Criminal Code criminalises same-sex relationships and intercourse (see for e.g., Globalequality.org, 2010). But what

exactly does the law say; what jurisprudence establishes it; and how has it been used in Ghana? The contentious section of the Criminal Code of Ghana reads as follows:

> Whoever has unnatural carnal knowledge (a) of any person of the age of sixteen years or over without his consent shall be guilty of a first degree felony and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than five years and not more than twenty-five years; or (b) of any person of sixteen years or over with his consent is guilty of a misdemeanour; or (c) of any animal is guilty of a misdemeanour(Section 104, Criminal Code 1960 (ACT 29).

This law also defines unnatural carnal knowledge as a 'sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal'. Section 99 of the same law explains what it means and will accept as evidence of carnal knowledge apropos:

> Whenever, upon the trial of any person for an offence punishable under this Code, it is necessary to prove carnal knowledge or unnatural carnal knowledge, the carnal knowledge or unnatural carnal knowledge shall be deemed complete upon proof of the least degree of penetration(Section 104, Criminal Code 1960 (ACT 29).

Put all these together and ambiguities abound in the sense that the code has left many aspects unaccounted for and hence more questions than answers. One of them is that, despite its importance to the interpretation and the execution of the law, the Criminal Code does not tell us what it means by 'unnatural

manner'. Due to this, the meanings of unnatural manner have been left for assumptions and conjectures. For instance, does it include or exclude anal penetrative sex between opposite or same-sex couples? Does it include non-penetrative sex between opposite or same-sex couples? Does it include or exclude oral sex? Not least, if anal penetrative sex of the penis is prohibited under this law, then heterosexual anal intercourse too could be punished. Additionally, if we reduce its meaning to penetrative sex alone, then it could be argued that, the law does not inherently prohibit lesbian sex (or as this thesis holds, lesbian 'play'). A similar argument could be made for gay men who may share intimacy by 'playing' together without penetration. These are few of the limitless possibilities not covered by the law which make its interpretation and application tricky.

Complicating matters further, the code does not use any gender-related words and phrases like men, women, female and male. It therefore makes it difficult to decipher if the law is targeted at homosexuals. A comparison to other (sodomy) laws elsewhere in Africa would help make this point clearer. In Zimbabwe for instance, the penal law on sodomy makes it clear that it targets anal sexual intercourse between males:

> Any male person who, with the consent of another male person, knowingly performs with that other person anal sexual intercourse, or any act involving physical contact other than anal sexual intercourse that would be regarded by a reasonable person to be an indecent act, shall be guilty of sodomy and liable to a fine up to or exceeding level fourteen or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or both (Section 73 (1), Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23]).

The use of phrases like 'male person' leaves no room for ambiguities in terms of sex and gender. Such direct references are missing in the Ghanaian case. It is not the aim of this thesis to call for a replica of the model from Zimbabwe. It is rather to state that, ambiguities imply uncertainties in that; they leave us with different options; two of which are prevailing in the Ghanaian case. First, it could be argued that there are no laws in Ghana that criminalise consensual sex or relationships between two same-sex adults. Second, it could equally be argued that section 104 criminalises unnatural canal knowledge which has been interpreted by some as targeting gay sex and/or relationships. These two different views are already dividing and creating tensions amongst Ghanaians. Upon pressure mounting on the then Attorney General (AG) of Ghana, Martin Amidu to clarify the position of this law, he specifies that, same-sex conduct between two consenting adult in the privacy of their room does not break the law:

> The law does not follow you to see what you do, your house is your castle; your room is your castle, what you do there is no body's business. It is only when you rape an adult by way of unnatural carnal knowledge that you become a subject of prosecution (Joy Online, 2011a)

As if to disagree and entrench her own position, the current Ghanaian AG Marietta Appiah-Oppong answers a similar question by contending that it is illegal for consenting same-sex adults to have sex per the provisions in the Criminal Code:

> The Criminal Offences Act of Ghana says that unnatural carnal knowledge is a criminal offence and so the position of the law is clear and that will be my advice to government (quoted in Human Dignity Trust, 2015, p. 1).

It is such exchanges, uncertainties and the tensions they cause that perhaps prompted Alex Afenyo-Markin, a member of the Ghanaian Parliament to request that 'Ghana Needs A Clear Policy On Homosexuality' (Citifm Online, 2014). Other reports however suggest that this law exist but only in name and that it has not been enforced in Ghana; thereby making it redundant (Human Dignity Trust, 2015). All in all, the law leaves all in limbo and the position one adapts is reductively subjective other than the strict legal objectivist demeanour of other sodomy laws in other African countries.

On the part of the 1992 Ghanaian Constitution, it guarantees the fundamental human rights of all Ghanaians as enshrined in chapter 5, 12 (2) as follows:

> Every person in Ghana, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, religion, creed or gender shall be entitled to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual contained in this Chapter but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest.

However, like the Criminal Code it is not free from ambiguities in relation to the protection of human rights in general and gay people in particular. The first of such issues with this provision quoted above is that, it does not include sexual orientations in the list of ideals (like religion and political opinion) that may be held by citizens; upon which they should not be discriminated against. Hence, whilst it explicitly highlights non-discrimination, it leaves room for speculation as to if it implicitly or explicitly includes sexual orientations at best. At worst, it could be argued and perhaps justified that, sticking to the letter of the law, sexual orientations are not included. In effect this could be interpreted as not granting protection to gay people. Far from advocating for such interpretations, the point to be reiterated here is that, once a law is left ambiguous, there is room for manoeuvring either to good or bad ends.

Secondly, a careful read of this important provision reveals a caveat. This caveat is that, human rights like fundamental freedoms and non-discrimination are subjected to the respect for the 'public interest'. But what does 'public interest' mean? Chapter 26, 295 (1) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana defines the phrase as follows:

> 'public interest' includes any right or advantage which ensures or is intended to ensure to the benefit generally of the whole of the people of Ghana.

In a sense, this definition invariably leaves the enjoyment of these rights in the hands of government which in turn determines what is in the public interest. What this practically means is that, a government could evoke other important ideals like democracy, religious and/or cultural standpoints against the enjoyment of this right. Let me provide a case in point. John Dramani Mahama the current President of Ghana remarks on how all citizens should be protected on the back of the principle of rule of law but also hints on particular cultural challenges with gayness and gay rights in the Ghanaian society:

> I believe that laws must prevail. For instance, people must not be beaten or killed because of their sexual orientation, but in my country there is a strong cultural hostility towards it (Erasing 76 Crimes, 2013).

To an extent, the President draws on the 'public interest' caveat and makes statements in favour of cultures. As the law extols the 'public interest' over fundamental human rights without limits, the point is that the human rights of many could be curtailed by governments by simply evoking this caveat. This is a common problem with human rights in general and how they relate to other important concepts like majoritarian opinion, rule of law, etc., as will be discussed in chapter 6.

Conclusion

The thrust of this chapter is that although it describes a highly gender biased and heteronormative sexualities in Ghana, it establishes that there is nothing natural about them. This is because sexualities in that country transcend the colonial and postcolonial eras; and each of these eras brought its own ruptures and continuities. Colonial authorities and missionaries for instance, introduced monogamous (church) marriages that existed side by side with Ghanaian customary and polygamous marriages. After independence, postcolonial Ghanaian Heads of State preferred monogamous heterosexual nuclear family as the building block of the new independent state. Suffice to reiterate that most of these leaders were Christian males who received their education from the West. This means that, in many ways there were not much

differences in terms of how sexualities where governed between (white) colonial and (black) postcolonial authorities. In this, we see the continuities of the colonial understandings of sexualities being exemplified.

Hence, the normalisation of not just any heterosexuality but the one that encouraged chastity (of women) and monogamous marriages became one of the key colonial legacies that Ghanaians maintained (Phillips, 2005, p. 292). Despite this onslaught of the colonial and postcolonial sexual mores, the country made up of different ethnic groups maintained aspects of customary understandings of sexualities including polygamous marriages and the central role of the *abusua* (the extended family) as a key point of belongingness. It is due to these ruptures and continuities that this chapter does not admit to a naturalised heteronormative Ghanaian 'sexuality' but rather situates itself in line with the queer theory that projects the social constructions of 'sexualities'.

All in all, it could still be said that the Ghanaian sexual cultures allow for sexual 'freedoms' without any strictly applied punitive measures so far as sex is between consenting adults and is not incestuous or paedophilic. Traditions which on the surface seem to prohibit sex, have been seen to actually encourage them. Examples have been cited on how puberty rites seek to avoid

prenubility sex but also end up promoting premarital sex. Despite these sexual freedoms, gender remains stratified in that, there are wide disparities between men and women in terms of their social, political and economic standings in society. It has been pointed out in this chapter that these stratifications put women in subordinated positions in favour of men. The chapter has shown how this is perpetuated by the primacy of patriarchy where several aspects of the socio-economic milieu are male-centred.

As historical examples demonstrate, normalisation of heteronormative sexualities also breeds dissident ones. Dissidents here do not only include homosexuals who may not conform to the prevailing ideals and norms on sexualities but heterosexuals who do the same. By this and in the Ghanaian case, it is implied therefore that, heteronormativity does not mean the privileged position of all heterosexualities but the ones which are linked with features like marriages, progeny, and potency. Already discussed is how the option not to marry or have children is almost non-existent even for heterosexuals. So, along the way of the colonial and postcolonial nation building, the notion of nationalism became heterosexualised (Smith, 1987).[18] Thus, to be nationally referred

[18] Nationalism is a particular sort of ethnically centred social identity or mobilisation often involving claims to political autonomy or statehood which lay claims to unique history, ethnic purity or cultural distinctiveness (Nagel, 2000, p. 110).

to (as a Ghanaian) is to conform to the prevailing (heteronormative) sexual norms governing the country. The dissidents (heterosexuals included) who would not conform face a whole range of institutional and social sanctions including stigma, name-calling, teasing, and violence.

Top on the list for dissident sexualities in Ghana are homosexuals. In the quest to either silence or hypersexualise sexualities in Ghana by the colonists and missionaries, homosexualities in particular had no place. Neither did homosexualities have a place in the postcolonial nation building. 'Had no place' does not denote that there were no homosexuals. Far from such depictions as it is essentially the conclusion of this chapter that there are evidences of same-sex relationships that have existed long ago and even have names/terms in the Ghanaian languages. It rather means that, the very existence of same-sex eroticisms had to be 'silenced' and this is demonstrated by how the British colonial authorities exported anti-sodomy laws to Ghana. It would be unfair not to reiterate that, postcolonial Ghanaian leaders upheld these laws and perpetuated heterosexualities.

Silences, discretion and inconspicuousness therefore are part of the strategies that allow gay men to simultaneously enjoy

local scene whilst performing culturally 'expected' roles. Yet as Ghanaians engage with rest of the world, new ways of imagining sex and manifesting sexualities are evolving. In the next chapter we will see some Ghanaian gay groups who have taken what it means to be dissident to a complete new level. These groups would not only be dissident, they want to be dissident in the 'open'; thereby challenging not just the silences that engulf homosexualities but also the fabric of heteronormative sexualities. Theoretically evoking essentialism, gay and lesbian theories and queer theories, nothing would contest Ghanaian heteronormative ideals than the events described in the next chapter.

Chapter 5- GHANA GOES GAY: 'QUEER' GHANA FROM 2003-2013

Introduction

It is the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate how the social constructions of homosexualities have taken different dimensions before, during and after the year 2006. I identify the year 2006 as a watershed for change that would disturb mainstream accounts on homosexualities. By 'mainstream accounts' is meant the silences, invisibilities, taboos and the culture of don't ask, don't tell that dominated homosexualities in Ghana. This is done by analysing what were reported, how they were reported, and the quantity of issues reported on the subject in that country. Remarkably, the reports in this ten-year period (2003 to 2013) suggest that some aspects of same-sex desires that hitherto (from 2003 to 2005) thrived on silences and in the 'closet' are gradually co-existing with public manifestations of homosexualities; particularly in the urban areas. Events of the year 2006 also provoked debates and created the platform for discussing homosexualities publicly (Afari, 2006). There was also international focus on homosexualities in Ghana from that year. Organisations like ILGA, OutRight and some Western countries

(U.S. and UK in particular) began to pay attention and have since been involved in the debate (see for e.g., ILGA, 2011; BBC, 2011).

Apart from the demands made by advocates both local and international from 2006, the exposure to tons of information and the internet (CIA, 2015) are creating new spectacles through which people view and imagine sex (Altman, 2004). People particularly the younger generation are exposed to new media images through the internet, TV and cinema (Altman, 2004). These dimensions contribute immensely to the social (re)construction of homosexualities recently. Gradually, 'traditional' sexual understandings co-exist, adjust, or fuse with international perspectives. This has influenced the Ghanaian media's interest in the subject of homosexualities. The media is keen on reporting 'gay issues'. In one instance, Adom TV, a Ghanaian-based TV station invited self-identified homosexuals to their studious to interview them (Adom TV, 2012). The station also allowed the public to interact with them through phone-in or text sections.

Ten years (from 2003 to 2013) is chosen to compile an analysis of what the reports have said about homosexualities and homophobia in Ghana. This is because, this ten-year period captures the various changes that have taken place in relation to

homosexualities. All the major events regarding homosexualities have happened in these years as the reports demonstrate (see for e.g., Afrol News, 2006; U.S. Department of State, 2011). They are also reflective of the generic mood and attitudes toward gays in Ghana. That is to say that the attitudes toward homosexualities before 2006 are reflective of the other years before 2003. Similar reflection can be seen in the year 2006 and beyond as described below where certain patterns seem to be reoccurring.

Attention was paid to the various reports of the press and some online media houses that concentrate on Ghana. For example, I draw heavily on the website called 'ghanawed.com'. This is mainly because that website reports online what the main print media in Ghana reports on a daily basis (Ghanaweb, 2015a). It therefore makes accessibility easier without having to look through individual newspaper archives. More importantly, it catalogues in a chronological order most issues reported on homosexualities in Ghana. This therefore provides a useful timeline to the reports. Because of the way the website is organised, it provides an encyclopaedic picture of the reports on homosexualities in Ghana with few clicks. I also draw on the reports by the Ghanaian-based newspapers called *The Ghanaian Times* and *The Spectator*. Through the effort of an informant, I

was given access to their libraries during the archival visit to Ghana. This enabled me to compile a comprehensive report from all the hardcopies of what have been reported by these newspapers on the topic. Moreover, during the visit I was also able to gather as much information as I could from the other print media like *The Daily Guide, The Daily Graphic* and *The New Crusading Guide*.

Reports by international pro-gay rights organisations (e.g., ILGA and OutRight), the media (e.g., BBC, Daily Mail, etc.) and state reports (e.g. US Department of State) on human rights in Ghana are also employed. This chapter uses other platforms like gay dating websites, YouTube and Facebook. It further draws on the interviews and survey conducted to highlight the general patterns. Finally, on the structure of this chapter, a historical outlook of events and reports on homosexualities are given. It is then followed by some theoretical analysis, patterns and conclusions.

Homosexualities from 2003 to 2005: The Silent Years

Prior to 2006, attention was not paid to the activities of homosexuals in the first place, not least their manifestations in different ways. Expectedly, much was not said about homosexualities in the Ghanaian and international media. This was

not peculiar to the media reports. As established in the preceding chapter, both Ghanaian and foreign anthropologists and ethnographers neglected the subject of homosexualities. As the reports indicate, homosexualities in Ghana were accorded little more than a footnote in any important socio-political discussion. Correspondingly, there was little or no gay rights advocacies, or at least overtly in Ghana before 2006.

The Ghanaian print media have stories and articles about homosexualities in Ghana. Yet they have few reports before 2006. Even then, most of the reports before 2006 were not centred on homosexualities in Ghana. They rather reported what was happening on the international front; mainly stories that have been reported by influential media houses in the Western world like the BBC. Few examples would help illustrate this particular occurrence better. After going through the archives of *The Ghanaian Times* (2005a) from 2003 to 2005, I found a 'gay story' titled: 'Vatican order forbids homosexuals'. The title suggests it was not concerned with homosexuals in Ghana. To paraphrase, the story reported on how the Vatican has published instruction banning the ordination of homosexuals into priesthood offices.

A similar story was published by *The Ghanaian Times* (2005b). It was headed: 'Gay Bishop attacks Catholic stand'. This

story made a reference to an incident in London concerning an openly gay Anglican Bishop who made a speech about how Catholics are handling homosexuals in the UK. This too had no bearing on Ghanaian homosexualities. Apart from these two publications, not much was said about the subject in the archives of this newspaper. This pattern was mirrored in other newspapers like *The Spectator*, *The Daily Guide and The Crusading Guide,* where the few that were eventually reported centred on foreign gay stories. The point here is that press stories on homosexualities mostly had a foreign outlook. It is not surprising that they were on the pages that had foreign news. For example, the reports in *The Ghanaian Times* aforementioned were both on page two of the edition which was reserved for foreign stories.

Likewise, on the international side, not much was reported from 2003 to 2005. In the archives of ILGA, there was only one report on homosexualities in Ghana until 18 August 2004 (ILGA, 2004). On this date, it published a statement of introduction received from two Ghanaians who said they were gay rights activists. The first was the President of the Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transsexuals of Ghana (GALAG), who signed the letter as Prince MacDonalds. The other signed his name as Mac-Darling Cobbinah and gave his position as the National Director of

CEPEHRG. The thrust of their co-authored statement was to introduce themselves and their organisations (which sought to promote the interest of gays in Ghana) to ILGA. They highlighted some of the discriminatory treatments like police brutalities and the health hazards gay men and women face. Apart from this, there were no further reports on Ghana on ILGA's forum until 2009. This is per the listings on ILGA's (2013a) country profiles and documents on Ghana. Other well-known international organisations that report on human rights generally replicated this pattern. Amnesty International's (2005) report did not mention homosexuals and homophobia in Ghana (see also UNHCR, 2006). The report rather centred on female genital mutilation and women's rights. Likewise, the US State Department of State (2004) had no reports on homosexualities and homophobia in Ghana for the year 2003.

From 2003 to 2005, the reports seem to pontificate that homosexualities existed or were given meaning and pre-eminence only in the medical field. But for the few studies that were done by medical practitioners or the Ghana Aids Commission to ascertain the health risks involved in gay sex, no detailed attention was given to the subject. Accordingly, debates on homosexualities were under the broad umbrella of HIV/Aids discussions. For

example, a study was conducted by Ellen Rockson, who at the time of the study was the Greater Accra Regional Population Officer (see *The Chronicles* 2 July 2003). The study established that in 'Tema and certain parts of the Eastern region…homosexuality is dangerously on the increase' (see also Ghanaweb, 2003b). Another study by Dr Dela Attipoe (2004), a former Ghanaian Public Health Physician working for Ghana's National AIDS/STI Control Program (NACP) was particularly insightful (Robertson, 2009). According to Attipoe's (2004) study, the following key findings were established:

1. MSM is real in Ghana with Ghanaians fully involved. It is not a recent phenomenon being visited on Ghana and Ghanaians by 'whites' or foreigners
2. The youth is actively being drawn into it and most of them at a very young age by their peers and older colleagues and relatives
3. MSM in Ghana cuts across all social classes, religions, ethnicity and married men are involved
4. It is practically happening everywhere, particularly where people gather for celebrations and merry making in urban areas and in places most people will least suspect
5. There are many prevailing factors that make MSM attractive particularly to the youth including adventure seeking, poverty, ignorance, lure of older gays looking for partners and the belief that anal sex is safer than vaginal sex

6. Public's reaction to gays and homosexuality, has driven it underground creating a safe haven for people to practise and making it difficult for services to be rendered to them

Despite these insightful findings, they found relevance in medicine and HIV/AIDS politics only. Typical of these years, HIV politics rather overshadowed the existence of a somewhat 'prevailing' gay life in Ghana. These reports did not become the springboard that would provoke further enquiry into the anthropology or the sociology of homosexualities in the Ghanaian context, especially on how the scope and meanings were gradually changing. The thrust of this era is that it was not that sex between men did not exist in Ghana. It was rather that its social construction was different. It was different in the sense that it thrived on silences and the exercise of discretion not just by homosexuals but also by the various reports. Hence, there was no political rhetoric about homosexualities and no demand for gay rights. Thus, there was no pressure on the government for a change in the law regarding same-sex relationships as will be established below. Per the reports, activities of pro-gay rights groups were also not publicly noticed.

Theoretically, heteronormative and essentialist understandings of sexualities converge in this era. As expected and with their long-standing reputations, their complimentary role

overshadowed other understandings and expressions of sexualities as well as the press reports. The unreported events of this era point us to the fact that there were grand narratives or understandings of sexualities based on heteronormativity and essentialism. Once these understandings became normalised, any other reports of (dissident) sexualities were not newsworthy. As indicated in the preceding chapter, the essentialised position of heteronormativity that resulted to a period of non-reports did not happen out of the blue.

We can turn to colonial and postcolonial theories and power relations for explanations on the processes that (artificially) created and perpetuated them. Colonial histories, continuities and discontinuities indicate how imperial power shapes and even impose Western sexual mores on Africa (Boone, 1995; Hawley, 2001). Morin (1977) argues that, some Western societies saw homosexualities as threat to the social order. He explained that, before social constructionists offered alternative explanations, medical science, psychology and psychiatry viewed homosexualities as pathological and an illness for which the core concern was to find a cure.

This resulted in a corresponding shift in (negative) attitudes toward gay men in particular. This hostility springs from the fear

that homosexualities threaten long-standing social order. Therefore, these understandings and moral positions against homosexualities were transposed by the colonists and missionaries into Africa. Hence, any trace of homosexualities was perceived as a stumbling block to the colonial and missionary objective. We are reminded by Aldrich (2003, p. 4) in *Colonialism and Homosexuality* that, the colonists aimed to establish respectable, loyal, Western and Christian virtues to the natives. In this scheme, dissident (homo) sexualities had no place.

The complications of the past legacy of colonialism are no less incongruous than those of the age of the postcolonial in regard to sexualities. Ironically, the postcolonial Ghanaian leaders continued the sexual mores left behind by the colonists. Hence notions of citizenship and nationalism were sexualised. For homosexuals or any 'dissident' sexualities, perhaps the best option was to be silent in the face of the prevailing primacy of heteronormativity. In effect the combined theoretical forces of heteronormativity, essentialism, colonialism and postcolonialism subdued any other understandings and 'forced' them into 'hiding'. This was so much so that, curious international and local observers had not much to report on homosexualities in Ghana during this era.

Ghana Goes Gay in 2006: Interrupting Heteronormativity

The year 2006 is a pivotal date in the history of gay rights advocacies and activisms in Ghana. The events of that year brought some level of 'awareness' in Ghanaians about homosexualities and their manifestations in unfamiliar ways. The phrase 'unfamiliar ways' is used to contrast these new understandings and manifestations from the (conventional) *Kodjo besia*, *Ama banyan, barima nkwan* and *ɔbaa barima*; some of whom 'preferred' to 'hide' their sexualities. That phrase further depicts how some gays in Ghana have opted to come 'out of the closet' on terms similar to those used in the Western world. In a sense, the year 2006 also marks the beginning of political, public and international focus on the subject of gay rights in Ghana. Afari (2006) the Ghanaian columnist in his article titled 'Homosexuality in Ghana: The Great 'Coming out' concedes on the importance of the year 2006. He argues:

> I reckon August 24, 2006 to be the great day of 'coming out' for the Gay and Lesbian community in Ghana.

O'Mara (2007; 2013) similarly recognises the importance of the year 2006 in the gay rights debate and the accompanying resistances. She describes that year as the period where

Ghanaians experienced their 'first 'gay' moral panic' (O'Mara, 2007; 2013, p. 10).

The reports demonstrate that from 2006, the Ghanaian media paid attention to the subject of homosexualities. For instance, although the archive of Ghanaweb dates back to 2002, the year 2006 shows a rise in reports on homosexualities (Ghanaweb, 2015a). It has thirty-one items on the subject in that year alone. On the same forum, there were altogether sixteen stories reported on the subject from 2007 to 2010. The sheer difference in volume between the other years and the year 2006 on the same forum attests to this pattern. Similar developments occur in the print and electronic media in Ghana, where more were published or discussed about homosexualities in 2006. The most important of the events that took place within 2006 was the announcement of a scheduled 'gay conference' on a radio station in Accra (Afrol News, 2006).

This generated public outrage and intense national debate about homosexualities. One of my interviewees relays to me how the purported conference 'hyped' homosexualities in Ghana:

> They had planned that conference as a way of pushing for the advancement of homosexuality in Ghana, and even had the concealed support of some Ministers and Members of Parliament. There were some however who opposed the idea and it became the topic of debate for

> over three weeks... After that time, the issue of homosexuality has not been hyped that much, except that occasionally you hear of some isolated rape cases where the culprits have been arrested (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14).

Apart from this announcement, several statements to the media were released by sections of the Ghanaian gay community and other advocacy groups demanding recognition, protection and legal rights. Leading this campaign was Patrick McDonalds who wrote several letters and statements to the press in 2006 (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2006a; Justice.gov, 2008).

These two events- the gay conference announcement and the media engagement by the gay community- compelled the government of Ghana to make statements about the supposed conference in particular and gayness in general. Kwamena Bartels, the then Minister of Information issued a statement regarding the purported conference. In his announcement, he stated unequivocally that the Ghanaian

> Government does not condone any such activity which violently offends the culture, morality and heritage of the entire people of Ghana Government would like to make it absolutely clear that it shall not permit the proposed conference anywhere in Ghana…Unnatural carnal knowledge is illegal under our criminal code. Homosexuality, lesbianism

and bestiality are therefore offences under the laws of Ghana (BBC News, 2006).

Public debate also proceeded after the above events (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2006c). It was reported that the government 'bans International Homo Conference' (Ghanaweb, 2006a). Another report this time by the *Crusading Guide* was headlined 'Ghanaian gay leader attacks media' (Ghanaweb, 2006a). The next set of statements came from the powerful and perhaps the most influential stakeholders in the gay rights debate-the clergy. The national Chief Imam of Ghana, Sheikh Osman Sharubutu 'congratulated the Government for turning down the application for gays and lesbians to hold an international conference in Ghana' (Ghanaweb, 2006d). Similarly, the Ghana Office of the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society hailed the government for stopping this conference (Ghanaweb, 2006e).

Around the same time, the Christian Council and other Christian groups organised press conferences amongst other means, to tell Ghanaians and the government about how homosexualities are evil and the implication they have on society as a whole (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2006f; 2006g). Invoking the biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah and quoting Leviticus 20:13, they posited that,

> God did not create man to marry man and woman to marry woman, but created man to cohabit with woman and to bear children…Homosexuality is an offence against God… despicable and dangerous phenomena…If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination (Ghanaweb, 2006f).

A section of the masses were also alerted to the succinctness of the issue of gayness. The demand for recognition and rights by the Ghanaian gay community also seem to have baffled and annoyed them. This public 'anti-gay' sentiment was captured by *The Ghanaian Times* (2006). The paper's front page headlined, 'Gays Meet Opposition' is telling. It describes that the general public is offended by the proposed gay conference to be held in Ghana. *The Spectator* (2006, p. 4) took on the empirical challenge. It conducted interviews with some Ghanaians by asking them a simple question that goes like 'Should Ghana Allow Gay Conference?' Almost all the respondents interviewed responded in the negative to this question.

On the whole their opposition stems from religious and cultural views mainly arguing that, Islam, Christianity and the Ghanaian values are against homosexualities. Mixing strong moral, religious and procreative sentiments, one of the respondent points out that,

> God created us. He created man and woman. He knew that if he did not do so, procreation cannot occur…This act is unacceptable and society must ensure that such acts are not officially recognised. We need to take steps to protect our young ones from being morally corrupted.

Internationally, similar trends occur. Pro-gay rights organisations like OutRight had previously scarcely commented about homosexualities in Ghana. In 2006, OutRight mentioned the gay conference issue (OutRight, 2006). Other influential media outlets like the BBC also took interest in the matter and made publications to that effect (see for e.g., BBC News, 2006).

This era challenged and destabilised the essentialised understandings of sexualities that underpinned heteronormativity. Replicating some of the political approaches of the gay liberation front, the era was characterised by the formation of associations, the demand for rights, the seeking of political and social spaces, amongst others. The gay liberation fronts were movements which urged the use of radical and direct activism to counter the shame society attached to gayness (Adam, 1995; Hay & Roscoe, 1996; Valocchi, 2001). The activities of these movements were rampant in the 1960s to the mid-1980s in the U.S. They were also characterised by gay pride matches (see Adam, 1995; Hay & Roscoe, 1996; Valocchi, 2001 for detailed discussions).

The ‘gay-issue’ organisations in Ghana like GALAG and CEPEHRG took radical means to make demands. Being radical could be subjective, but in a country where silences dominated the sexual scene, engaging the media about homosexualities of all ‘dissidents’ could fit that qualification. Like the gay liberation fronts, strategies and rhetoric bordering around a unique sexual (gay) identity and hence their demand for rights emerged. ‘Queering’ the social, cultural and political space, these groups sought recognition and inclusion in the Ghanaian society. In so doing, they sought to change mainstream social and cultural understandings of homosexualities by declaring gay pride and self-affirmations.

This era however led to a theoretical confusion. One of the main theories evoked in the process of challenging heteronormativity has paradoxically been essentialism. Advocacy groups make arguments anchored in essentialism by declaring that gayness is inborn, natural, biological and consequently inevitable (Irvine, 1990). These explanations anchored in essentialism have been used to justify the reasons why gays have inalienable rights. Yet placing the arguments within essentialism and highlighting their differences make their standpoint closely

knit to the very concept-heteronormativity- they have set out to question.

Thus by claiming naturalised, inborn, biological and God-given sexuality, this reasoning reminds us of the perception that sexualities are innate (Rahman, 2000, p. 18). Innateness of sexualities is one of the main features of essentialist and heteronormative claims. Consequently, another way of looking at the political and social implications is that, gays should be separated from others; purely on the basis of their sexual activities; thereby self-naming by declaring and accepting themselves as not only dissidents but as minority. This approach brings one theory namely homonormativity to mind. Steep in controversies and paradoxes, homonormativity may sound almost opposed to heteronormativity.

Yet a careful look indicates the two concepts are interlocked. What unites them is essentialism. Not unlike heteronormativity, homonormativity is the viewpoint that indorses a particular (homo) sexuality as the normal, natural or the desired sexual orientations and therefore should be privileged over other sexualities (Drucker, 2015; O'Brien, 2014; Post, 2010). In a sense, although it seemed so, homonormative claims do not challenge the privileged and essentialised assumptions in

heteronormativity but reinforce them. So rather than debunking claims of naturalised binaries between straight/gay, homonormativity endorses such distinctions. This position raises questions about gay liberation ideals and strategies. Duggan's definition and critique of what she calls the new homonormativity hints on some of these key issues: She defines it as

> A politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay constituency and a privatised, depoliticised gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption (Duggan 2003, p. 50).

It does not surprise that one of the main arguments of queer theorists is to challenge the homonormative and essentialist assumptions embedded in gay rights demands. Queer theorists as we have seen would not accept any notions strictly grounded in essentialism.

Post 2006 Queer: Visibilities or Silences, a Bit of Both?

After the 2006 episodes, the intensity of anti-gay attitudes and gay rights advocacies seem to have dwindled. From 2007 to 2010, much was not reported about homosexualities. Although, there was the usual mention of the topic in the media, they were not as active as observed in 2006 and from 2011 onwards. Trends

in these years (2007 to 2010) somewhat mirrored how it used to be before 2006. This means that, the era saw Ghanaian sexualities still embedded in heteronormativity with their accompanying silences. However, there were two major events that took place that brought homosexuals to the lime light again.

The first one was a strategic political action by sections of the Ghanaian gay community; and was led by Prince MacDonald and GALAG. Adopting the politics of queer (although dichotomous from the parodying of gender or sexualities as preached by Judith Butler), they 'unsettled' one of the most significant aspects of the Ghanaian polity-elections. In 2008, they threatened to boycott the Presidential and Parliamentary elections of Ghana. The primary reason given for this was that, their demands for cultural and legal recognition have been wholly neglected by the Ghanaian political elites (Ghanaweb, 2008a). In his statement to the press, MacDonald argued that gays and lesbians face abuse, discrimination, harassment and extortion in Ghana. Despite all these challenges, he held that, the government of Ghana was unwilling to have a dialogue, not least changing laws to favour gay people.

This threat to boycott the election was met with stiff opposition and anti-gay reactions from sections of the Ghanaian

public. One only has to visit the Ghanaweb website to realise the sheer opposition against this view. As at the time of checking, this publication has received 508 comments. Most of the comments were against homosexuals, although few agreed with the request by MacDonald (Ghanaweb, 2008b). Additionally, queering the cultural, political and social space reignited robust oppositions that would mark the second main event. In 2010, an anti-gay protest, the first of its kind which took place in Takoradi in the Western region of Ghana also revived the gay rights debates (Ghanaweb, 2010). The protestors claimed there was a concentration of gay people in that part of Ghana. They further claimed that the Western Region has become a haven for homosexuals because it hosts several foreigners. They petitioned the President of Ghana to react to the influx of homosexuals into their region. They threatened that if nothing was done about it, a nationwide protest of that kind would be done to reinforce their demands.

On the international front, there was little focus on homosexualities in Ghana. In the 2010 country report on human rights practices in Ghana, the U.S. Department of State had not much to report but for the anti-gay protest that took place in the Takoradi:

> On June 4, more than one thousand protesters in Takoradi, Western Region, participated in a peaceful rally against reports of gay and lesbian activities in their city. This was reportedly the first antigay protest in the country (U.S. Department of State, 2011).

So, as demonstrated, there was no pressure from the international community on Ghana compared to the year 2006. International agencies only reported the few and very outstanding events that took place in Ghana.

Issues around homosexualities rose to prominence again in 2011 and have since been active. In that year, one of the events that caused major debates about gay rights was the call by Evans Aidoo, the then Western Regional Minister for the arrest of homosexuals in that Region (Star Observer, 2011). He further called on landlords and tenants to report homosexuals or people suspected to be gay. This caused tension between the Ghanaian public and homosexuals (BBC New, 2011a). Religious leaders also condemned homosexualities; hence, stoking controversy. *The Ghanaian Times* published a statement by a catholic bishop, Most Reverend Mathew Gyamfi who pleaded with the government amongst other demands to 'Stop the Gays… They Pose Threat to Nation' (2011, p. 3).

To counteract, international pressure began to mount on Ghana to accept gay rights and be more tolerant towards

homosexuals. David Cameron, the British Prime Minister made a threat to Ghana with aid cut looming because of the attitudes Ghanaians express towards homosexuals (Daily Mail, 2011). Barak Obama, the President of the U.S. made a similar threat to African countries (Ghanaweb, 2011a). Sections of the Ghanaian public expressed their dissatisfaction about the international community meddling in their affairs when Ghana is a sovereign state (see Ghanaweb, 2011c). For instance, Professor Aaron Mike Oquaye, the former Second Deputy Speaker of the Ghanaian Parliament in response to the international pressure countered with strong words:

> Why won't children become wayward when they don't know what is mummy and what is daddy? When the primary source of control is destroyed? When the family from which everything else starts and the child is going to be taught to call a man, mother; no wonder the society will go crazy (Oquaye, 2013).

In his article titled 'Resisting Cameron's moral dictatorial tantrums: A non-compromising Choice', Bukari (2011), a Ghanaian writer took the debate personal with the British Prime Minister:

> The debate about whether or not to legalise homosexuality can go on but leaders of the developing world must be bold to shame the UK PM who thinks he knows it all. How can he prescribe what may be culturally permissible in his homeland to the rest of developing world? African

governments must not consent to the emerging era of mental and cultural servitude christened under the guise of UK aid.

Theoretically, something 'queer' happened to the ways sexualities are perceived in Ghana. Queer in the sense that, it is difficult to ascertain what government's reaction would be in the future towards homosexuals who are challenging heteronormativity. With 'queer' citizens demanding rights and international pressure looming constantly, outcomes remain to be seen. Also, it is queer because gradually the government and the Ghanaian public are acknowledging the existence of some homosexuals who are not prepared to go into hiding. It is moreover queer because it is difficult to categorise gayness in Ghana since 2006 and beyond. The description of sexualities in the preceding chapter epitomises the long period of monopoly by heteronormativity. Not that these characteristics have been completely eroded, but any attempt to describe (homo) sexualities after 2006 would result in multiple categorisations and meanings.

Consequently identity-based groups gathering on homonormative terms are now problematic. Thus reflecting the difficult nature in defining queer, gayness in particular and sexualities in general in Ghana have inherited the multiple meanings of what it means to be queer. For queer grants numerous positions where individuals can move in and out of one

category with ease as they wish (Hall, 2003). For instance the queer ways in which some gays and lesbians appropriate Ghanaian terms like *Yaa Asantewaa* and *ɔbaa barima* whilst at the same time embracing notions of coming out of the closet or championing gay rights exemplify this. Examples of some Ghanaian queers who may ignore gay rights politics and find themselves kowtowing or embracing the heteronormative pressures that accompany gayness by keeping quiet about their sexualities are cited below. Moreover, the increasing understanding amongst Ghanaian gay men who although share Western views on notions like 'coming out' but would not appropriate such definitions is also queer in nature. Illustrations of all the different manifestations with examples are the focus of the next section.

Queer Ghana: Old, New and Hybrid Manifestations

Based on the evidences already alluded to, this work strongly refutes the argument that gayness, homosexualities, bisexualities and all the numerous terms that could be used to describe same-sex relationships is un-African or un-Ghanaian. As shown, same-sex desires are found in Ghana. Most of the 122 respondents I asked did not know how long gays and lesbians have been in Ghana but 78% of them have seen, heard of, or know a homosexual in Ghana (Ghanaian Sexuality Survey, 2014). The

claim that same-sex desires are not Ghanaian makes rather simplistic a very complicated debate. Ama one of the very few people who have worked with gay men for a considerable number of years even from the time when no organisation in Ghana wanted any associations with them puts this argument in a unique way. She often asks those who say homosexualities are foreign, whether having sex is foreign. She contends as follows:

> If they say that, I ask them whether having sex is foreign. Because these sexual orientations have always been there. You talk to people, old and young and you would know that it has always been around... It has always been in the schools…It has always been in the universities. It has been with us (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15).

Yet before making such a generalised assertion, there is the need for a key caveat. The fact that same-sex desires have existed in the Ghanaian history does not in any way imply that such desires have been expressed in a static way. Like the Ghanaian cultures and customs themselves, parts of the expressions keep changing. Even some of the terms and names that are used to describe these relationships and desires are changing. This chapter argues that, it is the ever shifting manner in which homosexualities are expressed that should be the point of attention.

The reports indicate that, it is not homosexuals *per se* but their expressions that have caused tensions in recent years. Some

respondents in the survey said that the homosexuals in Ghana have changed their attitudes and the way they behave. By implication, they were taking about how they are expressing their homosexualities differently from the ways they may be used to. Even some gay men think other gay men behave 'strangely' these days. For, they also are talking about expressions and how they approve of, or disagree with some forms (Interview, Adu, 13.12.14; O'Mara, 2007).

Hence, the question should not be whether same-sex relationships exist in Ghana. It should rather be how same-sex desires have being or are being expressed. Altman (2001) puts this argument in a brilliant way. To him the question is not

> whether homosexuality exists-it does in almost every society of which we know-but how people incorporate homosexual behaviour into their sense of self (p. 86).

For the how (s) depicts the expressions or behaviours that accompany homosexualities. I simply call these (expressions) manifestations in this section.

This section is inspired generally by the interviews and survey conducted during the study. It also draws from the observation and analysis of the reports in the Ghanaian media. All the self-identified gay men I interviewed specifically provided information for the analysis below. Although other gay men I

spoke to also fall under the categorisations I espouse on below, as they spoke under the cloak of elite interviewees, their personal accounts are not specifically included in this section. I concentrate on the three ordinary Ghanaians who identified as gay men. This is because although all the gay men I spoke to (including the elites) say they are gays, they express or incorporate their gayness in three unique ways. In that respect, Adu represents the gay men who manifest in the 'old ways'. I am calling this the old manifestations. Ntow represents gayness in the new ways whilst Ali represents both the old and the new ways simultaneously. I shall call the former the new manifestations and the latter, the hybrid manifestations. The explanations for these types of manifestations are provided with brief information about Adu, Ntow and Ali correspondingly.

The Old Manifestations

The (homo) sexualities described in chapter 4 which are characterised by silences and discretion epitomise the old manifestations. Although complex on its own, these manifestations attract little attention and are overlooked. The 'old' does not signify past and/or forgotten. I call it old because of how long such manifestations have been in place. Some of the old manifestations are as old as the various Ghanaian cultural

practices and languages themselves. As shown in chapter 4, it was not a foreigner who invented terms like *Kodjo besia, Ama Banyin, supi*, *trumutu*, etc.

They have been there for a long time as the Ghanaian languages attest. The old manifestations are therefore the expressions of homosexualities that are rooted in the Ghanaian customs. They follow or are submerged by the heteronormative primacy of sexualities. 'Heteronormative primacy' used here implies that, the old manifestations still walk hand in hand with customs that defend potency, progeny, patriarchies, polygamy, etc. Strictly speaking, perhaps the word that could best describe the old manifestations is bisexualities (Interview, Fiifi, 01.11.14). Because of the heteronormative pressure from society to marry and have children, boys may 'play' with other boys secretly; whilst keeping a 'girlfriend' to avoid societal pressure.

Adu

Adu told me he was a gay man yet he would not talk about himself but others. He kept using words like 'they', 'themselves' and 'them' throughout the interview. Typical of the exercises of unnaming and discretion, he would not mention the names of the gay clubs he has (merely) heard of. Later, as he gains confidence and trust in me, he provides a name of place in Accra but insists

he has never been there personally. According to him, only the 'other' gays go there: 'There is a place in Accra called 'EPO' where they meet' (Interview, Adu, 13.12.14).

During the interview, Adu was critical of other young gay men. Evoking essentialist understandings, he spoke ill of those who claim they are 'gays' because of personal gains rather than genuineness or being born that way. In other words, they are not real homosexuals in his estimation. He holds notions like *kodjo besia* and *ɔbaa barima* dear to his heart. He is worried that now people suspect them to be 'gays' where as in the past, it was not like that. This is because others have made the notions of *kodjo besia* and *ɔbaa barima* 'disgusting' because of the way they portray themselves: 'it has now become quite disgusting, because of how the act is portrayed' (Interview, Adu, 13.12.14).

When I asked which people have made being *kodjo besia* and *ɔbaa barima* disgusting and how, he asserts as follows: 'It is some of us, the gays, because some now even wear feminine clothes and portray themselves as women' (Interview, Adu, 13.12.14). He admits he is gay but he is not interested and does not even understand concepts like 'coming out of the closet'. These features of Adu sum up the old manifestations.

The New Manifestations

> Most young LGBT men are visible... Gay pride is not organised in Ghana but there are occasional parties by gay men, for gay men...There are also a few who are out of the closet, especially self-identified effeminate men (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14).

The quote above is taken from the excerpts of my interview with a gay rights advocacy group in Ghana. The key words (i.e., young, visible, pride, parties, out, closet) in the quote represent the characteristics of the new manifestations of gayness in Ghana. The new manifestations are to do with the outward expressions of local homosexualities which are gradually looking like the ones in the Western world. The phrase 'Western world' is used here not by preference but from how some gay men have appropriated the phrase themselves. In other words, local homosexualities are manifested in new ways and this new ways they have called Western.

The gays in Ghana who manifest in this way not only find semblance to those in the Western world, they find solace and hope from the same source. Their dream is to have a 'gay world' in Ghana similar to those in the West; the US and the UK being their main inspiration. A gay man who claims he is out of the closet puts it this way: 'I pray a time comes when they [Ghanaians] decide to change and be like the Western Countries' (Time.com,

2014). Past and current pro-gay rights Ghanaian-owned organisations like GALAG and CEPEHRG were formed in the spirit of the new manifestations and the gay liberation strategies that were pioneered in the West (Epprecht, 2012). To put a timeline to this, the outing of the new manifestations began in the year 2006.

To provide another example, there is a video online of two gay men from Ghana (Time.com, 2014). Their main aim for sharing that video with the rest of the world is to let people know that they are homosexuals and are proud and happy to be so. Doing nothing to hide their identities and showing no signs of fear, they express how they are open and out about their sexualities. One of them who is named in the video as Nana Yaw drives home the point: 'I'm open, I'm out' (Time.com, 2014). Both of them speak impeccable English and live in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Nana Yaw indicates that he is a human rights advocate.

Ntow

Ntow was the most formally educated amongst the gay men who granted interviews. As at the time we spoke he was a student in a tertiary institution but occasionally works for a modelling agency. Even Ali, speaks of Ntow on how well connected and smart he is and how he often goes to the big cities particularly, Accra. Although I asked questions in *Akan*, Ntow answered in perfect

English and half way down the conversation, I ended up speaking English with him. Unlike the other two he was comfortable speaking English than *Akan*. Typical of the new manifestations, he spoke of who he is with pride and used the pronoun 'I' throughout the conversation. Other words like online, blind dating, gay clubs, shemales, etc, are also used by him during the conversation.

He does not only know about many gay clubs in Ghana, he has been to some of them. Ntow knows the 'EPO' club 'at Osu in Accra' where 'Wednesday' nights are specifically for gays (Interview, Ntow, 04.12.14). He told me he goes to the 'high class' gay parties where he gets the chance to meet important personalities like Ministers of state, who are also gay men:

> I go for the high class parties where I get the chance to meet Ministers… who are into this ... if you want to see the high class people in this country who are into that, you know what to do; where to go. It is more like the straight world; so I do not see any difference between the straight world and the homosexuality world (Interview, Ntow, 04.12.14).

Ntow criticises (other) gay men who behave like the *kodjo besia* and would not accept that they are 'real' gays. He does not see why they do not proudly own what they are and admonishes them that, 'You need to be proud of who you are' (Interview, Ntow, 04.12.14). He blames the entire anti-gay sentiments on the high

levels of illiteracy in Ghana. He constantly stressed the need for education for all Ghanaians about gayness:

> In Ghana…the percentage of illiteracy is high so we need to educate the illiterates… if you do not educate them they will never embrace it…So it is education that we need to give most people. People do not want to hear the name [homosexuality], but they do practise it.

The Hybrid Manifestations

Hybrid manifestations simply refer to the state where older forms of gay expressions co-exist with new and experimenting forms. Another way of describing hybrid manifestations is simply to do with where there is the combination of the old and the new manifestations. Individuals therefore may alternate or combine whichever they prefer depending on several factors like feeling, location, mood, etc. Carrillo (2002) refers to this co-existence when studying contemporary Mexico as the 'new hybridity'. He uses the term to explain how they can be a confluence of the local and the global expressions although individuals may have different meanings in these expressions. As explained, terms like *Yaa Asantewaa* and *boys-boys* are gradually merging with others like *Kodjo besia* because of their versatility or hybrid usage. *Yaa Asantewaa* for instance, although rooted in Ghanaian folklore, has been coined by young homosexuals themselves. They do so to signify their resolve in the face of serious challenges. Therefore

they are able to enjoy local and globalised gay scenes simultaneously.

Ali

Ali mainly spoke to me in Akan but occasionally used some English words. On the terms used to describe gayness, he alternates between globalised ones like 'gays' and 'homosexuals' to localised ones like *boys-boys* and *Yaa Asantewaa*. For instance, arguing that there are 'dignified' Ghanaians who sit in high places and advocate for gay rights secretly, he claims that it has been rumoured that the Vice President of Ghana does *boys-boys*: 'By way of hearsay, it recently came out that the country's Vice President even does *boys-boys*' (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14).

Ali enjoys both local scenes and the globalised aspects of homosexualities. He told me that he sometimes feels shy but at other times he does not care about what people say or think about his gayness: 'Generally you feel shy and hence do it secretly, but sometimes I do not really care about what others would say'. He does not want to be open about his sexuality, yet he has in-depth knowledge on where the gay 'chilling joints' (to borrow his terminology) are in Ghana. He has even been to some of them. He recounts:

> when I was in Tema, I used to go to Kokrobite and Club House, both in Accra. I also frequented a place in Labadi called Bonjour Beach. Those places are common in Accra because it is a busier place and no one seems to care what another person does. Nonetheless, I can say that RNG and Alfa Romeo in Bantama (Kumasi) used to be the popular gay joints but they are non-existent now (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14).

When his gay friend told him that he would love to marry a fellow man in Ghana, Ali rebuked him there and then. Yet Ali goes to (secret) events and conferences where the issue of gay marriage is often high on the agenda. He reports as follows:

> I once had a conversation with a friend who expressed his desire to even get married to a fellow man, to which I retorted... I was invited to a 4-day conference held at Noda Hotel around that same time. They had tried to push for the practice to be sustained in the country because some Ministers and MPs were involved, and some people were saying then that if homosexuality was legalised, everyone would be free to do whatever they wanted including getting married (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14).

Despite his involvements, Ali thinks gay rights

> would bring hatred, and would also not bring comfort or freedom to gays. For instance if a homosexual should reveal his sexual orientation to his religious parents because it has now been legalised, it might lead to hatred if persistent admonition by the parents to desist from the act is not heeded to by the person. It may even be worse with friends and outsiders (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14).

Although it may sound so, his statements are not ironic but rather point to the numerous and at times confused ways by which people may want to express their sexualities.

Some of the reasons for the old manifestations have been outlined in chapter 3 already. There are several possible reasons that could explain the new and hybrid manifestations. The springing up of several telecommunication networks, internet usage and press freedom have improved access to information. The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) fact book places Ghana as the 93rd country in the world that has most people using the internet (CIA, 2015). In 2009, it estimated over 1,297,000 components of internet in Ghana. Moreover TV and radio stations as indicated are accessible to those who cannot understand or read English as programs could be in any of the local dialects (Heath, 1997). This has increased the level of exposure Ghanaians have of the world. People now could watch a gay lifestyle on a soap opera or witness it on the internet. Ghanaians are therefore exposed not only to the different expressions of sexualities in general, but also fashion, music, dancing and many aspects of other cultures.

Due to the discovery of crude oil in Takoradi, there has been an influx of different people, hence different cultures in the Western Region (BBC News, 2011c); for example. It is not

surprising that gay life in that Region has been at the centre of public controversy. Accra is not dissimilar. As the capital city of Ghana, people are exposed to new meanings, institutions, social practices, technology and attitudes in relation to sexualities. This offers different perspectives and new ways of imagining sex and sexualities (Altman, 2004). Not only have sections of the Ghanaian gay community been recipient of this profusion of information, they have also used the opportunity to showcase their own understandings of being gay and 'liberated' and manifesting in new ways.

There is a YouTube video that shows Ghanaian gay men and women showcasing how it is like to be gay in Ghana (see Accradot, 2012). Additionally, there are 'gay scenes' in recent Ghanaian movies that would have been unimaginable few years ago (see for e.g., Final Rain, 2013). Sections of the gay community in Ghana also use the internet as a platform to interact with others elsewhere with common interests in gayness and gay rights issues. Some have gone further to replicate the use of gay dating websites in Ghana. Presently, the Modern Ghana (2015) website advertises gay singles from Ghana seeking lovers.

Conclusion: Analysis and Patterns

I observe two phases of gay rights protest in Ghana from 2003 to 2013 that brought gayness into 'public' focus. They are what I have termed the internal gay protest and the international gay protest.[19] Although these two phases are simultaneously taking place, the reports indicate that their commencements followed a chronological sequence. Thus, gay rights protest in Ghana were first started by Ghanaians and later joined by Western organisations or leaders. The internal gay protest is characterised by the new manifestations, visibility and the demands for gay rights. As highlighted, gay rights campaigns in Ghana were openly started by GALAG when its president went to the Ghanaian media to defend gayness. Direct foreign involvement and influence if any was latent before and during 2006.

The international gay protest involves the internationalisation of the debate where foreign pro-gay rights agencies and leaders actively get involved. This phase is more complex than the first. This is where the international community

[19] The word 'protest' used here depicts activities that outwardly support gay rights in Ghana. Protestors may do so by engaging the government, media, masses, religious leaders and other key players in the debate. For this purpose, the definition does not involve the activities of foreign organisations or nations who may have supported the gay community in Ghana by secretly providing logistics or funds without being on the 'frontline' themselves.

exerts pressure on the Ghanaian government to make the necessary changes to foster same-sex relationships. This leads to the politicisation of gay rights advocacies between national and international stances. Organisations like ILGA and OutRight also became pro-active in the Ghanaian debate by publishing events about the country.

The involvement of foreign organisations and countries are noticeable from the year 2011. There were major events that took place in that year, instigating this phase of the protests. The speeches by David Cameron and Barack Obama have already been alluded to as some of the main events of this phase. However, accompanying the birthing of active gay rights advocacies is equally vibrant resistances from some Ghanaians. The strategies used by them have ranged from phone-in calls to radio stations to staging of an anti-gay demonstration in the Western Region. Religious and political elites, columnists, media anchors and hosts have also shown in different ways how much they detest the new manifestations. Generally, at the top of the anti-gay resistance groups are the evangelical Christian church elites who command the respect of many in Ghana.

As a result of the events in 2006, the following issues emanate:

First, Ghanaian gayness entered into the public domain. Homosexuals contested and made demands that were not previously made. They also demanded public recognition. For with the new manifestations come new demands. Interestingly, it was not a medical practitioner or a foreigner who made those demands on behalf of gay men in Ghana. The reports indicate that it was some sections of the Ghanaian gay community who themselves sought to challenge the status of gayness in Ghana. The gay community faced the press and answered some questions about gayness. For instance, Mac-Darling Cobbinah and Patrick MacDonalds have since 2006 actively engaged the Ghanaian press and politicians with various demands. They have also engaged the international arena for support.

Second, since 2006, there has been pressure by advocates (both local and international) to change or update the Ghanaian 'sodomy laws' which are organised around loose words neither blatantly condemning nor recognising same-sex desires. There is also a demand for specific rights or protection for homosexuals notwithstanding the fundamental human rights enshrined and guaranteed in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. Yet, as stated, Ghana not unlike many formally colonised state, defends the

retention of 'anti-gay laws' (Phillips, 2005). Suffice to say that these laws are legacies of colonialism.

Third, key political figures, religious leaders, the masses and the media began to appreciate the enormity of homosexualities and gay rights issues outside the usual branding as 'foreign infiltration'. Consequently, gay rights made way into the political debates, religious arguments and public discussions. Gradually one observes a steady shift in public opinion and debate. The focus is shifting from sayings like 'gays are only in the West to how do we deal with gayness in Ghana'. For instance, gayness which was previously denied as not existing in Ghana has many people demonstrating against it. The anti-gay protest that took place in Ghana bears testimony to this paradigm shift. Hence homosexualities have entered into the political debates. In the early part of 2013, popular radio and TV shows in Ghana debated gay rights over a period of time (see for e.g., Joy Online TV, 2013). Topics like 'Is Ghana going gay' and 'The Politics of Gay rights' were thoroughly discussed. Consequently, there is a change from gay issues being relegated to the back pages to become more mainstream topics in media discussions.

As explained above, there seem to be a certain pattern that follows in the gay rights debate. At one point, there are vibrant

gay right campaigns. At those times, all stakeholders make their opinions known. For instance the year 2006, 2011 and 2013 show numerous publications and activities on homosexualities. Those years also had tons of political and media discourses on the subject. At other times, gay rights advocacies and anti-gay sentiments decline. Representing these 'dormant' years are 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010. In those years there was little said on the subject and no major event took place.

This repeated cycle of silences and anti-gay rhetoric signify that, part of the manifestations of homosexualities in Ghana still thrive on secrecy. Like the Ghanaian customary practices such polygyny and progeny, silences are intrinsic and hard to overcome. Politicians, law makers and stakeholders avoid the possibility of meaningful debates on gay rights. Politically, it perhaps makes sense to keep quite on the subject, particularly when majority of the electorates are against gay rights. Democratically, it may be 'prudent' not to go against the wishes of the majority of people who take strong stances against homosexualities. Or pass on the 'unwanted' aspects of social organisation as one of the 'curses' that are ingrained in colonial legacies. Politicians may also brand homosexualities as a lifestyle being copied by Ghanaians through the inevitable contact with Europeans and Americans (Patron,

1995). The position on how all these delicate intricacies of heteronormativity, homonormativity, manifestations, etc., align with the notion of gay rights (another contentious notion) is the subject for the next chapter.

Chapter 6- THE COMPLICATIONS OF GAY RIGHTS ADVOCACIES IN GHANA

Introduction

> We have received unintended backlash regarding media activities in the past. In the Ghanaian media discourse on homosexuality is often inflammatory... So after media interviews the issue is picked up by other stations and blown totally out of proportion. Some discussions or articles warn people that homosexuality represents the destruction of Ghanaian values and culture, while others urge society to ignore human rights in order to fight against homosexuality and 'save Ghana.' This negativity often results in attacks on LGBT persons in the heat of the arguments on the airwaves. CEPEHRG's office was closed for two weeks. During one of such incidences we received threats that the office will be burnt down. The Executive Director had to flee from Ghana for a while (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14).

The thrust of this chapter is that, despite well-intentioned purposes, gay rights advocacies in Ghana face intrinsic theoretical and practical complications that risk them being counter-productive. Put to the empirical test and as shown in previous chapters, the reports demonstrate that gay rights advocacies since 2006 have not prevented anti-gay sentiments. They have actually provoked the manifestations of stigma and violence. The quotation above (which is symptomatic of this paradigm) is not from any

ordinary observer but an organisation (CEPEHRG) that has been at the centre of gay rights advocacies in Ghana since they began. Giving a participatory (observation) account of how gay rights advocacies have been challenged, the quote is reflective of some of the issues that will be raised in this chapter. Other organisations have reported similar instances of undesired outcomes. The U.S Department of States reports on violence attacks on gays and lesbians in Ghana:

> In March a gang of men assaulted nine people they believed to be LGBT individuals in Jamestown, a neighbourhood of Accra, forcing them from their homes and attacking them with canes and sticks. The victims filed a complaint with a legal human rights organisation. They said their homes were burgled while they were chased out. No arrests had been made in the case by year's end (U.S. Department of State, 2013).

One would have expected that after the pressure from both local (e.g., CEPERHG) and international stakeholders (e.g., the governments of the UK and the U.S.) asking Ghanaians to respect gay rights, gay people would have enjoyed the purported improved conditions. Yet as the report above indicates, this has not been the case. But it has not been all doom and gloom. There are alternative approaches used by the Ghanaian government to protect gay people. In a section below, practical examples are

cited from how the Ghanaian government with some Ghanaian institutions are using 'unconventional' approaches to offer protections that could elude the most curious observer. Publicly resisting gay rights with one hand, these approaches have been used to offer protections and avenues of integration for gay people secretly; with the other. As the primary focus of this chapter, the complications and these alternative approaches are discussed below in details but first, there is the need for theoretical clarifications as to what gay rights are.

Theorising Gay Rights from Human Rights

The phrase 'human rights' is composed of two words- human and rights. The human part depicts persons, individuals, man, woman, etc. (Orend, 2002). With the human part (of human rights) comes another concept called dignity. That is to say that once born as a human, she has an inherent dignity. Her human dignity in this case depicts self-respect that further commands others to treat her with respect (Barilan, 2012; Kateb, 2011). This therefore makes it relatively easier to evoke the dignity of a woman and her inviolable rights for example. Perhaps this explains why the concept of human dignity is one of the pillars of the UDHR. In its preamble the UDHR extols the principle of human dignity and how it is integral to human rights as follows:

> Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world (UN, 1948).

Rights have manifold meanings but a simple way to explain them in relation to this thesis is to view them within two main categories, namely positive and negative. The positive aspects of rights are often used synonymously with words like prerogatives, privileges, liberties, authority or licence and permission (Campbell, 2006). Although these categories of words have their individual meanings and theories particularly within political science (see Ingram, 1994, Jones, 1994; Edmundson, 2012) and jurisprudence (see, Yowell, 2007; Wellman, 1995; Wacks, 2015), they are reflective of the everyday use of the phrase the 'right to'; which signifies an entitlement to something. That is, the phrase 'right to' immediately suggests, the right holder's ability to make claims to certain privileges, entitlements or prerogatives. The right to education, healthcare, protection from violence are some of the examples. These brands of rights are closely linked to what is known in the literature as positive rights. Positive rights mainly comprise those sets of rights that require a government to act to make them realised (Fredman, 2008; Gewirth, 1996; Steiner, Alston & Goodman, 2008). They involve 'must do' obligations and

hands on activities by governments to achieve the full potentials of the rights in question.

The other categories of rights are those that enable the right holder to demand from others (including governments) to refrain from certain acts against her. They denote exemptions, indemnities and immunities from certain (unwanted) actions of individuals, groups or the state. Intertwined with the concept of negative rights in the literature, they are the ones that require governments to refrain from acting in some cases and certain ways to ensure the rights of citizens are protected (Schlossberger, 2008, p. 32; Fried, 1978, p. 132; Orend, 2002). In other words, governments are usually expected not to do anything regarding these rights. Therefore, there could be a breach of rights should a government take any action regarding these rights. The right not to be subjected to inhumane treatment and not to be deprived of liberties fall under this category.

Human rights are therefore simply rights held by individuals because of the simple fact that they are human beings. They are rights that are shared by all persons equally, regardless of nationality, sex, race, colour, religion, ethnicity, age and economic background. Article 2 of UDHR establishes these characteristics of human rights:

> Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (UN, 1948).

Why should there ever be questions raised about such a reasonable offer (of rights) geared towards equality, individual protection, civil liberties, and all the long list of other morally and legally loaded words and phrases. In other words, the principles and objectives of human rights in theory should appeal to anyone who is genuinely interested in protecting the human dignity of all, seeking foundation of freedom, and advocating for justice and peace in the world. As Sen (2004, p. 315) argues, there is something deeply appealing and compelling about the idea of human rights conceptually and practically just because of what they purport to achieve. And indeed, the moral appeal to human rights has been used to a variety of ends; from resisting torture to demanding food and medical care for the vulnerable.

Yet the idea of human rights has yielded numerous oppositions and hindrances. Controversies on human rights range from what they are, their source, their aim, their fairness and the list could be extended. In the book *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalisation Era,* Ishay (2004) discusses six key controversies that go to the core of human

rights. All the controversies she raises are crucial to human rights theories but the first three in general and the fourth one in particular are relevant to this work.

The first controversy in Ishay's evaluation concerns the origins of human rights. She argues that although it may appear that secular sources are antithetical with religious underpinnings of human rights, they complement each other. This means that there is a perfect continuum of past and modern thinking of human rights that have contributions from both religious and secular ideals. The second concerns the claim that modern conception of human rights is predominantly Eurocentric. By this, it is implied that the current brood of human rights particularly within the UDHR originated from Europe and so the interests of Europeans are central to their conceptualisations. The third for Ishay is represented by the extent to which modern liberalism is indebted to socialist thought when it comes to the conceptual underpinnings of human rights. So although human rights' vision is currently depicted as liberal, it has seen major contributions from socialist ideals like the struggle for universal suffrage; workers' rights; and social justice.

The fourth controversy represents the antagonism between cultural relativism and universalism that have already been

discussed in chapter 3. The tension between universalism and relativism has been well documented and cuts across almost all the controversies not only in theory but the practical implementations of human rights as shown in that chapter. One major area where these controversies play out is the area of gay rights. This offers some explanations as to why gay rights have been entangled in steep controversies. We will see below how and why the Ghanaian case has not been an exception in respect to these controversies.

A Theory of Gay Rights

Gay rights are relatively new aspects within international human rights systems. The UDHR did not explicitly include sexual orientations or gender identities in its formulation. Article 2 of the UDHR sets out the basis for which persons should not be discriminated against but sexual orientation was not part of those listings (see, UN, 1948). It clearly included race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property and birth. However, there have been evolving conceptions of international human rights law that specifically include the protection of gays and lesbians. One of such

conceptions if not the cradle of gay rights is the Yogyakarta Principles (2007).

Inspired by the reasoning and the wording of the UDHR, the Yogyakarta Principles has 29 principles that include the rights to equality and non-discrimination; the right to recognition before the law; the right to life; and the right to security of the person. The Yogyakarta Principles (2006) evoke certain (positive) characteristics of the UDHR. It for instance refers to the principle as a 'universal guide' which establishes 'binding international legal standard' that states 'must apply':

> In 2006, in response to well-documented patterns of abuse, a distinguished group of international human rights experts met in Yogyakarta, Indonesia to outline a set of international principles relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. The result was the Yogyakarta Principles: a universal guide to human rights which affirm binding international legal standards with which all States must comply. They promise a different future where all people born free and equal in dignity and rights can fulfil that precious birthright.

The striking point is the fact that gay rights are prominent despite its late arrival within the international human rights systems. In some cases the concept of gay rights are used synonymously or interchangeably with the concept of human rights (Holzhacker, 2014). I use the phrase gay rights interchangeably with human rights in this chapter. This is not by

choice but it is a way of mirroring how the theories and the advocacies have simply merged the two principles as if they have no fundamental differences. Anyone who has engaged in any fieldwork on gay rights advocacies would have heard a popular saying from advocates and activists that goes simply like 'gay rights are human rights'. In practical terms this comparison and invocation of gay rights as if they are human rights themselves, is an effective way of emphasising the importance of gay rights. They however border on some theoretical intersections and invite other theoretical speculations and complications. One of such brand is that, by claiming that gay rights are human rights is to also claim in effect that the word 'gay' could replace the 'human' part of the phrase 'human rights'.

This thinking prompts a (re) look at the principle of rights and their rankings in general. Thinking in ranking terms is to do with questions about what makes a particular right important or supersede other rights. Ranking or competition of rights for prominence is an old battle. It is for this reason why we use terms like the generations of rights (Waldron, 1993; Arat, 1991); positive and negative rights (Fredman, 2008; Gewirth, 1996; Fried, 1978); natural rights and legal positivism (Finnis, 1979;

Locke, 1952; Hart, 1958); etc.[20] The sense of competition cuts across fundamental disagreements on ethics, norms, morality, culture, politics, legal, economic and contextual reasoning establishing which human rights are important. Writing on the ranking and the distribution of significance in the book *The Political Theory of Political Thinking*, Freeden (2013) discusses how the substantive weight on any given right is dependent on how proponents justify that right in terms of the value of that which it purports to protect:

> the right always appears as a protective capsules and shield for a distinct separate good, whether the right to life, to liberty, to property, to happiness… The substantive weight on those phrases does not settle the empty container 'right' but on the value, be it life, liberty, property, or protest (p. 140).

He further provides an example of this reasoning within rankings where natural rights defenders emphasis the term 'natural' in

[20] First generation of rights (or civil-political) include freedom of religion, conscience, thought, speech, associations, voting rights, rights to fair trial. The theory buttressing second generation (or socio-economic) is that certain foundations, goods and services should be available to all people. Third generation of rights are those that attach importance to social identity, culture identities and minorities (see Vasak and Alston, 1982 for detailed discussions on the generations of rights). Natural rights proponents uphold the moral legitimacy of rights, thus any law, rights morals, creeds or doctrines should have a natural/moral appeal or they become unreasonable. Legal positivism on the hand discard notion of morality and argues for the supreme operation of laws regardless of their moral appeals (see Finnis, 1979; Locke, 1952; Hart, 1958 for detailed discussions).

order to make jurisprudentially worthwhile, those rights they seek to uphold:

> Natural rights theories attach the word 'natural' to that of rights as an uncontestable compound elevator of a good to the head of any such ranking, an life, liberty, and property/estates once topped those lists (2013, p. 141).

There is another dimension to this. Rights do not only compete internally with other rights but externally against other equally important principles like the rule of law, democracy, and morality. In *Taking Rights Seriously*, Dworkin, (1977) contends that, the evocation of rights carries some measure of unassailability and finality to trump other crucial ideals of governance (Dworkin, 1977). This means that individuals possess (legal) rights beyond those explicitly codified and that these rights may morally or politically trump even the welfare of the majority of people. It is therefore not by sheer coincidence that advocates prefer making gay rights inseparable from human rights.

By situating the arguments and politics within human rights, advocates appeal to ideals that are supranational (transcend national context and interest (see Helfer & Slaughter, 1997; Thoreson, 2014b) and supra-positive (appeal to international laws and standards and could supersede national positive laws (see Çali, 2015). In other words, as the word 'gay' is used

synonymously with the word 'human', it forcefully implies that gays are humans and by that admission, they should be accorded inalienable rights regardless of their sexual orientation. So, in spite of stern contestations, gay rights advocates insist that gay rights are universal, unchallengeable and immutable just like human rights (Thoreson, 2014b).

The practical implications of this theoretical claim have not been rid of controversies. In Ghana, the government readily argues that gays have protection under the constitution as human beings just like all other citizens. Yet on the other hand, the government is quick to dissociate itself from gayness when the arguments shift from human rights to gay rights. Many of my elite interviewees highlight how all humans are protected by the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Ghanaian Constitution. But most of them were quick to add that, this guaranteed protection gets ambiguous when the concentration shifts from the human to the fact that he is gay. One of them addresses this ambiguity as follows:

> According to the constitution, we are all equal before the law and everybody has a right, so as human beings and as individuals like anybody else, yes they [gays] need to be protected by law…But whether the protection should be in the context of their being gay people is another matter; so when we mix the two issues, that is when you see

> people opposing...if they are demanding rights in the context of being homosexuals, the society always speaks against that (Interview, Francis, 26.01.15).

In effect, as advocates equate gay rights to human rights, there is a strong opposition to such thinking where a clear dichotomy is made between the two principles.

Wondering how these theories and international frameworks translate into the African context, I asked a senior official at Pan Africa ILGA what gay rights mean.[21] She stresses that to most organisations who are part of ILGA Africa, gay rights mean the eradicating of laws that discriminate against gays and lesbians and those that criminalise gayness:

> the main thing is demanding that violence and discrimination against LGBT people be dealt with by states…we also actually demand actual rights for LGBT people, and the first step in demanding these rights is to say that…the legal landscape as it stands actually inhibits the enjoyment of certain rights of LGBT people… the penal codes that criminalise same-sex sexual activity actually go to a large extent to justify the amounts of violence that is perpetrated against LGBT people… it justifies the states' ability to raid an LGBT organisation's office whenever they need to, whenever they want to, to arrest. So for us really, the stripping away of this legislation will go a long way in ensuring

[21] Pan Africa ILGA is an organisation which is part of ILGA and amalgamates 41 sub organisations in Africa working for human rights and equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people (Pan Africa ILGA, 2013).

> that LGBT people can enjoy their rights as equal citizens (Interview, Betty, 12.10.14).

I posed the same question to the founding officials of a gay rights advocacy group in Ghana who similarly frame response in terms of non-discrimination:

> We advocate that sexual rights are human rights…We also advocate that MSM should have friendly health services…We demand that stigma and discrimination toward gays and lesbians should stop...We encourage and educate gays and lesbians to know their basic rights…We demand for legal representation of accused gays and lesbians (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14).

Then I asked some self-identified gay men who are 'ordinary' Ghanaians on whose behalf all the advocacies are done. One of them puts it in simplistic terms where he compares gay people to 'straight' people arguing that, if they are both humans, then there should not be discrimination:

> I do not know the freedom that people want but to me I am thinking we should be treated equally like how the straight people are treated...They should not discriminate because it is not fair...We are all humans (Interview, Ntow, 04.12.14).

Another interviewee frames his understanding of gay rights within freedom of choice:

> I am aware of gay rights. I understand it to mean that gays should be allowed to live their lives because that is how they feel they want to be...

> Gays should just be allowed to do what they want to do (Interview, Ali, 01.12.14).

From the above, one of the prominent features of gay rights advocacies in Ghana, is the demand for the decriminalisation of same-sex intercourse and relationships. This means the demand for the update or removal of parts of the Criminal Code that may be deemed as criminalising same-sex intercourse and relationships. Hence, the foremost demand is legal. Another important feature is the demand for the eradication of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Advocacy groups demand that gays should be treated equally. They further demand cultural acceptance and recognition of their sexualities regardless of how such sexualities may be manifested. Probing these theoretical and practical issues, the subsequent sections discuss some of the key complications that accompany the demand for gay rights.

The Complications of Politicisation

The dictionary meaning of Politicisation or to politicise is to render political tone, character, interest or awareness to a situation or an event (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). Politicisation is often common in the areas of human rights advocacies in general where international norms, ideals, standards and aims conflict with

local demands, thereby rendering a political tone to that which is discussed (see Becker, 2013; Risse-Kappen, Ropp, & Sikkink, 1999 for debates on the legitimacy of human rights). Gay rights advocacies in Ghana have unintentionally been politicised. Explanations as to how and why this has happened are discussed below; first, there is the need to look at some generic issues with the politicisation of international human rights themselves. This is because, some of these key issues transpose into gay rights advocacies.

Conventionally, proponents of international human rights wish for them to be perceived as having a legitimacy that transcend politics, law, sovereignty of individual states, etc. (see for e.g., Føllesdal, Schaffer & Ulfstein, 2014; Henkins, 1990). Already explained above are the supranational and supra-positive postures of international human rights laws where it is maintained that, they should be perceived ideally, to be final and eternal; and hence should not be compared to some of the acrimonious tensions that come with international relations and global power politics. However, detractors (like Mutua, 2008) claim that theoretical conceptions and implementation strategies of international human rights have taken the form of social and political organisation. As already alluded to, Ishay (2004) reminds

us that the sources of human rights at least within the UDHR are Eurocentric. Indeed this not to say that we should abandon the prospects of international frameworks in toto. It is rather to say that, those who argue against the view that human rights are interest free may have a considerable strength to their claim.

On the implementation side, justiciability (where a party can apply for the validity and enforcement of international human rights law (Ife, 2009) and international accountability require countries that either drafted or ratify human rights instruments to be accountable and occasionally be punished for gross breaches (Kamminga, 1992). Thus, international human rights institutions mimic a supranational government mode of organisation where countries with bad human rights records could be punished; with economic sanctions being the most preferred means. Countries such as Zimbabwe (see Human Rights Watch, 2013) and Uganda (see Human Rights Watch, 2015) immediately come to mind as they have received sanctions for poor human rights records. The point is that, there are officials, countries and institutions that conceive, draft and apply human rights principles. Because they have individual goals, political affiliations and aspirations, some of their cherished ideals are translated into the formulations and implementations of international human rights principles

(Thoreson, 2014b). Because of some of these features, critics say that, human rights cannot be cleared of partisanship when activities have a political outlook.

This politicisation of human rights has not gone unnoticed. Evans (2001) shows how power politics is embedded in human rights and how they legitimise dominant interests. He maintains that, human rights in the end do not essentially uphold the interest of the vulnerable, but legitimise the demands of major global economic actors. Mutua (2008) offers a critique of human rights not dissimilar. He argues that although human rights are presented as legal instruments rid of ideological affiliations or political interest, their conceptions and genre are like a political movement. Ignatieff (2001) articulates his version of the political nature of human rights and holds that, political impartiality is almost impossible to achieve within human rights. As a consequence he concludes that, human rights advocacies or activisms are bound to be political. His elucidating point is worthy of a long quote:

> Human rights activism likes to portray itself as an anti-politics, in defense of universal moral claims designed to delegitimise 'political' (i.e., ideological or sectarian) justifications for the abuse of human beings. In practice, impartiality and neutrality are just as impossible as universal and equal concern for everyone's human rights. Human rights activism

> means taking sides, mobilising constituencies powerful enough to force abusers to stop. As a consequence, effective human rights activism is bound to be partial and political. But at the same time, human rights politics is disciplined or constrained by moral universals. The role of moral universalism is not to take activists out of politics but to get activists to discipline their partiality-their conviction that one side is right-with an equal commitment to the rights of the other side (2001: pp. 9-10).

Consequently, the discussions about gay rights like human rights have been inadvertently politicised in Ghana. In Ghana there are tensions between national and international stances on gay rights. As international advocates mainly seek reforms in the Ghanaian laws to favour gays amongst other demands, national detractors dismiss their demands as colonial and imperial. I have already shown by way of examples how there are contentions over 'colonial' (sodomy) laws in 'postcolonial' Ghana. Here the West tells Ghanaians to eradicate these laws branding them outmoded and anti-gay but Ghanaians respond in the negative, thereby creating international tensions. I have also mentioned how such tensions are further fuelled by the reactions and attitudes of some Western politicians against African politicians and vice versa.

In that regard, the scenario whereby the President of Ghana is humiliated by the MSP has been cited as an example of this kind of politicisation (see *The Herald*, 2016). In the end, as influential

global politicians like David Cameron, the British Prime Minister and Barack Obama, the President of the U.S. suggest gay rights (see Daily Mail, 2011 and Ghanaweb, 2011a respectively), influential local politicians like past and current Ghanaian Presidents, Parliamentarians and the clergy counter with emotive and nationalists defensiveness emanating from the ideals of national sovereignty, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and self-rule (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2006e; 2006f; 2006g; BBC News, 2006). These dimensions stoke political and diplomatic tensions.

The politicised nature of the advocacies is not only found in the international arena, it is also localised. Locally, electorates are watchful and ready to vote for politicians and political parties who take a firm stance against gay rights advocacies. Politicians and government officials therefore treat gay rights issues with political cautiousness. Perhaps few examples would help demonstrate this point. When the current President of Ghana, John Mahama nominated Nana Oye Lithur, a human rights advocate to be a Minister of State, sections of the Ghanaian public expressed concerns about her stance on gay rights (Joy Online, 2013b). They claimed she supported gay rights and so she is not morally commendable to be a Minister of State. This became a topical issue in the Ghanaian media for a long time.

A Ghanaian State Attorney at the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General I interviewed could not stress enough how the entire debate on gay rights advocacies is reducible to the play of power politics. She further indicates how politicians handle gay rights advocacies as potential power winning or losing strategy in their largely religious constituents:

> I will say it is political. The government does not want to be infamous with the people because…you have people who think that homosexuality is demonic; Christian leaders coming out openly to say... it is alien to our culture... So if a government tries to legalise that, the government of the day may become infamous, may fall out with the people so they might lose their votes (Interview, Alima, 15.11.14).

Another interviewee argued that any government who tolerates gay rights discussions would be shooting itself in the foot because the potential backlash could be overwhelming and would lead to the loss of many votes. She argues that the whole debate 'is political... the backlash is too much, it ties in too much to the number of votes' (Ama, 21.02.15).

There is a political dilemma that occurs here. On the one side, Ghanaian politicians dissociate themselves from being labelled as supporters of gay rights. A possible explanation is that, they may do so to please their largely religious constituents. On the other side, gay rights advocacies require the political will of

governments to take roots. The advocacies also require the political will of the government to commence any formal considerations. Suffice to say that, in the Ghanaian case, such will by politicians is almost non-existent at this time. This dilemma in the end leaves the ideals of gay rights advocacies hanging without any meaningful headway.

The complications of Silencing and Polarisations

The theoretical antagonisms between gay rights politics and queer theories have crept into the practical realms. One of the main opposing views queer theory raises against gay rights is that gay rights advocates may assume universality of (homo) sexualities (Dugan, 1992). Based on identity formations and politics, 'universality of sexualities' means that there are certain common characteristics that unite (homo) sexualities globally (Warner, 1993). In this particular case, it denotes the presumption that gays are a unique category of people who share unique global similarities that make them different from others. This leads to the critique that gay rights discourse assumes that, gays are a universal category who should ideally manifest in certain 'approved' ways often reflecting the idea of being proud and out of the closet (Massad, 2007). It also denotes that, gays in the world share common understandings, meanings and connotations

as to what being gay is. This then implies that, gays face similar challenges which could be remedied with the proliferation of new (gay) rights and activisms.

As these characteristics may not be present in all societies for manifold reasons, gay rights advocates are criticised as inadvertently projecting Western understandings of sexualities (Epprecht, 2013). Detractors (like Massad, 2007) dismiss gay rights as Western inventions with little or no contextual relevance to the rest of the world. In Massad's (2007) eyes, there are inherent assimilationist tendencies that make gay rights repressive of other diverging understandings or options. So, gay rights advocacies risk repressing 'same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into their sexual epistemology' (Massad, 2007, p. 163). Joseph Massad indeed writes in a different context of the Arab world but his main arguments are relevant here.

In chapters 2 and 3, I have shown how scholarship exploring the colonial and missionary vision is rampant with the 'moral' (but also assimilationist) imperative of colonial authorities to cloth the bare breast and buttocks of the childlike African (see, Wieringa, 2009, p. 216; Osha, 2004; McClintock, 1995; Boone, 1995; Hawley, 2001). In the process of doing so, many other

understandings and meanings of sexualities that did not fit the Western or the colonial experience were silenced.

The everyday use of the phrase 'to be silenced' is to be deemed absent, mute, inaudible, forgotten, concealed, hidden, excluded, voiceless or colonised (Cambridge Dictionary, 2015). Usually found in sociological literature on deviance, shame and guilt, silencing might include subtle or aggressive techniques and processes used to dismiss or deny the legitimacy of other sexualities (see Ward, Laws & Hudson, 2003; Halpering & Traub, 2009; Harper, 2013; Lewis, 1992; Thoits, 1989). Bearing in mind that at this time I write within the terms of homosexualities, this is where other meanings and understandings of homosexualities are dismissed not by heteronormative dispositions alone, but ironically by homonormative ones too. This means the neglect of notions like *ɔbaa barima, nunjo and kodjo besia*. For, we cannot speak of the heteronormative silencing of homosexualities without equally highlighting the silencing that occurs where dominant homonormative narratives subdue other meanings of queers. Simply put, the silencing that was previously done only by heterosexuals may now be done by queers themselves too.

By extension, silencing also means the excluding if not the eradicating of other avenues of protections that may not concur

with the ideals of gay rights advocacies. 'Other avenues of protections' are those means by which queers live with others in peace without society's (unwanted) focus and anti-gay sentiments as seen from the year 2006 onwards. They include the conscious effort by individuals and organisations to live in harmony by appreciating the common problems faced by gays; but not within gay rights terms. As indicated, a subsection in this chapter focuses on explaining what these alternative approaches are. For now, the concentration is on how gay life could exist besides and behind the façade of having a wife and/or children or behaving in 'manly' ways. I have highlighted how gay men did not need to fear as their sexual preferences would not compromise the socially-essential performance of heterosexual virility in chapters 4 and 5.

Not leaving in fear reflects how homosexualities have been overlooked by society through intricate grid of secrecy and discretion. In addition, the practice of 'don't tell' 'don't ask' indicates that some people are indulgent, receptive and are permissive toward homosexualities manifested under discretion and secrecy. In the heat and tensions of gay rights advocacies in Ghana in the year 2006, an anonymous Ghanaian gay writer who uses the pseudonym, Mensah, drums home this point. He

emphasises how a secret gay lifestyle could be beneficial to some gay men in Ghana. He writes:

> I do not think we need western style militant gay rights campaigns and demonstrations in Ghana. The status quo is fine for many gay men. They live their lives quietly and incognito, and have no wish to marry each other. Yet they enjoy the local gay scene in their own way without anyone parking their nose in their affairs… As an African man, I have no wish to proclaim my private, adult, consenting bedroom life from the rooftops. And quite frankly, it is no one's business to come digging, anyway (Mensah, 2006).

As the statement above indicates, some queers dread that gay rights advocacies could destroy their social and sexual worlds and the protections therein. Therefore, there are concerns that gay rights advocacies risk silencing and possibly eroding these avenues of protection by making some homosexuals vulnerable with the insistence on rights. One of the survey respondents puts it this way:

> Gays and lesbians have always been in Ghana, no harm has come to them. Bringing...gay rights in Ghana will make people hate them (Ghanaian Sexuality Survey, 2014).

Another stresses how Ghanaians intentionally overlook gay and lesbian people but an open gay lifestyle and rights assertions might offend many people and be counterproductive:

> I have lived and have friends who are gays/lesbians, and there was never a problem. We lived as blinded by their act and never troubled them. But…giving them rights…will make it worse. They will beat them on the streets (Ghanaian Sexuality Survey, 2014).

This is not to understate some of the complications associated with gay life in the private life alone. Yet, whilst this line of argument may have its own deficiencies, it points out a particular irony. Some gay men having been socialised into cultures where patriarchies and heteronormativity dominate, share those values of their cultures proudly. As the above examples demonstrate some homosexuals conform to the public expectations of gender norms and heterosexuality; not out of shame but of ethnic and national pride; and opt to express their sexualities incognito. An interviewee who has been studying sexualities in Ghana and working with gay men for many years makes a compelling argument in relation to this point.

He argues that, most of the gay men he works with do not want associations with the term 'gay' because they are bisexuals. Neither do they want any public manifestations because most of them are married to female partners. He maintains that, they dissociate themselves from other queers who insist on gay rights because they feel the advocacies are not in their interest:

> a whole lot of them are bisexuals, doing it underground, maintaining the secrecy… Because people do not lose anything…if someone is a bisexual and he can go out there and get somebody in the club, why should this… person want the whole thing out there? He is not going to associate himself or herself with that [gay rights]…so you can find that the very few who are championing it [gay right] have been the very few who started it long time ago; you hardly come across any new faces in the movement. Not that new people are not there but they do not want to be associated [with gay rights] (Interview, Fiifi, 01.11.14).

The larger point is that, within these localised and contextualised practices, gays have found protections through the conformity to dominant homosexual norms in spite of the paradoxes and the conditionalities; involving silences. It has been argued that these avenues of manifesting and their accompanying protections could be silenced. For instance, after extensive studies in Africa, Epprecht (2013) sounds the alarm bell, arguing that, the almost absolute appeal to human and gay rights may not bring desired outcomes in the African context. He cautions:

> while solidarity and support from the West have often been very helpful to Africans and are often gratefully acknowledged as such, blunt, uncritical or chauvinistic appeals to human rights – only recently accepted in Western countries (and still not consistently applied!) – are unlikely to have desired outcomes (p. 178).

Polarisations

One of the undesired consequences of silencing is that it could unintentionally lead to polarisations. In relation to this section, polarisations are used in sociological terms and they simply mean to cause previously held conflicting opinions (about gayness), to divide strictly into completely opposing groups (Roberts, 2008, p. 201). In other words, the complex, divergent and multifaceted views held by people on gayness are simplistically reduced to, and strictly binarised into those who support gays (and their rights) and those who do not. This is far from suggesting that Ghanaians did not hold divergent views on gayness prior to gay rights advocacies. It is rather to state that the advocacies have contributed to making them apparent; thereby cementing those divisions.

The reports that provide feedback on how gay rights are faring show entrenched divisions that hitherto the commencements of the advocacies were unheard of. The anti-gay protest that took place for the first time in Takoradi as a result of the moral panic brought by gay rights issues is reflective of this paradigm. Within gay rights advocacies in Ghana, there are three main categories of polarisations that could be deduced from the

reports. I shall call them intranational, international and intra-queer.

Intranational Polarisation

I use the phrase intranational polarisation to refer to the divisions that occur within a nation when tensions between the majority of the populace and gay people sour due to an event or series of events. Although there may be citizens of the same country, there is a continuous reference to the distinction between the 'us' and the 'them'. Within the gay rights debates in Ghana, overtones of the 'we' (Ghanaians) have permeated the discourse from simplistic arguments made by ordinary Ghanaians to the sophisticated ones by political elites. To provide examples exclusive of the ones already provided in chapter 4, John Mills, a former President of Ghana answering questions on Ghana's stance on gay rights uses the word 'we' (Ghanaians) and differentiate it from gay people as if the latter are not Ghanaian citizens: 'We have made our position well-known. Ghanaian society frowns upon homosexuality' (CNS News, 2012). Sentiments like the one expressed by him provoke a nationalist defensiveness against queers who may be deemed by many as national enemies (see *The Ghanaian Times,* 2006 for e.g.).

A possible explanation as to why this polarisation occurs is to do with the fact that gay rights advocacies challenge the very fabric of social organisation by questioning government's authority to control morality within its jurisdiction for a 'desired social good'. This does not only bring moral panics, it provokes negative reactions from governments. In line with this, Donnelly (2003) remarks that till date, homosexuality is widely regarded by a significant number of people in almost all societies to be profoundly immoral. So, gay rights advocacies are met with energetic moral and religious rhetoric that seeks to maintain the 'ideals' of social organisation within a nation (Epprecht, 1998).

International Polarisation

The entrenched division between international stances on gay rights against national stances is what I am calling international polarisation. This type of polarisation mainly occurs at the diplomatic level (see CNS News, 2012). As shown, international gay rights advocates seek reforms to favour homosexuals. On the other side, there is a clear government stance against gay rights. There is almost a consolidation towards some sort of a national consensus on what sexualities entail for a Ghanaian. That is to say that, anti-gay stances are becoming supported with nationalist justifications. As indicated, phrases

along the lines of 'we' (Ghanaians) are used when people speak on issues of gay rights. This nationalist defensiveness emanates from debates on 'approved' sexual practices, where proponents against gay rights propose distinct and 'accepted' understandings of Ghanaian sexualities often rooted in heteronormativity. Interestingly, these nationalistic narratives may not only define sexualities based on heterosexuality.

As seen in the previous chapter, they also define approved ways by which someone can be queer. This thesis has demonstrated for instance that many Ghanaians seem to tolerate the old manifestations but would not tolerate the new manifestations of gayness and the call for gay rights. So, gay rights are dismissed with all the host of blizzard adjectives such as colonising, secular, juridical, individualistic and so do not resonate with realities in Ghana (see Kennedy, 2013; Oquaye, 2011). Consequently, the discourse on gay rights has been internationalised or depicted as foreign as discussed in chapters 2 and 5.

Intra-queer Polarisation

The divisions within the queer community in Ghana instigated and manifested through gay rights advocacies is what I am terming intra-queer polarisation. Here the polarisation is not

between straights and gays but from accusations made by queers against other queers. This generally occurs as a result of an individual's choice on how to manifest their gayness. As explained in the preceding chapter, some queers prefer manifesting in the old manifestations where they live their lives incognito without adopting a Western sexual identity although they may be exposed to them. Accordingly, although people may come into contact with a particular identity, they may not appropriate them.

Others decry the possibility of being connected with gay rights as they neither understand the associated politics nor their relevance. When O'Mara (2007) interviewed some queers in Ghana, she found out that, some of them avoid contact with organisations and individuals who trumpet gay rights. They accuse them of not being 'indigenous to Ghana and may be manipulated by international funder' (p. 45). Accordingly, gay rights are gradually being associated with the elites within the gay community; who speak English; receive funding from international donors; and often travel abroad for conferences. These dynamics create tensions within the queer community.

The Complications of Prioritisations

International gay rights advocates mainly base their demands on legal and cultural transformations. Such demands are

however intertwined with other integral aspects consisting of the economy, religion and values of any given society. Examples are provided below but one major area that critics say advocates overlook is to do with the socio-economic challenges faced by Ghanaians. Despite the sheer poverty many Ghanaians endure, critics argue that gay rights advocacies overlook the socio-economic disparities between countries (like the UK) who propose gay rights and Ghana who resist and reject them as not priorities (Kennedy, 2013; Oquaye, 2011). In other words, as gay rights advocates highlight the hierarchies found in sexualities, their opponents constantly bring to their attention the hierarchies and disparities within the global economic redistribution. Unintentionally compounding to this problem is the fact that some Western governments threaten broad sanctions when Ghanaian leaders propose that there are misplaced priorities within gay rights advocacies. This has been one of the major complications confronting gay rights advocacies and the recipe for antagonisms; one for which queers become scapegoats.

On this particular point, I draw on the exemplary works of Nancy Fraser. This is because she discusses specifically, contemporary issues and gay rights play a central role in her studies. Rather than falling for the lure of the proliferation of rights

advocacies in the combat against homophobia, Fraser (1995; 1997) shifts the debate from the cultural and the political. In a nuanced manner, she redirects the centre of attention to the complexities that accompany the inequalities within global economic redistribution. By 'inequalities within global economic redistribution', is meant unequal international wealth statuses between countries or what Milanovic (2005) calls in disparity terms, 'worlds apart'.

This is where there are considerable economic disparities between rich and poor countries. Fraser thinks there should be a conscious effort to remedy these inequalities, hierarchies and class systems rather than supplanting them with the talks of rights. She is not the only one who thinks in this direction. There are writers who suggest that the discourses about (gay) rights are incomplete, and require alternatives that should have a more encompassing and nuanced evaluation of issues. For example, Tushnet (1984) denounces rights as myths and illusion conjured to cover up the economic, political and social inequalities (see also Kennedy, 1984). I am not inferring that this is what Fraser thesis is wholly about, although she highlights the need for redistribution of wealth in the global economy quite significantly.

Fraser (1995) brings to bear a dilemma that she calls the politics of redistribution and recognition. The latter is to do with the request for the recognition of differences which fuels the struggle for groups under the umbrella of sexuality, race and gender. Consider for example that gay rights advocacies in Ghana as explained above is partly based on the quest for the cultural recognition for gays as a category with a distinct sexuality. These demands may seem localised but they resonate with some international patterns, particularly the strategies used by the gay liberation movements. So, the politics of recognition appears to be a strategy with a long-standing reputation where gays demand for cultural recognition of their sexuality from society. The politics of redistribution is to do with socio-economic injustices which are entrenched in the political structures of the international community. That is, there are socio-economic injustices in the sense that disparities between poor countries and richer countries are considerable. Some of the features of this international pattern include economic marginalisation and deprivation.[22]

The dilemma is that, the demand for recognition which is often couched under cultural domination subsequently supplants

[22] Economic marginalisation is where poor countries are being confined to undesired low paid jobs and unfair trade engagements in international trade (Spoor, 2006). Deprivation in this sense where there is a denial both locally and internationally of a material standard of living (Pogge, 2002).

economic exploitation as the fundamental injustice for gay and lesbian people. So the politics of recognition therefore displaces socio-economic redistribution as the answer to struggles and injustices: 'Increasingly, however, identity-based claims tend to predominate, as prospects for redistribution appear to recede' (Fraser, 1995, p. 70).

It is Fraser's thesis that, although she acknowledges the antagonisms in this dilemma, there should be an effort to appreciate redistributive concerns and that includes occasionally pursuing them simultaneously for better results. As she writes within the confines of justice, she implies that, we cannot speak of civil and political justice without socio-economic justice. Again we can see elements of rankings and prioritisations that have been the topic of debates in the rights arena been reargued here.

Fraser is further suggestive in terms of remedying these perceptions and antagonisms. She explains what she terms the affirmative and transformative remedies of justice (1995). The former is targeted at correcting inequitable outcomes of social organisation devoid of disturbing the underpinning framework that creates them. By this, it is meant in relation to this thesis that, gays in Ghana could be granted rights and cultural recognition without questioning why they were culturally 'devalued' in the first

place. With that option, society simply affirms demands by granting rights without recourse to the colonial, postcolonial and power relations that create the antagonisms in the first place. Hence affirmative remedy of justice is usually associated with mainstream multiculturalism where emphasis is placed on respecting and revaluing unjustly devalued group identities like gays and lesbians.

Transformative remedies on the other hand, seek to correct inequitable outcomes by restructuring the generative framework that produces them. Being the opposite of the affirmative, it poses the question of why groups like gays and lesbians are devalued in the first place. Transformative remedies of justice seek to challenge the cradle of injustices and not just provide rights to cover them up. This implies questioning both the heteronormative and homonormative understandings that have come to be naturalised in the gay rights debates. This includes the use of queer theory to deconstruct the hetero/homo dichotomy; essentialism; and identificatory categories. In Fraser's (1995, p. 83) words,

> The Transformative aim is not to solidify a gay identity, but to dissolve all sexual difference in a single, universal human identity; it is rather to sustain a sexual field of multiple, debinarised, fluid, ever-shifting differences.

Fraser's arguments are relevant to the complications of gay rights advocacies. It invites us to (re) think in terms of socio-economic inequalities alongside the quest for cultural and legal recognition. Practically, some of the points she makes have been articulated by other writers who have called for rich countries to support poor countries in the fight against poverty rather than the focus on rights. An-Na'im, Madigan, & Minkley (1997) adumbrate that human rights paradigm would not have any significance to most Africans if it neglects concerns of economic hopelessness in Africa. In Ghana, the reports show that indignity and powerlessness that inhibit people from exercising their human rights stem from harsh economic conditions like people not being able to afford basic needs like food (see for e.g., WFP, 2015). Some Ghanaian leaders ask why gay rights are trumpeted so loud when there are fundamental socio-economic issues that require equal attention from the international community. In an article titled 'Forcing Africa to Embrace Homosexuality' Dr Arthur Kennedy, an influential Ghanaian politician typifies this argument as follows:

> on grounds of our priorities, the focus on homosexuality is a luxury we cannot afford. We have problems with child labour, discrimination against women, education and unemployment…If the West cares about us, they should help us in solving these big issues (Kennedy, 2013).

Professor Michael Oquaye, an outspoken Ghanaian politician on gay rights also raises this issue. He calls on David Cameron, the British Prime Minister to look at how poverty affects Ghanaians rather than prioritising gay rights in the following way:

> If Cameron is really concerned about human rights of Ghanaians... he should be considering the right of the following, for example: kwashiorkor children, sickle cell disease sufferers, street children (Oquaye, 2011, p. 10).

Let us say that these are views of opinion leaders who have blatantly made known their stance against gay rights. But I sought clarification on same from an (Ghanaian-led) organisation at the forefront of gay rights advocacies in Ghana and was surprised to be told that they are equally concerned about socio-economic issues affecting the people they work for. It was further stressed that, with regard to socio-economic challenges gays and lesbians are particularly vulnerable:

> Gay rights are human rights, and the variance in socio-economic problems, including disparities in the distribution of wealth, income, and access to resources, affect everyone. In Ghana individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) are especially susceptible to being placed at a socioeconomic disadvantage. Thus, socio-economic problems are inherently related to the rights and well-being of LGBT persons (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14).

The key point here is that the global redistributive concerns expressed by detractors and even supporters of gay rights should be taken seriously. Far from being an apologist for Oquaye and Kennedy; but when there is a constant reference to the generic socio-economic problems even by gay rights advocates, it is a reminder that, that need attention. This pattern and disagreements between local needs and international focus in human rights in general are pointing cues as to which rights are given priorities over the other depending on those making the claims. Epprecht (2013) again is critical of activisms that would not consider the socio-economic inequalities between Western superpowers and Africans:

> Activist in the West should consider devoting part of their energies and critical self-reflection to the current practices and structures that shore up Western power and exacerbated socio-economic inequalities in Africa (p. 178).

African leaders have raised similar concerns about the need for socio-economic rights to be prioritised (Hollenbach, 1998). They propose that there should be equal commitment to socio-economic rights, in the case of Africa. This is telling in the conceptual focus of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (the Banjul Charter). The Banjul Charter appears to focus

on the socio-economic needs of Africans and it sums this point up in its preamble:

> Convinced that it is henceforth essential to pay a particular attention to the right to development and that civil and political rights cannot be dissociated from economic, social and cultural rights in their conception as well as universality and that the satisfaction of economic, social and cultural rights i(s) a guarantee for the enjoyment of civil and political rights (Banjul Charter, 1986).

Conclusion: Beyond Gay Rights Advocacies; Alternative Approaches

We can see from the above that gay rights advocacies face substantial resistances and complications. Yet this thesis does not profess that other approaches which are outlined below have had similar levels of complications and antagonisms. The Ghanaian government and other important stakeholders like the Ghana Aids Commission, the Ghana Police Service and the Ministry of Health have used several approaches outside the demands and the assertion of (gay) rights in protecting the dignity of citizens; homosexuals included. For instance, appreciating the potentials of backlashes, the government and key stakeholders have avoided the use of words like gays, homosexuals and rights (Ghana Aids Commission, 2014). As we have seen, these words immediately evoke tensions. In their stead, words and phrases like key

populations, marginalised persons, MSM, public health, reaching out, dignity, and protection, are being used.

The (re) naming have been important in avoiding public criticisms whilst at same time providing protections for homosexuals. Thus, mirroring the silences that surround gayness in Ghana, the government through subtle ways provides avenues for the protection of gay people. For example, although there is no policy statement on guidance for homosexuals, Robertson (2009, p. 4) recognises how the Ghanaian government is doing this:

> even without policy guidance, the Ghanaian government has quietly recognised the need to respond to…MSM, although it believes it must do so discreetly.

In one case, the government and key policy makers whilst overseeing the conduct of a research on MSM actually stopped its publication because, the document was deemed sensitive. They did so not to promote any government's interest, but to protect gay people from a potential backlash should the report be published. So stakeholders carefully considered the timing and context for some time until they made the report available at a point that was deemed appropriate:

> SHARP's biomarker research on MSM was considered to be so sensitive by some policymakers and other leaders in the HIV stakeholder community in Ghana that they discouraged public release of the final

> report. Concerns were raised that the dissemination of data showing such high HIV prevalence among MSM could be used to blame them for the epidemic in Ghana and create a possibly violent backlash. As a consequence, the final report was never formally released, and only shortly before SHARP closed in 2009 were the main findings from the study published online (Robertson, 2009, p. 4).

It is such contextual understandings, strategic timings and nuanced approaches that make Ghana distinguishable from other sub-Saharan African countries in terms of the issues that affect gay people. The following is how such features of Ghana have been described:

> Ghana, which like its neighbouring states condemns homosexuality, is distinguished from most countries in sub-Saharan Africa by the level of activity addressing MSM. With the support of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), ground-breaking…programming for MSM has been developed in the country…officials have also not prevented the development of…interventions despite the legal prohibition of homosexual behaviour (Robertson, 2009, p. 1).

In discussing what has worked so far in place of the demands for gay rights, let me provide below concrete and tangible examples:

Public Health

The number one area where examples abound on this aspect is public health. Before critics launch attacks on this approach by evoking theories around the medicalisation of homosexualities in

the academic scholarship, it is important to recognise how effective public health approaches have been on the real-world side. Medicalisation of homosexualities is to do with the process by which homosexualities are defined, conceptualised, theorised and treated as medical conditions (see, Conrad, 2007 for detailed discussion of the term). This thesis is aware of and appreciates the literature on the disadvantages that come with the theorisation of sexualities (e.g., Epstein, 1996) especially 'deviant' ones as medical conditions. But the Ghanaian case presents a different picture. Different in the sense that, the quest by health care professionals as we will see is not to diagnose and prescribe a 'cure' for homosexualities, but to rather provide services in ways that are dignified for homosexuals who seek their help. It is also different because the approach has not been top-down where professionals dictate every facet of the engagement. As we will see, homosexuals have been involved in a huge way.

Before outlining how these approaches have been working on the empirical side, it is worth mentioning how even within the academic side, the same approach has yielded unprecedented and ground-breaking initiatives. For example, there has been a (deafening) silence on the topic of homosexualities by Ghanaian academics for long time. I have shown in chapter 4 how leading

Ghanaian academics focus extensively on the sexualities part, whilst relegating the homo aspect of the word 'homosexualities' to the realms of the unspoken (see Ankomah, 2004 for an exception). But for the scholarly interventions of professionals and researchers in the health sector, Ghana would have very minimal scholarship on homosexualities.

This is to pinpoint how the few researches on gayness have mainly come from the health sector. Attipoe's research is a palpable exemplar in point. Perhaps this paradigm explains why the references and quotations in this conclusion are mainly from public health experts, the Ministry of Health, the Ghana AIDS Commission; etc. And not from respected Ghanaian academics (both past and present) like Sarbah (1897); Busia (1950); Nukunya (1969); Anarfi (1993; 2006); Sarpong (1977); Oppong, Oppong & Odotei, (2006); Adomako Ampofo & Boateng (2007); etc.

What is striking about some of the quotations and examples provided below is that, although they start from public health analysis, they move into issues of non-discrimination, equality, dignity and protection. This is crucial because although the starting point is within health, it opens other avenues up. Two of my interviewees speaking on this paradigm concur:

> as a country, we in HIV …ensure that MSM have access to services and that they are treated with dignity and respect, and that they are not abused or they do not suffer any form of discrimination at any point in the service delivery process. So we have laid the necessary foundation and other sectors can build on what we have done to ensure that they receive comprehensive services especially in the health sector (Francis, 26.1.15).
>
> public health approach appeals to everyone so... starting from that point of view has gained us inroads even within the public health sector; gained inroads in training health personnel to be key-population friendly and reducing stigma; and providing access and proper health services to MSM (Ama, 21.2.15).

In effect, the dynamics suggest that, it has been through public health strategies (not gay rights advocacies) that issues affecting gay people are getting organised and gradually developing, with the potential of becoming key policy document that looks into ways of reducing stigma:

> We have… Standard Operating Procedure for all civil society and partners… this is…a national document under the Ghana AIDS Commission. So we have been able to make inroads in developing and getting key population into key strategic policy documents on HIV in the country; and within it we are talking about stigma reduction and what could be done (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15).

Also, it is through the 'relaxed' public health approaches that other key organisations in Ghana outside the health sector like the

Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) are getting drawn into fruitful and productive discussions. It was not a government official/department who commended this approach but a leader of a gay rights advocacy group in Ghana, thereby signifying its positive effects. Highlighting that there is more room for improvement, he shares how his organisation accesses key state institutions:

> currently we are able to engage state organisations (specifically, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice… directly to address some of our needs (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14).

Engaging the Queer Community

It has been established that gay rights discussions have been internationalised. The exchanges are between Ghanaian elites like Presidents, Members of Parliament and the clergy one the one hand. And international elites and organisations like the Prime Minister of the UK; the President of the U.S.; ILGA; and OutRight; on the other. As the tensions sour between powerful men and women regarding gay rights advocacies that usually take place in capital cities such as Accra, London and Washington, public health officials in friendly ways engage gay people locally from major cities to the rural areas of Ghana. They train gay people to become peer educators or community liaison officers. According to an interviewee, these are 'MSM… recruited as part of

the project to reach the MSM who did not want to be reached face to face through peer education' (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15). This is to enable them to provide support, counselling and comfort to fellow gay men:

> we have trained some of them who are peer educators who reach out to them and bring them to the facilities and the drop-in centres. [We have] trained healthcare workers in specific hospitals who provide friendly services to them; so we do not have major issues there. Now those who also face stigma, discrimination or any form of abuse, we have trained some of them as watchers – they watch over each other (Interview, Francis, 26.1.15).

Similarly, the few people involved in working with gay people in Ghana are familiar with (insider) terms and notions like M-Friends and M-Watchers which are built on the idea of providing community-focused trainings that enable the quick reports of and responses to abuses against gay people (PEPFAR, 2014; Ghana Aids Commission, 2014; Interview, Francis, 26.1.15). M-Friends include key local professionals like lawyers, police officers, district assembly members and health care workers who receive specialised trainings to provide special services and immediate responses to gay men who face abuses, stigma or violence (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15; PEPFAR, 2014). It is the range of key stakeholders involved and the fact that the training courses on

MSM are progressively being integrated into the curriculum of the Ghana Police Service that make the scheme classic:

> We have trained lawyers…judges…judicial service officers, the police; and now we have even curriculum that integrates these issues in the Police Service…We have trained parliamentarians, we have had several advocacies (Interview, Francis, 26.1.15).

M-Watchers are a group of leading MSM who get trained and receive the logistics that enable them to report abuses within 2 hours of them being notified by other MSM (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15). Through these schemes, M-Watchers could report abuse to equally trained police officers or lawyers (M-Friends) who provide advice or legal aid:

> we call them M-Watchers, they are MSM themselves, they have trained them and we have linked them up with our contacts in the police service and in the law enforcement agencies, and we have lawyers who have been trained to provide legal aid for them (Interview, Francis, 26.1.15).

Perhaps it is through this mutual trust between gays and health care professionals that enables the former to reveal vital information about the operations of brothels for gay sex workers; including the owners who operate them to the latter. Such vital insights could elude the most ardent of gay rights advocates. An interviewee proudly asserts:

> We did identify some MSM brothel sites in Accra and we did engage the pimps and the brothel owners as to whether we could have discussions

> and educational activities as well as testing and counselling for the male sex workers… These sites were visited and we provided testing and counselling and commodities to the sex workers. We have identified up to date a total of 7 brothel sites (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15).

Whilst these provisions may not be couched in strict legalistic terms of special (gay) rights, they could be branded as special treatments for gay people. It is the country Ghana in question, where access to healthcare provision has been branded as inadequate by reports (see, World Health Organisation, 2014). Yet gay people have special services within health care like drop-in centres specifically made for them:

> We have drop-in centres set up for them [gay people] so they walk in, and they can even have games in there, meet new people, talk to people, health workers, get all the services they need, get all the health commodities they need. If they have to test for HIV it is also done for them. If they have other needs that the drop-in centres do not provide, they are referred to the appropriate complimentary service delivery points like hospitals or health facilities, social service centres. It can be anything depending on their needs (Interview, Francis, 26.1.15).

I am told that such 'special and preferential treatments' are not limited to health care access but other avenues as well. Apart from the M-Friends and the M-Watchers systems, gay people could report abuse from anywhere in Ghana to officials of CHRAJ by

sending them text messages, a 'luxury' that has not been extended to all Ghanaians who face other forms of abuse:

> we also have a system, an electronic system for reporting abuse throughout the country, and we have done that in collaboration with CHRAJ, so they [gays] can use mobile phones to send a text message to a CHRAJ Officer who will take the records and follow up. They can also use the internet service to do the reporting and the CHRAJ Officer will follow up and build the case, and then investigate the case and do a report for decision making in that respect (Interview, Francis, 26.1.15).

The lesson here is that, whilst it could be argued that there could be room for improvement in protecting human dignity of vulnerable groups in Ghana, the fact that these approaches have not been branded as gay rights does not nullify their overall capabilities. So, even as the American President, the British Prime Minister, the MSP; ILGA; and OutRight criticise the Ghanaian government for not embracing gay rights, the latter has resorted to nuanced ways of protecting its citizens amidst the potential of backlashes. This pattern makes worthwhile (re) quoting the Ghanaian President who responded to international critics in the following way:

> I believe that laws must prevail. For instance, people must not be beaten or killed because of their sexual orientation, but in my country

there is a strong cultural hostility towards it [gayness] (quoted in Erasing 76 Crimes, 2013).

Chapter 7- CONCLUSION: MAIN FINDINGS AND RECCOMENDATIONS

Introduction

From the onset it was made clear that the purpose of this thesis is neither to justify nor condemn gay rights advocacies. This is purely because the issues raised in the entire thesis are beyond strict categorisations, where one either supports or oppose gay rights advocacies. The practical complications from the theoretical asymmetries have been outlined in chapter 6 but will be briefly recapped below. Subjecting the theoretical basis of gay rights advocacies to scrutiny, critiques became unavoidable. The critiques are reiterated in this conclusion.

The theories which were drawn upon, namely queer, postcolonial and human rights all have important things to say about gay rights. They also differ sharply but the theory of essentialism connects them in unique ways. I have shown how popular postcolonial discourses, gay rights proponents and even those who resist them make claims to essentialism in justifying their philosophies. For, although queer theory challenges the theory of essentialism, in the realms of activism, the two theories may be used in tandem to achieve different purposes. It has been discussed in chapter 3 how activists make either the compelling

case that one is born-an essentialist claim- gay (Vitagliano 2012; Irvine, 1990; Stein, 1992, p. 325); or one becomes-queer claim-gay (Jagose, 1996; Hall, 2003). Whether one is born gay or becomes gay, the overriding aim of activists is to appeal to the social conscience of those who contemplate on abusing gay people (see, Blumenfeld, 1992; Kantor, 2009, Berzon, 1996).

For this thesis, commencing from a queer perspective meant questioning some of the theoretical assumptions that underpin gay rights advocacies. One main critique that queer theory raises against gay rights is the presumption that there is uniformity of (homo) sexualities (Dugan, 1992). In chapter 3, I have explained how this presumption connotes that there are core and widespread features that unite (homo) sexualities globally (Warner, 1993). That presumption holds that, gays are a distinctive category of people who share unique global similarities that make them unlike others. Unavoidably this leads to the critique that gay rights advocacies often assume pre-empirically that gays everywhere should idyllically manifest in certain 'approved' ways often mirroring themes like coming out of the closet, gay pride matches, gay rights demands, gay marriages, adoption, etc., (Massad, 2007).

Further, this implies that gays in the world share common understandings, meanings and connotations as to what being gay is and thereby face similar challenges that could be remedied by the propagation of (gay) rights assertions. These attributes partly describe what has been branded in the literature as homonormativity where some aspects of homosexualities seek to be normalised and naturalised (Drucker, 2015; O'Brien, 2014; Post, 2010). Ironically and not unlike its apparent opposite known as heteronormativity, gay people claim that their sexualities are natural, inborn and with universal attributes that make them different, just as heterosexuals do (Duggan 2003).

It is the fact that these cherished features of gay rights advocacies are not found in all societies that leads this thesis to conclude in agreement with other authors like Epprecht (2013); and Massad (2007) that gay rights advocates are inadvertently projecting Western understandings of (homo) sexualities. Once this projection is backed by the threat of aid cut from Western superpowers without considering the contextual relevance of gay rights politics, the whole project is deemed assimilationist, imperialistic and repressive of other understandings of sexualities that are outside the sexual epistemology of the advocacies (Massad, 2007, p. 163).

Even so, it would be unfair not to acknowledge one major achievement of gay rights advocacies in the Ghanaian case without which this conclusion becomes a gross misrepresentation of the events. Despite the critique against gay rights advocacies, the claims and politics of advocates both local and international have helped in generating debates and discussions about homosexualities which are largely perceived as a taboo subject (Tamale, 2011). Today, there are several reports, newspaper articles, speeches and avenues that make discussing gayness possible (see for e.g., Afari, 2006; Ghanaweb, 2015a; Justice.gov, 2008). A reminder of the Ghanaian history in relation to homosexualities would help support and put this point in perspective.

As analysed in chapter 5, prior to the (watershed) year 2006, there were very few reports on gayness. This was reflected in both the international and local arenas where the infrequency of the reports could make them pass for the non-existent. Prior to that year, international organisations like ILGA, OutRight and Western countries such as the U.S. and the UK did not pay attention to Ghana in respect to gayness (see for e.g., U.S. Department of State, 2004). For the local press in Ghana, issues about homosexualities where often centred on foreign stories, not

on homosexualities in Ghana (see for e.g., *The Ghanaian Times*, 2005a). Gay rights advocacies changed this paradigm from the year 2006. This is demonstrated by the sheer proliferation of reports by both international and Ghanaian media houses on gayness in Ghana since that year (Afari, 2006; Ghanaweb, 2015a; Justice.gov, 2008). This means that the issues around homosexualities which were deemed 'don't ask, don't tell' have become highly topical in Ghana.

What I wish to foreground in this conclusion is that despite the tensions they create, gay rights advocacies made possible some avenues for deliberations. Even an ardent critic has to credit gay rights advocates for bringing a highly 'taboo' subject to the fore. This is crucial because, much as people at times say they do not want to talk about homosexuals, the fact that the debate comes up in the Ghanaian media sporadically indicates that discussions about homosexualities in Ghana have become unavoidable. And I have to add that, it was the tensions the advocacies brought that partly prompted this research in the first place.

Like a double edged (queer) sword this work has not only raised critical dimensions of gay rights, it has also questioned the basis of the resistances to gay rights. It does so by challenging the

essentialist basis upon which the claim to a distinct African culture and sexuality is made. Holding that such claims are philosophically incoherent, the thesis highlights historically that the word Africa is a Eurocentric term that connotes negativities (see, Jarosz, 1992; McCarthy, 1983; Hibbert, 2002). Africans holding on to, and embracing that word is one thing, but saying that there is a natural and a given sexuality that makes Africans distinct would be adding insult to injury. Thus, to claim that all Africans through their 'culture' have a unified and a distinct sexuality which is strictly based on normalised heteronormativity forecloses discussions. The word 'culture' is deliberately placed in inverted commas to highlight how Africans have cultures not culture. The main point about foreclosing discussion is framed in the question of 'how one does discuss homosexuals who do not 'exist' on the continent?

In the face of evidence saying that homosexualities exist in different parts of the world, some choose to believe Africa was/is free of homosexualities (see for e.g., BBC News, 2001; CBC News, 2014; CNS News, 2015, Epprecht, 2004; Zabus, 2013). Even when black homosexuals from Africa come out and insist that they are gays, they are wholly externalised to Western derived identities without any convincing justifications but only to say that they have 'learnt' it by way of contact with white people. Assuming, not

necessarily admitting that they have indeed learnt it from white people, have homosexualities (upon that same inconsistent logic) not become part of Africans in much the same way as other practices and cultures borrowed by Africans? Beyond this rhetorical question, research actually shows that homosexualities existed/exist in many parts of the continent (see for e.g., Boisvert & Johnson 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2008; Needham, 1960; Greenberg, 1988; Besmer, 1983; Gorer, 2005; Murray & Roscoe, 1998; etc.). Those who agree with this point but blame homosexualities in Africa on white people do a disservice that has an inherent racist overtone. Thus, blaming homosexualities on white people is the repetition of the ills of racism. Only that this time, it is done by some Africans like Mugabe, Museveni and Moi who might selectively forget or intentionally ignore that they cry foul when some equally racist white people or press reports (see for e.g. Smith, 2014; Mills, 2011; The Telegraph, 2013) insult them by calling them backward and homophobic.

Summary of Main Findings

This thesis came across several findings and I summarise the main ones in this section. In addition, the study has inevitably been limited but points to potential future studies. As this study centred mainly on male homosexualities, a future study that looks

at the intricacies of female homosexualities in Ghana in relation to some of the key points raised here is required. Also, as hinted in the introduction, this study has been a single case study of Ghana and justifications have been provided in its defence. However, a comparable case study of two or more African countries with similar colonial histories but different modalities on how gayness and gay rights have been received would provide more insights into the discourse. Last but not least, this study concentrates on how Christianity has influenced the discourse in Ghana, and so a study that looks at how Islam relates to homosexualities in Ghana or Africa as a whole would be elucidating.

In the quest to summarise key findings of this work, I ask some of the frequently asked questions about gay rights and (homo) sexualities in Ghana. Subsequently, I answer them based on the research findings from this thesis.

Are Homosexualities Ghanaian?

Much as many Ghanaians would like to believe otherwise, the evidence demonstrates that homosexualities are 'Ghanaian'. By 'Ghanaian' is meant here that there are gay people who are Ghanaians and homosexualities in Ghana is not a recent phenomenon. Over 60 years ago, Christenson (1954) found traces of homosexualities in Ghana. Reflecting the silences that govern

homosexualities in Ghana, his findings did not prompt any in-depth studies on the subject. An elderly Ghanaian interviewee revealed to me that around 1971, when studying in a secondary school, there were reports of *trumutu, supi* and *piu* amongst students in single-sex schools (Interview, Maame, 13.1.15).

Administering and studying 156 questionnaires, Dr Dela Attipoe in the year 2004 establishes that 'MSM are real in Ghana with Ghanaians fully involved' (Attipoe, 2004). As an authority in the field, Attipoe (2004) further answers those who might suggest that homosexualities in Ghana are recent phenomenon and/or as a result of contact with white people or foreignness. Thus, his research establishes that men who sleep with men

> is not a recent phenomenon being visited on Ghana and Ghanaians by 'whites' or foreigners' and that 'It is practically happening everywhere, particularly where people gather for celebrations and merry making in urban areas, along with other places most people would never suspect.

As recent as 2013 we are told not by a foreign organisation but the Ghana Aids Commission (2015, p. 6) that,

> there are approximately 30,579 MSM in Ghana, with a lower plausibility bound of 21,645 MSM and an upper plausibility bound of 34,470 MSM.

Considering that this data is only regarding those who have come forward, this number could be an underestimate. One of the

interviewees who conducted research on a similar project puts it this way:

> the project that I worked on which ended in December for five years for the SHARPER Project, we were able to reach close to 48,000 MSM, so that is why we are saying that, that number could be an underestimate (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15).

Fast forward to the here and the now, as I write in this year, 2016, perhaps it is the sheer number of Ghanaian gay men seeking lovers online (Friend finder, 2016; Gay-datanta, 2016; Boyfriend.name, 2016) that makes one Ghanaian newspaper concludes that 'Ghana Tops Gay List In Africa' (The Independent, 2013). It is the captivating way in which an interviewee (an expert on the field), responds to Ghanaians who ask whether or not gayness is foreign, that makes her answer worthy of recitation:

> If they say that, I ask them whether having sex is foreign. Because these sexual orientations have always been there. You talk to people, old and young and you would know that it has always been around... It has always been in the schools…It has always been in the universities. It has been with us (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15).

Another place where evidence of gay sex exists is the area of prostitution. Male prostitution is common in Ghana according to the findings of the studies in that area. Studies suggest that there are male prostitutes who sell sex to male clients. As shown in chapter 6, I am told by one of the leaders of the research that

looked into MSM in Ghana that there are '7 brothel sites for MSM in Ghana' (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15). These findings have been confirmed by the arrest of male prostitutes by the Ghana Police Service. In one instance, a male sex worker was arrested for soliciting or importuning prostitution and given a fine (Peace FM, 2009). In the nutshell, this research concludes that, homosexualities, gayness, queer, bisexualities and all the host of complicated names that could be associated with same-sex intercourse and relationships are evident in Ghana.

Are Homosexualities un-African?

This thesis has equally discussed evidence of the existence of same-sex intercourse and relationships in different parts of Africa. Several examples have been provided in chapter 2 to refute the claim that homosexualities are not African (see Boisvert & Johnson 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2008; Needham, 1960; Greenberg, 1988; Besmer, 1983; Gorer, 2005; Murray & Roscoe, 1998). To further complicate what has been said about a claim to a distinct African culture and in relation to gay rights resistances, can the claim to Africanness stand the test of academic scrutiny? This is because once we claim Africanness several questions immediately arise. The crucial amongst them is what do we mean by Africanness? Countless answers might be given; perhaps the most

convincing being geographic (World Atlas, 2016). Thus, we may assume geographically a continent and a space on earth called Africa and so Africanness could be found in geography. But we know that those who make a claim to Africanness mean more than geography. They romantically make references to a distinct and a unified culture of the inhabitants of that continent (see BBC News, 2001; CBC News, 2014; CNS News, 2015).

Yet, if we think in terms of what constitute Africanness outside that geographical enclose to include cultures, customs, religions, artefacts and values, then that sense of Africanness immediately become problematic. This is made clear particularly in the area of gay rights advocacies and their resistances, for the following reasons. Do we mean the Africanness of the different ethnic groups composing the 54 individual countries (World Atlas, 2016) with millions of people who speak 1500 to 2000 languages (nationsonline.org, 2016)? If so, then apart from their shared commonality found in the abject poverty they face (World Bank, 2012), there is not much left that unifies them, given their sheer numbers and the variations in their cultures and languages. Even within colonial and postcolonial terms, the intermingling of different foreign and native cultures only makes the claim to Africanness even more unintelligible. Thus, it makes it extremely

difficult if not impossible to separate what passes for Africanness from that which is Western.

This is because when Africans claim that their countries are Christian countries and are truthfully backed by the religious demographics (Pew Research Centre, 2006), what they imply is that, ironically they have more in common with Western Christian countries than they have imagined. As discussed in chapter 6, the dominant discourse on the Christian religion blurs the differences in the cultural responses and resistances to gay rights in both Western and African countries as if they have no specific geopolitical histories. Typical of some Africans, Robert (a popular European name (Ancestry.co.uk, 2016) Mugabe speaks impeccable English (learnt from colonial and mission schools (oldachimotan.net, 2015); and proudly embraces his Christian religion (Relzim, 2013), a practice imported to Zimbabwe and other African countries by Western missionaries and British colonisation (Carey, 2011; Robert, 2008). When he lays claims to 'distinctive' Africanness and insults all American leaders as 'Satan worshipers' (Mail Online, 2015) confusion abounds.

Such a disposition makes one wonder what Africanness (granted such a word should exits) has to do with the (foreign) English language and Christianity. Again one cannot help but

wonder how to distinguish Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe from Rick Santorum of America in terms of how they respond to discussions on homosexualities. For both of them liken gay people to dogs as if their reactions to gay rights have been scripted (see USA Today, 2003; Maclean, 2012). The point to note from this identity fragmentation is that (not all but) the dominant discourse of the Christian religion has united anti-gay stances in a universal manner. Thus, the differences between the Africans, Americans and other Westerners who oppose the advocacies in the name of Christianity are almost negligible.

But that is not all. Those who propose and support gay rights including the black Africans amongst them, also follow suit. In that, their politics and their advocacies have been linked with developments in Western countries, with the stonewall riots that took place in America being the cradle of their movements. Perhaps this is what makes Epprecht (2013) conclude that, gay rights advocacies in Africa is disproportionately white and foreign. The word 'white' used in the preceding sentence is represented by the sheer number of organisations and people from Europe and America that are involved in the advocacies in Africa. The word 'foreign' used in that same sentence signifies how the small number of the locals and black Africans amongst gay rights

advocates are accused of aiding imperialism, connected to wealthy Western NGOs and therefore externalised to wealthy Western countries.

Are the Manifestations of Homosexualities the Same?

The manifestations of homosexualities are numerous and hence problematic when perceived as same. This is true for Ghana as it is for Africa and the rest of the world. I use the plural homosexualities for a reason and that is to highlight the different expressions found in different cultures as established in chapters 3, 4 and 5. Although traces of homosexualities are found in Ghana, their manifestations have not been the same. This point transposes into two main crucial points. First and foremost, this means that, some homosexuals in Ghana have not expressed their sexualities in the same way as others in the Western world. This implies that all gays in Ghana should therefore not be expected to express their gayness in the same ways as gays in other places do. Whenever these dynamics are not properly appreciated, they lead to activisms and politics particularly within international gay rights advocacies that are tantamount to forcibly assimilation of local manifestations into dominant ones. This is where the politics of coming out of the closet, gay pride matches, gay rights

demands, gay marriages, and adoption become universal attributes without which gays are deemed not fully 'liberated'.

The second point reinforces the first by holding that even in Ghana what count as homosexualities in relation to manifestations have seen considerable changes from time to time. I have shown in chapter 5 how the periods before, during, and after the year 2006 highlight the old, new and hybrid manifestations of homosexualities in Ghana. This does not come as a surprise because as indicated, Ghana is made up of several ethnic groups and hence different sexualities. Different sexualities mean different expressions. It is for this reason of manifold manifestations that gay rights advocacies become problematic when they project a one-fit-all understanding and manifestation of (homo) sexualities.

Are Ghanaians Inherently Homophobic?

Whilst there are traces of homophobic attacks in Ghana like anywhere else in the world, there is nothing inherently 'Ghanaian' about them. In line with the discussions in chapter 2, homophobia is a colonial/Western import that is still entrenched by equally colonial/Western dominant discourse on Christianity. I discuss the effects of homophobia separately below, but if there was any word that is to be branded foreign in the gay rights circles, then it is

homophobia. This is known because history tells us that, as a colony of Britain, most of the Ghanaian laws and jurisprudence reflect English ones (Read, 1962). If we conclude that the source of the criminal law and recent manifestations of homophobia are both foreign then indeed, we implicitly infer that homophobia is foreign to Ghanaians.

This is not to say that, Ghanaians are not playing their own role in sustaining homophobia in that country. I have established how postcolonial leaders from Ghana entrenched and perpetuated inherited colonial legacies on sexualities. It shall soon be discussed below with examples of how homophobic attacks are carried out not by foreigners but by Ghanaians against fellow Ghanaians. My intention is rather to state that when Ghanaians offer reasons for homophobia, those reasons are grounded in colonial legacies. Also those who want homosexuals punished often refer to a law that was originally exported by colonial authorities nearly 125 years ago. Put these together and it might make sense why, gradually, Ghanaian anti-gay sentiments are sounding more and more like Christian evangelicals in far-away Western countries such as America.

Are (Homo) Sexualities Natural?

The Ghanaian case buttresses the assertion that (homo) sexualities are not natural. This is because sexualities are socially constructed by the conglomeration of several aspects of a given society. Prior to colonisation, there was no Gold Coast or Ghana but individual and varied autonomous states and ethnic groups that occupy the geographical area we now know as Ghana (World Atlas, 2016; nations online.org, 2016). The names Gold Coast and Ghana did not exist but for the calling into existence (naming) by the colonial authorities and Ghanaian postcolonial leaders respectively (see, Pierre, 2013; Davy, 1969). The phrase 'calling into existence' is evoked deliberately to signify the possibility of socially constructing any phenomenon, not excluding colonial territories and postcolonial nations. What has been grounded in this thesis is that, the people of Ghana and their habitats long preceded these ruptures of naming by both white colonists and black nation builders.

This means that, autonomous ethnic groups preceding colonisation had different understandings, modalities and manifestations of sexualities. The pre, colonial and postcolonial histories reveal that, Ghanaian sexualities as we know them to be today are products of numerous socio cultural aspects. Mixing with

different contexts and timings, I have already discussed how the colonial and postcolonial preference of social organisation constructed heterosexual, patriarchal and (gender) stratified notions of sexualities. Moreover, the fact that notions of sexualities have not been static but dynamic demonstrates further that there is nothing natural or essential about Ghanaian sexualities.

This is exemplified by the common knowledge that although we can speak of Ghanaian customary marriages for example, different ethnic groups in Ghana have their own unique ways of interpreting and even operationalising their customary marriages. Surely we call all of them customary marriages, but there are distinctive features of an Akan, Eve, Ga or Gonja marriages (Amoo, 1946). The same logic applies to the construction of all sexualities, same-sex sexualities included. Therefore, this thesis agrees with Butler (1993; 1990, p. 129) who insists that sexualities (and gender) are products of reiterations and recitations of the 'ideal' notions about what any society would like to deem 'normal'.

Are Gay Rights Advocates Achieving their Objectives?

Gay rights are rife with complications and controversies. The reports that followed gay rights campaigns and advocacies in Ghana indicate that, they face serious resistances, thereby raising

several backlashes in place of the purported 'liberation' for gay people (Interview, CEPEHRG, 20.11.14; U.S. Department of State, 2013). Indeed it could be said that the advocacies have inadvertently been counterproductive. For it could not be by utter coincidence that, a rise in anti-gay reports is often preceded by gay rights campaigns. The events of the years 2006, 2011 and 2012 bear witnesses to this pattern (see for e.g., CNS News, 2012). It is not always the enemies of, but also some of the supporters of gay rights who admit their philosophies and their politics have not been working as were originally envisaged. For example, as already alluded to, CEPEHRG (Interview, 20.11.14) a pro-gay rights advocacy group retells how its activities often result in backlashes from Ghanaians.

Similarly, it is not always heterosexuals who argue that gay rights advocacies do not work in some instances. Some gays themselves, on whose behalf gay rights are championed accuse the advocacies as not beneficial (see for e.g., Mensah, 2006). In practice, the activities of activists often incite anti-gay sentiments by politicising the debate (Joy Online, 2013b; Interview, Alima, 15.11.14). At other times, their activities have resulted in not only silencing other avenues of manifestations of sexualities and the accompanying avenues of protections for gay people, they have

also created polarisation (Roberts, 2008, p. 201; Interview, Fiifi, 01.11.14). All in all, gay rights advocacies have resulted in more complications than emancipatory ends. This does not mean that other approaches outside gay rights advocacies have not worked. As established, the government of Ghana and other key institutions use alternative approaches within public health in particular to offer protections to gay people. These nuanced and tactful approaches have been instrumental and welcomed by stakeholders and gay people alike. In concluding this section, let me underline that, perhaps rather than insisting on (acrimonious and legalistic) rights claims, these avenues outlined above could be further explored and developed.

Recommendations

At this point some recommendations that emanate from the theoretical and empirical issues in the study are in order. As the debate is internationalised and localised, I shall categorise the recommendations in that order. As gay rights advocacies is seen as Western or international and linked with threats of aid cut and forcible assimilation, I shall frame recommendations in socio-economic terms. The second part of recommendations for international partners is framed in terms of the reasons given for homophobia and anti-gay stances; and why those reasons must

be taken seriously. As the resistances or anti-gay stances are framed in homophobic terms, the suggestions for Ghanaians, locals, government and localised stakeholders will be framed in relation to the effects of homophobia. The aim of this is to discuss how all Ghanaians, not just gay people are at risk of facing discrimination, hatred and violence.

Socio-economic Issues

Foreign countries, agencies, organisations and individuals with genuine interests in offering a helping hand to Ghanaians in the quest to protect human dignity, must be equally concerned with the totality of the several issues that affect Ghanaians. As shown in chapter 6, Ghanaians face harsh socio-economic conditions. Per the World Bank development indicators, many Ghanaians are classified as extremely poor because they live below the national poverty lines (World Bank, 2015), set by the World Bank to be below $1.25 (dollars) per day (Global Monitoring Report, 2015). It is not always from sheer hatred for gay people when some Ghanaians ask why gay rights issues have been prioritised despite the poverty many Ghanaians endure.

Hence, whilst support and help from international partners are welcomed, prioritising gay rights without recourse to other prevailing socio-economic challenges only complicates matters.

Most of my interviewees who work with gay men in Ghana were thankful for the funding from the USAID (Interview, Salifu, 20.1.15; Interview, Francis 26.1.15). Yet they decry how gay issues have become a chief aid conditionality without which applications for external funds become a fruitless endeavour. Consequently, one of the major criticisms levelled against foreign and wealthy partners is that if the advocacies mean well for Ghanaians, then they should be concerned with the generic socio-economic challenges faced by all Ghanaians, not just gay Ghanaians (Kennedy, 2013; Oquaye, 2011, p. 10).

It is not hard to explain why gay rights are not a priority to some Ghanaians. The reports tell us that the dishonour and hopelessness that hinder Ghanaians from exercising all human rights stem from harsh socio-economic conditions like people not being able to afford basic needs like food (see for e.g., WFP, 2015). At times, one is wary of the abuse of the word 'context' but one of the instances where that word remains relevant is in the area of global economic redistribution. International advocates, whilst vehemently proposing gay rights and chastising anyone who stands in their way, forget (or perhaps ignore) the considerable socio-economic disparities between the (wealthy) nations they

speak from and those (poor) African countries who are to heed to their commendations by hook or crook.

This thesis therefore adds further momentum to actors calling for conscious efforts to remedy the exacerbated socio-economic inequalities and hierarchies between the West and the rest (see Fraser 1995; 1997; Tushnet; 1984; Epprecht, 2013; An-Na'im, Madigan, & Minkley, 1997; Kennedy 1984; Kennedy, 2013, Oquaye, 2011). These disparities should not be swept under the carpet with the talks of (gay) rights. Again doing this might enable a (re)conception of nuanced alternatives inclusive and/or exclusive of (gay) rights talks. Perhaps this approach may also curtail if not eradicate the charge of imperialism against Westerners, some of whom may genuinely want to contribute to helping Ghanaians in the fight against hatred.

The Reasons Given for Homophobia: Why They Should be Taken Seriously

The debates on gay rights have been acrimonious and spiteful. Many reasons have been given by those who champion anti-gay sentiments and homophobia in Ghana. They have ranged from very simplistic arguments to coherent ones that appeal to culture, religion, public health, procreation, democracy and politics. This section discusses why it is important to understand,

appreciate and engage them holistically. This is because it is a healthy exercise for anyone interested in protecting human dignity.

A brief caveat is in order here. It is not my intention to justify the abuse of or violence towards anyone. As beating, insulting, harming and torturing of any human being cannot be morally rationalised. My intention is rather to highlight what motivate those attacks in the first place in the quest to resolve them. In other words, to fight hatred, the cultural, social and legal bases of that menace must be holistically engaged and not trivialised. After all, homophobia emanates from the fear generated by the existence of gay people. And to deal with that fear in a nuanced way, the reasons for the fear must be known, acknowledged, appreciated and engaged. The principal and most enduring reasons given for homophobia are centred on the interpretations of biblical principles.

For instance, a common echo in the Ghanaian case is that there is the fear that the Christian God could visit upon Ghanaians his wrath if gayness is not stopped, just as it was done in the biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah (see for e.g., Ghanaweb, 2006f; 2006g; *The Ghanaian Times*, 2006; *The Spectator*, 2006). Sodom and Gomorrah are at times used as metaphors to view and

highlight the 'deviations', especially, homosexuality in societies. According to the 19th chapter of the book of Genesis (in the Holy Bible), the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were completely extinct from the surface of the earth by God with fire and Brimstone. The reason for this is that the inhabitants of the cities indulged themselves in many 'vices', homosexuality being the chief amongst them. This account has been crucial in that it has given the spiritual reasoning that buttresses many anti-homosexual laws from a long time. Actually laws that prohibit gay sex have been branded as sodomy laws, getting its name from this account of Sodom and Gomorrah (Legal Dictionary, 2016).

There is also the fear that since homosexualities challenge the conventional marriage between a man and a woman, an exclusive gay life would impede procreation (see Oquaye, 2011). Proponents of this argument contend that society faces extinction with a complete gay life-style where men marry other men without having children (see for e.g., *The Spectator*, 2006). As already highlighted, progeny is one important aspect of Ghanaian sexualities that are linked to economic resources and social status. Children are deemed so important that, the whole enterprise of copulation is aimed at producing them (Clark 1999, p. 717; Fortes, 1949, p. 101; Goody 1956, pp. 38-64; Miescher, 2005, p. 151;

Clark, 1999, p. 717). Hence, some Ghanaians may insist that sex is not for pleasure but for child bearing, and so should be between men and women.

Additionally, there is the fear that homosexuals spread HIV; in line with the generic statistics that state that, there is a relatively high HIV prevalent rate in MSM (see, for e.g., Ghana Aids Commission, 2012, p. 9; 2014, p. 34). Another reason given by some Ghanaians for homophobic attitudes is to do with the foundational fear that people; especially the youth could be 'recruited' to adopt a gay lifestyle (see for e.g., *The Ghanaian Times*, 2011). This is related to the poverty levels in Ghana and some parents fearing their children could be lured with money and gifts into gayness.

Based on the above, the reasons given for homophobia may not always be born out of cynicism but a quest to protect some 'ideals' or institutions people hold in high esteem. As seen, they could be the marriage institution, religious doctrines, cultures, family, etc. Despite, how 'absurd' and 'retrograde', these reasons may appear to gay rights advocates, it must be stressed that others may be willing to defend them vehemently. More so, some of these reasons may have long-standing reputation and legitimacy than relatively new gay rights advocacies. Consider for

instance how sexualities in Ghana have been constructed from a long time; transcending the colonial and postcolonial eras. Through these constructions, heteronormativity has been entrenched even to the point that some say it is the natural or the normal way. Consider further for illustration how Christianity, marriage and progeny have become integral aspects of the social organisation of Ghanaians from a time period older than the nation Ghana itself. From the religious demographics, the reasons given for anti-gay stances resonate with the majority of people and simply cannot be trivialised or ignored.

The wisdom in all these is that, not carefully engaging these reasons for homophobia but only branding them outmoded, stagnated and backward could be ruinous to the fight against the canker. In other words, activists and all those concerned with homophobia in any part of the world should be aware that any discussion of the subject of sexual orientations must acknowledge the resilience of homophobic reasons. The positive aspect of this argument is that understanding and appreciating the reasons given for homophobia could trigger the exploration of other options available in promoting human dignity through education, dialogue, public engagements, etc., in instances where the assertion of gay rights backfires.

Having argued the above, the next section holds that, the reasons given for homophobia, much as they may appeal to religious and populous dogma put everyone at risk. That is to say that, every Ghanaian not just gay people face the risk of homophobia and hatred, despite how popular the reasons given for them might be.

Homophobia: How we all Pay the Price

> what does a homophobe whose brother, sister, son, father, daughter, uncle, or aunt is gay do? Does he shun them, and advocate that they should be discriminated against, or put to death…? That is why those who advocated discrimination or punishment of gays need to think harder (Mutua, 2011, p. 460).

The quote above is critical for two reasons. Firstly, it is because of its source. The quote is from Makau Mutua an academic who is well-known for being an expert on human rights in Africa. Mutua is widely cited as a major critic of the universal claims of human rights and has written extensively on the subject (see for e.g., Mutua, 2004, p. 58; 2002). The fact that leading academics in the field of human rights including those who disagree with him often make references to his work indicates we should take him seriously (for e.g., Freeman, 2011 p. 226; Osiatynski, 2009, pp. 163-4). Moreover, the quote warrants a critical reflection, given

that it is coming from someone who is highly critical of the universal claims of human rights.

Secondly, despite his misgivings about human rights in general, Mutua's (2011, p. 460) quote invites everyone to reflect deeply upon the consequences of homophobia. He invites us to look at gay people not as people from outside but those who could be close family relations. And so Mutua (2011, p. 460) asks us what we would do, when we find out that a close relation is gay? The way he cleverly frames his question rhetorically and the options he gives to would-be answerers to choose from would make the most stubborn homophobe think twice. Do we 'put to death' our close family members for the simple fact that they are gays? Mutua (2011, p. 460) enquires from all of us.

He cautions in the context of the whole of Africa, but likewise points have been made specifically in Ghana by different people. Much as many (including this thesis) might disagree with his politics, a similar question posed by one Ghanaian gay man who says he is a human rights advocate demands deep pondering. He probes apropos:

> You may see me to be gay, I'm opened, I'm out now. How could you tell that maybe your junior brother, your elder brother, your father or your grandfather is engaging in this homosexual act (Time.com, 2014).

Maame, one of my interviewees correspondingly told me that initially she was extremely critical of gay people until she knew her colleague at a government Ministry was a gay man. She argues that it is easier to harbour all kinds of negative thoughts about gay people whom we may perceive as faceless or abstracted until we put a face to, pinpoint or personify them. Putting a face to the gay she insists, tickles a positive part of our social conscience:

> When something is collective, a group, and there is no face to it, you can express all the anger; but the moment you can put a face to something, you see the human aspect and the sympathy comes... this person that I know that we work with who is gay, he is a person. I mean we greet him, chat with him... we work with him; I do not turn my back on him because he is gay; I do not say I will not shake him because he is gay; I do not say that he will not sit on this chair (Interview, Maame, 13.1.15).

The above suggests that we and the people close to us face the repercussions of homophobia. Apart from the reasons stated above, this rings true because you do not need to be gay to face the dire consequences of homophobia. At times one needs to be merely suspected to be one. An example would help unpack this point. In one case, a Ghanaian merely suspected to be gay was severely beaten. Whilst the perpetrators were at it, his ordeal was filmed and the video later uploaded on YouTube (2015). With his

blood oozing, the victim was 'made' to admit he is gay on camera. I must caution that this video is bound to evoke upsetting emotions (horror, sympathy, outrage) to those who can bear to see it to the end. Not that his torture could be justified even if he is truly gay, but the fact that he was beaten on the suspicion of being one, shows no one is safe. In effect, anyone could pounce on anyone and harass them because they suspect from the way they walk, talk, dress, sound or behave as being gay. This puts all at risk.

If anyone thinks they are immune from the effects of homophobia and hatred, the example of people as powerful as the Vice President of Ghana, should make them reconsider their stance. Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, the current Vice President of Ghana, recounts how a man tried to blackmail and extort money from him by accusing him that he is gay (Ghanaweb, 2012). Fearing the potential damage the accusation could generate, Amissah-Arthur does all he could to expose his blackmailer and convince Ghanaians that he is not gay. The larger point here is that if a man that powerful could be faced with the consequences of homophobia then again every Ghanaian could be a target.

Conclusion: Complementarities not Antagonisms

If some international partners have consciences that make them so restless that they immediately respond to abuses, so too do some Ghanaians. It was not the American or the British, but the Ghanaian government who established the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection to offer protection to all 'marginalised' groups. It is not just foreigners but also some Ghanaians who respond to discrimination against, and ill treatments of gays in their country. Prominent Ghanaian figures have spoken out against homophobia and advocated for the cultural recognition of gays despite the risk of being labelled as gays, immoral, stooges of the West or not religious.

For example, Professor Fred Sai (former Presidential Advisor of Population, Reproductive and Health and HIV/AIDS (*Ghanaian Times* 25 June 2011, p. 15); Kennedy Agyapong (current member of the Ghanaian Parliament (Ghanaweb, 2013); and Nana Oye Lithur (current Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection (Joy Online, 2011b), have on various platforms stated that homosexuals in Ghana should not be targeted for discrimination and inhumane treatments. For emphasis, I shall quote from a statement made by Kwesi Amoafo-Yeboah (a former Ghanaian Presidential Candidate):

> I think every Ghanaian and indeed every human being deserves protection of their human rights. I have had gay friends, human beings, die from AIDS in the 80's because they were afraid to come out and seek medical help for fear of persecution (Modern Ghana, 2013)

Similarly, there are Ghanaian celebrities who are not political or academic elites who also speak against homophobia. Their views are particularly interesting because, as locals with huge fans base, they speak in terms and languages that reflect typical Ghanaian speeches. For instance, a singer called Efya, rated amongst the first 5 Ghanaian celebrities most followed on twitter (Talk Media, 2015) descends heavily on those who beat up a man for the suspicion of being gay. She tweets to them and all Ghanaians with a clear message which when paraphrased might simply imply that 'some people are gay so get on with it':

> the world is changing…get with the program… Gay people are here... Get with the program. It is who they are… so you be you… let them be them (Ghanaweb, 2015c).

Tweeting in the Ghanaian pidgin English and evoking what she calls her motherly instincts, Efya like Mutua (2011, p. 460) asks all Ghanaians if they would beat or kill a close relative who is gay:

> If he was your brother...what would you do…you go beat am…? You go fit kill am..??... We are all humans. (If he was your brother...what would

> you do...Would you beat him..? Could you kill him..? … We are all humans (author's translation).

The point here is this: Put the nuanced international engagements and the voices of locals together; what you have is an indomitable force of united stakeholders who bring to the table coherent arguments that surpass the justifications given for hatred and violence.

Finally, for any 'marginalised' Ghanaian who live in perpetual fear of being stigmatised, discriminated against, humiliated, blackmailed, beaten, tortured or killed and would like to know from this study what the way forward is, I simply posed a similar question to a Ghanaian-based expert who have been working in the field for a long time. The following is her answer encapsulated in the spirit of hope:

> keep hope alive… 10 years down the line we have come a long way because for us who were even working on MSM, we were stigmatised… But then gradually…there has now been a shift and…we now have several development partners and people working with MSM because there is a better understanding. I guess it will continue that way…we do now have a Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection, which responds to marginalised persons' issues (Interview, Ama, 21.2.15).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Glossary

Abusua- An Akan term for the family, lineage, and kinship. It captures both the nuclear and extended families.

Agorɔ- Play. It is also used to describe physical intimacies that do not involve penetrative sex between males and females. Agorɔ includes oral sex, fondling, kissing, cuddling, etc. It may happen between same-sex or opposite-sex couples.

Bragorɔ- A ceremony that introduced a girl officially to the community and also legitimated her fertility after her first menstruation.

Barima nkwan- A soup made by a man. The term is affectionately used by neighbours and friends to refer to a man who does a 'woman's job' like operating a *chop bar*.

Bɔga- A term/slang used to describe a Ghanaian who has returned to Ghana from overseas particularly a Western country like the U.S., UK, Germany, etc.

Boys-boys*:* An insider term used by the gay community to identify other gay men without arousing public suspicion and attention.

ɔbaa barima: The female man. In a more complex appreciation of the term, it may be used to describe a female who 'behaves' in 'manly' ways and also perceived as a lesbian.

Chop bar: A restaurant

Kodjo/Kwadwo besia: A male who behaves or walks like a female. A Kodjo besia may have a boyfriend with whom he has a gay relationship.

Kyiribra: A disgraceful rite performed for a girl who has sex or gets pregnant before undergoing the initiation rites to womanhood.

Mpena: In the Akan language, this term captures any non-marital love relationship between males and females involving (or has the potential of) sexual intercourse.

Supi*: A*ffectionate and sexual ties forged usually in all-female boarding schools. It also connotes lesbian sex.

Trumutu/Trumu Trumu- This term is popular in single-sex boys' boarding schools. It means anal same-sex intercourse amongst boys.

Yaa Asantewaa*:* Rooted in Ghanaian folkloric tales, the term is used by both gays and lesbians. For the gay men, it is an insider term used to discretely describe other gay men who are seen as the 'girlfriends' and hence assume the 'female' roles

like cooking in the relationship. For the lesbians, it may be used in ways similar to the *ɔbaa barima* to signify a female whose bravery surpasses that of a man.

Appendix 2: Unedited Sample of Written Comments made by Respondents in the Survey

1. Everyone has a right. Gay or lesbian is not a crime. My religious belief doesn't condone gay practice however, it doesn't castigate it either. Everyone should learn to accept people for who/whatever they are.
2. Gays should be treated as normal Ghanaians with no special rights. They should not demonstrate their sexuality publicly just as the way people with other sexuality do not.
3. I do not believe that it is natural to be gay or lesbian. I personally would not want my child to be either. But I don't think they should be treated harshly or harmed. But I also don't think they should be given special rights. I don't think they should have the right to marry because marriage is between a man and a woman. They can decide to form their own institution for partners but should not be allowed to desecrate the marriage institution.
4. Gays are also human beings so we should treat them normal
5. They don't deserve any protection at all
6. If heterosexuals are not getting any special protection from the government of Ghana, I don't see why gays and lesbians should be specially protected. Why do they even seek special

protection? Is it because deep down they know the act is unacceptable? Well I leave that to them to answer. To me they should be treated as normal but they should stop seeking attention. Only God can judge us.

7. Respect for the fundamental human rights of all individuals irrespective of their sexual orientation is a must. I don't feel it infringes on my personal space as long as they are consenting adults and keep themselves to themselves. I feel that Ghana has enough problems already to be worrying herself on what anybody does in the privacy of their homes.
8. A research shows that the spread of HIV is been done by homosexuality. And it should be banned in Ghana and the whole of Africa
9. I think those advocating for gay rights are not looking at the big picture. They are considering just one side. They should consider the bigger picture- procreation, culture, religion etc. They can remain gay if they want in their private rooms and not expose it.
10. I don't think they should be treated different from regular people.
11. God created man for woman. Not man for man or woman for woman. I hope Ghana does not want to end up

like Sodom and Gomorrah. Ghana has always fear and believe in God that is why we have enjoyed peace all these while and it should remain like that.

12. They should put a stop to that. I hate them badly.

13. I think the government should pass a law whereby anyone seen practicing homosexuality in Ghana should be arrested and serve a jail term.

14. It is not normal and not to be entertained in the Ghanaian society. How would the family progress and children brought up if gays and lesbians are encouraged? How would the Ghanaian society be, if the conventional family is broken down? I think is should not be promoted/encouraged.

15. Though I don't support them being treated bad and differently, I wouldn't support homosexuality to be legal in Ghana.

16. Gays have always been there. They should just be ignored in terms of gay rights but we should accept that they are there and not treat them badly. They should not have the right to get married then what next? It will be legal to marry animals and objects? Marriage is an institution between a man and a woman. If gays want to be together

they should invent something else but the term ‘marriage’ should not be applied to their union

17. They are human beings that have right to basic human rights. But I don't agree with the practice and I frown on it

18. Homosexuality has always been in Ghana like in many countries, even though socially, culturally and religiously unacceptable. Gays/Lesbians though considered by a wide section of the populace as social misfits, have been 'tolerated' in the society. However, attempts and subtle campaigns to have it legalised stoke the ire of many Ghanaians.

19. They don't deserve any protection at all

20. Gays and lesbians have always been in Ghana, no harm has come to them. Bringing the idea of homosexuality and gay rights in Ghana will make people hate them. I have lived and have friends who are gays/lesbians, and there was never a problem. We lived as blinded by their act and never troubled them. But giving them rights and equality, will make it worse. They will beat them on the streets.

Appendix 3- List of Interviewees

Pseudonyms	Place & Means of interview	Status/Position & Organisation
Adam	Accra/Nottingham Telephone	Former Senior Official, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Regional Integration, Ghana
Adu	Kumasi/Nottingham Telephone	Self-identified gay man
Ali	Kumasi/Nottingham Telephone	Self-identified gay man
Alima	Accra/Nottingham Face to face and Skype	State Attorney, Ministry of Justice & Attorney General, Ghana
Ama	Accra/Nottingham Skype	Senior Official, FHI 360, Ghana
Betty	Johannesburg/Nottingham Skype	Senior Official, Pan Africa ILGA
CEPEHRG	Accra/Nottingham Email	CEPEHRG, Ghana
Ebo	Accra/Nottingham Skype	Director, Ministry of Health, Ghana
Fafa	Accra/Nottingham Telephone	Expert on Gender and Sexuality, University of Ghana
Fiifi	Accra/Nottingham Telephone & Skype	Expert on Gender and Sexuality, University of Ghana
Francis	Accra/Nottingham Telephone & Skype	Senior Official, Ghana Aids Commission
Maame	Nottingham Face to Face	Director, Ministry of Health, Ghana
Morro	Accra/Nottingham Skype	Director, Ministry of Health, Ghana
Ntow	Sunyani/Nottingham Telephone	Self-identified gay man
Salifu	Accra/Nottingham Telephone	Director, Ministry of Health, Ghana

Appendix 4: Excerpts from Interview with CEPERGH

Question 1

What are some of the demands your organisation make concerning gay and lesbian rights in Ghana?

Answer

We advocate that sexual rights are human rights. We also advocate that MSM should have friendly health services. We demand that stigma and discrimination toward gays and lesbians should stop. We encourage and educate gays and lesbians to know their basic rights. We demand for legal representation of accused gays and lesbians.

Question 2

What are some the main challenges to gay rights advocacies in Ghana?

Answer

The Ghanaian Criminal Code contains an act known as unnatural carnal knowledge left in our law books in the year 1960 by the British. The law has been interpreted as same-sex sexual acts and is being used to prosecute the LGBT people in Ghana. Advocacy for gay rights is therefore perceived as promoting same-sex sexual acts and violating that law. Again the level of stigma and discrimination against the LGBT community in Ghana is very

high. This has forced a lot of the LGBT population to remain in their closets and not willing to come out to access services and programs available for them. Some service providers also stigmatise LGBT people thereby making it difficult for them to continue receiving health and human services.

Question 3

What approaches have your organisation used in the last 10 years?

Answer

CEPEHRG has granted media interviews emphasising the existence of the LGBT community and the need for recognition by governments when issues of human rights and health services are discussed. Another approach has been channeling our issues and needs through UN agencies in Ghana who engage government in decisions and policies that should reflect the issues of LGBTs, mostly referred to in this context as Key populations, which include FSWs [Female Sex Workers].

Question 4

Have these approaches changed in the last 10 years?

Answer

Currently we are able to engage state organisations (specifically, the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative

Justice and also the Ghana AIDS Commission, which is under the office of the President) directly to address some our needs but it needs more strategies because although the organisations may accept in principle that LGBTs need protection from discrimination, physical abuse and deserve friendly health services, most individuals at these institutions are themselves homophobic. However it is important to note that the approach of engaging UN agencies in Ghana concerning the issues of LGBT has helped a lot as most HIV programming take into consideration issues of LGBT especially MSM.

Question 5

Have you observed any unintended or negative impact or backlash as a result of your organisation's activities in Ghana?

Answer

We have received unintended backlash regarding media activities in the past. In the Ghanaian media, discourse on homosexuality is often biased, inflammatory and dishonest. So after media interviews the issue is picked up by other stations and blown totally out of proportion. Some discussions or articles warn people that homosexuality represents the destruction of Ghanaian values and culture, while others urge society to ignore human rights in order to fight against homosexuality and 'save Ghana.'

This negativity often results in attacks on LGBT persons in the heat of the arguments on the airwaves. CEPEHRG's office was closed for two weeks. During one of such incidences we received threats that the office will be burnt down. The Executive Director had to flee from Ghana for a while.

Question 6

Are there any lessons to be learnt from gay rights advocacies and approaches in Ghana and Africa as a whole?

Answers

The basic lesson learnt is that we try in the best possible ways to reach out to people with our issues (human rights and Health) and get them to understand the issues rather than trying to fight back or using the media because the media misinterprets us and blow issues out of proportion which ends in attacks and threats.

Question 7

Why do some Ghanaians say homosexuality is not African?

Answer

Although many Ghanaians do not want to support any argument encouraging the respect for gays and lesbians rights, the Ghanaian media often share news of activities like gay pride and commitments of foreign leaders to gay rights. Thus many see

homosexuality as a way of life from foreign land. Secondly, people generally believe that pedophiles who abuse young boys are all gays, and activities of pedophiles especially involving foreigners in Ghana are highly publicised and so again the moment some Ghanaians hear gay or homosexuality their thinking is the act that the foreign men came to teach our children.

Question 8

Why are your activities in Ghana branded foreign, although locals may be involved?

Answer

A human right in general, is believed by many as foreign. People do not see why a parent cannot beat his child as a mode of correction. Again fighting for the rights of LGBTS has not received any support from our traditional or political rulers. Majority of the organisations enforcing human rights are NGOs and it is believed that foreign donors fund them, and so unfortunately, regardless of the locals involved it is still perceived as we are pushing activities to support a foreign agenda.

Question 9

Some have said that, there are many socio-economic problems in Africa, so why the focus on gay rights in Ghana?

Answer

Gay rights are human rights, and the variance in socioeconomic problems, including disparities in the distribution of wealth, income, and access to resources, affects everyone. In Ghana individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) are especially susceptible to being placed at a socioeconomic disadvantage. Thus, socio-economic problems are inherently related to the rights and well-being of LGBT persons.

Question 10

Are there particular understandings, meanings and attributes of homosexuality within international gay rights advocacies?

Answer

Yes there are understandings, meanings and attributes of homosexuality. Most young LGBT men are visible but are cautioned so to avoid attacks. Gay pride is not organised in Ghana but there are occasional parties by gay men, for gay men (gay in this sentence means LGBT). There are also a few who are out of the closet, especially self-identified effeminate men.

Question 11

Why is the 'coming out' theme so important in international gay rights advocacies?

Answer

It is important because coming out emphasises that fact that the LGBT people exist in our society and also gives us a human face. Meaning, it puts a face on the issues of sexuality and gender identity.

Appendix 5- Excerpts From The Conversation With Adu, a Self-identified Ghanaian Gay Man.

Question 1

Would you say that there is a large population of gays in Ghana?

Answer

Yes there are many gays in Ghana and they are mainly found in Accra and Kumasi.

Question 2

Are there gay clubs in Ghana?

Answer

There is a place in Accra called 'EPO' where they meet.

Question 3

How does it feel like to be gay in Ghana?

Answer

It is mainly safe for gays in Ghana because they only engage in the act indoors, except that because of the way some gays walk, they may sometimes be seriously harassed in the open by people.

Question 4

Why do you think people sometimes behave that way toward gays?

Answer

I think it is because the general perception in Ghana is that being gay is foreign to our culture, hence most people are usually hostile to others who engage in it.

Question 5

Are you aware of gay rights, and how do you understand them?

Answer

Yes, I am aware of gay rights. I understand them to mean that gays should be allowed to live their lives because that is how they feel they want to be.

Question 6

What do you think gays would want the government to do for them?

Answer

Gays should just be allowed to do what they want to do.

Question 7

What are some of the challenges or hostile situations that gays in Ghana face?

Answer

Gays are usually treated as dirt and the outcasts of the society, to the extent that some are even often disgraced in public.

Question 8

Do you think the laws of Ghana permit homosexuality?

Answer

The laws of Ghana do not permit the act.

Question 9

Have you seen or heard of any instances of arrests of gays?

Answer

Not really, but quite recently I heard of the police making an arrest of prostitutes, which included some men identified as gays.

Question 10

Would you be comfortable to declare openly that you are gay if you were given the chance to do so?

Answer

Yes, I will gladly do it.

Question 11

Have you already come out in the open?

Answer

Well I still do it secretly.

Question 12

And how does that make you feel?

Answer

I feel normal.

Question 13

Have you ever been to a gay gathering before?

Answer

Yes I have been to a gay function where we had some people talk to us.

Question 14

Were the people you met Ghanaians or foreigners?

Answer

We usually have a mixture of Ghanaians and foreigners coming to talk to us, with the former being the majority.

Question 15

So why do they usually say that homosexuality is of foreign origin?

Answer

Like I said already, it is not a part of the Ghanaian culture, compared to the foreigners who have rather accepted it as part of their society.

Question 16

How do your family and friends relate to you as a gay man?

Answer

I cannot be definite about how they relate to me collectively because each person does so differently; some have accepted me whilst others who are not in favour are rather hostile.

Question 17

What reasons are usually cited for the rejection of homosexuality?

Answer:

They usually begin by quoting from the Bible and then by making references to our cultural values.

Question 18

I heard that there were men who used to engage in some 'women's job like operating restaurants. People seemed to be fine with them, so why is it a problem now?

Answer

It is because it has now become quite disgusting, considering how the act is portrayed.

Question 19

Which people have made gayness disgusting?

Answer

It is some of us, the gays, because some now even wear feminine clothes and portray themselves as women.

Question 20

What accounts for such behaviour?

Answer

They have learnt it from the whites, because in the Western world people can even change their sexual make-up.

Question 21:

How do they learn it from them?

Answer:

Through research on the internet as well as through social media.

Question 22

What do you think gays should do then?

Answer

I think some of us gay men must stop portraying ourselves as women.

Question 23

Are there bisexuals you know?

Answer

Yes there are. There are even some who get married to females to avoid pressure from people.

Questions 24

What do Christians and Pastors say about homosexuality?

Answer

Quoting from the Bible, they condemn the act.

Question 25

How do you feel about that?

Answer

I know I am sinful before God, but then it is what gives me pleasure.

Question 26

Do you think many gays would want to express themselves openly?

Answer

Yes there are many like that but they cannot because of the Ghanaian hostility. Many would love to express themselves like in America where there are many gays.

Question 27

How do you know there are many gays in America?

Answer

I watch them on the internet and also read from the newspapers.

Question 28

Would you like to share any experience or do you have any general comments to make?

Answer

I just want to advise other gays to desist from showing themselves as women and to take good care of themselves.

Appendix 6- Interview with Ama, a Ghanaian Expert Working with Gay men in Ghana

Question 1

From your experience, are there many MSM in Ghana?

The project that I worked on which ended in December for five years for the SHARPER Project, we were able to reach close to 48,000 MSM, so that is why we are saying that that number could be an underestimate.

Question 2

Could you tell me about this project?

Answer

This project is the USAID-Ghana SHARPER Project, and it was led by FHI 360, funded by USAID/Ghana, and the objective of this project was to improve the knowledge and attitude of key population which included MSM, female sex workers as well as their partners... The second objective was to increase the demand for services with this improved knowledge on what HIV is. The increased demand for services was really focussing on testing and counselling and other HIV-related care and support services. The

third objective was to look at the implementing partners that we work with, and they were 33 in number to implement these objectives.

Question 3

What were some of the significant findings from this project?

Answer

I will say there were several, but one key thing from this project with regard to MSM was the fact that the SHARPER Project was able to break new grounds with some innovations where we engaged some MSM themselves to help us reach those who were difficult to reach, i.e. the older MSM. Because the peer education approach that we were using were reaching the MSM who wanted to be reached, more or less. They were more open, so the peer education approach could reach so much but then we knew that the social media was also another avenue. So we adopted the strategy of engaging and calling them 'Community Liaison Officers' who were MSM and they used the Facebook and other social media platforms to reach their kind with information and referrals for services.

The other one was, we did identify some MSM brothel sites in Accra and we did engage the pimps and the brothel owners as to whether we could have discussions and educational activities as well as testing and counselling for the male sex workers. Because they were those who were at risk within the risk groups and then outreach activities were done with them. These sites were visited and we provided testing and counselling and commodities to the sex workers. We have identified up to date a total of 7 brothel sites but we have been able to visit only 3, and it is because of having to engage with the pimps back and forth.

Question 4

Why is the government not looking into gay rights?

Answer

Well you know, with all our interventions that we have done, we or I try not to get into that dialogue too much. The government probably will not be looking at that too much because it is political. The environment is still very homophobic. I think basically that is it, and our interventions really do not focus so much on that because it brings a lot of backlash. But we have been able to continue with our interventions without veering into those kinds of

discussions and thoughts. But basically I would say it is political, the backlash is too much; it ties in too much to the number of votes.

Question 5

Do you think that as a nation Ghana has not gotten to that point of gay rights discussions?

Answer

No. You know, it [gay right] is just recent. Almost 10 years back when we started doing more comprehensive interventions with MSM in Ghana. Even though we did learn a lot from working with FSWs, which is another marginalised group. When we began working with MSM, one key theme that was used with regard to the behaviour change scheme and all the things around it was 'It is my turn'. They came out with the themes 'it is my turn now to access services, take care of my health'; 'it is my turn now to discuss issues'; and basically in relation to HIV/AIDS. This is what resonated with them because they developed the theme themselves and that is what we have run with. So all our social behaviour change communication materials has the theme 'It is my turn' running through. So I will say it is relatively new. If you

compare [with] the other marginalised groups; i.e. female sex workers, interventions have been with them for the past say 30 to 35 years. The issue of legalising prostitution came up some time, about 10 years ago, and there was a big backlash.

Question 6

Have the gays and lesbians been the ones who initiated these interventions which you mentioned started about 10 years ago?

Answer

No. [These were] the projects with funding from USAID; they [MSM in Ghana] did not initiate. But the fact is, working with them [MSM] was about the first time any project was focussing on the MSM and engaging some of them as Peer Educators; engaging some of them as the Community Liaison Officers I spoke about.

Question 7

Do you think that using public health strategy is safer, or even preferable? Do you feel safe as an official working with MSMs?

Answer

Yes, and you know, public health approach appeals to everyone so we are not saying that, that is it, but starting from that point of view has gained us inroads within the public health sector; gained inroads in training health personnel to be key-population friendly; and reducing stigma; and providing access and proper health services to MSM. So the understanding of starting from that public health point of view where we know that in Ghana 80% of HIV transmission is through sexual intercourse. If we talking about reducing new infections, then we are looking for safe sexual intercourse. And with the safe sexual intercourse we are looking at sexual practices that are more risky than others. So then it draws us to anal sex compared to vaginal sex.

With anal sex, we are looking at reducing the risks, and you have to get to people who engage in anal sex to understand and know and explain the risks so that it is safe and can reduce transmission. So then it draws us to the people who engage in it; so we do not start from people to stigmatise them, but we start from the point of view of reducing new infections. In Ghana, most transmission is through sex. So everything must be [around] discussing sexual intercourse that is safe and with protection. So

that has been at least our objective in working with MSM and that opens the way for us to access the healthcare, look at even the legal cases, get the police to support us and conduct swoops, because they understand what we are doing; so that is how it has worked.

Question 8

Has this approach been successful; has it received less hostility from the general public?

Answer

Yes it has, because we have been able to nationally develop a Key-Population National Strategic Plan, the first ever in Ghana, and this was under the auspices of the Ghana AIDS Commission, which is really under the office of the President. And we have the President launching this document as part of it. We have had a Key-Population Standard Operating Procedure for all civil society and partners who want to work with key population. This is also a national document under the Ghana AIDS Commission. So we have been able to make inroads in developing and getting key population into key strategic policy documents on HIV in the country; and within it we are talking about stigma reduction and

what could be done. That is where we have started discussions on working with the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice and working with the police. Where issues come up and we need to, we are facilitating these legal services, seeing or responding or reacting to issues that are reported not because the persons are MSM or FSW but just because they are humans.

Question 9

From what you have experienced and heard through your work, why do people say homosexuality is foreign?

Answer

If they say that, I ask them whether having sex is foreign because these sexual orientations have always been there. You talk to people old, and young and you would know that it has always been around. It has always been in the schools; it has always been in the universities. Probably as I said, engaging them had not always happened until 10 years back. Having discussions with them do not indicate that it is foreign; it has been with us.

Question 10

Would you say gays and lesbians in Ghana are now more 'visible' than maybe 20 years ago?

Answer

It is mostly the MSM that I know, not too many of the lesbians. I would say yes because I think now I know them too well, I see them everywhere, which I am not saying is bad. And about being more open, let us say there are more open discussions on it than before. But as to the people being open to say we are having a meeting or something of that sort, that has not happened yet, but there are more open discussions on it.

Question 11

Regarding these interventions, would you say they are foreign in origin or would you say that they are locally developed?

Answer

Let me say that 10 years back, there was one small study: 'Opening the Pandora's Box', which was conducted by one partner with the aim of finding out whether they could veer into; I mean start working with MSM. There was not much and you could not

name civil society organisations working with MSM. So under this SHARP Project, there were two projects that were funded by USAID which I worked on both. The SHARP Project decided that we must work with MSM… I did a lot of desk review to find out what was happening where, and fortunately for the SHARP Project we had our Chief of Party who was MSM. We also had this gentleman who had a small organisation, and doing something small with MSM but basically on gay rights. He would get funding from external donors, do a one-off activity and then that was it. [There was] no comprehensive program. So we decided that we could begin with him.

So then we met with his small organisation called CEPHERG. With the information from population council, the desk review that was done, the discussion with the then Chief of Party, we developed a scope of work. Looking at the capabilities and capacity of CEPHERG at that time, it was very small; so we developed a one-year program to reach just 200 MSM. So that is how it began and the interventions moved on from there. So really I will first say the interventions also engaged a lot of operational research, formative research and a lot of focus group discussions because we needed to understand working with MSM since it was the first ever in the country; and really knowing them and what would work

with them and for them. So I had a lot of engagements with MSM and now I think I have more MSM friends than non-MSM male friends.

Question 12

How do you see the future for MSM?

Answer

We always say you have to keep hope alive, because without hope you should not live. So I will say 10 years down the line we have come a long way because for us who were even working on MSM, we were stigmatised…But then, gradually there has now been a shift and…we now have several development partners and people working with MSM because there is a better understanding; I guess it will continue that way. And you know as I said we are engaging legal persons. Within our program we have developed some community response rapid networks to respond to some sexual and gender-based violence cases. So it has widened the circle gradually and the government has also instituted or we do now have a Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection, which responds to marginalised persons' issues.

Appendix 7- Survey Questionnaire

What is a normal or natural sexual relationship to you?

- ○ A man and a woman in love
- ○ A man and another man in love
- ○ A woman and another woman in love
- ○ All of the above

Have you seen, heard of, or know any gay or lesbian in Ghana?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Are there are more gays and lesbians in Ghana now than before?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ I don't know

Should gays and lesbians be accepted in Ghana?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

How did you come to this conclusion? Tick all answers that apply

- ☐ Is based on personal experience and conviction
- ☐ Is based on my religious belief
- ☐ Is based on my culture
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other:

Have some gays and lesbians changed their attitude, behaviour and appearance recently?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

- ○ I don't know

Since when have gays and lesbians been around in Ghana?

- ○ always
- ○ Recently
- ○ I don't know

Where does homosexuality come from? Tick all answers that apply

- ☐ From abroad
- ☐ From Ghana
- ☐ Both Ghana and abroad
- ☐ It is everywhere
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other: _____

Gays and lesbians in Ghana are. Tick all answers that apply

- ☐ Ghanaians
- ☐ Foreigners
- ☐ Both
- ☐ I don't know

How do people become gay? Tick all answers that apply

- ☐ They are born that way
- ☐ They learn it
- ☐ They are forced into it
- ☐ Because of money
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other: _____

Should the Ghanaian government protect gays and lesbians?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If you answered Yes to the above Question, why do you say so? Tick all answers that apply

- ☐ Because homosexuals are normal human beings
- ☐ Because they deserve protection
- ☐ Because some people cause harm to them
- ☐ Other: _____

If you answered No to the Question, why do you say so. Tick all answers that apply

- ☐ Because they are not normal human beings
- ☐ Because homosexuals do not deserve any protection
- ☐ Because no one is causing harm to homosexuals in Ghana
- ☐ Other: _____

How should government protect gays and lesbians in Ghana? Tick all answers that apply

- ☐ Recognise them
- ☐ Give them special protection
- ☐ Arrest those who cause harm to them
- ☐ Government should not make homosexuality a crime
- ☐ I don't want government to protect them at all
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other: _____

How should we treat gays and lesbians in Ghana?

- ○ Treat them normal
- ○ Treat them different

What should government's response be to those who demand gay rights?

- ○ Listen and grant their demands
- ○ Negotiate with them
- ○ Ignore them
- ○ Other: _____

I may accept gays and lesbians if they. Tick all that apply

- ☐ Keep quiet about their sexuality
- ☐ Stop demanding recognition and rights
- ☐ Don't come out in public behaving differently
- ☐ Other:

General Comments

In the box below, please write any other comments, opinions, experiences and views about homosexuality and gay rights in Ghana



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