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South African Sign Language
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The Impact of Christian Churches' Separatist Treatment of Difference on the Intersectional Identities of LGBTIQA+ and d/Deaf communities in Johannesburg

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A Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (by dissertation)

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Abstract

This research explores the manner in which mainstream Christian institutions respond to the embodiment of difference, looking particularly at the difference of d/Deaf identity and LGBTIQA+ identity. It discusses how people who embody these differences respond to the institutional treatment of difference, and the impact that this treatment has on their religious (Christian) identity.

It tracks the history of the Church in South Africa, and how alternative churches emerged over time, given the instances of marginalization, oppression and discrimination which occurred in mainstream churches. This research also discusses the history of South Africa's d/Deaf Community and the importance of d/Deaf Culture and Deafhood in this community, as well as the ongoing struggles and consequent victories of the South African LGBTIQA+ community.

By using an ethnographic research method, doing deep hanging out in four research sites around Johannesburg, South Africa, and conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews with nine participants, which included d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+ people from various demographics, it was found that people who embody difference tend to experience violence in various forms in church spaces. This included structural violence, physical violence and sexual violence. Lateral violence also occurred where members of a marginalised group reiterated the violence perpetuated by mainstream churches, on fellow marginalised group members.

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To God, for giving me the strength to keep going when I was at my lowest

Thank You.

Declaration

To whom it may concern,

I, Jade Jacobs, declare that this dissertation is my own work. I declare that I have not plagiarised any part of this dissertation. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (by research) in the field of South African Sign Language at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before in part or in full for any degree or examination at this or any other university.

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09 May 2019

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Religious spaces have a tendency to perpetuate traditionalist, normative social values and practices (Alumkal,1999); Christian churches are not exempt from this (Graham, 2002). These values and practices include heteronormativity[1], patriarchal systems which naturally result in sexist practices, unfair treatment towards people with disabilities, and historically, racism (Alumkal, 1999; Mofokeng, 1988; Pevey, Williams and Ellison, 1996; Neuenfeldt, 2015). Perpetuation of normative practices tends to have a negative impact on church-goers who do not fall within the parameters of these values and practices. Churches are perceived as spaces of love and freedom, but this experience is usually limited to people who conform to society's idea of "normal" identities, such as white, cis[2]-gender, heterosexual, able-bodied males); this is based on the notion that Christianity started as a European religion (De Wet, Teugels & Van Deventer, 2014) with hetero-patriarchal values and dictated very specific gender roles and in turn, power dynamics (Phiri, 2002). This is discussed further in Chapter 2 and Chapter 5. For those who do not fit the idealistic image of a specific church, the church can sometimes become a space of victimisation, marginalisation, oppression and discrimination. 'Idealistic images' here could refer to, amongst others, the idea of a perfect womxn[3] as someone who performs femininity in the way she dresses and the role she plays in the relationship, is soft-spoken and submissive. These idealistic images also perpetuate patriarchy and heteronormative gender roles and hierarchies, where men are in positions of power and womxn show respect by being submissive to men[4] (Pevey *et al.*, 1996). Idealistic images do not include those who do not conform to heteronormativity or people with disabilities.

Those who may be considered 'different' are often treated differently to those performing the idealistic image. This research project seeks to establish how churches respond to two different non-normative subjectivities: LGBTIQA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, Asexual/Alosexual/Aromantic) identity and perceived disability[5], particularly d/Deaf identity. Morgan (2014) refers to *d/Deaf* as a *fluid continuum*, given that people who identify as d/Deaf move between the deaf/Deaf binaries: 'deaf' which is the audiological condition of hearing loss, and 'Deaf' is indicative of the "socially constructed visual culture" (Erting, 1994); the use of d/Deaf was coined by Wrigley (1996).

LGBTIQA+ people follow what many churches would consider 'deviant' lifestyles, where they do not conform to the acceptable heteronormative identities set out by society and they are thus treated

[1] A concept which considers the only "normal" kind of sexual and romantic relationship to exist between someone who is biologically male and someone who is biologically female; it also does not acknowledge any genders outside of the male-female binary (everydayfeminism.com, retrieved December 2018).
[2] Cis-gender refers to people who perform the gender they were assigned at birth (Defosse, 1994)
[3] The term "womxn" will be used throughout this dissertation to refer to people who identify as female, irrespective of sexual orientation; the term will be used throughout this dissertation to reiterate the importance of a feminist perspective of womxn not being a "subordinate category" of *man*.
[4] Patriarchy is not a major theme in this research, but it is mentioned within the findings and does play a significant role in analysing the power dynamics in the Church.
[5] d/Deaf people are included as people with disabilities here as people who are not in the Deaf community view deafness as a disability and label d/Deaf people as such – d/Deaf people and allies of the Community do not support this view; however, I am using it to illustrate how normative systems impose inferiority on those who are different to them.

differently and often unfairly. People with disabilities may also experience discrimination in church spaces, but this discrimination will manifest differently to that of LGBTIQA+ people. Churches express discrimination differently on each type of difference, and members within these churches spaces who embody these differences have to learn how to deal with them in relation to religious aversion and inclusion.
One critical way in which marginalised groups within church spaces have managed aversion has been to create small alternative spaces within Christian practice. These spaces carve out places for the expression of Christian faith without having to be subjected to discrimination in mainstream church spaces. For example, there have been splinter churches for d/Deaf congregants, and there have been anti-homophobic religious spaces created in recent history of religious practice[6].

This research aims to explore how d/Deaf people and/or LGBTIQA+ people experience Christianity and Christian church practices in spaces which treat deafness as a disability that needs to be cured, while not recognizing d/Deaf people who embrace being d/Deaf as a cultural identity, and LGBTIQA+ identity as a problem that needs to be fixed. It also examines how people who embody both of these identities manage to maintain both identities without compromising either and how they cope with the oppressions of being d/Deaf and/or LGBTIQA+ in church spaces. Thus, this research seeks to understand how d/Deaf identities and/or LGBTIQA+ identities intersect with Christian identity.

It is important to note here that while I recognize the role that intersecting aspects of identity (such as race, gender, class, age, etc) play in shaping individual experience, including all of these aspects in this study would have been too complex for a Masters dissertation. Hence, I chose to focus on two identities which emerged during my Honours research, which felt important and fitting for contemporary identity studies: LGBTIQA+ identities and d/Deaf identities.

Research Rationale

People who embody identities which differ from what society considers to be 'normal' may be treated differently even in church spaces where, according to Scripture judgment from one to another should not occur (Matthew 7:1. Often, the judgement from one person to another is critiqued amongst Christians given that God alone has the power to pass judgment, as "the judgment of God is absolute and excludes all human judgment. It is impossible to receive glory and praise from God and from any human source at the same time" (Hendry, 1983: 126)

Two identity groups are often exemplified for their portrayal of different or 'deviant' lifestyles during church services, being condemned and regarded as sinful or impure – these are people with disabilities (Malina & Neytey, 1996; Gaijarro, 2000), and people who identify as LGBTIQA+ (Garanzini, 1989; Barton, 2010).

In Christian Churches, d/Deaf people are often categorized as people with disabilities (Lewis, 2007), and they tend to be treated as inferior, or a people to be pitied who ought to be prayed for, for healing and restoration of all bodily functions, to be whole so that they may be pleasing to God

[6] E.g. Inner Circle Mosque in Cape Town which recognises the rights of LGBTIQA+ people; New Life Church in Johannesburg is a fully d/Deaf church which is open to any who can communicate using South African Sign Language (SASL).

(Morris, 2008). Another community that is often discriminated against in the Church is the LGBTIQA+ community; this community is regarded as an abomination, and many Christians regard LGBTIQA+ identities to be one of the worst sins a person can commit (Garanzini, 1989; Barton, 2010; Potgieter, 1997; Graziano, 2004) As a hearing lesbian from a Christian family and with a strong Christian upbringing, when I came out to myself, it was difficult for me to deal with the complexities of not wanting to neglect my Christian identity and yet always feeling the harshness of the condemnation against homosexuality preached in all the churches I attended growing up. When I started studying South African Sign Language and learning about Deaf culture I became an ally to the d/Deaf community. I became interested in how d/Deaf people and d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people experience Christian church spaces, as well as the issues like marginalization and discrimination, they may face.

Hence, this research looks at how d/Deaf people and LGBTIQA+ people negotiate their relationship to faith within the context of their intersectional lives in relation to how the Church has dealt with difference through separatism. It focuses specifically on d/Deaf people, LGBTIQA+ people and their Christian identities. To shift the focus from narratives informed by patriarchy, heteronormativity and ableism[7], this research aimed to serve as a platform for people from marginalized groups to share their experiences of discrimination in the Church, their perspectives on being d/Deaf and/or LGBTIQA+ and Christian in a world that condemns and marginalizes these lifestyles. I also aimed to explore how the emergence of alternative Church spaces occurred, and how accepting these alternative Church spaces are. Capturing the narratives of people who navigate these Church spaces would assist me in establishing the extent to which difference is accepted in alternative Church spaces where people are familiar with experiences of oppression and marginalisation; for example, how d/Deaf lesbians are treated in a hearing LGBTIQA+ religious institution and how d/Deaf tolerate LGBTIQA+ lifestyles.

Research Question

In order to uncover these issues, I pose the following question:

Given that some Christian churches deal with difference in a separatist manner (Creamer, 2009; Bunch, 2001; Burack & Josephson, 2005), how do people who fall under these categories of difference (i.e. d/Deaf and/or LGBTIQA+ individuals) respond to the treatment of difference?

I also included smaller, more focused questions which were aimed at assisting me in answering my main research question:

- How do d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people develop both (LGBTIQA+ and religious) identities, simultaneously, without compromising either?
- To what extent do churches' treatment of individuals impact on an individual's decisions to remain within the church?
- How does this, in turn, impact on the construction of a LGBTIQA+ identity and/or d/Deaf identity given the separatist manner in which churches treat difference?

[7] Ableism is a form of discrimination or prejudice against individuals with physical, mental, or developmental disabilities that is characterized by the belief that these individuals need to be fixed or cannot function as full members of society (Castañeda & Peters, 2000)

- How does the treatment of difference manifest in alternative church spaces (i.e. d/Deaf churches and LGBTIQA+ affirming churches) compared to mainstream (i.e. heteronormative and hearing) church spaces?
- How does an individual's d/Deaf identity impact on the construction of their Christian identity given the lack of interpreters available in hearing religious spaces?
- In inclusive religious spaces, what is the extent to which inclusivity is manifested i.e. would a d/Deaf church welcome LGBTIQA+ people, and would a LGBTIQA+ affirming church welcome and cater to the needs of a d/Deaf person?

Research Aims

This research aims to bridge the gap in existing literature, both locally and internationally, which is discussed in Chapter 2. While perusing the various literature related to the treatment of difference in Christian Church spaces, it was noted that the literature related to LGBTIQA+ identities and d/Deaf identities intersecting with Christian identity is limited. Previous research tends to focus on d/Deaf identities in relation to the Church, or LGBTIQA+ identities in relation to the Church, but rarely ever focusing on the three topics together.

In a South African context, Morgan (2008) writes about the experiences of d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people and Reid (2010) focuses on (hearing) LGBTIQA+ Christians; emerging literature (Mmanape, 2017) also focuses on the barriers in the Church experienced by d/Deaf Christians. International research includes David and Cruz (2018), which speaks to the intersections of d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+ identity, as well as Lewis (2007) and Morris (2008) who discuss the experiences of oppression and marginalisation by d/Deaf people in Church spaces.
By exploring how Christian d/Deaf people, Christian LGBTIQA+ people, as well as people who simultaneously identify as Christian, d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+, have experienced Christian churches, this research aims to bridge the gap in the literature which discusses these facets of identity as separate entities.

The following section will discuss and review existing literature which has informed this study.

Chapter 2: The Impact of Christian Churches' Response to Difference on the Lives of d/Deaf and/or LGBTIQA+ People

Introduction

This chapter will look at existing literature and theory related to topics relevant to the research in question. I will begin by briefly discussing the history of Christian churches in South Africa; this will lead into a discussion of the history of the oppression of marginalized groups in South African churches, the history of LGBTIQA+ churches in South Africa and the history of d/Deaf churches in South Africa (the histories of the research sites specific to this study are discussed in detail in the Ethnographic Findings chapter, and will only be mentioned as reference points in this chapter).

A section on Christian perspectives of disability will also be included; this section will define Audism and Ableism in reference to mainstream Christian churches' regarding d/Deaf people as people with disabilities.

I will reflect on the development of d/Deaf studies, incorporating a discussion on d/Deaf identity, Deafhood, d/Deaf geographies and being d/Deaf in South Africa.

I will then look at the history of LGBTIQA+ identities in South Africa, including the contesting views of LGBTIQA+ identities as un-African and LGBTIQA+ identities having existed in Africa before the infiltration and subsequent domination of Western culture. This will be followed by a discussion on Christian perspectives of LGBTIQA+ identities, including homophobia, queerphobia and the perpetuation of heteronormativity.

The impact of Christian perspectives on the religious identity of marginalized groups (d/Deaf people and LGBTIQA+ people) will be briefly discussed in a section about cognitive dissonance and internal identity conflict.

Finally, I will define and discuss four types of violence, namely structural violence, sexual violence, physical violence and hegemony, and how these concepts are relevant to a study on Christian Church spaces.

The Church in South Africa

Historical records of South Africa during pre-colonial times document no evidence for the existence of Christian beliefs or Christian churches. Traditional African religion was practised before the introduction and gradual domination of the Christian faith in the pre-colonial period. Portuguese seafarers passed through the Cape regularly along their journeys to trade with India and other places in the 1400s, bringing with them a Christian doctrine; this never found root as the travellers never settled on the Land.

The first record of Christianity dates back to 1488 when Portugese mariners planted a cross at the Southern tip of the continent (Ngong, 2009). In 1652, the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck and the Dutch settlers saw the introduction of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK – English: Dutch

Reformed Church), and the proselytization of Indigenous (Khoe and San) people began. Van Riebeeck was deployed by the Dutch East India Company to the Cape coast, on a mission to create a refreshment and resupply point for other trade ships travelling to and through this point. Although the main aim was to set up a commercial space, in that era religion, commerce, and politics were closely linked and the belief was that Christian beliefs must be spread to all whom believers come into contact with. This set the foundations of the first Church in what is now called South Africa as over time indigenous people and slaves and children of mixed parentage came to accept Christian faith.

The first Christian Missionary[8] arrived in 1737 and was met with resistance by the Dutch Reform church. After much resiliency, the first Moravian Mission station in Genadendal[9], Western Cape, was established. During this time the Lutheran church had also begun to establish itself on Cape soil.

The 18th Century saw the intrusion of new colonisers through the overthrowing of Dutch rule by British settlers and the expansion of Christian denominations to include Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Wesleyan, Congregational, Lutheran, Baptist and many other church denominations. Christianity became a growing faith all across the Land[10] but conflict[11] between Indigenous people and White settlers led to a split in the Church and Indigenous people began to establish African Christian churches which were separate, and not under the control of the initial mission-controlled churches (African Independent Churches/African Indigenous Churches (AIC)) (Daneel, 1987).

The initiation of AICs in the beginning of the 19th Century set the scene for a future of contestation, and/or amalgamation, of African traditional beliefs and European Christian beliefs. Towards the end of the 20th Century AICs had grown in popularity to the point that they outnumbered European Christian churches in South Africa and becoming the largest Christian church on the continent. While AIC churches do not form part of any European church bodies, some AIC denominations continue to adopt customs which stem from European practises, excluding any African traditional practises. Sundkler (1961) categorises these two branches of AICs as Ethiopian churches and Zionist churches. Ethiopian churches tend to adhere to mission-church customs, beliefs and practises, with the major difference being that they are led and controlled by Black people. However, there are a number of denominations which advocate for the incorporation of African traditional practises into European-influenced Christian belief systems ('inculturation') in order to fit an African context. An example of this is the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the largest AIC in Southern Africa which was founded in 1924. ZCC is a Bible-based church which believes in water-baptism[12], praying to Jesus Christ, prophecy and the Catholic-influenced custom of redemption through confession, repentance and prayer. They

[8] Georg Schmidt, founder of the first Protestant mission (the Moravian Mission) (De Wet, Teugels & Van Deventer, 2014)

[9] Originally Baviaanskloof (De Wet, Teugels & Van Deventer, 2014)

[10] The huge immigration influx of European settlers meant that more Land became occupied, hence they moved inwards from the Coast (sahistory.org.za, 2013).

[11] No space for African Religious expression within Western Christian customs; paternalistic behaviours of missionaries suppressed African Religious leaders; the rise of colonialism across Africa and continuous oppression of Africanism as a result (Kealotswe, 2014)

[12] According to the Christian Bible, Matthew 28:19)

employ African traditional methods which are often rejected or seen as un-Christian by other Christian churches. These include the use of symbolic objects (Holy water, oil, cords and strings or special clothes and teas) for healing purposes; one church leader referred to this as 'faith healing', as church members had faith in the healing abilities of the objects, not in God (Lukhaimane, 1980). Furthermore, traditional AICs have been described by Western scholars as "syncretistic" and are often criticized for their ritual practises which have been described as "cultic" as opposed to the AIC view of these churches as "contextual or inculturated" (Maimela, 1985).

The Church and the Marginalisation of Minority Groups

Since both European and AIC churches are based on strict traditional (conservative) Biblical ideology, despite their differing views amongst themselves they maintain similar beliefs as far as the embodiment of difference is concerned. Hence, all Christian churches tend not to be inclusive towards minority groups, including d/Deaf people and LGBTIQA+ people, as their beliefs are embedded in heteronormative, patriarchal, ableist perspectives as a result of years of indoctrination (Germond in Germond and De Gruchy, 1997; Otieno, 2009). This has resulted in a further breaking-away of LGBTIQA+ people and d/Deaf people with Christian identities, who have been marginalized and oppressed in mainstream church spaces, to form alternative church spaces where they can freely express and embrace their 'different' identities. The following sections discuss Christian perspectives on d/Deaf identity and LGBTIQA+ identity respectively, with each section following a brief look at the establishment of d/Deaf churches and LGBTIQA+ churches in South Africa as a response to instances of marginalisation and oppression.

Christian Perspectives on Disability and d/Deaf Identity

Given that mainstream Christianity does not differentiate d/Deaf people from people with disabilities (Lewis, 2007), in this section I will discuss disability from a Christian perspective, under the construction of d/Deaf people as people with disabilities. However, a brief section relating exclusively to d/Deaf identities is included at the end, to formulate the context for the following section.

People with disabilities often face varying forms of exclusion in church spaces. Christian beliefs often see disability as an infliction or imperfection (Malina & Neytey, 1996), something which is a punishment for sin[13]; historically the case was that people with disabilities could not enter the temple lest they defile it (Dead Sea Scrolls, 1946/7-1956;2017), i.e. a person who is blind or deaf cannot observe the law, hence they are impure (Gaijarro, 2000). Often people with disabilities become charity cases for Christian people, who engage in 'acts of service' which includes 'taking care' of people with disabilities (Eisland, 1994). An extract from Creamer (2009) highlights an example of a Christian person with a disability having experienced all the above-mentioned Christian responses to disability:

> *"As a person with a life-long disability, growing up in the church exposed me to a wide range of religious responses to disability. These folk theodicies are summed up in the familiar remarks: "You are special in God's eyes. That's why you were given this*

[13] John 9: 1-3, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" implies that being blind was the punishment for sinful behaviour.

> *disability"; "Don't worry about your pain and suffering now, in heaven you will be made whole"; and "Thank God, it isn't worse." I was told that God gave me a disability to develop my character. But at age six or seven, I was convinced that I had enough character to last a lifetime. My family frequented faith healers with me in tow. I was never healed. People asked about my hidden sins, but they must have been so well hidden that they were misplaced even by me. The religious interpretations of disability that I heard were inadequate to my experience." – (Creamer, 2009: 35)*

These beliefs are justified through Biblical texts, often making reference to the miracles Jesus performed during His earthly mission, making paralyzed people walk[14], restoring sight to the blind[15], making deaf people hear[16], curing people from leprosy[17] and even restoring life to the dead. Aside from referring to instances of disability being healed as evidence for disability being unpleasing to God, punishment for sin, disobedience, ignorance or unbelief through disability is also a common theme in mainstream Christianity[18]. Exclusionary language is used often in sermons, in many forms; this is done by pastors and also through Scripture. For example, metaphors which include disability labels are commonplace in the Bible, such as blindness in reference to unbelievers (John 9:39; 2 Peter 1:8-9) or lacking knowledge or understanding (Isaiah 29:9-10) and deafness in reference to stubbornness and disobedience (Isaiah 42: 18-20; Jeremiah 5:21).

Bunch (2001) uses the examples of Jesus performing miracles as support for the restoration and healing of people with disabilities:

> *"Christians are expected to emulate Jesus' concern for and direct intervention into the lives of the disabled. If the Christian church is Christ, the direct revelation of God to the world, the church must take Jesus' healing and restorative mission as seriously as his preaching mission. If the Christian church is Christ to the world, it must seek out the isolated and bring them back into community. The Christian church, as Christ in the world, must recognize the dignity of every human being." (Bunch, 2001:42)*

While this might be well-intended with the purpose of creating a sense of integration of people with disabilities into broader society, the problem of the insistence of healing as a condition for integration serves to further entrench exclusion. Many people with disabilities do not see their disability as a hinderance to their daily life, but rather the hinderance is the manner in which an ableist society has constructed a world which excludes people with disabilities. Christians (along with society at large) have failed to acknowledge that disability can only exist in a context where certain needs are prioritised above others; for example, in a loud environment (or on the contrary, in an environment which requires complete silence) d/Deaf people are at an advantage over hearing people as they are still able to communicate through Sign Language; similarly, if every day spaces were constructed to benefit people with disabilities (e.g. braille systems on all buttons and signs etc. and ramps at building entrances), no person would be disabled. As Creamer (2009: 8) states, "As with other categories, the concept of disability is integrally related to structures of power and is

[14] Matthew 8:5-13; Matthew 9:1-8; John 5:1-9;
[15] Mark 8:22-26; John 9:1-38; Matthew 20:30-34
[16] Mark 7:31-37;
[17] Mark 1:40-45; Luke 17:11-19
[18] Blindness appears as the most common form of punishment, appearing in 7 portions of Scripture.

dependent on socio-political categories constructed by an ableist culture." Hence, it can be said that the concept of disability was instituted by an able-bodied, ableist structure as a form of exercising power over a minority group whose members embodied a perceived difference, as is the case with all marginalized minority groups.

Lewis (2007) states that the exclusion of d/Deaf people in the church is linked to the theological construction of d/Deaf people in the medical model. This is true for all perceptions of disability in church spaces, as displayed above. The response by many d/Deaf people was then to establish churches where d/Deaf people had full accessibility, used Sign Language as the medium of instruction and communication, and read the Bible from a different perspective to how hearing people read the Bible. This became an inclusive space for d/Deaf people to learn about Christianity free from the control of hearing society, enabling a liberated theology to ensue and fulfilling the request of Jesus Christ that the Church should carry out His work. According to Thielicke (1970) the value of human life is not based on human perception but rather solely on the fact that we are created and redeemed by God. Hence, we are all equally deserving of an unconditional dignity irrespective of our physical, mental, emotional, financial status. "Churches, as Christ in the world, when will you strive to integrate the disabled into the community the way that Christ did?" (Bunch, 2001: 43).

.

The d/Deaf Church in South Africa

Owing to the limited research conducted around d/Deaf religious groups in South Africa it is difficult to know the precise history of the establishment of d/Deaf churches in South Africa. A lack of accessibility in most churches poses a huge barrier for members of the d/Deaf community (Mmanape, 2017) and given that the majority of d/Deaf children are born to hearing[19], non-signing families, d/Deaf people often choose to leave their family churches and isolate themselves from religious spaces, or seek a church that caters to their linguistic needs. While some churches do provide accessibility services like Sign Language interpreters and visual aids, the participation of d/Deaf people in these church spaces is often limited; d/Deaf people tend not to be included in positions of leadership as they are "usually seen only as the objects of religious care and instruction, and not as the subjects thereof" (Smit, 2010: 1).

Furthermore, as suggested by Mmanape (2017) who's study focuses on the experiences of d/Deaf Christian South Africans who no longer attend church, the lack of access to quality interpreting services in churches results in d/Deaf people choosing to not go to church. The participants in Mmanape's study also stated that the poor standards of education in d/Deaf schools contribute to the accessibility barriers faced by d/Deaf people in churches, as the Bible is not accessible in South African Sign Language to the Deaf Community. The study reiterates the social exclusion and marginalization of d/Deaf people within the Church in South Africa.

Smit (2010) suggests that the first d/Deaf church was introduced by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1976; Warrington, in an unpublished autobiography, dates the d/Deaf congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church to before 1976 as he briefly outlined the establishment of the d/Deaf church for

[19] 90% of d/Deaf children in South Africa are born to hearing families according to (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders – NIDCD, 2016)

the English Protestant d/Deaf community in Johannesburg beginning in 1973. At this time the Dutch Reformed Church catered to the Afrikaans d/Deaf community and the Roman-Catholic church had a d/Deaf ministry but there was no set d/Deaf church for English Protestants. Warrington attended a church service at Rosebank Union Church in 1973 and after the service spoke to some congregants and requested for Sign Language to be used in order to reach the d/Deaf community. The congregants happened to be parents of d/Deaf children and thus decided to work together with Warrington to develop a space for d/Deaf people to learn about God and the Bible. In 1974 two d/Deaf ministries begun, one in Blairgowrie and one in Rosebank. In 1978 the ministers, including Warrington, began theological training with a hearing pastor from the Deaf Christian Fellowship in London. Once their training was complete, the d/Deaf church spread across various areas in Johannesburg. Although there are few formally established d/Deaf church buildings in South Africa, there are gatherings of d/Deaf people who have formed churches in various locations such as New Life Church in Johannesburg, and some integrated churches like Christ Church, East Rand and Redemption Church in Greenstone. A more detailed overview of the d/Deaf church's establishment can be found in *Discussion of the Sites.*

As the d/Deaf community had faced instances of oppression and marginalisation in the church, they created safe and inclusive spaces for d/Deaf people to worship; hearing people who used Sign Language were also welcome, given the inclusive nature of the church. The church has employed a d/Deaf liberation theology[20] (Lewis, 2007) which allows for the reading of the bible in a manner that is contextual and meaningful to a d/Deaf experience. However, the inclusivity was limited to people who embraced heteronormative behaviours; while LGBTIQA+ people would not be rejected or denied attending services, they would either have to hide their LGBTIQA+ identity, or commit to changing their identity. This speaks to the concept of horizontal or lateral violence, which sees the enactment of violence or oppression by people of minority groups, on people of the same minority group (Fanon, 1963) and causes deeper marginalisation and segregation within minority groups.

Christian Perspectives on LGBTIQA+ Identity

Many religions condemn or devalue homosexual practices (Garanzini, 1989), stating that it is an abomination, and not the way God intended for people to live (Barton, 2010). Potgieter (1997) states that psychologists testifying in court cases regarding gay men and lesbian womxn have said that same-sex 'behaviour' is a sickness *and* a sin which can be cured through spiritual and psychological intervention; this claim has been used towards the criminalization and prosecution of LGBTIQA+ people (Graziano, 2004). This is quite similar to Christian beliefs of LGBTIQA+ as many Christians regard homosexuality as a sin, an illness, and/or psychological impairment; however, some Christians do not regard psychological intervention as a means to an end – they rather believe in the power of prayer (Gordon, Feldman, Crose, Schoen, Griffing & Shankar, 2002) to facilitate healing.

An example of this is the Christian right (conservative) -affiliated *Love Won Out* movement in the USA, founded in 1998, which helps homosexuals to "overcome" or be healed of their homosexuality;

[20] With seemingly socialist influence, the idea of liberation theology is focused on achieving economic and social justice and freedom for all people (Guiterrez, 1973)

thereafter, the “ex-gay/lesbian” becomes involved in Love Won Out advocacy campaigns to help other homosexuals and their friends and families to deal with the “problem”. A huge difference between the political anti-gay movements and Love Won Out’s “ex-gay” movement is that where anti-gay movements see same-sex desire as a choice, Love Won Out considers same-sex desire to be something that develops from childhood, often based on experiences during childhood (which will be mentioned below) (Burack & Josephson, 2005). Furthermore, Love Won Out considers “gay” to be a social identity, and homosexuality to be a “psychological condition”. A psychologist, Dr Joseph Nicolosi, states that “we are all heterosexual by nature, but some of us have a homosexual problem” (Burack & Josephson, 2005: 4).

> *“Speakers spoke of those who identify as lesbians and gay men (to differentiate them from those “struggling” with their same-sex attraction) as unhappy, empty, in pain, defensive, broken, and enraged. With regard to this final point, Nicolosi suggested that for many developmentally damaged children, the enforced goodness of childhood provokes envy of “bad boys” who act out. He argued that this envy is the root of both the bad and socially transgressive behavior of gay activists and the alleged exhibitionism of lesbians and gay men in gay pride parades.” (Burack & Josephson, 2005:4)*

From the above we can clearly see that from a mainstream Christian theological perspective homosexuality is a problem, and something which one can be healed and delivered from. Some Christian groups have exercised blatant hatred towards LGBTIQA+ people; Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) is an extremist American church notorious for its extremist views on a variety of social issues, the most pertinent being their extreme homophobia. The church slogan reads “God Hates Fags”, and this is also the name of the church’s website. Members of WBC picket daily, in what they describe as “peaceful sidewalk demonstrations opposing the homosexual lifestyle of soul-damning, nation-destroying filth. We display large, colourful signs containing Bible words and sentiments” (Westboro Baptist Church, n.d.); what they describe as Bible words and sentiments can easily be identified as hate speech by the manner they have been grossly misconstrued to paint Christianity as a religion based on hate, punishment and rejection. Indoctrination begins at an early age, as small children are also seen participating in pickets.



Figure 3: Example of "large colourful signs containing Bible words and sentiments"



Figure 4: Example of "large colourful signs containing Bible words and sentiments"

WBC regards LGBTIQA+ social justice movements as militant, and as posing a threat to America. WBC also appears to hate America, and celebrates the death of soldiers in killed in battle.

> *"Perceiving the modern militant homosexual movement to pose a clear and present danger to the survival of America, exposing our nation to the wrath of God as in 1898 B.C. at Sodom and Gomorrah, WBC has conducted **63,038** such demonstrations since June, 1991, at homosexual parades and other events, including funerals of impenitent sodomites (like Matthew Shepard) and over 400 military funerals of troops whom God has killed in Iraq/Afghanistan in righteous judgment against an evil nation."*

Furthermore, WBC critiques the teachings of other Christian churches stating that they are built on lies, and are unbiblical:

> *"Even though the Arminian[21] lies that "God loves everyone" and "Jesus died for everyone" are being taught from nearly every pulpit in this generation, this hasn't always been the case. If you are in a church that supposedly believes the Bible, and you are hearing these lies, then your church doesn't teach what the Bible teaches."*

Similar to other Christian churches, WBC states that all their claims can be backed up with biblical evidence. Christianity justifies the condemnation of LGBTIQA+ identities using six core scriptures. The most famous of the six scriptures is found in Leviticus 18:22 and states, "Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a womxn. It is a detestable sin". In the Islamic faith, a similar view of homosexuality as an abomination, presents itself, according to Halstead and Lewicka (1998):

> *Muslims oppose the teaching of homosexuality not only because their religion proclaims it to be an 'abomination', but also because […] the notion of homosexuality as a lifestyle at all, let alone a natural and equally valid one, is itself incoherent from a Muslim perspective. (1998: 49)*

These teachings, or threats, of condemnation often lead to LGBTIQA+ people experiencing intrapersonal conflict, particularly if they desire religion or spirituality within their lives (Subhi & Geelan, 2012). Shuck and Liddle (2001) wrote a paper based on the findings from different research

[21] The ideological ideas of Dutch Protestant Jacobus Arminius who rejected Calvinist ideology; WBC is based on Calvinist ideology.

articles, which discusses how religious identity and LGBTIQA+ identity can be in conflict or can be integrated. Some accounts from Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGBTIQA+)[22] people (Shuck and Liddle, 2001) have shown that the conflict they've experienced is usually the result of religious doctrines which reject LGBTIQA+ identity:

> *Many said that their clergy or religious denomination taught that sex between members of the same gender was sin or that LGB[TIQA+] people were bad. Some said they had been instructed by clergy to pray for forgiveness and struggle to overcome their homosexuality. Others said their church prohibited all non-marital sex, which dictated eternal chastity for lesbian or gay parishioners. Three respondents (one raised Catholic and two raised Baptist) mentioned specific scriptural passages that were used to condemn homosexuality from the pulpit, particularly Biblical passages in Leviticus and Paul's letters to the Corinthians. - (2001: 69)*

The manner in which the bible verses are written has led some to believe that the condemnation against homosexuality is specific to men having sex with men (Baldock, 2014); for example, in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot had two angels staying at his home in Sodom; the men of Sodom surrounded Lot's house and demanded that he bring the men out so that they could "have sex"[23] with them. Lot begged them not to have sex with the men and offered his daughter to be raped (there is no evidence that the daughters gave consent, hence I use the term rape) by the men instead (Genesis 19: 4-8).

This story is a blatant example of toxic heteronormative, patriarchal (Brownson, 2013), hegemonic [masculinity] performativity (see *Violence*), where Lot exercises ownership over his daughters' bodies by giving them to the men without their consent, as he would rather have womxn raped[24] than for the angels to be raped by the men of Sodom. This also speaks to the position of womxn in society, in biblical and current times, through the sexualisation of womxn's bodies and perpetuation of rape culture.

Other examples of scripture used to condemn and reject LGBTIQA+ identities are Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 5: 9-13; 6:9. Some biblical scholars have argued that using these texts to justify homophobia or exclusion of LGBTIQA+ identities in ministry is hypocritical as the texts are read in isolation, thereby ignoring other acts that are also considered unlawful[25] (Brownson, 2013), and that the mistranslation of the original terms has altered the meanings of these texts to suit an anti-LGBTIQA+ belief system. One such example are the Greek words *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai,* both used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. *Malakoi* literally translates to *soft*, and has

[22] Although Shuck and Liddle's study dealt specifically with LGB identities, I have chosen to use the *LGBTIQA+* acronym to provide consistency throughout this paper.

[23] Some bibles quote the men saying, "Let them [the angels] come out so that we can rape them". This interpretation is supported by scholars who have traced the original Hebrew text which uses the word *yada*, which means to have sex with or without consent. These scholars suggest that in Sodom, *yada* often occurred without consent to men visiting the town, and these unconsensual sexual acts ultimately led to God destroying the city (Germond and De Gruchy, 1997; Rogers, 2011).

[24] This implies the preference heteronormative sexual interactions, even to the extent of rape, over same-sex sexual activity.

[25] The Book of Leviticus lays out the laws as instructed by God, yet only certain portions are still considered in modern Christian doctrine.

been used to describe soft fabrics (Matthew 11:8); before 1958 it was also used describe effeminate character (hence it was usually ascribed to womxn) and bore connotations of weakness or lack of virility when used to describe men; in reference to sexual acts, it described the man who took the submissive (or womxn's/feminine) role. After 1958 a shift in perspective resulted in new translations of malakoi as *those who participate in homosexuality, sexual perverts* and other things that were seen as sexually immoral. Similarly, *aresenokoitai* originally referred to men who took a dominant in nonprocreative sex, but did not determine the sexual orientation of those men. In 1940 a new translation of the bible saw the use of arsenokoitai as *sexual perverts, sodomite, those who practise homosexuality.* In 1971 a newer translation combined both words to simply indicate *homosexuality* (Baldock, 2014).

Vines (2014) challenges the use of the six anti-homosexual scriptures by providing evidence from the bible which contradict traditional claims against homosexuality. He proposes that Ezekiel 16:49, which highlights the sins for which Sodom was punished; the text in Ezekiel appears not to mention homosexuality (Genesis 19) as the sin, but rather selfish, arrogant and gluttonous behaviour. The response to the two portions of Leviticus (18:22; 20:13) come from Hebrews 8:13[26] and Romans 10:4 respectively[27].

The rejection of LGBTIQA+ identities in mainstream churches has led to LGBTIQA+ Christians breaking away from mainstream church spaces to establish new, inclusive safe spaces of worship and learning about Christianity. Inclusive churches read biblical engage in "queering" texts, a process of critiquing the formerly established traditionalist perspectives and interpretations of the bible (Yip, 2005; Shore-Goss, Bonache, Cheng and West, 2013; Webster and Maitland, 1995). Goss (2002) states that to "queer" biblical texts would interfere with or spoil the texts, hence destabilising and deconstructing naturalised, normalised reinforcements of traditional ideology. According to Yip, this queering and destabilisation serves to expose the contextualisation of texts socio-culturally and temporally, as well as "the ideological framework of the authority that constructs such hermeneutics" (Yip, 2005: 51), hence providing the means to critique not only the traditional interpretation of texts (which tend to reinforce heternormativity), but also to critique the interpretive authority of those in positions of religious authority. This provides a space for LGBTIQA+ Christians to offer their Biblical interpretations from an inclusive perspective, which is still wholly embedded and built upon Christian ideology.

South Africa pre-1994 excluded the recognition of any LGBTIQA+ unions, as the Apartheid government's act of enforcing a particular (traditionalist) brand of Christianity, as described above. Hence, there was no space for the inclusion of LGBTIQA+ affirming religious spaces, and no legal protection for the Rights of LGBTIQA+ people. The abolishment of apartheid saw the abolishment of many old laws, and the Constitution now includes the protection of LGBTIQA+ people's Rights; South Africa post-Apartheid has thus seen the emergence of LGBTIQA+ inclusive and affirming churches which not only welcome LGBTIQA+ people but also work towards assisting people in accepting and embracing their LGBTIQA+ identities in accordance with Christian doctrine.

[26] "By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear."

[27] "For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God."

Although still largely marginal, there have been significant steps towards the recognition and acceptance of LGBTIQA+ affirming ministries by few mainstream Christian denominations. Archbishop Desmond Tutu has been a massive advocate for LGBTIQA+ people in South Africa, publicly declaring his support for LGBTIQA+ Christians to be recognised as equals in the Church, and condemning Christian groups who continue to oppress, marginalise and reject people with LGBTIQA+ identities.
The following section expounds on the establishment and growth of LGBTIQA+ affirming churches in South Africa, and the attempt towards change in the attitudes of mainstream Christianity.

The LGBTIQA+ Church in South Africa

The age-old Christian belief which views LGBTIQA+ unions as a sin has resulted in many people with LGBTIQA+ identities being rejected from mainstream church spaces if they do not have intentions of expelling, rejecting, ignoring or 'changing' their LGBTIQA+ identity in favour of a heterosexual identity; in these spaces, people with LGBTIQA+ identities may be welcomed to participate in church services but will be excluded from roles of leadership, and will not have marriages or civil unions recognised by the church. Furthermore, the expression or performance[28] of LGBTIQA+ identity tends to be frowned upon or chastised in the church space.

Desmond Tutu describes the role of the church in the marginalising and condemning of LGBTIQA+ people, in a manner that is not in line with the character of God portrayed in the Christian Bible:

> *"The church of Jesus Christ, far from being inclusive and welcoming of all, has over and over again pushed many to the periphery; […] it has made many of God's children outcasts and pariahs on the basis of something which, like race or gender, they could do nothing about – the sexual orientation. The church has joined the world in committing what I consider to be the ultimate blasphemy – making the children of God doubt that they are children of God" – (Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Foreword to 'Aliens in the Household of God (Germond and De Gruchy, 1997))*

Germond and De Gruchy (1997) aimed to show that there are no Biblical or theological grounds for the marginalisation and alienation of people in the church based on their sexual orientation. However, many LGBTIQA+ people who have Christian identities, because of the rejection from mainstream church spaces, often face an internal conflict or cognitive dissonance (see *Cognitive Dissonance, Identity Conflict, and Conflict Resolution*) where they feel the need to reject or repress one of the identities in order to restore internal peace. The reading of Biblical texts are often taken out of context or read from a hetero-patriarchal perspective (Germond and De Gruchy, 1997), results in fearmongering towards those who do adhere to this heteronormative, patriarchal practise; hence, many LGBTIQA+ people are inclined to try to change their sexual orientation to avoid 'eternal damnation' and the inescapable 'wrath of God' (Baggett, 1994).

Many Christian LGBTIQA+ people have made the decision to leave mainstream church spaces and create spaces where they are able to freely practise Christianity while still maintaining their LGBTIQA+ identities, free from judgement, oppression or marginalisation from heteronormative

[28] For example, womxn wearing masculine clothes, men wearing feminine clothes or make-up; essentially, not conforming to cis-gendered behaviours.

church spaces. These are known as Inclusive churches, as they aim to help LGBTIQA+ Christians integrate and reconcile both identities, emphasising the importance of honing both identities as each contributes to the individual as created by God, in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). These are different from gay-friendly churches which, as mentioned above, show conditional acceptance towards LGBTIQA+ people.

The biggest LGBTIQA+ affirming church internationally is the Universal Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC), founded in the USA in 1968, and pioneering the move towards same-gender marriages. There are MCC congregations in various locations internationally including the Good Hope MCC in Cape Town; Church A), one of the sites in this research, originally belonged to the MCC body but has now broken away and is affiliated with the Deo Gloria Apostles Network (DGAN), but remains an independent church. DGAN is an inclusive and affirming church body consisting of approximately eleven Network churches spread out amongst all South African provinces, which is overseen by Apostle Deborah Bell of the Deo Gloria Family Church (DGFC) in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal. The Church A congregation often combines with DGFC for conferences and seminars once a year. Church A and other LGBTIQA+ affirming churches adopt the overarching theme of being open and inclusive to people of all identities who wish to worship God and Jesus Christ, with the intention of providing a spiritual home, free from discrimination, to all who are believers.

In this section I have discussed the history and development of the Christian church in South Africa, and highlighted how the traditional practises of mainstream churches has led to the exclusion of minority groups, or people who embody a perceived difference. I then discussed the consequences and outcomes of exclusionary practise, as manifested in the establishment of alternative churches which aim to be inclusive of people of all identities, in an attempt to dismantle marginalisation and oppression in church spaces and to reinforce the message of unconditional love, kindness and acceptance as shown by Jesus Christ.

The Development of d/Deaf Studies

This section looks at literature regarding the development of d/Deaf Studies internationally and in South Africa. It discusses early theories of d/Deaf studies such as Ladd's (2003) notion of Deafhood and Deaf Pride, and how strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1987) plays a role in the development of d/Deaf identities; this serves as an introduction to d/Deaf identities in South Africa, and the importance of being a Sign Language user in d/Deaf spaces. I will also discuss emerging literature which deals with d/Deaf geographies (Rosen, 2017) which speaks to how physical spaces can be oppressive or inclusive towards d/Deaf people. This section is relevant as it highlights the importance of communication and accessibility to information in the d/Deaf community, which currently poses a major barrier toward the integration of d/Deaf individuals into "mainstream" (hearing) society.

A Brief History of d/Deaf Studies

The term "Deaf Studies" dates to 1971 when Frederick Schreiber made public mention of the term for the first time while exclaiming the importance of d/Deaf people "getting ahead" and having a record of the history and culture of d/Deaf people:

> *"They [d/Deaf people] need concrete examples of what deaf people have already done so that they can project for themselves a brighter future. If we can have Black studies, Jewish studies, why not Deaf studies?" (Katz, 1999 in Bauman, 2008: 7).*

d/Deaf Studies is an area of knowledge which looks at various topics related to the d/Deaf community including d/Deaf Culture, d/Deaf politics, d/Deaf identity, (the history of) d/Deaf education and Sign Language, amongst others.

Historically there have been waves of the development of d/Deaf studies; for example, the First Wave of d/Deaf studies in the 1960s, saw a major shift of understanding of language and culture in the d/Deaf community and a successful utilisation of strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1987)[29], where *deaf* became *Deaf,* marking the shift from pathological perspectives of deafness as hearing loss to the acceptance of a cultural identity of a linguistic minority group (Bauman, 2008). However, despite this change being a cause for celebration, the shift from *deaf* to *Deaf* implied that these identities existed in a binary - people would either identify strongly with the pathological perspective and strive towards being identified as hearing, or would reject this view in favour of being a member of the socio-linguistic minority (Deaf) group.

> *"This binary model is problematic in Deaf education because as Brueggemann (2009) observes, it thrives on opposition and the rhetoric of exclusion. The consequence is that deaf persons themselves tend to stay locked into those oppositions and are afraid to enter the gap between the binary poles" – McIlroy and Storbeck (2011: 496)*

Second-wave introduces the term *d/Deaf* (Wrigley, 1996) created as an attempt to bridge the gap between people who might experience fluidity in their identity as a Deaf person, by moving between Deaf spaces and hearing spaces and communicating effectively in both spaces, while not necessarily having a bi-cultural identity. Ohna (2004) suggests the concept of "Deaf in my own way", where a d/Deaf person reaches a point of self-actualisation which says, "I have to be together with deaf and hearing persons and to be able to do this, I have to be *deaf in my own way"* (Ohna, 2004: 34).

McIlroy (2008) coined a new term, DeaF, ascribed to people with dual d/Deaf and hearing identities. Although *DeaF* is similar to *d/Deaf,* there is an essential difference between the two:

> *"[DeaF is] a linguistic marker of a person's duality of identity in which the person is situated within both the Deaf and hearing worlds […] a capital 'F' is used to symbolise the fluid identity of bicultural Deaf persons, hence the emphasis of the F in DeaF" – (McIlroy, 2008: 13)*

Hence, although both *DeaF* and *d/Deaf* people have the ability to integrate in both d/Deaf and hearing spaces should they choose to do so, the use of *d/Deaf* "indicates complex situations that fall

[29] Strategic essentialism is defined as a mobilization strategy used by minority groups based on a shared identity and a common goal, for the means of self-representation. The concept was realized by Spivak in 1987 and is frequently referred to in queer studies, feminist studies and d/Deaf studies.

between these two choices" (Monaghan, 2003: x) while *DeaF* adopt a bicultural identity which shifts as an individual moves through different spaces.

Deafhood (Ladd, 2003) (see following section) formed part of the Second Wave of d/Deaf Studies as this wave spoke to d/Deaf ontologies (ways of *being*, including personal experiences) and d/Deaf epistemologies (ways of thinking), and introduced intersectionality[30] (Crenshaw, 1989) by creating a platform for marginalized groups within the d/Deaf community[31] to be represented through the sharing of experiences with other d/Deaf people.

d/Deaf Identity and Deafhood

Deafhood, according to Ladd (2003) is a process of actualisation towards one's d/Deaf identity, the liberation from oppression of the d/Deaf by the hearing through the realisation and acknowledgment of Sign Languages as real, fully developed independent languages which are equal to spoken languages. Deafhood rejects oralism (an education system introduced by Alexander Graham Bell, which became enforced after the Milan Congress of 1880, forcing d/Deaf students to learn by lip-reading and communicate through spoken language) and audism (the notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or behave in the manner of one who hears (Humphries, 1975)) and promotes the use of sign language communication amongst d/Deaf people and other members of the d/Deaf community (allies, children of d/Deaf adults (CODA) and sign language interpreters).

To identify as d/Deaf is an important part of becoming and belonging in the d/Deaf community (Morgan, 2014). Given that 90% of d/Deaf children are born to hearing families (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders – NIDCD, 2016), most d/Deaf people go through a process of becoming part of the d/Deaf community. There is a shift from having a pathological deaf identity in a hearing space, to meeting other d/Deaf people, learning Sign Language and becoming part of a new Deaf culture, with a new d/Deaf identity – the process of Deafhood. This journey to becoming and ultimately, belonging, is described by West as a life-journey where identities continuously "grow, morph, fade and intertwine" (2012: 180). A sense of belonging is created through shared experiences of being d/Deaf, experiencing oppression, and feelings of isolation or displacement in hearing spaces (Morgan, 2014). d/Deaf people hence have a sense of unity and a connection to a diasporic community (Heap, 2003) with other sign language users both nationally and internationally, whether or not they know the people. Despite sign languages not being universal, there is a sense of citizenship (Wrigley, 1996) to an imagined community (Anderson, 1991), a Deaf-world (Bahan, 1994; Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan, 1996) belonging to those who self-identify as culturally Deaf, which naturally assumes the use of sign language as their primary language (Morgan, 2014).

There have been some critiques of Ladd's notion of Deafhood from scholars who argue that Deafhood does not leave much room for individual experiences of being d/Deaf. Ruiz-Williams,

[30] The oppression of multiple "low-status" identity categories (e.g. Black, womxn, LGBTIQA+, d/Deaf, poor, etc.)

[31] This includes race, gender, sexual orientation, class and non-signing d/Deaf people; people who belong to these groups experience double-oppression (Klinger, 1997), firstly for being d/Deaf and secondly for embodying other marginal identities.

Burke, Chong and Chainarong (in Friedner and Kusters, 2015) state that Deafhood implies a Deaf-hearing binary which does not account for intersectionality amongst the Deaf community; they move away from the idea of DEAF-SAME, a term used to describe a universal experience of being Deaf (Friedner and Kusters, 2015). Instead, they wish to represent "deaf intersectional realities [as] part of our individual and collective journey in recognizing what was lacking and erased in our study program and wider community" (Friedner and Kusters, 2015: 264). They have stated that renowned Deaf Studies scholars, like Harlan Lane and Paddy Ladd, have appropriated experiences of d/Deaf people who experience multiple oppressions (such as d/Deaf People of Colour, DeafBlind, and DeafDisabled people), "…decontextualizing histories of European colonialism that endure to the present day, presuming that racialized oppressions share the same structures and processes as phonocentrism and audism, and rendering the intersections of DDDBDDHH-POC invisible." (Ruiz-Williams, Burke, Chong and Chainarong in Friedner and Kusters, 2015: 264)

Ladd (2015) counter-argues this by stating that despite individual differences, all Deaf people internationally share the experience of being d/Deaf, and that all people from minority groups will at times face tensions because conflict occurs naturally as a result of oppression. He also states that because minority studies are fairly new in academia,

> "…they have not yet progressed to the point where cross-minority study is a reality. This means that few people are able to see beyond their own situation to understand the parallels in their experiences and thus be in a better position to challenge oppression." (Ladd in Friedner and Kusters, 2015)

The experiences of the South African d/Deaf Community mirror both perspectives (of Deafhood/DEAF-SAME, as well as intersectional d/Deaf identities), as seen in the following section.

Being d/Deaf in South Africa

South Africa's d/Deaf community consists of approximately one million people, and yet is still quite marginalized from mainstream hearing society (Heap, 2003). Language barriers provide a major wedge in communication between d/Deaf people and hearing people in South Africa, as the majority hearing people do not understand or acknowledge SASL as real language (Woodward, 1982) and are unaware that a d/Deaf Culture exists. Many South Africans have a pathological, medicalised perspective of the d/Deaf community, which takes the belief that deafness is a disability and d/Deaf people are less capable of living "normal" lives than hearing people (Stander and McIlroy, 2017).

Morgan (2014) states that, to date, the research regarding Deaf Culture, Deafhood and d/Deaf identities in South Africa is sparse. Most of the research about the d/Deaf community is focused on education, policies and planning, and linguistics (Aarons and Akach, 2002; Penn, 1984; Reagan, 2008). Heap (2006) conducted a study focusing on sign-Deaf spaces in Cape Town, South Africa. The Deaf Community of Cape Town (DCCT) is a community which embraces Deafhood and has a proud and rich d/Deaf Culture. It was initiated in 1987 as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to serve the needs of the side-lined Black and Coloured d/Deaf community. It is run entirely by the d/Deaf community and decisions are made by the d/Deaf members, and has pioneered in placing d/Deaf people in leadership positions (DCCT, n.d.). DCCT runs many programs which are designed to empower the d/Deaf community at large. DCCT has displayed Deafhood (Ladd, 2003) in their unity

as a community, which was present even during apartheid when South Africa was largely segregated, as Heap stated that "around the mid-1990s the d/Deaf were claiming a commonality across South Africa's historical divides on the basis of a 'Deaf culture'" (Heap, 2006:35). Furthermore, the DCCT also regarded themselves as equals with the hearing community on the basis of having a cultural perspective of being d/Deaf and rejecting medical perspectives of deafness as hearing loss.

d/Deaf people do not belong to one single community, as their belonging is shaped according to experience, space, language, culture[32] and self-identity[33] (Heap, 2003; Storbeck and Jurgens, 2007; in Stander and McIlroy, 2017). Similar to Ladd (2003), d/Deaf children in South Africa also learn about d/Deaf Culture and Deafhood when they enter d/Deaf schools, and are thus enculturated into d/Deaf Culture (Stander and McIlroy, 2017), hence going through a journey of *belonging* (finding one's space and being a part of a d/Deaf community through shared experience, oppressions, language – SASL - and d/Deaf culture) and *becoming* (learning ways of being d/Deaf, learning about the experiences and cultures of other d/Deaf people, etc.), according to Morgan (2014) and Bauman (2008).

Since d/Deaf people do not necessarily belong to a single d/Deaf community, different aspects of identity are often prioritized in different social situations (Jacobs, 2015; Morgan, 2008). In an investigation of the construction of d/Deaf identities, Morgan (2008; 2014) found that self-identity also played a role in the prioritising of identity in various spaces; while d/Deaf heterosexual participants tended to prioritise a core d/Deaf identity in all social spaces, d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people (Morgan, 2008) prioritized their LGBTIQA+ identities in d/Deaf spaces. In Willemse and Morgan, John Meletse's narrative account of "being d/Deaf, becoming gay" (2009: 88) shows how he negotiates his d/Deaf and gay identities according to the space he is in – his gay identity is prioritized in gay spaces, and his d/Deaf identity is prioritized in d/Deaf-hearing spaces[34]. In d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ spaces, both identities appear to be equally prioritized. Jacobs (2015), in an investigation on the fluid identities of a d/Deaf lesbian, found that sexual orientation and d/Deaf identity were prioritised according to social space; similar to John's manner of prioritising identity, Dalene prioritised her sexual orientation (lesbian) in spaces with LGBTIQA+ people, either d/Deaf or hearing, and prioritised her d/Deaf identity in d/Deaf-hearing spaces.

Given that d/Deaf heterosexual participants in Morgan (2014) prioritized their d/Deaf identities, which can be viewed as unconditional patriotism to the d/Deaf community, this research seeks to establish whether that patriotism is extended within religious spaces where some d/Deaf people present their LGBTIQA+ identities – whether there be unconditional acceptance based on a shared d/Deaf experience; similarly, in a hearing LGBTIQA+ religious space, would d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people be welcome and accepted based on a shared experience of oppression and marginalisation of LGBTIQA+ by heteronormative people . This research also aims to establish whether d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people would prioritise their d/Deaf or LGBTIQA+ identity in a religious space.

[32] Since most d/Deaf children are born to hearing families, they often have a home language which is not SASL; the same applies to culture, which refers to the family's cultural history, traditions and customs.
[33] This refers to religious self-identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc, which play a role in belonging in certain communities.
[34] Spaces simultaneously occupied by d/Deaf and hearing people.

d/Deaf Geographies

'Geography' refers to the study of places and the interactions between people and their environments. According to Rosen (2018) geographical spaces have an effect on the people within them, according to how they are constructed. Rosen defines 'space' as 'a site where culture and body meet… a physical text of cultural constructions of the body that articulate personal, social and material functions and arrangements." (2018: 60).

Given that sign language is a visual language which relies on sight for communication (with the exception of tactile-signing, used by Blind-d/Deaf people or between Blind and d/Deaf people), it is important that d/Deaf spaces are constructed in ways that accommodate for optimal receptive capability for the people using the space. This can happen on a physical and abstract level. For example, according to Gulliver and Fekete (2017) d/Deaf space is created through sign language due to the visual-spatial nature of sign language – thus an abstract construction of a d/Deaf space occurs, as sign language makes use of space to be produced.

The physical "brick-and-mortar" (architectural features and physical layouts) (Rosen, 2018: 64) construction of space is what I am interested in in this research, focusing on Rosen's (2018) notion of sensescapes, i.e., a geographic model of the sensory landscape that resulted from the expression of

> *"an institutional culture's ideological and practical order of the senses, its sensible material objects and its allocations in space for its programs and services that serve the sensory needs of the DHH [d/Deaf and hard of hearing] people." (Rosen, 2018: 64)*

In the study, Rosen mentions three sensescape constructs, namely visual sensescapes, auditory sensescapes and mixed-sensory sensescapes. The construction of sensespaces contributes to a level of inclusion or exclusion in the space. This will be discussed briefly below for each of the three suggestions of sensescapes, according to the accounts recorded in Rosen (2018).

Visual sensescapes

Visual sensescapes are created with the intention of being beneficial to visually oriented people. These landscapes are specifically designed to include visual-sensible objects and fields of sight (Rosen, 2018). The study provides the example of a d/Deaf school in California which aims to serve the visual sensory needs of the students by providing services and activities which are suitable to visual-oriented people, in this case, the students. Some of the provisions noted by Rosen are round table surrounded by chairs in common areas, lighting and video relay systems, and in learning and living areas, up-to-date visual technologies (SMART Boards, videophones, video cameras, visual safety alarms, strobe lights, visual electronic intercom system, televisions (TVs) with closed captioning decoders), and semi-circular seating arrangements for optimal fields of vision for everyone in the space.

Auditory sensescapes

Auditory sensescapes are created to cater to the needs of auditorily oriented deaf people who prefer to make use of assistive hearing devices and use speech to communicate. The services provided in these spaces are to enable and advance the use of auditory sensibility. In this study, Rosen visited The Center for Hearing and Communication in New York City; this institution aims to

improve the quality of hearing life of adults and children who experience all degrees of hearing loss. The geography was designed to ensure that visitors to the center would benefit from the auditory-oriented layout. Auditory sensible objects such as telephones, speakers, voice amplifiers and special Voice Carry Over Read and Speak telephone systems which would translate speech into text which could be read and responded to via speech. Seating areas n waiting rooms had rows of chairs in straight lines, and square tables with chairs around them.

At another site, Clark's School for Hearing and Speech (previously Clark's School for the Deaf in New York) had similar services, as well as speech pathology and audiology services available as well to allow students to use speech instead of sign language. Notably, Clark's School also had desks and chairs in classrooms arranged in semi-circle formation, for maximal hearing and vision.

These two sites effectively employed audism by rejecting opportunities for a DeafSpace (Gulliver and Fekete, 2017), emphasising and promoting the importance of using speech and being able to hear with audio-enhancing technologies like cochlear implants, hearing aids and audio amplifiers. The sites were also blatantly ableist in their design, being inaccessible for people with disabilities and especially exclusionary to visually oriented people.

Mixed-sensory Spaces

Rosen visited two sites which provided mixed-sensory services to accommodate a larger range of people. Both sites had technologies which served the needs of auditorily- and visually-oriented people. For example, at O'Hare airport announcements made over the speaker system were also displayed on screens, all videos contained closed-captions, and seating was arranged in a parallel as well as adjacent fashion to allow visually oriented people to sit opposite one another while audio-oriented people could sit next to each other.

The Paper Mill playhouse aims to be a space that is fully accessible to all people, including d/Deaf people and people with disabilities. In order to cater to visually-oriented people, they have ASL interpreters and large screens with open-captions for people who would not benefit from interpreters.

The mixed-sensory spaces tended to be the most accessible for a wider variety of identity groups, being accommodating as a DeafSpace in some instances and an auditory space in other instances.

This section has aimed to discuss how d/Deaf studies has developed from the First Wave which essentialised Deafhood and embracing Deaf culture as a concept completely divorced from hearing society, to a shift towards recognising d/Deafness on a spectrum. It has also mentioned the various ways in which d/Deaf culture is expressed which includes the fluidity of d/Deaf identity and the construction of d/Deaf geographies and Sensescapes to accommodate d/Deaf identities.

LGBTIQA+ Identities in (South) Africa

The South African LGBTIQA+ community is growing substantially, with a population of at least 800 000 people being open about their sexual orientation[35] (Morris, 2017); this could be attributed to the recognition of LGBTIQA+ Rights in the Constitution (1996) and also as global movement towards the recognition of LGBTIQA+ identities has become more prominent recently. South Africa's LGBTIQA+ community has become the biggest role-player in the struggle towards social justice, fighting towards the actualisation of the Rights of all oppressed groups (South African History Online, 2017).

There are contestations surrounding the history of LGBTIQA+ identity in South Africa and Africa at large. Some African traditionalists argue that homosexuality is un-African, stating that it is a Western concept that has infiltrated African culture, while others provide evidence for the existence of homosexuality even in pre-Colonial (South) Africa (Sanders, 1997). These contestations are briefly discussed below, followed by an account of LGBTIQA+ people's lives in a liberated South Africa including the persisting daily struggles and dangers of being an LGBTIQA+ person in South Africa.

LGBTIQA+ is un-African!

Bajaha (n.d.) presents a paper titled *Postcolonial Amnesia* which looks at the position of African Traditionalists, and especially African government leaders, and their attitudes towards homosexuality; many African leaders have expressed their unacceptance of homosexual practise, some going as far as to criminalise it. The rejection of homosexuality by African traditionalists is based on homosexuality being a sin according to Christian doctrine, and that it un-African (Epprecht, 2004; Morgan and Wieringa, 2005), and is an imposed Western concept which threatens to erase African customs and tradition; ironically, Christianity was introduced by the West, as were the laws that prohibited homosexual practise in Africa (McKaiser, 2012), which African leaders fail to acknowledge.

The article discusses how homosexuality is characterised as a colonial imposition while colonial laws and religion are not considered. Bajaha states that while the *concept* of homosexuality may be un-African (Foucault, 1978[36]), the claim of homosexuality as un-African cannot be extended to homosexual *acts*; to do this is to erase portions of African history (Roscoe and Murray, 1998). The report further states that the claim of homosexuality being un-African infers that Africa is socio-politically and culturally homogenous which is not the case; scholars of African History[37] have documented the rich and vast history of cultures and traditions across the continent and while some traditions may overlap, it is incorrect to assume a single that general observations can be applied unilaterally. Ultimately Bajaha states that "the claim that homosexuality is 'un-African' simply becomes a metaphor for the propagation of conservative agendas that promote a heteropatriarchal society under the guise of protecting tradition, culture and religion" (n.d.: 10). This is emphasised by Msibi's (2011) suggestion that "anxious masculinities" (Stein 2005) that drive this agenda—with

[35] This excludes LGBTIQA+ people who are only out to some people and those who are not out to anyone

[36] In *The History of Sexuality* (1978), Foucault acknowledges homosexual identity as a recent Western social construct. Despite the expression of homosexual acts in Africa throughout history, homosexuality was not classified as an identity (Epprecht, 2008)

[37] Afolayan, 2005; Falola, 1993; Jewsiewicki and Newbury, 1986; Roscoe and Murray, 1998, amongst others

masculinity being reconstituted because of an array of social changes questioning the patriarchal authority" (2011: 1)

LGBTQA+ Identity as Inherently African

McKaiser (2012) makes the claim that the existence of LGBTIQA+ people in Africa is evidence enough to contradict the view of LGBTIQA+ as un-African. Msibi (2011) reiterates Bajaha's point that the terms 'homosexual' and 'gay' did not exist in precolonial Africa but there is evidence for the existence same-sex attraction and intimacy, sometimes hidden but often expressed, and accepted (Epprecht, 2004).

Studies have shown evidence of the existence of same-sex practise in Africa for centuries; in Uganda, certain tribes had priests who dressed as womxn; Kenyan tribes has religious leaders who dressed as womxn and could marry other men; the Kamba tribe in Kenya recognised marriages between two womxn, if one womxn could not bear a child she would marry another womxn who would be the surrogate. This was to ensure that the family name would not die out. Many other examples of LGBTIQA+ identities in Africa before colonialism pose the claim of same-sex practises being a colonial imposition, as a contradiction. Roscoe and Murray (1998) explore African pre-colonial same-sex attractions and expressions in great detail, looking at accounts by the first European explorers to Africa – the Portuguese – which documents the existence of the Mbundu tribe who had a womxn king; dressed in masculine attire, she had an army of men dressed as womxn, who were her 'wives'. While this is not specifically an example of same-sex attraction, it does account for the existence of complex sexualities in pre-historic Africa. However, Roscoe and Murray do provide extensive details of same-sex relationships manifesting in various forms and according to various social stratification from precolonial to postcolonial periods in Africa:

Evidence of same-sex intimacy exists amongst the Khoi people who used the term *koetsire* to refer to a passive male role in a sexual act, and *soregus* which refers to masturbation amongst a same-sex group of people, especially men. Same-sex intimacy between womxn did occur but was a rarer occurrence. Bantu tribes also had boy-wives who would have sexual relationships with older men; the relationships ended when the boys reached manhood and could then choose boy-wives of their own if they so desired. This was also popular amongst miners between 1907-1950 (Msibi and Rudwick, 2015).

Being LGBTIQA+ in South Africa

Despite the constitutional laws which protect LGBTIQA+ people in post-apartheid South Africa, this protection is not guaranteed; many LGBTIQA+ people still face the danger of violent attacks, hate crimes, sexual assault and various other forms of abuse every day (South African History Online, 2014; Morris, 2017). The LGBTIQA+ community has fought for recognition and protection since the apartheid era, with people like Simon Nkoli, Justice Edwin Cameron, Beverly Ditsie and Justice Kathy Satchwell being pioneers in various areas of the struggle towards recognising LGBTIQA+ people in South Africa. Allies such as Dr Allen Boesak, Archbishop Desmond Tutu have publicly declared their support towards the recognition, acceptance, protection and equality for all people in the LGBTIQA+ community. Despite having achieved numerous victories such as the legalising of LGBTIQA+ relationships, adoption rights for LGBTIQA+ couples and representation in the media and television,

and many campaigns aimed at educating broader society about the LGBTIQA+ community, the struggle continues 24 years into the new era of democracy.

Along with womxn and children, LGBTIQA+ suffer high instances of violence in their daily lives. Hate crimes[38] are often committed against LGBTIQA+ people in an attempt to "fix" or punish them for their identity. It is more common for LGBTIQA+ people who do not perform cis-gender identity (e.g. masculine-presenting womxn and effeminate men, or transgender people) to be victims of these attacks as their identities are more visible (Vaid-Menon, 2011). Lesbian, bisexual and queer womxn are often victims of 'corrective rape' which is when a woman is raped in order to "cure" her of her lesbianism (Koraan and Geduld, 2015).
Reports show that 40% of LGBTIQA+ people know someone who has been murdered for being suspected of or for being openly LGBTIQA+ (Morris, 2017). Koraan and Geduld (2015) have also stated that between 2000-2015 approximately 31 lesbian murders had occurred, and on average 10 instances of "corrective" rape occurred per week. Gay men are constant victims of violent physical attacks, including rape by other men (Davis, 2012).
The Love Not Hate (LNH) Campaign by OUT LGBT Well-being report, which was conducted in 2016, shows that approximately 57% of LGBTIQA+ people across are open and out about their identity, of whom the majority are from big cities like the Western Cape and Gauteng. While South Africa has the second highest percentage (67%), of LGBTIQA+ tolerance in Africa, 55% of all LGBTIQA+ South Africans fear discrimination based on their identity.

Generally, there is a lot of unity within the South African LGBTIQA+ community, but the country's battle to overcome and redress the imbalances of the apartheid era and the residual effects of that do find ways to seep into the Community and cause divisions on political grounds. The first Pride March was in 1990, organised by the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) and was highly political, as it was both a LGBTIQA+ Pride event as well as an anti-apartheid march. Since then, some have felt that the march should retain its political grounds in order to continue addressing and highlighting the issues faced by the LGBTIQA+ community, while other have felt moved towards the event being a celebration of LGBTIQA+ identity with minimal politics involved (South African History Online, 2017). Today there are an assortment of LGBTIQA+ Pride events, some of which are highly political and tend to be attended by minority groups, such as Johannesburg People's Pride, and others which are more celebratory and commercial such as Johannesburg Pride and Pretoria Pride.

There have also been instances of transgender (Trans) or gender non-conforming (GNC) people feeling excluded from conversations around violence, as Trans and GNC people are often omitted from conversations where the focus is on 'womxn' and 'lesbians' (Vaid-Menon, 2011). The Trans community are more marginalized than other LGBTIQA+ people as they often are marginalized by other LGBTIQA+ people as well. In 2016 the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) released an article about the marginalisation of Trans people and especially Trans children. The article states that South Africa's legal framework essentialises binary conceptions of sex as male and female and that in turn recognises the binary social constructs of gender, man and womxn, leaving

[38] Iranti-org defines a hate crime as "a crime motivated by the perpetrator's bias against the victim. These crimes often involve excessive violence meant to transmit a message about the perpetrator's bias" (Iranti-org, 2012-2015)

no room for the complexities of gender which exist between these binaries. The Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act has thus adopted a pathological stance on GNC and Trans identity, whereby any individual who wishes to undergo gender-affirming surgery needs to have been through various medical tests and requires letters from medical practitioners before the surgery can happen. This removes an individual's agency in the process of actualising their true identity, and also becomes a class issue by excluding any Trans people who cannot afford the medical procedures involved in the process (SAHRC, 2016).

This section has provided a brief outline of the lives of LGBTIQA+ people in South Africa, and the dangers attached to coming out and openly performing one's identity. It has also shown an example of lateral violence, where Trans and GNC people have been marginalized by other LGBTIQA+ people due to the history of essentialising binary concepts of sex and gender in South Africa. However, it also shows that despite the negative experiences of some LGBTIQA+ people in South Africa, the community is resilient and continues to fight for equality and recognition in South Africa and in the world.

Cognitive Dissonance, Identity Conflict, and Conflict Resolution

As highlighted at length in previous sections, religion can be very exclusionary towards people who embody perceived difference, believing that all people should live according to certain normative practices, traditions and customs with no room for individual agency. This allows hegemony to maintain a position of authority, through the oppression of those who seek to challenge and dismantle power structures (Cudd, 2005).

The exclusionary behaviours of mainstream churches often have the effect of inciting internal conflict or cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) in individuals who simultaneously embody a Christian identity as well as a marginalized identity (d/Deaf or LGBTIQA+ identity). This section aims to discuss these conflicts in relation to cognitive dissonance, and the difficulty involved in trying to reconcile both identities. The discussion will include a critique of mainstream Christianity perspectives on LGBTIQA+ identity.

Cognitive dissonance, according to Festinger (1957) initially referred to inconsistencies in cognitions but has since been applied more generally to include feelings of discomfort that occur when attitudes are inconsistent with behaviour, and when new self-perceptions are inconsistent with life-long morals or beliefs (Heine and Lehman, 1997). Shuck and Liddle (2001) explored cognitive dissonance as experienced by LGBTIQA+ people with mainstream Christian upbringings (see below), looking at the effects of the dissonance on people's beliefs and behaviours, and how the dissonance was resolved.

As human beings it is in our nature to have intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1989). At times, different identities may be performed, according to the space one finds oneself in (Jacobs, 2015). However, it is almost impossible to simply isolate identities from one another as they all tend to impact and contribute to an individual's experiences in the world. For example, a closet lesbian womxn may suppress her lesbian identity in a religious space, but the identity remains a part of her and in fact contributes to how she experiences the space (Jacobs, 2015). Owing to a general negative response to LGBTIQA+ identities in mainstream church spaces one can easily to see how a LGBTIQA+ person may experience identity conflict or cognitive dissonance when having to simultaneously deal

with an emerging LGBTIQA+ identity (or, the realization that they are not heterosexual) and an already-developing religious identity that they've honed since birth (Schuck and Liddle, 2001).

Wagner, Serafini, Rabkin, Remien, & Williams (1994) (in Shuck and Liddle, 2001) links religious conflict to internalized homophobia – adopting negative feelings towards the self because of having a socially stigmatised identity, which can lead to a rejection of the identity (Meyer & Dean, 1998). This was most likely based on past homophobic experiences before they had even realized their gay identity (Schuck and Liddle, 2001). Wagner et al.'s study was conducted with two groups of gay men, one of which belonged to the mainstream Catholic church and one which belonged to Dignity[39]. The study revealed that the men who had come out while practising Catholicism had eventually left the church, instead becoming non-practicing Catholics (i.e. they still identified as Catholics but were no longer engaging in religious practises associated with Catholicism), in favour of developing their LGBTIQA+ identity, whereas the men who were members of Dignity took a longer time to reconcile their gay and religious identities. The authors thus assumed that Dignity had played a significant role in LGBTIQA+ people overcoming the internalized homophobia. Considering the results of a study presented by Festinger and Carlsmith (1959), by no longer participating in Catholic practises, the men from the Catholic church decreased dissonance as they no longer had to face the situation which solicited feelings of conflict (Prus, 1976); the members of Dignity, however, experienced a higher degree of cognitive dissonance which was ultimately reduced through the process of reconciling their Christian and gay identities in a space where the gay identity was affirmed and accepted (Dunford and Kunz 1973; Thumma, 1991).

Mahaffy (1996) conducted similar research to Shuck and Liddle, however this study focused on lesbians and the effects of their Christian identity in relation to dissonance and resolution of internal conflict. Mahaffy suggests that Christian lesbian womxn from Protestant backgrounds are most likely to experience internal conflict, due to the persistent Christian doctrine of homosexuality being a sin as well as the emphasis placed on the importance of heteronormative family structures and rigid gender roles, from which lesbian womxn would deviate.

Some lesbian womxn have attributed non-normative feelings to external sources, for example, their social environment or demonic forces – this may play a role in reducing dissonance as it shifts personal responsibility and allows for alternative intervention such as cure therapy (Pattison and Pattison 1980; Nicolosi 1991) or prayer. Others attributed their intrapersonal conflict to the judgement they receive from people who reinforce heteronormative practise; similar to the gay mean from the Catholic church (Shuck and Liddle, 2001), this dissonance could be resolved by changing their social environment (Festinger, 1957). Lesbian womxn who feel that their orientation is an innate part of their identity found resolution of conflict through altering their cognitions or adding new cognitions (Dunford and Kunz 1973; Thumma, 1991), thereby reducing incongruency.

Ultimately the study found that religious lesbians experienced dissonance either externally or internally; external dissonance was resolved by living with the tension while internal dissonance encouraged the altering of the individual's cognition either towards not seeing a lesbian lifestyle as sinful, or conforming to societal norms and adopting a heternormative lifestyle, depending on the

[39] DignityUSA, or Dignity, is a LGBTIQA+ affirming church of the Catholic denomination in Medford, Massachusetts, USA, founded in 1969 (Roche, 1995)

individual. The study leaves room for questioning as some womxn involved avoided answering certain questions regarding their resolution of dissonance.

The data above speaks to my research as it explores the difficulty of having a LGBTIQA+ identity and Christian identity and identifies how these identities may cause cognitive dissonance for each of the participants involved in the study. Both studies have also explored how churches play a role in reinforcing dissonance and how such dissonance can be resolved by various means, including religious practise. However, it is centred on two identities and does not include d/Deaf participants, thus excluding the possible dissonance in d/Deaf caused by the oppression of d/Deaf people in church spaces. I aim to further explore the attitudes towards the embodiment of difference within church spaces, by including d/Deaf participants. I aim to establish how an LGBTIQA+ church where there are no d/Deaf congregants would receive d/Deaf people, and how a d/Deaf church views and treats d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people, given that people from both of these alternative spaces have previously experienced oppression and marginalisation by mainstream Christian churches. I also wish to relate the above studies to a South African context in order to establish how marginalized groups in South Africa responded to cognitive dissonance they may have experienced.

Violence

Violence is typically a behaviour or action exerted with the intention of causing harm. Since violence is not always a physical act, it is sometimes not recognised as violence. However, there are times where non-physical acts of violence occur intentionally (such as hegemony, explained below) and times when they occur unconsciously by the perpetrator (such as the unconscious re-enactment of violence explained in Chapter 5, *1.2. Covert Expressions of Violence in the Church on LGBTIQA+ Identity and d/Deaf Identity*). Previously, violence was not a huge issue as it is now, given that the use of violence was justified by cultural practise and human nature (Blume, 1996). This section will briefly outline and explain three types of violence and how they occur in everyday life.

Structural and Hegemonic Violence

Hegemony refers to the exercising of control by an authorative body, over those in lower positions of power. A Marxist theory of hegemony considers it as the manipulation by a ruling class, resulting in their view becoming the *status quo*, the norm (Gramsci, 1971), and are believed to be beneficial to every social class, as opposed to only benefiting those in power. It differs from Authoritarianism in that those who are affected by hegemony consent to it and struggle over its common sense (Eagleton, 1991) rather than being forced into it with severe consequences for disobedience. However, Gramsci stated that this consent forms part of the manipulation, where certain social structures which shape ideas and beliefs such as the media, universities, and religious institutions are used as a means to manufacture consent (Gramsci, 1971 in Heywood, 1994; Donaldson, 1993).

Structural violence, a theory introduced by Galtung (1969) refers to a form of violence which has no direct actor, making it difficult to identify a perpetrator. Structural violence is a systematic manner of causing harm or disadvantaging individuals, often in very subtle ways, and often those who are disadvantaged are those who are in lesser position of power, resulting in avoidable inequalities and suffering. Galtung (1969) also related structural violence to the discrepancy between people's potential realities and their actual realities, where Lewis (2018) makes the example of potential life expectancies amongst certain groups being much longer than actual life expectancy due to social

factors such as racism, sexism and economic inequality. Hence it can be said that the effects of structural violence are intersectional as it tends to affect marginalized, minority groups on various levels of their lived experience (such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation), in a manner similar to hegemony, by convincing victims that the act is ultimately to benefit them; the main perpetrators and often the only ones who are never victims of structural violence are "white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchy" (bell hooks, 2004: 52). Extensive examples of hegemonic and structural violence are discussed in further detail in Chapter 5 (see *Violence*)

Physical Violence

Physical violence, as defined by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (n.d.) refers to "bodily harm suffered as a result of the application of immediate and unlawful physical force often associated with sexual and psychological violence resulting in injuries, distress and health problems."

Violence often sees men as the perpetrators (Msibi, 2009), as violence is an expression of masculinity. As stated before, the use of violence has previously been linked to cultural practises (Althaus, 1997; Ansell, 2001; Moosa, 1996) and in some cases, to religious practise, especially in cases where men exercise authority over their wives and children (Phiri, 2002). Njoroge (1997) iterates this view with the following statement:

> *"Culture is the leading issue, which has pre-occupied the theology of African women. Culture has silenced many women in Africa and made us unable to experience the liberating promises of God. Favourable aspects of our cultures, which enhance the well-being of women, have been suppressed." – Njoroge (1997: 5).*

This shows us that some cultures - such as a culture of patriarchy - are expressed as religious practise, and that many men use the Bible as a tool to justify their actions. Instances of domestic violence are often not dealt with in the church because of the distorted Christian belief that womxn are subordinates who should submit to their husbands; while this does exist as a biblical principle, it has been used by too many as a tool to maintain patriarchal dominance in church spaces (Phiri, 2002).

I have also considered the non-consensual laying on of hands as a manner of physical violence, as it infringes on an individual's body rights (Mokhoathi and Rembe, 2017). Persons in positions of religious authority are able to extend their authority over people's bodies in the name of religious practise, much in the same manner as men do to their wives and children. This can be manifest in many ways including violent physical assault (Germond and De Gruchy, 1997) and sexual violence. Minority groups are susceptible to this abuse in church spaces as they are often considered to be demon-possessed and are told that the laying on of hands is necessary for salvation and redemption (Purvis, 1995). Some congregants might not consent to the laying on of hands, but they might be told that accepting membership at a church implies the acceptance of its practises (Harris, 2009). This makes it difficult for those who have been victims of violence and sexual abuse to classify the acts as abuse. Physical abuse in churches is explained in more detail in Chapter 5 (*Explicit Demonstrations of Violence in the Church on d/Deaf Bodies and LGBTIQA+ Bodies*).

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence refers to non-consensual sexual acts committed to an individual, and includes rape, paedophilia, intimate partner assault, unwanted contact, unwanted exposure to nakedness, sexual exploitation, amongst others (National Sexual Violence Resource Centre (NSVRC), 2010). According to the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's (CSVR) report on Gender-based violence, sexual violence is the most common form of violence in South Africa (2016).

It is unfortunate that sexual violence has become common in church spaces, with hundreds of people coming forward in 2018 to report cases of molestation, paedophilia and rape that they have experienced in church (Terry, 2008; McLaughlin, 1994); furthermore the perpetrators of these acts tend to be religious leaders which reiterates the claim that religious leaders extend their positions of authority (Denney, Kerley and Gross, 2018) beyond what is expected in religious practise, to the point of exploiting the faith of congregants while saying that this is God's will (Mokhoathi and Rembe, 2017). It should also be noted that the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of sexual abuse in the church are men, which is to be expected given that men are mainly in positions of leadership in church spaces (Denney et al., 2018)

While Chapter 5 (*1.3.2. Sexual* violence) highlights some instances of sexual violence in church spaces, I would like to briefly mention some of the occurrences that will be discussed there: Currently the most famous case in South Africa is the Cheryl Zondi versus Timothy Omotoso trial at the Eastern Cape High Court, where Timothy Omotoso, the pastor of Jesus Dominion International church, has been accused of sexually molesting and raping female members of his congregation while holding them hostage at a house in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal. After Cheryl Zondi spoke out about her terrible experiences, many other womxn came forward to report their experiences at the hand of Timothy Omotoso. During her testimony, Cheryl Zondi mentioned that when she questioned Omotoso about the reason for his actions, he simply stated that he was doing what God wanted (News24, 2018).

In the Catholic church, internationally and in South Africa, individual have reported instances of sexual molestation, paedophilia and rape by priests and religious leaders in the church (Terry, 2008). According to a BBC News report (2018), allegations of sexual abuse in the Catholic church date back to the 1950s but have become more attention in later years, especially in the 1990s, and had become a major issue by the 2000s. In 2017 an Australian inquiry found that over ten thousand children had been molested in institutional spaces over decades. In 2018, charges against church clergy including bishops and Archbishops, and priests, either stepped down or were put on trial. A former Vatican employee has been sentenced to five years imprisonment for child pornography.

In South Africa, three clergy members have stepped down after being charged with sexual misconduct, and the report further states that thirty-five cases of sexual abuse have been reported since 2003, of which only seven have been investigated (Monama, 2018). A youth Pastor from an Old Apostolic church in the Western Cape has been found guilty of sexual abuse (Booysen, 2018) which shows that abuse does not only occur in Catholic churches; indeed, the Omotoso Trial, which involves a Pentecostal church, shows that sexual abuse occurs across Christian denominations, often with little consequence for the perpetrators as they are covered by Constitutional rights (Makhoathi and Rembe, 2017; Constitution, 1996).

The recent media attention and public outcry against sexual abuse and religious authority is seeing a shift in this regard, where more church leaders are being held responsible for their actions. What remains is for the claims that these are committed in God's name to be investigated and refuted as sexual immorality has long been condemned by all Christian churches, as well as for a review of the Constitution to assess the extent to which religious acts can be exercised before they become criminal, in order to protect the dignity and well-being of church members.

Conclusion

This section has discussed elements of existing literature which are relevant to this research. The section serves as background context for the findings from this research study. As mentioned above, sections in Chapter 5 will go into detail about the issues introduced here, relating the above literature to the findings specific to this research. The following chapter will discuss how I conducted the fieldwork and data collection process, as well as the challenges faced during the research process.

Chapter 3: The Ever-Evolving, Feet-Finding, Comfort-Creating Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will outline the method(s) I used to collect my data and what each method entails, the selection of sites and participants, brief descriptions of sites and participants, how sites and participants were selected, and the ethical procedures involved. I will also discuss the challenges faced during the data collection process. The chapter starts with an explanation of the initialization of the research topic and how it altered as challenges surfaced.

Initially I had planned to base my research on the narratives of six to eight d/Deaf lesbians in order to understand their experiences in religious spaces; the reason for this was because during my Honours research, from the case study I learned that the participant, Danelle, a d/Deaf Black lesbian from Eldorado Park, had stopped going to church because of her previous negative experiences in the space. She had experienced marginalization based on accessibility barriers, as the vast majority of churches in Gauteng do not provide interpreter-services for the d/Deaf community. Furthermore, she had also experienced oppression and demonization based on her identifying as a lesbian - this meant that after she came out, the church leaders would try to pray for the demons to come out of her ("Pray the gay away") as they believed that being a lesbian meant being possessed by an evil spirit.

> *"Then we start talking about St Vincent's Church, and about the time Kristene and Michael[40] prayed and told the people they can't sin anymore. She laughs because she knows that's exactly how they are. The following parts I wish I could have recorded on camera – she tells me how when she was in St Vincent she hated going to church services on Monday mornings because it was boring and she would always fall asleep during the service and she was annoyed that the J-W (Jehavah's Witness) kids got to skip Mass. One day the priest asked if he could pray for her because he had heard that she is a lesbian. She said OK it's fine he can pray. Then he prayed, and he asked if she feels different and she said no. She asked what's wrong with her being a lesbian, and he responded the Bible says it's wrong. She then asked, doesn't the Bible say I must follow my heart, and why would God give me a heart if I'm not supposed to follow it? The priest didn't have an answer. The following week she told them she had converted to Islam, and then she no longer had to attend Mass." – Fieldnotes journal, 2017*

Danelle's experience served as an appetizer to this topic, inciting a hunger to learn more about mainstream religious spaces and how they treat people who are different to what they perceive as 'normal', and whether other d/Deaf, or LGBTIQA+, or d/Deaf *and* LGBTIQA+ people had ever encountered similar experiences to Danelle. Because I could not just assume that d/Deaf people had in fact experienced some sort of discrimination against them because of identifying as d/Deaf, I asked Danelle if she had this experience or if she knew of people who had this experience. She told me that she had experienced marginalisation in the church because she was d/Deaf, because she had been forced to attend church with her family, which were hearing churches without any SASL interpreters.

[40] Kristene is a d/Deaf teacher at St Vincent's School; her husband, Michael, is the youth pastor and a leader in the New Life Church 1 where I conducted some of my research. They both attend the church and are passionate about helping people accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour.

> *"My first church experience was a hearing church. The priest was preaching, I was watching but I couldn't understand anything. I didn't know what he was saying, when he was preaching, and praying, I had no idea what he was talking about. I felt very uncomfortable, so I left" – (Danelle, a d/Deaf Black lesbian from Eldorado Park)*

Having some evidence that there was some discrimination and marginalization of d/Deaf people in church spaces, I knew that I had to substantiate this evidence and engage with more d/Deaf people to establish whether Danelle's was an isolated case or if other d/Deaf people had had similar experiences. I had previously heard about integrated churches (churches which use spoken language and have SASL interpreters available for d/Deaf people) from some d/Deaf friends, and I did some research to find out if any fully d/Deaf churches could be found around Johannesburg as I was unaware of the existence of churches which used SASL as the language of communication.

However, despite my interest in this topic, it proved to be more difficult than I had anticipated to get people involved in being participants in the study; a major barrier was my own lack of confidence in my signing which hindered my ability to engage deeply with the d/Deaf community on a regular basis; thus, I was unable to effectively form the bonds that were necessary - it is very important to gain the trust and allow research participants to feel comfortable with the researcher, especially when attempting to discuss issues that might be traumatic or triggering of painful memories for the participants - for the research to occur.

Although I visited e-Deaf on a few occasions and reconnected with each potential participant each time, as well as created a Whatsapp group with the intention of facilitating more in-depth discussions with participants, it still proved to be a difficult task. The inability to build trust relationships resulted in two of the d/Deaf lesbians I had been introduced to being reluctant to share their stories with me. For two others who were still interested, I then had difficulty providing financial compensation in the form of taxi fare to meet them in a convenient location to conduct the interviews. After a long period of failed attempts, both womxn decided to drop out of the study. At this stage, Danelle was the only d/Deaf lesbian who was still interested and committed to the study. This was completely understandable to me, as I was already aware of the complicated position I posed, being a hearing researcher in a d/Deaf space. I felt less awkward about my position as a lesbian in a lesbian space even though I knew it was impossible to ignore the fact that the intersection of being a *hearing* lesbian was extremely significant in this space where d/Deaf lesbians face a double oppression on the basis of being both d/Deaf and lesbian in a predominantly heteronormative, hearing world.

As a result, I made the self-challenging decision to change the angle of my study to not only focus on the experiences of d/Deaf Lesbians but also of the broader d/Deaf community who had experienced similar barriers to Dalene on the basis of them being d/Deaf and the lack of interpreter services in the church. Included in this, though, I was desperate to understand if d/Deaf Christians who had previously experienced oppression and marginalization in a church space would be open to allowing all d/Deaf people, regardless of how they identify (particularly referring to LGBTIQA+ identity), into this open and accessible space of worship, if they so desire. In order to draw comparisons to how different types of church spaces treat difference, I selected a hearing church with a LGBTIQA+

congregation, a d/Deaf church with heterosexual-performing members, a mixed church with both hearing and d/Deaf congregants; one other site did not affect the findings as it was only used as a space to identify potential participants. The sites will be discussed below, and the findings will be explained in detail in Chapter 5 (*Findings and Discussion*).

Ethnography

This research has been conducted in the form of a multi-sited ethnographic study. The inclusion of a variety of research sites allowed for comparisons to be drawn between how each institution treats difference and how inclusivity is established in each space. I have chosen to adopt an ethnographic methodology. Wolcott (1988; 1994) describes ethnography as "the study of the way of life of an identifiable group of people". I used an ethnographic approach as a research method as it allowed me to observe individuals performing their natural self (Lincoln and Guba, 1985); this was achieved through first-hand contact, via a naturalistic means of enquiry, in which the researcher is able to conduct ethnographic research in a natural setting which exists outside of the researcher's presence, rather than the artificial experimental conditions which interviews create (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). This provides a more holistic collection of data than one would gain from only conducting interviews.

Ethnographies usually employ the participant observation method (Cushing, 1879; Malinowski, [1922] 1935); by using participant observation, I was able to immerse myself in the environments of the individuals I was observing, and also to participate and engage in their various activities, according to each setting I found myself in, while still not entirely being a member of the community. The purpose of this data collection was to be able to identify behavioural patterns while observing the participants in church spaces, as well as to identify how the Church as an institution deals with the presence and performance of difference, in order to draw conclusions (Spradley, 2016).

During an ethnographic study the researcher captures data in the form of field notes and interviews. It requires the researcher to spend large amounts of time observing the research participants in the selected space – in my case, the church space. The collection of data may not take very long (at the very least, 6 months) but it is important that the researcher is able to identify behavioural patterns while observing participants to draw conclusions. Feuer, Town and Shavelson (2002) state the following:

> *"when a problem is poorly understood, and plausible hypotheses are scant – qualitative methods such as ethnographies … are necessary to describe complex phenomena, generate theoretical models and reframe questions" (Feuer et al. 2002:8).*

Hence an ethnographic approach was preferred in this research as there is limited available literature regarding the intersectionality of d/Deaf, LGBTIQA+ and religious identities, and how religious institutions treat the dynamics of difference (such as 'disability'[41] and LGBTIQA+ identity) in

[41] Again, here I use 'disability', as being d/Deaf is often viewed from a medicalised, pathological perspective and regarded as a disability in mainstream society, including within religious institutions (see ***Error! Reference source not found.***)

South Africa, making desktop research a less viable option. Furthermore, I felt that it would be more beneficial for me to connect personally with participants, immersing myself in spaces and having conversations where we could discuss how they navigate the intersections[42] in question; it also granted me the opportunity to engage with participants about experiences we may have had in common.

Shweder (1997) states that in order for an ethnography to be good, it is necessary to approach the research as if you know nothing about it instead of assuming that you know everything; this enables you to experience things in their most natural, rawest form, or the "really real" (1997:153). By conducting field research and observation as well as interviews, a researcher is able to gather new evidence to answer research questions.

Site Selection

I visited a number of sites, two of which later became the base sites where the research was carried out and which served as platforms for other research sites to be discovered (due to a series of mishaps during the research process), to identify potential participants. During these visits I made fieldnotes which assisted me in selecting participants who I would approach and ask if they would be interested in doing a semi-structured in-depth interview with me about their religious identity in relation to either their d/Deaf identity, their LGBTIQA+ identity, or both identities. This will be explained further in the following section on Participant Selection.

Initially I had planned to visit only two research sites, namely eDeaf[43] in Braamfontein, and New Life Church (NLC)[44] in Rosebank. Throughout the research process, however, these plans changed due to various reasons.

NLC1 closed for construction in June 2017, and became a roaming church moving between houses of the congregants on every third Sunday – the thought of visiting the homes and being part of such a small and intimate setting for me was too overwhelming and I felt that I should find an alternative research site. During my visits to NLC1 the pastor had told me about an integrated church in called Christ Church (CC) which has a small d/Deaf community and the services are interpreted into SASL. He suggested that I visit the church to meet other d/Deaf Christian people. My experiences at CC will be discussed later in this chapter in the *Discussion of the Sites* section.
In October 2017 I managed to make contact with Michael, the youth pastor from NLC1, and he informed me that the NLC had moved to a retirement home in Lombardy East, called New Life Church 2 (NLC2). He invited me to come and visit and so I ended up with NLC2 as my final research site.

I chose to visit eDeaf because it consists of a majority d/Deaf and Hard-of-hearing (HoH) staff, and an entirely d/Deaf and HoH student body, which allowed for participant observation and in-depth

[42] Christian identity as it intersects with a marginalized d/Deaf and/or LGBTIQA+ identity
[43] eDeaf offers several training courses and learnership programs to "Empower Deaf communities for business"; […] state-of-the-art facilities offer the ideal learning environments for Deaf individuals (http://edeaf.co.za, retrieved on 30 June 2016).
[44] NLC is a d/Deaf church which was established to cater to the d/Deaf Christian community in Johannesburg.

interviews with d/Deaf lesbians outside of a religious space, where they were free to perform their true selves and to discuss freely about issues relating to the identities relevant to the study such as being d/Deaf, being lesbian, their views on Christianity, their relationship with the church and God, and in some cases, why they decided to stop attending church services.

Unfortunately, I did not manage to make strong connections at eDeaf because of a combination of reasons. The visits were often daunting as I felt I had been thrown into the deep end and I often felt stressed by my inability to sign effectively, to make people understand the purpose of my visits as well as the point of my research. For example, arriving in the parking lot of e-Deaf on my very first visit, dressed in black sweatpants and a mauve elbow-length t-shirt and black Converse sneakers, I felt all eyes on me, a stranger stepping out of a strange car, midway through lunch hour. As this was my first time I had no idea where to begin looking for anything or anyone, and a small panic attack resulted in me completely forgetting every sign I had ever learned, especially watching everyone signing rapidly to each other, accentuating my feeling of being an inferior sign language user. Luckily, when I found my way to the reception area, I bumped into an interpreter I recognized who had graduated with SASL Honours the year before me. After explaining to her why I was there she assisted me in finding two people who met the criteria for my research; namely, d/Deaf lesbians. I also reconnected with Danelle who had been the participant in my Honours research. She was studying at eDeaf at the time and because the lesbian community at eDeaf is comparatively small, she knew all the Deaf lesbians and introduced me to them.

Although I appreciated the assistance of the interpreter, being introduced to people through Danelle who is d/Deaf, seemed to make people more trusting and accepting of me. Unfortunately, due to varying circumstances, such as logistical issues, my own difficulty in funding the transport for me to meet with participants, general miscommunications about the nature of the research and some people's (understandable) reluctance to open up to me about their past experiences of discrimination and marginalization in church spaces, I was unable to follow through with the interviews. The only participant to remain involved was Danelle; thus, I was able to delve more deeply into aspects of her identity that had only been touched on during the Honours research. eDeaf no longer served as an active research site but remained an important part of the research process as I found new participants through the participant I had met at eDeaf.

Finally, because of these issues, I decided to broaden the scope of my study to include all LGBTIQA+ people, either d/Deaf or hearing, to see if comparisons could be made between the treatment of 'disability' and LGBTIQA+ identity in mainstream church spaces. The idea comes from an assumption that homosexuality is treated as a sin and 'disability' is treated as a punishment, an impairment or something that takes away from a person's wholeness and perfection as God intended them to be. Hence, I ended up with an additional research site – an LGBTIQA+ church in Soweto called HPW.

Ultimately I ended up with the following research sites: The first field-site, a LGBTIQA+ church in Soweto (HPW), consisted of (hearing) L[GBTIQA+][45] individuals; the second was an integrated church in the East Rand (CC) which consisted of a mixture of d/Deaf and hearing congregants (with an

[45] HPW is a completely inclusive church, regardless of sexual orientation or any other identity; however, the congregants consist, almost always, of lesbian womxn.

approximate 98% hearing, 2% d/Deaf congregants and 3-4 SASL interpreters), the third, NLC (1&2), which consisted of 99% d/Deaf people, and the last, which eventually became an obsolete site, eDeaf in Braamfontein.

My visits to NLC (1&2) allowed me to engage with an entirely d/Deaf community in a purely religious setting, to establish their views on what difference is and to find out about their experiences in d/Deaf religious spaces compared to hearing religious spaces (if they had been in any); I could also learn a bit about their lives outside of religious spaces, their backgrounds, upbringing and general lived experience, and how this has influenced their views on the embodiment of difference in Christian spaces. Visiting CC allowed for the observation of a Christian church's response to difference within their particular community, given that the church was integrated and hence I could see how people with a perceived disability were treated in the space which consisted mainly of hearing-normative people.

I purposely chose an integrated heteronormative church, a hearing LGBTIQA+ church and a d/Deaf heteronormative church as they are all are somehow different from mainstream heteronormative hearing churches, in that they have made attempts to be inclusive to otherwise marginalized groups such as d/Deaf people and LGBTIQA+ people who are included in this research. This allowed me the ability to compare and contrast how each institution deals with difference, and whether their ability to deal with difference extends beyond differences those that affect them directly. I chose to visit eDeaf as I was guaranteed to find d/Deaf participants and I was aware that there are a number of d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people who attend class there, of which I was not guaranteed at the other sites.

Participant Selection

The criteria I based the selection of my participants on (with whom I would conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews) included their role or position in the church (to ensure that people from varying levels of membership – such as leaders and regular congregants - are involved, thereby providing a wider variety of perspectives and experiences), sexual orientation (as it is important for the experiences of LGBTIQA+ people to be highlighted, but heterosexual people were interviewed to determine and compare the inclusivity policies of each church), religious identity (as the focus is on Christian identities) and self-identification (people who self-identify as Christian, or LGBTIQA+, or heterosexual). To identify participants, I visited the various institutions mentioned above on a regular basis i.e. fortnightly over a period of six to eight months. Each institution served as a field site to conduct research in the form of fieldwork.

Ultimately, I had a total of 9 participants: three d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+, three d/Deaf and heterosexual, three hearing and LGBTIQA+. For ease of reference in the *Findings and Discussion* section, I will list participant details below:

d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+ (Non-church-goers)

(Approximately 28 – 43 years of age)

- Danelle – a d/Deaf Black lesbian womxn from Eldorado Park;
- Timothy – a d/Deaf Black gay man from Soweto;
- Johan – a d/Deaf Black gay man from Soweto

d/Deaf and heterosexual (Leaders at NLC)

(Approximately 38 – 70 years of age)

- Wesley – a d/Deaf White pastor/preacher at NLC 1&2
- Paul – a d/Deaf White leader at NLC 2
- Michael - a d/Deaf White youth leader at NLC1/member at NLC2

LGBTIQA+ and hearing (Leaders and members at HPW)

(Approximately 34 – 46 years of age)

- Noreen - a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn and Head Leader at HPW, Soweto
- Maggie – a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn and leader at HPW, Soweto
- Nelly – a hearing Black lesbian womxn from Riverlea, and member of HPW, Soweto

Participant Observation

Participant-observation helps to establish a deeper understanding of the study, as Shewder (1997) states, it activates dormant or other cognitive structures during the participatory process. It assists in creating a better understanding of oneself which then enables one to recognize and acknowledge difference. It is important to ensure that the researcher and participant maintain certain boundaries throughout the research.

In order for me to reach this level of understanding, I spent six to eight months in the various spaces, forming bonds with various people and enquiring about their lives and experiences. During participant observation, I asked casual conversational questions and recorded field notes; this process assisted me in enlisting some potential research participants. I made sure to spend more time talking to those who seemed more comfortable engaging with me and told them about my research. Anyone interested would give me their contact details and we would be in contact via social platforms like Whatsapp and Facebook. I would ask them if they'd be comfortable doing a one-hour long formal (semi-structured in-depth) interview with me, to collect biographic narratives about experiences of coming out as a LGBTIQA+ person (with those who identify as lesbians) and how that affected their religious beliefs, their attitude towards religion and ultimately, their religious identity; with d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ participants I discussed their religious identity in relation to their d/Deaf identity, and how either if these identities impact their LGBTIQA+ identity and their entire experience of being a d/Deaf Christian LGBTIQA+ person. I had interviews with members of the d/Deaf church to discuss issues of inclusivity and access, their perspectives on welcoming and accepting d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people, their experiences of marginalisation and oppression in hearing church spaces, and how they came to be part of the d/Deaf church.

Semi-structured in-depth interview

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are meant to provide thick descriptions of concepts or details a researcher aims to find. Thick descriptions are geared to deliver an element of surprise, in the sense that the researcher might be expecting a certain outcome, at which point the opposite of the expected occurs (Geertz,1973). It is this surprise element which provides fundamental data for the researcher. Thick descriptions also contribute to helping a researcher establish the symbols and

practises which communities and in-groups use to identify with one another (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, 2004) such as language and sexual orientation and even race.

Semi-structured interviews give the interviewer the ability to ask questions which offers the interviewee the chance to open up and speak in a conversational manner, hence I chose to use this interview method as a means of allowing the participants to share the information they were comfortable sharing. I had a list of prompting questions (Appendix G) (some questions were pre-empted by the interviewee and did not need to be asked by the interviewer), which assisted in guiding the conversation along the lines of what I intended to find out – namely, identity intersectionality, religious identity, LGBTIQA+ identity, and experiences within religious spaces and the effect of those experiences on one's current identity. Some questions were pre-empted by the participants and I did not need to ask them.

In-depth interviews also follow a conversational structure and are described by Webb and Webb (1975) as a conversation with a purpose. The difference between normal conversation and an in-depth interview lies mainly in the objective and the roles of the participants. The purpose of an in-depth interview is to unearth any information which will provide new knowledge.

Given that the congregants at HPW were more open to doing interviews with me, I was able to make use of the semi-structured in-depth interview method during our interactions; I had a list of prompting questions (Appendix G) which aided me in guiding the conversation towards the data I wished to uncover, but also to share any information they felt comfortable sharing. In a few instances the participants pre-empted some of my questions, and in other instances I had to do more prompting. In some instances, people shared more than I anticipated, which could have been interesting to explore further had they not been beyond the scope of the research.

During my visits to NLC I approached the main pastor (Wesley) on a few occasions times to ask if he would be interested in participating in an interview with me; he tended to show disinterest, one time stating that I should visit CC where his son is involved in church leadership – he also mentioned that the church has a small d/Deaf community with interpreters. Another time his response to me was that he would email the sermon notes to me if I'm interested to learn more.

I also approached two other members of the congregation who were equally uninterested. After NLC1 closed for renovations and I started attending the church at NLC2, I approached the Pastor again and experienced the same subtle rejection – this time he told me he comes to NLC2 for four consecutive Sundays and goes to another church every fifth Sunday. I kept attending and trying to ascertain who might be interested in participating – two people who had been extremely friendly seemed like viable options. On a particular Sunday I attended a service and once it ended I had a brief conversation with the man sitting next to me, he was friendly and willing to chat, however he got called away to assist one of the old womxn to get a cup of tea. I then helped replacing the furniture to the back of the room, and at some point, bumped into one of the old members I had previously approached at NLC1 who had been uninterested. I knew he was a youth leader and often preached when the pastor was not around.

The turning point in my research in d/Deaf churches came at this moment, when I asked him if he would share some if his experiences of growing up in the church space, whether hearing or d/Deaf, and what brought him to where he is now, and whether I could film it. He immediately agreed, and we sat down and he briefly shared stories about his childhood with me. Because the story was quite short, I asked if he would mind talking about his current family and life. He shared another short story about his wife and children and their experience of being a d/Deaf couple raising two hearing sons and being uncertain about how to teach their children about Jesus, the bible and Christianity.

After this interview was done, I decided to adopt this new approach and apply it across all my interactions. Although I asked prompting questions, these interviews lasted much shorter than my interviews with participants from HPW; my assumptions around this will be discussed in the *Limitations of the Research* section.

I approached a man I had previously chatted to and he said he remembered me from a while ago; I asked him if he would be willing to tell me some of his past church experiences growing up and about his religious background. He agreed and said I should wait a few minutes and he would come find me. As I was walking around, a womxn saw me with the video camera in hand and approached me to ask who I am. I explained to her who I am and that I'm doing research about the d/Deaf community and religious identity. She asked if I'm d/Deaf or hearing. When I told her I'm hearing she said she is impressed with my signing. She proceeded to help me find people to participate. Many were willing but felt shy about being on camera. One old womxn finally agreed and she told me a very short story about her history which I found difficulty understanding because her signing was very different to mine – the other womxn who had been helping me had to interpret my signing in to sign language the womxn could understand. Thereafter she suggested that I chat to the pastor so I once again attempted to talk to him. He finally agreed, and after I recorded his narrative he offered to send me a copy of his unpublished autobiography to assist me further.

Discussion of the Sites

Highest Praise and Worship, Soweto

During my attendance at HPW the small congregation consisted of approximately ten to twenty people, but the spirits were always high and the atmosphere warm and welcoming. Initially when I started attending this church, it took place at SOHACA House[46] (SH) in Vilakazi Street. I had met the reverend, Noreen, at an event a month prior to visiting HPW for the first time and she told me that I could find her church in Vilakazi Street. On my first visit to HPW I was accompanied by three friends; we had difficulty finding the building as it was not in a typical Church building, and the numbering on the buildings was not chronological. After wandering around one of my friends approached a womxn walking on the street to ask her if she knew about a church for LGBTIQA+ people, and she then directed us to the house which was well-hidden in a cul-de-sac which we had already walked past a few times.

[46] SOHACA House is an LGBTQA+ Affirmative organization that provides counselling, Mental Health and HIV support to LGBTIQA+ people; they also have an online platform which provides further support and resources for M2M (Men who have sex with men) and other sexual health and sexuality questions and queries.

As we walked into the driveway we heard the sound of singing coming from a small single garage. We opened the door and quickly stepped inside where it was warm, and I was surprised to see that the sound of the singing had been so loud considering that there were only 10-12 people present. I looked around and noted that at the front of the garage, in front of the roll-up door, a dark-green curtain was draped to hide the door, and in front of the curtain was a table covered by a cloth in the same colour as the draping. On top of the table stood a glass jug of water surrounded by 4 glasses, some lit candles which gave the place a warm atmosphere, a small wicker basket and a Bible. Reverend Noreen stood in front of the table, singing along with everyone else. Against either of the walls, white plastic chairs were lined up so that the congregants sat facing each other, perpendicular to the roll-up door and table. Standing on the opposite end of the room to the roll-up door, a small three-bar electric heater made the small space feel like the warmest place on Earth.

During the warmer spring months, the services moved to inside the main house, which was a slightly smaller and cooler space. The same white plastic chairs were used in the house, set up in a semi-circle in the lounge area. Those who arrived early would be lucky enough to get a seat on one of the comfortable brown couches against the walls behind the plastic chairs. Another benefit of arriving early was the bonding moments that occurred during the setting up of chairs, whilst waiting for other congregants to arrive. In these moments, those who were present would often engage in discussions about their personal lives and other topics not related to church. This is when I really found my place in the space and felt like I had found a space where I belong.

In the summer when the sun was blazing and the lounge was too hot, there would be some chairs set up in rows, like pews in a church, under a red gazebo in the narrow driveway; an aisle would split the chairs into two columns with two chairs on one side and one chair on the other. Often there would be five to six rows of three chairs, and I noticed that on the hot Sundays of summer, more people were present at services than at any other time of year.

In May 2017, HPW moved to new premises at a community centre in Soweto. I am uncertain of the reasons for the move, however I noticed that the congregation expanded after the church moved.

I visited HPW every second week over a period of seven months, taking part in the service, getting to know people and learning about how the church functions. Outside of the church space, I engaged in informal discussions with Noreen on issues of religion and LGBTIQA+ identity, and how to resolve potential intrapersonal conflict that might arise, as well as how HPW's perspectives on d/Deaf identity. This gave me the confidence to continue attending services at HPW, conducting participant-observation and allowing myself and the other congregants to get comfortable with one another.

Thereafter, once I had developed relationships with members of the congregation I was able to ask for volunteers to be participants in the study: the process was quite simple – after a church service one Sunday, Noreen officially introduced me to the congregation and explained I am doing an MA about religion and sexuality. I was asked to elaborate further on the nature of my research and asked if anybody would be interested in sharing their stories on a volunteer-basis. Four womxn came forward and provided me with their contact details to set up a time to have an interview. I contacted all four womxn letting them know that they could ask questions about the research at any time.

Of the four volunteers, I managed to successfully secure and carry out interviews with three of them; two leadership, and one member who had recently joined the church (see *LGBTIQA+ and hearing (Leaders and members at HPW)*. The three participants each engaged in a separate interview lasting between one hour to one hour thirty minutes with me, with questions (Appendix G) centred around their religious journeys as LGBTIQA+ people who have a Christian identity, how they found out about HPW, the challenges they may have faced in mainstream churches, the challenges other people might face in mainstream churches, their views on the treatment of difference in church spaces, and how to challenge the [separatist] treatment of difference in Church spaces.

New Life Church 1, Rosebank

For 4 months I attended NLC, an entirely d/Deaf church held in Rosebank. I chose to attend this church as it consisted of mostly d/Deaf people who would sometimes attend with their hearing family members. The space was quite large considering the small number of people who attended church there. It looked similar to a cathedral with stained glass windows which would cast colourful reflections on people's faces as the feeble autumn-morning sun shone through. On all my visits I recall congregants sitting on ice-cold plastic chairs which had been arranged to form pews towards the front side of the space; presumably we did not sit at the back on the wooden pews because it was too far back from the projector screen and pulpit. Approximately fifteen twenty congregants were present.

The church service would start with a greeting from whoever was preaching that morning – either Michael or Wesley – and a prayer; we would then sing a few songs – this was a brand-new experience for me, and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it, despite being slightly taken aback and surprised by my own ignorance. The words of the songs appeared on PowerPoint slides on a screen, and everybody signed the words in English word order and simultaneously used their voices to sing along, each person following their own tune but everyone vaguely sticking to the rhythm of the leaders; these were a mixture of old and young congregants who would come to the front of the church and lead everyone – ensuring that everyone finished each song more-or-less at the same time. On my first visit, the songs were accompanied by extremely loud music which blared and crackled through busted speakers, but the bass could be felt, and everyone seemed to enjoy it. On all my other visits, there were no speakers, just the sound of everyone's voices singing at different paces. After the singing, someone would do the announcements and collect the tithes and offerings. This all happened very quickly.

We then received the Word[47]. My experience of the Word was always weird and I felt uncomfortable about it. Even though my signing was not outstanding, my receptive skills were good enough that I could follow even without looking at the slides – I would often refer to them to see which Bible reading was being taught, though, but I followed the sermon quite easily. The slides (*Figure 1* & *Figure 2)* seem to be used mainly to assist the preacher[48] in staying on track with the church's announcements and the sermon he had prepared. They consisted of general announcements,

[47] This is a term commonly used by Christians to refer to the Bible, and a sermon preached using the Bible.
[48] I had visited this church more than once and noticed that they used the same structure for each service, whether the main pastor or another leader gave the sermon, hence I have used the word 'preacher' here and not 'pastor'.

upcoming events, Bible verses and short notes to refer to the Bible verse on the slide; there were also some diagrams. While referring to the slides, the preacher would use English word order with mouthing, and would then switch back to SASL word order when elaborating on the notes from the slides. Mouthing was consistent, whether he used SASL or English word order, although the mouthing occurred at random, not with every sign.

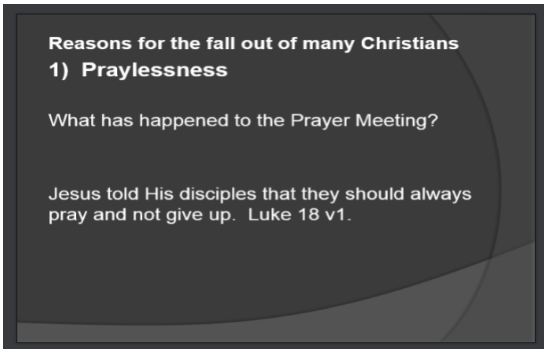


Figure 1: PowerPoint Slide with Text



Figure 2: PowerPoint Slide with Images

Unfortunately, the church closed its doors from March 2017 for construction and renovations, and was said to be reopening in November 2017, therefore I could no longer attend this church for fieldwork purposes. I then decided to visit CC as a new fieldwork site as I knew that it was an integrated church and would therefore have a d/Deaf community; on my visits to this church, I noticed that many of the older congregants from NLC1 also attended there. Thus, I decided I could not count the mishap as a loss, but rather as a chance to observe the congregants from NLC1 in a different environment, and to engage with them about their experiences in each church, and to establish which space they preferred and why. Unfortunately, I was never granted permission to do fieldwork at this site, hence I did not manage to conduct interviews with members.

New Life Church 2, Lombardy East

While attending church services at CC I found out that NLC services were moving around to various members' homes every third Sunday. I felt too scared to attend these services as I felt they would be too small and intimate. Eventually I found out that an alternative church had been established at a Deaf old-age home called NLC2. I started attending services there in August 2017 and felt welcomed and accepted from the very beginning. I continued to attend services here every other Sunday for about 3 months in total. I collected three life-stories from various leaders in this church.

Where the church at NLC1 had been demographically diverse, with a balanced mix of older people, younger people and children of various race groups, the church at NLC2 consisted mostly of old people, with very few middle-aged people and one young adult. The pastor (Wesley) at the church came from NLC1, along with his wife and a few other older members of the congregation who I recognized from my few visits to NLC1. The majority of the congregation was made up of older people who I had not seen at NLC1. The total congregation consisted of approximately thirty people.

I felt out of place as I was the only non-member of the d/Deaf community. However, I sat down and enjoyed the service, which surprisingly did not include any controversial preaching. I tried to imagine who I would like to ask to be a research participant, but it was hard to tell without knowing anybody's personalities. I learned that after the service, once all the chairs had been moved back to their original places at the back of the room, everybody gathered around for tea. I assisted with moving the chairs and while I did this, I chatted with a few people. Three people approached me to ask me why I was there. I immediately decided that these would be the people I would approach to be participants – one was a man who looked to be about sixty years old, who told me he was born in Britain and has been living in South Africa for fifty years. He still seemed to use some British Sign Language (BSL) which confused me slightly. The next two people to approach me were the middle-aged people – a man named Paul, and a womxn named Lynnette. Most people were very oral and signed and spoke simultaneously – as I surveyed the room I realised that this was not only for my benefit, because everyone was doing it. However, they still made use of SASL structure. The preacher had also used mainly Manually Coded English during his sermons – his preaching was once-again accompanied by PowerPoint slides which were written in English and Afrikaans, and his approach was basically to sign the words as they were written on the slides, which was the same as I had experienced at NLC1.

Christ Church, East Rand

Christ Church East Rand is the only branch of the Christ Churches which hosts integrated church services, providing SASL interpreting during Sunday morning services. Located in a residential suburban boom-gated area of the East Rand, it is hard to reach with public transport, hence it is situated on a vast plot of land with two large parking areas for the many private cars that need to park there – one paved parking area at the front entrance of the church and a massive open field of luscious green lawns at the back of the church. The grassed area at the back of the church is sometimes used as a dog training and dog-walking park when the church is not hosting services.

The building itself boasts affluence and wealth – the church building is massive, situated on an enormous piece of land with luscious green lawns which serves as the main parking for the huge congregation. The front entrance, mainly used for the elderly and wheel-chair users, is neatly paved with a small flower bed lining the glass walls which give people driving in a sneak preview of the beautiful, simplistic modern finishes inside the main church. Inside are hundreds of chairs placed in a crescent-shape facing the main stage at the front of the church. The stage is adorned with fancy musical instruments, including a few guitars, two keyboards, some mics and an expensive drum set (the drum set is placed inside a transparent box to amplify the sound of the drums). A section of the stage surface slides up to reveal a baptismal pool. Due to the expanse of the church, a number of projection screens are placed strategically around the church to ensure that everyone gets a clear view of the stage. Cameras are also placed in various locations to capture the service as well as to give all congregants a clear view of the main stage.

At the back of the church, in one corner is a Mother's Room, where mothers of small children can go with their babies or toddlers during the service, so that the children do not disrupt the service, but the mothers still get full access to the service via microphones and screens. In another corner is the sunny visitors' lounge, with comfortable white chairs where first-time visitors meet and speak to

some members of leadership after the service; they also enjoy a delicious cup of coffee and occasionally, a muffin. The furthest corner of the church hosts a coffee bar complete with barista equipment and a small kiosk with some snacks. This area is cordoned off from the main church by some stackable doors on Sunday nights for the evening service, as only about 10% of the amount of morning service people seem to attend evening services. This corner has lovely soft brown leather couches, a few small round tables with chairs, in the style of a coffee shop, and in the big open space in front of these comfortable chairs, the normal plastic chairs are set up to face one of the strategically-positioned screens which serves as a make-shift stage on Sunday evenings.

Overall, I did not feel very comfortable in the space and this was accentuated when I did not receive a response to either accept or reject my request to include CC as research site and conduct interviews with congregants.

eDeaf, Braamfontein

eDeaf, situated in Solomon Street in Braamfontein, is a vibrant place, and always alive with people signing to each other from across the parking lot to the little chesa nyama [49] and spaza shop[50] during their lunch breaks when I would visit there. The institution was eatablished in 2007 by the current CEO, Nazreen Captieux-Bhana and COO, Jesse Kotze. Nazreen is Deaf and therefore understands the needs of the Deaf community, and Jesse (a CODA – Child of Deaf Adults), being part of the biggest Deaf family in South Africa is also aware of the challenges the Deaf community faces; thus their partnership has played a huge and vital role in the empowerment of d/Deaf South African youths.

The role of eDeaf is to equip d/Deaf people with skills which enables them to find jobs in the market sector, by bridging the gap between school-leaving and entry-level job positions. The courses are sponsored by various companies, who also provide learners with a stipend each month to cover transport and other costs, thus making it accessible and affordable for young d/Deaf people (http://edeaf.co.za/edeaf-solutions-for-a-hearing-world/ retrieved on 06/06/2017). They have a variety of sponsors and clients including Shoprite Checkers and Mint Management Technologies. Shoprite Checkers has, however, embarked on a project called Decade of the Deaf which aims to employ 1000 d/Deaf staff between 2008-2018 (http://edeaf.co.za/clients retrieved on 07/06/2017).

Over a period of seven months I occasionally visited eDeaf where I spent time with d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people during their lunch breaks, but unfortunately was not granted permission to join any classes. On my first visit I was lucky enough to happen upon an interpreter who had studied SASL at Wits whom I had previously met, and she helped me find my way around and introduced me to some potential participants. I also bumped into my old d/Deaf friend and former research participant, Danelle, who introduced me to some of her friends and in less than twenty minutes I had found six people who were interested in my research.

My insecurities regarding my SASL skills given that communication was always laborious and slow resulted in me visiting eDeaf very rarely, and although I managed to find a group of LGBTIQA+ people who I would always return to, consisting of between four and six d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people

[49] A place that sells flame-grilled meat, often served with pap, gravy and salads.
[50] A tiny convenience store that mostly sells sweets, lose cigarettes and cold drinks.

depending on the day, the relationships never reached the point where we were completely comfortable with each other. They would sometimes need to slow down their signing speeds when addressing me and I would often ask them to repeat things.

I was pleasantly surprised, then, when three womxn from the group agreed to be participants and do interviews (Appendix G) for the research project. The aim of these interviews was to find out more about their religious backgrounds, experiences with religious institutions (hearing and heteronormative), and their current stance on religion and religious identity. In the end, of the three people who had agreed to be involved in the interview process, only Danelle remained.

Filming of Interview & Translation of Data

I conducted interviews with various members of each congregation I visited. Below I discuss the interview processes from each research site.

Highest Praise and Worship

At HPW in Soweto, I spoke to two members, one of whom was part of the church leadership, and the reverend. One identifies as a womxn who loves womxn and one identifies as a lesbian. I conducted approximately one-hour to 1.5-hour long interviews with each of them in various locations: one interview took place at the participant's home, and two took place at Wits University in the SASL Department's SignLab[51].

For the first interview I used my cellphone as a recording device, and the quality was terrible, making it extremely difficult to transcribe the interview. I learned my lesson from this and for the following interviews I used my cellphone, changing the quality settings, and also used alternative devices (a laptop and an iMac computer in the SignLab) as a back-up. These interviews were much clearer and easier to transcribe.

During these interviews, participants shared various life experiences with me, based on some guiding questions asked them (Appendix G); these questions were not very specific, used a guideline, and allowed for participants to freely share information with me if they felt so inclined. When I didn't get enough of the relevant data I was looking for, I would prompt further; however, I did make it clear in the beginning that participants could choose not to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable or that would incite past trauma.

New Life Church 2

At NLC2, I collected short life stories according to what people were willing to share, as I had been struggling to get people to agree to formal interviews. However, when I approached people and asked them to share short summaries of their life stories focusing particularly on their experiences in mainstream hearing churches or d/Deaf churches growing up, people were more eager. I needed to film the story production in order to refer back to them during data analysis, and so unfortunately the moment I asked people if they would share their stories as I filmed them, they became shy and slightly intimidated and then declined.

[51] Computer lab for SASL students and staff

A few people were still interested, and I managed to collect four stories during the time everyone had fellowship and drank tea after the service. Admittedly, the stories were extremely short, as people were quite reluctant to share too much information with me. I did my best to probe for more information, asking them more general questions in the hope that it would encourage them to share more openly. However, they shared only what they felt comfortable sharing, and I didn't think it wise to force more information out of people. Some shared about their families and others shared about their religious journeys; none mentioned anything about the church's inclusivity policies or opinions on LGBTIQA+ identities in the church and given my excitement at how smoothly things were finally going, I decided to skip questions pertaining to inclusivity of LGBTIQA+ people. As a result, I decided it would be best to supplement some missing information with the notes I had made during fieldwork.

Of the four interviews I conducted, I realized I could only use three, as one of the older womxn I was signing to could not understand my signing because it was too modern, and I had to get someone to interpret from my SASL to signing she could understand. However, the story she signed was not completely relevant to the information I was looking for. She was slightly shy at the idea of being filmed which I think contributed largely to the sparse information she volunteered – she told me very briefly what her name is, that she has a husband and two children and that she came from Tel Aviv in Israel. When I asked her if she had anything more to share she politely declined. I had hoped that her interest would spark the interest of the other people seated around her table but unfortunately people seemed to become more nervous at the thought of being on camera.

The other three interviews were offered by three men who had all been religious leaders in the church – one of them is currently the main Pastor at this church. He started off by sharing his journey to religious leadership with me over a cup of coffee; during this time, he signed and spoke simultaneously, the way he does when referring to the notes in his PowerPoint slides while preaching. Once he was done drinking his coffee we moved to a quieter space and sat opposite each other on soft and comfortable grey couches as if we were on a television talk show. He allowed me to film him retelling the story he had just shared, but this time with no speech – only signing, in perfect SASL structure. Some mouthing was still present, but I am certain this is the manner in which this d/Deaf community signs, as I observed a number of people using mouthing while chatting with other d/Deaf people.

d/Deaf Non-church-goers

After failing to obtain participants at eDeaf, and having trouble finding d/Deaf lesbians specifically to participate in the research, I decided to broaden the scope and include people of any LGBTIQA+ identity. Danelle was my only d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ participant and I needed to find more people to match this identity group.

My d/Deaf gay friend from Soweto, Johan, invited me to a workshop at Iranti-org[52] which was focused on raising awareness about the needs of the d/Deaf Trans community. Although it was

[52] An organisation which advocates for the rights, protection, awareness and visibility of LGBTIQA+ and especially Transgender/Transsexual people.

aimed at d/Deaf Trans people, some other LGBTIQA+ people also attended, and Johan thought it would be beneficial to my research to attend. At the workshop I met a d/Deaf gay man, Timothy, who was also friends with Johan. I was interested in him as he raised the issue of the marginalization and danger of d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people in church spaces, stating that some d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people desired to have a relationship with God and learn more about the Bible but because they are constantly demonized and discriminated against in church spaces, they stop going. He expressed that he would very desperately like to be part of a church space where he could feel safe and accepted in a place of worship being his authentic self unapologetically without fear of being dismissed, discriminated against, "exorcised" or facing violent hate crimes. After the workshop we exchanged contact details and he agreed to participate.

I also approached Johan and asked him if he would like to participate as I knew that he had previously had issues in church because of his identity and performance as a gay man; he agreed immediately since we already knew each other, it would be an easy process, and he knew the details of the research as he had assisted me in thinking about formulating the topic, and had attended my proposal presentation.

I conducted three interviews with d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people (see *d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+ (Non-church-goers),* allowing them to share anything they wanted with me in relation to their experiences of growing up d/Deaf, things they had experienced in various churches, either d/Deaf, hearing or mixed, inclusive to LGBTIQA+ people or not. These interviews were conducted at the various participants' homes in areas in and surrounding Soweto.

These participants easily shared with me, without me having to prompt much aside from asking the first question: *Can you please tell me about your experience of going to different churches in your life, what did you experience as a d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+ person?* (Appendix G) From here, some participants told me about their lives in school, discovering that they were LGBTIQA+, how their families reacted, and also about their experiences in churches, how they were treated, their feelings of rejection, as well as harassment and abuse within the church.

Ethics and ethical considerations

As part of the University's ethical guidelines, it was important to apply to the Wits Ethics Committee for ethics clearance which was granted to me in form of an ethics certificate (Appendix A).

In line with the Ethics Committee's requirements, I provided each participant with a participant information sheet (Appendix B) outlining the details of the study, participant consent form (Appendix C), video recording consent form (for d/Deaf participants) (Appendix D) and voice-recording consent form (for hearing participants) (Appendix E). According to the university's ethical guidelines, it is recommended that participants remain anonymous in order to protect their identity should sensitive information be disclosed; the following was stated to each participant on the participant information sheet:

> *The information gathered in this study will be compiled into a dissertation; this may be presented at an academic seminar held by the SASL Department, where the contents of the study will be disclosed;*

> *your identity will still remain anonymous and I will use a pseudonym to identify you if you do not wish to disclose your identity. The dissertation will otherwise be kept by the SASL Department. After the dissertation has been completed there is a possibility that this work will be published in an academic journal article. – extract from participant information sheet.*

I had initially planned to ask an interpreter to assist me with signing the information sheets to each d/Deaf participant; however, I was unable to find an interpreter who could travel with me to the various locations I visited during my fieldwork hence I did it myself. I had no problems engaging d/Deaf participants about the various information sheets and each of them confirmed that they understood and agreed with the contents of the written forms.

I also stated that should the interview incite any past trauma, a Counsellor would be available to work through the trauma. The Counsellor's letter is attached as Appendix H. Before beginning research at each site I requested permission to conduct research at the site in the form of a Research Site Permission form (Appendix F).

Although I had planned to formally approach my potential research participants and ask them to sign consent-to-participate forms, a small amount of the data I collected came about through unplanned interactions with people or friends I would meet up with in informal ethnographic settings within the d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ community. Because I am only good friends with a small number of members of the d/Deaf community, all my d/Deaf friends are aware of my research and so when we would see each other they would tend to ask about it. As such, we would end up talking about various experiences we've had, in terms of religion and oppression in religious spaces, or oppression and marginalization we've experienced in other spaces we find ourselves in. An example of this is the discussion I had with Danelle about her experience in churches and at school assemblies, which occurred during a coffee break at a SASL Poetry workshop we were attending at Wits University.

Another example is the discussion I had with an LGBTIQA+ identifying interpreter, who I had approached to help me by attending church services with me to interpret the participant information forms. Unfortunately, they could not help me as they had stopped attending church, especially hetero-centric, heteronormative, traditional conservative church spaces like the one I attended during the research process. We had a short discussion after attending an event together where they had been the interpreter. They told me that they had a relationship with God and often prayed and read their Bible, but they could not attend church because they had experienced some discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

Another example is the workshop I attended at Iranti-org, where I met d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people from various locations around South Africa. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss some of the needs of the Deaf LGBTIQA+ community, especially the d/Deaf Trans community, and one of the needs that came up which was discussed at great length was religion. The d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ community, especially those from Black communities, are often stigmatized and labelled as demon-possessed and unchristian - sometimes based on them being d/Deaf and also because of identifying as LGBTIQA+, making this a form of double/intersectional oppression - which makes it difficult to find a place of worship; as result, from the stories told at that workshop I found that most d/Deaf

LGBTIQA+ people have discontinued going to churches they grew up in and are searching for religious spaces where they can feel comfortable and accepted.

These interactions have helped me to understand the struggles of the Deaf LGBTIQA+ community in relation to my research, and also helped me to identify new potential participants. In these situations, it was impossible to hand over my consent forms, as I didn't have them on me, having not expecting to be engaged in such conversations; this is when I would ask the participants for consent verbally.

Conclusion

This section has outlined the processes I undertook to identify research sites, participants and research methods. I have attempted to explain my reasons for choosing these methods and how they are suited to my research. I have summarized my observations at research sites and the processes involved when conducting interviews. Finally, I have discussed the ethical considerations and how I accounted for the University's Ethical guidelines. The following section will discuss the ethnographic findings specific to each research site.

Chapter 4: Ethnographic Findings

Introduction

This chapter will provide insight into my observations during the ethnographic process of data collection. It will discuss findings at each site, findings specific to certain sites and findings which occurred at all sites. I will also include extracts from fieldnotes and interviews to elaborate on the findings and to introduce the experiences of participants within the space. The sites to be discussed are Highest Praise and Worship Soweto (HPW), New Life Church 1&2 (NLC) and Christ Church East Rand (CC). This discussion aims to provide context for the following Chapter.

Highest Praise and Worship, Soweto

History

The LGBTIQA+-affirming church in Soweto is run from a community centre and led by Reverend Noreen, who identifies as a womxn who loves womxn. The church was born from the Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church body which served under the Universal Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC); today HPW are an independent body, although they do collaborate with other affirming churches for conferences and seminars throughout the year.

The MCC was founded in 1968 by Reverend Elder Troy Perry after he had been defrocked from the Pentecostal church on the basis of his homosexual identity. In a four-part document about his journey to becoming the founder of MCC, Perry tells of how, after many years of trying to reconcile his conflicting gay and Christian identities, an unexpected break-up and a suicide attempt, his mission to start a church that would be open and accessible to the LGBT community was revealed to him by God (Perry, 1990):

> *"God wanted me to start a new church that would reach into the gay community, but that would include anyone and everyone who believed in the true spirit of God's love, peace, and forgiveness." - (Perry, 1990: part 3)*

The church started in October 1968 and consisted of gathering of twelve people in Perry's living room. Over the years the church has grown and spread internationally, gaining a huge following because of the church's aims to be inclusive towards people who have been marginalized from mainstream churches, as well as to advocate for civil and human rights; they were the first church to perform same-gender marriages and as such, inevitably have been involved in the struggle towards marriage equality internationally.

Before HPW was started, Noreen co-pastored the Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church with a young gay pastor, Reverend Patrick. The church was initially held above The Skyline bar in Hillbrow (Reid, 2010); it is "a spiritual home to those seeking guidance in reconciling their sexual identity with their relationships with God" (Journeys of Faith exhibition, 2016). Reverend Noreen broke away from the broader HUMCC and started her own church called Highest Praise and Worship MCC in Soweto. In November 2014, when the church completely broke away from MCC, the church became Highest Praise and Worship (HPW). Despite having broken away from MCC, the church continues to uphold the values of MCC, being committed to promoting justice, inclusivity and peace

by welcoming people of all ages, races, sexual orientations, nationality, gender, marital status, etc., with the sole condition of having a desire to participate in the Body of Christ[53].

Site-specific Findings

This section will elaborate on findings which were specific to HPW. The basic tenet of this church, as mentioned above, is that all people are welcome irrespective of the individual aspects which make up their identity, which includes age, race, sexual orientation, nationalities, genders, marital status, family history and health status. The identities that stood out for me as being welcomed without judgement were sexual orientation and identity performance, mental health status, and identifying as a person with a disability; something else that stood out for me was how congregants who had taken membership at HPW had a sense of accountability to the rest of the congregation, concerning attendance and absenteeism; this also extended into the building of care relationships amongst members, which will be discussed below. This section will discuss my findings in the space based on the aforementioned aspects of identity as well as acts of accountability and the development of relationships of care that I saw while being in the space.

Accountability and Care Relationships:

As I spent many months (approximately nine months) attending church services every second Sunday at HPW, I noticed that there were six to ten members who were consistently present, and many others who would come less frequently but who I would still see at least once a month. Those who attended once a month were usually people who had to work on Sunday mornings; this was always mentioned during the announcements, as people tended to submit apologies and give reasons for their absence. Although I had witnessed this form of accountability in other mainstream churches, and even at one point while doing fieldwork at NLC2, the apologies and reasons for absence was usually only given by leaders of the church, whereas at HPW, this was done by all members.

For me this played a role in the development of a family-like environment at HPW, as all members were aware of what was happening in each other's lives and it showed a presence of caring for each other's well-being. These displays of care extended further than just praying for one another; members took an active role in making provisions for those who were absent because of financial reasons by discussing ways to collect money to provide to those who need it. Likewise, if there was an upcoming event which someone could not afford to attend, members would meet to organize the means to raise extra funds to ensure that those who could not afford it, could be involved.

Sexual orientation and Identity Performance:

As HPW is a LGBTIQA+ affirming church, LGBTIQA+ people find it to be a safe space to worship and develop a relationship with God. The majority of congregants, when I began my fieldwork, were slightly masculine-presenting womxn who Noreen told me were lesbians; many had shortly-shaved hair and wore masculine clothes like collared button-up shirts, ties, men's pants and men's formal

[53] Christians often make reference to the 'Body of Christ'; this does not mean the physical human body of Jesus Christ but refers instead to the Church which consists of those who believe in Jesus Christ, who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour (Voulgaris, 1998), which serves as the basis to get into Heaven, according to Christian beliefs (John 14:6, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no-one comes to the Father except through me.").

shoes. Those who did not wear formal attire tended to wear men's jeans or tracksuit pants with t-shirts or informal shirts with sneakers. Few womxn were feminine-presenting, dressed in skirts, dresses or womxn's jeans and shirts or t-shirts and dainty feminine accessories. During my period of fieldwork at HPW, different people frequented the space, and different performances of identity were present. The space mostly consisted of womxn, with the rare appearance of men; there were two occasions when I saw men in the space, both times when Noreen was preaching elsewhere or attending a leadership conference. Because the men were all masculine-presenting, it was hard to tell if they identified as gay. Only the man who preached, Dr Cedric, spoke openly about being a gay man. On the day I first met Dr Cedric, there was one other man who, although he was mostly masculine-presenting, embodied the stereotypical gay man effeminate body language and I therefore assumed that he was gay.

> *"And later, a taaaallllll man with a bald head save for a tiny patch on the very front of his head in line with the tiny little soul patch resting just beneath his bottom lip walks in […] the soul-patch man is wearing a dark blue suit with a light-blue polka-dotted waistcoat under the blazer, and tan-coloured shoes. If not for his effeminate mannerisms, like the way he stood with his weight leaning mostly on one hip, and the way he sat with his legs crossed the way womxn usually do, or with his uncrossed legs pressed together as opposed to the typical take-up-as-much-space-as-possible-with-my-open-legs (manspreading) manner of sitting of heterosexual men, and his overall gentle air about him, he could well have been a regular macho heterosexual man." – (fieldnotes journal, 2016)*

I only assumed the others were gay based on the fact that they were attending an LGBTIQA+ affirming church service where a gay man was preaching, and that they appeared in the church services on both occasions that Dr Cedric was preaching, which were the only times I had ever seen them at the church.

At times there would be a male-bodied person dressed in womxn's clothing who would not attend church services but would pick up congregants after church; they[54] were well-known amongst all the congregants, and everyone would always gather around their car and chat when the service was over.

People were never judged for their appearance but were instead picked on for their talents and skills. For example, a young butch womxn who was particularly good at singing was often asked to lead songs, while a womxn who always delivered powerful prayers would often end the service in a word or prayer and would also pray during services[55]; Maggie was very good at public speaking and would usually introduce the time during services when people were invited forward to deliver

[54] I refer to the person at they/them, as I am not certain of their gender identity.

[55] A common trait in Pentecostal churches is prayer; praying happens at the beginning and ending of services, as well as in the middle of service. The prayers in the middle of services tend to be unprompted by a person, and instead are believed to be prompted by the Holy Spirit. In all my experiences it has happened that an individual would be moved by the Holy Spirit while a song is being sung; usually these are the slower, calmer songs, called 'worship' songs, which are sung before the sermon to create the atmosphere of peace and stillness within the church. At the end of a worship song many people usually would all pray at the same time, speaking slightly louder than a whisper – this would go on for a few minutes and most times would end with one person still praying after everyone has stopped. Once this person has stopped praying, the sermon would usually start.

testimonies for the week, and a womxn named Vuyelwa would handle all the church's admin tasks, including welcoming the congregation, delivering announcements and organizing various events. Although these people would often be the ones to perform these tasks, the tasks were not fixed to a single individual; other congregants were given opportunities to volunteer to perform these tasks to ensure that all congregants felt comfortable to be involved in the activities, and to create a feeling of family and community amongst the congregants:

> *"I noticed that Noreen and Vuyelwa would always ask for volunteers to do certain tasks such as opening or closing in prayer, giving the weekly announcements and updates, praying for tithes and offerings, delivering the Tithe Talk, or assisting with events organizing." – extract from fieldnotes journal, 2017*

While these occurrences of congregants performing tasks were present in the Pentecostal churches I had attended growing up, in those churches the roles tended to be fixed (i.e. only one person would be a praise and worship leader, one person would handle finances, etc.), with a top-down (Wundt, 1879) leadership approach meaning that the people in leadership would vote on who performs tasks which left little room for suggestions from the rest of the congregation. Although this was done to maintain order and discipline within the church, it often caused feelings of resentment among congregants as they felt that certain people were favoured over others and there were not enough opportunities for others to display their skills.

The inclusion of members in decision-making at HPW has assisted towards creating an atmosphere of involvement and belonging, which is very important for people who have experienced exclusion and marginalisation previously. It also shows that organization and order can be maintained while using a bottom-up leadership approach (UhlBien and Marion, 2007).

Physical and Mental Health, Illness and People with Disablities:

Many churches do not accept the existence of illness, whether visible or invisible. In many Christian belief systems, those who identify as people with physical disabilities are considered to have a physical illness or deficit and are considered to be lesser people than those without disabilities. People with diagnoses of mental or physical illness, or who have a physical disability, are often marginalized, treated differently, or forced to undergo prayer to deal with the illness or disability. In this section, I will discuss my experiences regarding HPW's approach to mental and physical illness and people with disabilities in the church space, compared to my experiences of these aspects in mainstream churches while growing up.

Mental health issues are considered taboo in Pentecostal faith, with many pastors stating that depression and anxiety are "all in the mind" and can be deterred by not thinking about it or not allowing it to take over your mind. On the other side of the coin, some people would consider mental health issues to be curses or demon-possession which need to be dealt with through prayer. These statements portray the individual's lack of understanding of mental health issues, and also serve as deterrents for people with mental health issues from coming to church as their illnesses are not taken seriously.

At HPW the attitudes towards mental health issues was different in the way that people spoke about certain mental illnesses and the treatment thereof. As mentioned above, some Christian believers

would say that to get rid of depression one should simply stop thinking about it or not allow it to control your thoughts or allow church leaders to pray the demons away. My experience at HPW was different in that they acknowledged that depression exists as an illness of the mind in the same way that cancer exists as an illness of the body:

> *"As Noreen is not here today, another womxn who I have seen in services before is leading today. She has a deep voice and a huge afro, and I feel drawn to the motherly warmth in her aura. She exudes the characteristics of a leader, by the way she poises herself confidently and deliberately. She speaks about the troubles she has been facing recently and says that she has been feeling depression creeping back which implies that she has been depressed previously. She speaks briefly about having been admitted to mental health institutions and treated for depression, but she also believes that she will not reach that point again,"- extract from fieldnotes journal, 2016*

The manner in which the womxn, who I later came to know as Maggie, spoke about her depression made it seem like depression is a normal thing that people experience and something which can be dealt with through treatment. Other congregants spoke about experiences of depression, anxiety and other mental health issues in other services, having to deal with the various struggles in everyday life. Some congregants spoke about how they had previously attempted suicide; Noreen, the reverend, told me during an interview that she had also attempted suicide:

> *"Well, I think during all the situations at my church I tried to commit suicide, but then somehow it didn't work out - I found myself being alive. Then waking up from that whole situation made me start thinking there must be a reason why I'm still alive today, and there must be something that God has for me." – (Noreen, a Black hearing womxn who loves womxn, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto)*

In my previous experiences in churches, mental health was thought of as a curse from the devil, or a demon inside the affected person, and the belief was that in order to get rid of the depression one should exorcise the demon or break the curse through prayer; the option of seeking professional help from mental health practitioners, psychologists, counselling or therapy was not permitted as this was considered a lack of faith in God's healing power. The difference at HPW was that although people still believed that prayer could help one deal with mental health issues, they also believed in receiving help through counselling (Noreen says in Van Wyk (2009) that she received medical help and counselling after she had been brutally raped) and acknowledged that mental health issues are real diseases the same as physical health issues.

In mainstream churches, congregants with physical disabilities such as wheelchair-users, are often catered to in terms of accessibility (the presence of ramps or alternative entrances to the church building if the main entrance uses steps), but are often stigmatized and prayed for, for total restoration of physical abilities. While some people may feel hindered by the inability to walk and may desire the ability to move without aid, many people do not feel that what society considers to be a disability, is a disability for them; instead they might consider themselves to be differently-abled.

At HPW, physical health issues are not discriminated against, and congregants who have physical illnesses or identify as people with physical disabilities are not marginalized in the space; Nelly, a

member of HPW, briefly mentioned that her cousin who is a wheelchair user would be attending services at HPW when she visits Nelly in Johannesburg and Nelly felt confident that her cousin would not feel excluded in the space:

> *"I have a cousin, she's a lesbian, she's paraplegic, I've been inviting her to church, so I know that she should also be welcomed." – (Nelly, a hearing Black lesbian from Riverlea, and member at HPW).*

Maggie, who is HIV+, speaks openly about her HIV status. In the extract below she talks about her feelings regarding her diagnosis from a physical and spiritual perspective:

> *"You can say I'm open. I'm living with HIV so also involved in the HIV field, so, I've learned that for some things not to be awkward, just be open about them, talk about them in passing […] I believe I'm cured from HIV, I got spiritual healing - not the physical, it's still there, but on the inside, everything, I'm ok." – (Maggie, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn and leader at HPW, Soweto)*

Noreen had previously been confined to a wheelchair for many months due to the effects of a tumour on her spine which paralyzed the lower part of her body. During this time, she was co-pastoring at HUMCC, as HPW had not been established yet. The inability to walk did not stop her from carrying out God's work, and nobody told her that she needed to be 'healed' in order to lead. Her desire to be able to walk again was personal, as she did not enjoy the sudden need to be dependent on family to move around; she prayed to God to restore her ability to walk, and she believes that besides the surgery she had undergone, her faith played a part in restoring the use of her lower body. Noreen believes that disabilities do not exist, and that instead we are all differently abled bodies, all created uniquely in God's perfect image:

> *"Personally, I don't think there is anyone who has a disability, because then it means all of us has a disability of some kind because we're not the same. I always think that God has some sense of humour - when God was sitting somewhere and creating all these things […] I think God created us to be different for a reason […] There are people who might have something that is different, how do I have the right to point a finger and say this is a disability? […] We have our brothers and sisters who are also blessed in their own ways because they might not see, or they might not hear but [they have] other qualities […] What I am saying is that people are different and they have been created in a different way […] We have to get to a point where we complement each other, whether we're different, but we complement each other. So, no-one is disabled." – (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).*

The overall attitude of participants at this site was that, although we are all uniquely created, we are all created in the image and likeness of God, and because we are all God's creations we cannot judge one another for any differences we might embody. The church is committed to teaching a message of love and acceptance to everybody, as they believe that this is the true essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and hence the basis of Christian doctrine. Any person from any walk of life is welcome at this church:

> *"We are an Open and Affirming Body of Jesus Christ, embracing diversity. We believe Gods love embraces all regardless of who you are, where you come from, what you have done or what you have. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome in this house." – (deogloria.org)*

The church aims to deliver Bible-based teachings with interpretations given to them by God, not based on any personal influence, beliefs or experience.

New Life Church 1&2

New Life Church (NLC) is a d/Deaf church which moved from one site to another during my fieldwork. The change in location resulted in a change in congregants, which I believe influenced my findings. The initial site of NLC when my fieldwork started was at an old chapel in Rosebank, and it moved to an old-age home called NLC2 in Lombardy East. This section will discuss my findings at each site of NLC and how the change in sites affected the data collection and findings of this research, beginning with an overview of the history of the church and the various journeys from being a d/Deaf church to an integrated church and back to a d/Deaf church.

History

NLC is headed by a pastor named Wesley, a d/Deaf white man who grew up in a hearing family, but attended De la Bat for the Deaf (now called The National Institute for the Deaf (NID)) in Worcester and used SASL as his first language. During the interview Wesley only relayed a small portion of his life story to me, but in his unpublished autobiography he expounds in great detail about his journey to becoming the Head pastor at NLC, which, during my fieldwork, took place in Rosebank and Lombardy East. The book tells of how he had always been a Christian, having grown up in a Christian home, and it was something that always remained important to him.

As a young man, working as an industrial chemist, he was also being mentored by Barry Barritt (Barry), from England, who was an organizer for the International Deaf Christian Conference held every four years. Wesley was invited to the conference in Switzerland in 1984. Four years later at the following conference in Wales, Wesley delivered a few messages to the conference attendees. Back in South Africa, Barry was leaving to go back to England, meaning that Wesley's official mentorship was coming to an end. Barry appointed three leaders for the new Deaf church that was to be established, and Wesley and his wife were chosen as head leaders, given their knowledge in Christian doctrine and given Wesley's history of having grown up in a Christian home. After many years the church grew and became successful; on the tenth anniversary of the Deaf Christian Fellowship, as the group of churches in Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Cape Town, and other international branches was known, Barry attended the celebration as a guest speaker. At this meeting he expressed his desire for the Deaf church to integrate with a hearing church. The members of the Deaf congregations did not agree with this but out of respect for Barry, they agreed to integrate.

For many years the integrated churches ran smoothly; there were integrated churches in the following locations across Johannesburg: Christ Church in East Rand (CC), Living Stone Fellowship in Kempton Park, New Covenant Church in Bryanston, Good News Church in South Hills (Johannesburg South), Covenant Community Church in Benoni, and Valley Vineyard Church in North West Johannesburg. This suited some d/Deaf people better as the previous fully Deaf church had been in

the East Rand, close to where Wesley and his wife lived; the newly established integrated churches were easier to access for those who lived closer to these areas.

Many young people had stepped up and volunteered to be interpreters for the d/Deaf members but did not gain full SASL proficiency and instead used Signed English which the d/Deaf members did not feel comfortable with as it was harder to follow services; many of these young volunteers stepped down and new people joined, but again they were not proficient in SASL. This challenge happened in all integrated churches across Johannesburg. Eventually as the d/Deaf members lost interest, they began to withdraw from services which ultimately led to the disbanding of integrated churches everywhere except for CC and Valley Vineyard Church in North-West Johannesburg, as these two churches were lucky to have skilled SASL interpreters.

CC then decided to plant a new church in a school hall in Germiston, called The Fireplace Church, led by a couple that had been in Home cell[56] with Wesley and his wife. This was an integrated church, but the d/Deaf members still wanted to have church meetings on their own, and thus weekly meetings were held at a d/Deaf venue opposite the school where church was held. These meetings were put to an end when hearing elders in the integrated church said that the d/Deaf members could no longer meet on their own, with the lead elder stating that that the deaf-only meetings "belonged in a rubbish bin"! "Where in the Bible can you show me about the deaf-only church?" (Warrington, unpublished autobiography: 87). However, there is no proof of a hearing-only church in the Bible either, which Wesley pointed out to the elder in response. After many unsuccessful meetings on the part of the d/Deaf members of the church, the integrated church The Fireplace Church closed, hearing members moved back to CC, and d/Deaf members, shortly thereafter, started a new d/Deaf church of their own. Wesley writes in his book, "It was a sad experience for us, a well-intentioned experiment at reaching across the barrier of deafness to other Christians, but it had not worked. Perhaps the whole church was not yet ready for it." (Warrington, unpublished autobiography: 88).

This recollection tells of the experiences of Wesley and other d/Deaf Christians who very desperately wanted a church to call their own, where they felt comfortable and where they were equally involved in leadership and decision-making. Unfortunately, integrated churches were not the ideal space for this to happen, as ableist leaders in the hearing church thwarted every effort for d/Deaf members' involvement. These experiences all led up to the establishment of New Life Church (NLC) in 2006, which was open to all races and ages, and both d/Deaf and hearing were welcome. Many members from old previously integrated churches, including The Fireplace Church, came to join NLC. Because it was situated in Primrose, it was difficult for some people to access, and hence the then-vacant chapel in Rosebank the NLC North branch of the church in 2011.

[56] Home Cell refers to small splinter groups who meet, usually mid-weekly, and engage in bible study and prayer; because the group is much smaller and tends to be more intimate, it is a good space for people to learn from each other and also to be able to ask questions, which does not happen during Sunday services at church.

Site-specific Findings

NLC1:

NLC1 comprised a small and diverse group of congregants, varying in age, gender and race. All congregants were d/Deaf and used SASL as their language of communication. Out of approximately fifteen to twenty congregants, majority (70%) of the congregation were White people, with 20% Black people and one Indian person. All Black and Indian congregants looked between 19-30 years old, while the White congregants were mixed, with some being families of parents and young children, and others being older married couples. I thought this would provide a good range of perspectives on the questions in my research, if people would agree to participate.

At this church there were trends I noticed, not as defined as trends at HPW, but which still seemed to occur consistently as I participated and collected data during the months I visited. These trends were inclusivity of hearing people, horizontal violence/oppression (which manifests as homophobia), heteronormative family structures, and d/Deaf Pride. These will be discussed below.

Inclusivity

We entered the building from a side entrance which was close to the school hall. This entrance was easily accessible for wheelchair users or people with mobility issues, however to reach this entrance from the parking lot was trickier, given how uneven the paving was. The inside of the building looked quite similar to a cathedral with stained glass windows which would cast colourful reflections on people's faces as the feeble autumn-morning sun shone through. On all my visits there I recall everyone sitting on ice-cold plastic chairs which had been arranged in straight-lined pews towards the front area of the church; presumably we did not sit at the back on the wooden pews because it was too far back from the projector screen and pulpit.

The church service would always start with a greeting from whoever was preaching that morning – either Michael or Wesley – and a prayer; we would then sing a few songs. This was a brand-new experience for me, and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it, despite being slightly taken aback and surprised by my own ignorance. The songs were led by two members of the congregation who would stand at the front where the pulpit is; the words of the songs appeared on PowerPoint slides on a screen, and everybody signed the words in English word order and simultaneously used their voices to sing along, each person following their own tune but everyone vaguely sticking to the rhythm of the leaders, ensuring that everyone finished each song more-or-less at the same time. On my first visit, the songs were accompanied by extremely loud music which blared and crackled through busted speakers, but the vibration of the bass could be felt, and everyone seemed to enjoy it. On all my other visits, there were no speakers, just the sound of everyone's voices singing at different paces.

After the singing, someone would do the announcements and collect the tithes and offerings. This all happened very quickly, in twenty minutes or less. We then received the Word. My experience of the Word was always weird, and I felt uncomfortable about it. Even though my signing was not outstanding, my receptive skills were good enough that I could follow even without looking at the slides – I would often refer to them to see which Bible verse was being taught, but I followed the

sermon quite easily. The slides (*Figure 1* & *Figure 2*) seem to be used mainly to assist the preacher[57] in staying on track with the church's announcements and the sermon he had prepared. They consisted of general announcements, upcoming events, Bible verses and short notes to refer to whatever Bible verse was on the slide; there were also some diagrams. While referring to the slides, the preacher would use English word order with mouthing, and would then switch back to SASL word order when elaborating on the notes from the slides. Mouthing was consistent, whether he used SASL or English word order, although the mouthing occurred at random, not with every sign.

On my first visit I vividly recall that two hearing men came to the church service; based on their confused facial expressions when they walked in, I assumed that they did not know this was a d/Deaf church. On that particular day Michael, one of the participants in this research, was bringing the Word as the Head pastor was visiting another church. Michael's wife, Kristene, accommodated for the hearing men who did not understand SASL by voicing over the entire service. Below is an extract from my fieldnotes journal which describes the account:

> *"After the first song two men walk in and sit in the pew behind me. I greet them and they say hello so I know that they are hearing. Singing carries on for two more songs. The tithes and offering happens very quickly (a guy stands up and waves a bag around – nobody responds so he sits back down). Kristene approaches the two new men and introduces herself. They do not understand her signing so she figures they are hearing. She decides that she will voice over the service for them." – (fieldnotes journal, 2016)*

The display of a sense of welcoming and hospitality to those of us who were hearing in a d/Deaf space by using spoken language to accommodate our needs was appreciated, and these acts showed how NLC aims to be open and welcoming to all who wish to worship God; however, the events that followed inspired feelings of discomfort from what I perceived to be an unfair assumption of people's spiritual positions and relationships with God, or a lack thereof. The following extract from my fieldnotes journal explains my experience and thought process in detail:

> *"[Michael] stated that he believes in the power of prayer and he believes that prayer is important and also it is a good way to overcome our sins and to repent and be forgiven. He then offered to pray for all those who felt the need and those who had not accepted Jesus as their saviour. Many people raise their hands including me even though I'm ok on both parts […] They pray for some other people and then come to the two new men. Kristene asks their names and they tell them. One I remember is Boyce […] but I'm not sure of the other. This is where it got weird because Michael prayed for their sins to be wiped away and that they would not sin anymore. It was weird for me because I thought that he doesn't know them or their life story and yet he's assuming that they are in sin… what if they wanted prayers for financial breakthrough or health or just to say thanks… So, in that moment I decided I no longer want prayers." – (fieldnotes journal, 2016)*

In my previous experiences of leaders offering to pray for congregants, the leader would discreetly ask the congregant what area of their life they would like to pray for, and will then pray privately for the person; given that SASL is a visual language it might be hard to pray discreetly or privately, and

[57] I had visited this church more than once and noticed that they used the same structure for each service, whether the main pastor or another leader gave the sermon, hence I have used the word 'preacher' here and not 'pastor'.

perhaps my lack of understanding of prayer in d/Deaf church settings had contributed to my interpretation of the situation as negative, intrusive and judgmental.

After my first regrettable experience at NLC St. Vincent's, I felt apprehensive to return, however I understood that it was important to the research process and hence after a few weeks I returned. My second visit was different from my first and was more enjoyable in the beginning. At this service I met Wesley for the first time and learned that he is the Head pastor of NLC, this was also the first time I would sit under his preaching.

During this service I learned that after that service (04 December 2016) the church would close for the Festive Season, and would reopen early in January of the following year:

> *"Another announcement that stood out for me was the fact that this was the last church service for the year and the church would then close until 8 January 2017 (I always find it weird when churches close for the holidays - does God go on holiday? Why are we going on church holiday…)." – (Fieldnotes journal, 2016)*

My reason for being shocked by this was that I could not understand why the church would close completely for an extended period of time, as it was one of the few d/Deaf churches in Johannesburg and I knew that some of the congregants felt more comfortable here than at their family churches. I had been eager to attend a Christmas Day service at this church and was slightly disappointed that this would not happen; I then decided that on Christmas morning I would visit CC to collect some fieldnotes about the church and the d/Deaf community at the church. I will expand on this experience in the following section.

Horizontal Violence/Oppression (Homophobia)

Once again everyone was accommodating and even asked me if I would be able to follow the service in SASL. I felt comfortable to be a hearing person in a d/Deaf space, but I did not feel comfortable as a LGBTIQA+ person in the conservative church space; I had previously asked a member of the congregation who I knew from Wits if she knew of any LGBTIQA+ people in the church and she said she did not know of any, as the church was centred around traditional family values. Although I did not know what the sermon would be about, when the topic (*Protect your spiritual well-being)* was introduced I thought that a message about why homosexuality is a sin would be one of the sub-topics of the sermon.

> *"The sermon was based on how as Christians we need to get back to the cross and how to do that, because we are no longer God-fearing and have based our lives on man-made theories like Evolution and science– there was a diagram of 2 pillars – one which was favourable in God's eyes and one which was filled with "sins". The sins consisted of pornography, homosexuality, abortion…*



Figure 3: PowerPoint slide showing good and bad in God's eyes

> *Lawlessness included things like living together outside of wedlock, fornication, etc. Hopefully the pillars are not listed as opposites alongside each other because homosexual "behaviour" is not opposite to marriage. Parts of the sermon made me realize that the church was slightly weird and not a place I could get deeply involved as heteronormativity and patriarchy are still the basis of their beliefs." – (Fieldnotes journal, 2016)*

I was aware that stigmatization of LGBTIQA+ people exists in the d/Deaf community, because my LGBTIQA+ friends in the d/Deaf community had told me about their experiences of being marginalized by d/Deaf heterosexual people, however it still raised questions about why d/Deaf people, who had experienced these kinds of negative experiences as a result of hegemonic practise applied by hearing people, would perpetuate these practises, especially within church spaces which should be safe spaces for all people regardless of identity. The fact that the church had expressed the perspective of homosexuality being a sin made me feel scared to approach the leaders with my research topic, as I feared that they would turn me away for exploring topics which they viewed in such a negative light. I also feared that they would assume that I am a lesbian because of my appearance and would thus be reluctant to engage with me about these issues, perhaps because they would view my interest in the topic as challenging the church's values and beliefs.

After reviewing the PowerPoint slides and considering the wording on each stone of the pillars in the image (*Figure 3*), I realized that the reference to "homosexual 'behaviour'" was something I had previously come across when reading about the Catholic church's perspective on homosexual identity versus homosexual behaviour; (Rodriguez, 2010) states that the Catholic church does not condone homosexuality, but homosexual identity is acceptable as long as no homosexual 'behaviour' (i.e. homosexual sex) takes place.

Heteronormative Family Structures

Owing to the fact that the church did not accept homosexual identity, it was not surprising to see the presence of heteronormative family structures; there were two families which consisted of mother, father and child(ren), and while some of the younger people attended church alone without their families, the older couples who were present were all heterosexual couples. On the day I introduced myself to Wesley he told me about his son who is hearing and who attends CC. This interaction led me to believe that family is important to Wesley:

> *"Wesley tells me that he is not at this church every week and usually it is led by Michael. He goes to his son's church which is Christ in East Rand. His son is a youth leader in that*

church (he is hearing) and they have a small Deaf community with interpreters, so he and his wife often go there when they are not at NLC1." – (Fieldnotes journal, 2016)

In his autobiography Wesley also writes with great fondness about his familial support system growing up, where his whole family made attempts to communicate with him in SASL even though he was the only d/Deaf member of his family. He also writes about his two daughters from his first marriage and his son and daughter who he shares with his current wife, mentioning how important his children are to him and how he worked hard to maintain relationships with his two older daughters after his divorce and after he remarried.

If any LGBTIQA+ people were present I could not identify them, and as I had previously been told, nobody in the space had ever come out as LGBTIQA+.

Deaf Pride

Deaf pride in the space was clearly displayed by the medium of communication being SASL, and through each congregant embracing a d/Deaf identity, celebrating d/Deaf heritage and prioritizing d/Deaf identity. I saw evidence of this in the fact that all people present in the space used SASL; parents who had d/Deaf children taught their children SASL, and hearing parents with d/Deaf children in this space mostly used SASL to communicate with their children:

"I saw a car driving in. After parking the family stepped out: mother father and 2 daughters. The older daughter (around 14/15) had shoulder-length dark hair and hazel eyes. The younger daughter (9/10) had red hair and green eyes with specks of brown. Their parents seem to be hearing as the mother sometimes speaks to them to emphasize certain things (mostly signs), and the father doesn't seem very interested in the family [seems like he refuses to learn to sign or something – he just looks quite grumpy]. Both daughters seem to have an exceptionally close bond to their mother and are also extremely active […] After another 5 minutes another car pulls up. A family of three steps out – mother father toddler. Baby looks about 2 [years old] and has a blanky in his hand. He is extremely cute with little blonde curls. […] she is very oral […] She signs and speaks to her son and he is learning to speak. […] We watch as he signs with his tiny hands." – (Fieldnotes journal, 2016)

Furthermore, the congregants who came from hearing families came to this d/Deaf church instead of attending their family churches, even though some lived far away and had to use public transport to get to Rosebank. This suggests that the feeling of belonging was much more present in this space than in hearing church spaces, as supported by Ladd (2003):

"However, sign language users are those who were born Deaf or became so at an early age. For them, the issue of loss has no meaningful reality. By creating their own communities and utilising their beautiful languages, they have created a linguistic and cultural environment in which they take both comfort and pride"- Ladd, 2003: 14

I believe that for congregants at NLC St. Vincent's, this space was the linguistic cultural environment which created a sense of comfort and pride which Ladd speaks about in the above quote.

Unfortunately my vision of conducting interviews with the diverse group of congregants at NLC St. Vincent's was never realised; after my failure to return to NLC St. Vincent's once it had reopened in January 2017, I spent a month trying to build up the courage to return. In February 2017, I attempted to go to the church on three occasions and was told by the security that there was no

church. In March I contacted one of the congregants who then told me that the church had been closed for construction until November 2017. She also informed me that the church would instead take place at a different congregant´s house every third Sunday. Once again, I felt apprehensive about attending these services as I was struck by the debilitating insecurities surrounding my SASL productive skills. I decided to locate a new research site to continue participant observation. I attended CC a few times (explained below) and eventually found out about the NLC church services which were happening at NLC2 in Lombardy East. Once I had received the church's location and service time details I started attending services there.

NLC2

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, NLC2 became the new location for NLC church services previously held in Rosebank. The demographics of NLC2 differed vastly from those at NLC1, with the main most notable difference being the difference in age of the participants; where there had been a variety of age groups present at NLC1, at NLC2 there was approximately 80% of people over the age of 80, 16% were 50-65, slightly more than 2% under the age of 40, and less than 1% under the age of 30, including myself. The race variation was also much different, where 99% of congregants at NLC2 were White and 1%, including myself, were persons of colour (POC). Hence the trends and patterns I observed in the space were different to those I observed at NLC1, given the generational gaps and cultural and ethnic discrepancies between the two groups. However, because the churches were two branches of the same tree, there were many parallels I noticed between the two. Furthermore, there were also many of the older people from NLC1 who now attended church at NLC2. Below, I will discuss the difference in trends I noticed between the two church spaces; thereafter I will briefly elaborate on the parallels that existed and how those parallels were portrayed.

The main findings during participant observation at NLC2 were: the development of care relationships and familial connections amongst a group of people living in a care centre away from their own families; the importance of fellowship; multilingual communication; and inclusivity of marginalized identities in an exclusionary manner. The trends which were reiterated from St. Vincent's were: Inclusivity of hearing people and Deaf Pride.

Development of Care Relationships and Familial Connections

As most of the people who attended NLC2 were resident of the care centre, and presumably, based on their age and the fact that they attended services with friends instead of spouses most of their spouses were deceased, the old people at NLC2 had developed close bonds with one another. They would often assist each other to move about before service started (trying to get to their seats, finding a suitable chair to sit in, etc.) and again after services when everybody would gather around for tea and biscuits. They would also share little blankets thrown over their laps during the colder months, and some of the younger (below 70 years) congregants would serve tea to the older congregants who might struggle to serve themselves.

During services while the pastor was preaching, it was a usual occurrence for someone to interrupt the sermon to share an anecdote or ask a question, and often a conversation would ensue amongst congregants, signing across the room to each other and to the preacher; according to Lewis (2007)

this occurs frequently in d/Deaf churches. The acceptance of these interruptions as part of the order of services was significant for me as it felt like there was room in a religious setting to ask questions, something I had not experienced before, as my experience of church has always been that the congregation focuses all their attention on the preacher and ingests everything they say without interruption or enquiry.

The Importance of Fellowship

The previous trend of the development of care relationships and familial connections links to the importance of fellowship which was evident at NLC2. Church services were held in a large room which led into a garden through the back entrance. The room housed many small square tables which could each seat four people around them; there were board games and jigsaw puzzles set on the tables which were presumably used for recreational purposes by the residents at NLC2. In another area of the room were groupings of comfortable couches set up around coffee tables with a variety of reading materials on the tables. Along one wall was a huge bookshelf filled with books, magazines and DVDs or VHS tapes; on the perpendicular wall was a digital projector screen, which was used by the pastor every Sunday during church services. The room was clearly set up as a space for the old people to relax and socialize with each other, and the moveable furniture meant that the space could easily be rearranged as was necessary.

On Sunday mornings, the chairs and comfortable couches would all be moved towards the side of the room with the digital projector screen; all seats would be arranged in a semi-circle, in a manner that every person could have a clear view of the person preaching. After every service, the younger (under sixty years) congregants would move the chairs back to their original positions around the tables and the congregants would seat themselves around the tables, sometimes squashed in groups bigger than four per table, to drink tea and coffee, eat biscuits and engage in various discussions. This was an important part of the service, and although I did not always hang around, these moments of informal fellowship, of eating and drinking together, provided an important base for my research as it helped me to develop connections with people in the space: people got to enquire about my presence in the space, and in turn I got to understand which congregants would be more willing to discuss research with me. Ultimately the only people who were truly interested were three leaders, one of whom was Wesley, the Head pastor of the church.

Multilingual Communication

The language used in this space was SASL, but on the PowerPoint slides which accompanied the pastor's sermons, notes were written in English and Afrikaans. In the same manner as NLC1, the communication was in SASL but with mouthing occasionally accompanying signs. The language of the mouthing differed between individuals, while SASL structure remained the same. At one service a man I had never seen at NLC before, preached the sermon. He used Afrikaans mouthing while signing in SASL. However, what I noted was that when he finger-spelled words, he would use the BSL alphabet when signing Afrikaans words, and would translate to English, using the (S)ASL alphabet.

Inclusivity of Marginalized Identities in an Exclusionary Manner

During the interview process I still felt afraid to bring up my questions around LBTIQA+ identities and the church's response to the embodiment of such identities. This was based on my fears of being

rejected from the space but also because I had been enquiring about permission to conduct fieldwork at NLC since I had been attending at NLC1 and had not received responses from the leadership. I changed my approach and said that I wanted to collect short narratives about congregants' experiences in various church spaces, namely d/Deaf church spaces, hearing church spaces and integrated church spaces, or just general life stories about their religious identities. The leaders who agreed to allow me to interview them shared short portions of their religious journeys with me – I had optimistically hoped that the topic of LGBTIQA+ identities would appear without me any prompts from me. When this did not happen, I decided that the best approach would be to request the desired information via email.

Because Wesley had previously preached about homosexuality being ungodly, and because he is the Head pastor of the church, I expected that all leaders would share his views on the matter. I was pleasantly surprised then to receive a response from one participant which does not completely condemn LGBTIQA+ identity in the church. Although he stated that he believes LGBTIQA+ identity embodiment is immoral in God's eyes, he reasoned that all people who wish to proclaim and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ should be allowed in the church, since we are all sinners by nature but God does not see our sin as our sin has been cleared through the Death of Jesus Christ.

> *"Since we are living under the grace of Lord Jesus (not under the Mosaic Law) and His death on the cross all sins have been fully paid for and forgiven provided one has faith his/her in the Lordship of Christ and live[s] for Christ as their personal Saviour. So, NO one is to be excluded from the Body of Christ when one is a bonafide believer in Jesus, [including] all forms of one's personal [identity] such as gay, transgender, etc. Any LGBT unbelievers who wish to attend or even join into the Christian church are always welcomed alike.*
>
> *Unfortunately, in this real world many ignorant or naïve believers, even spiritual leaders, out there are still showing some degree of hostil[ity] or totally unaccept[ance] toward any LGBT Christian believer. This is due to various reasons such as strict upbringing of Christian home or [hearing] the judgemental preaching or teaching of self-righteous leader without having a true showing of caring, accepting and loving toward LGBT people, including LGBT unbelievers.*
>
> *Should [the] body of Christ, including spiritual leaders, fully grasp and understand the Bible and God's true character and godly attributes one will easily accept and welcome with love all people include[ing] LGBT people." – (Paul, a d/Deaf white heterosexual man, and leader at NLC2)*

However, despite his belief that all people should be accepted in the church, irrespective of their identity, if the church fully understand what God's grace entails, he still does believe that through acceptance in the church and through involvement in the church, people who identify as LGBTIQA+ will change and be liberated from their LGBTIQA+ identities to become better and acceptable unto God:

> *"I see them [LGBTIQA+ people] as God sees them, through the work and love of gracious Christ upon His crucifixion. With the act of loving, accepting and caring I see there is a true transformation of one's life, usually [revealed as] improved from bad to better or morally wrong to integrity and [the] right mind, and so forth. No one is right to force or exclude them regardless as it is the sole work of the Holy Spirit, not us or spiritual people. Frankly, I have seen some take a day for one [to] act differently to many years to change to the right mind or emotional stability - psychologically healed as well spiritually healed." – (Paul, a d/Deaf white heterosexual man, and leader at NLC2)*

Thus I have concluded that the perspectives surrounding LGBTIQA+ identity differ between individuals at NLC1&2, where some leaders outrightly reject even the presence of LGBTIQA+ people in the space while others believe that the space should be accessible to all people who identify as Christians, but ultimately the belief is that LGBTIQA+ people will eventually change their identity or orientation to what is 'normal' and 'right' (i.e. heterosexual) if they truly are believers.

Christ Church, East Rand

History

Christ Church, East Rand (CC) started in 1983 when two Baptist churches joined together. Starting small, holding meetings at a Town Hall, the church grew quickly and had to move to its current premises in the East Rand. CC is a huge church led by Pastor and his wife (Christ Church, n.d.), and consists mainly of hearing people but has a small d/Deaf constituency which varies in numbers, weekly, ranging between five and fifteen people. The d/Deaf community that exists in this church was born from the previously larger d/Deaf community which existed when the church initially became an integrated church (see *NLC History*). They provide SASL interpreter services for the d/Deaf community at every Sunday morning service, Wednesday evening Prayer meeting and at Bible School. Sunday evening services do not have interpreter services.

Site-specific Findings

My experience at this space was one of isolation, exclusionary language towards d/Deaf people (as well as people with disabilities) despite being an integrated church, and covert racism.

Isolation

In my 6 months of attending some morning and some evening services every second weekend at CC, I was left feeling slightly disappointed and deflated. Unfortunately, despite all the amazing features and fancy accessories adorning this church, the atmosphere was not very warm and welcoming. Everyone seemed to be caught up in their own world and to reach out and make friends with anybody seems quite tasking. People are not friendly towards one another, and especially not to strangers – people did not even wish each other a Merry Christmas at the Christmas Morning service. Being a big church, this is understandable, however it the lacks the feeling of closeness, warmth, love and family which one experiences at HPW and NLC, where many people make an effort to greet and pull up a chair for a new visitor.

The closest community one notices in the church is the tiny 2% Deaf community – I've seen them chatting with each other when the service had ended, and most other people start rushing off to their cars in a bid to escape the inevitable queue of traffic leaving the enormous parking lot.

My experiences in this space raised many questions about their inclusivity, not only around the d/Deaf community but also issues such as race and gender, and sexual orientation.

The only solid connection I managed to make was with one of the interpreters I knew from before I started attending the church; she helped me in a big way to navigate my way and figure out who would be the best people to speak to, who would be willing to assist this research. However, this

never materialized as I did not receive any response from them when I attempted to make contact with them, via numerous emails, for formal interviews.

Exclusionary Language towards d/Deaf People (As Well As People with Disabilities)

The language used during services showed a lack of understanding towards d/Deaf identity and d/Deaf culture, but also towards people with disabilities. Lewis (2007) posits the following:

> *"if [the African Indigenous liturgy] does not challenge the social equilibrium of the modern African state it is maintaining the oblivion of oppression that the church in Africa has been guilty of in the past. This is an issue to be aware of in creating new Deaf liturgies too. Simply creating liturgies in BSL[58], using Deaf cultural forms does not make them transformative. They must be prophetic; they must use imagination to proclaim an alternative to the dominant culture or they will simply be continuing to perpetuate the oppression of Deaf people in the church."*

As an integrated church, it should be mandatory that inclusive terms are used during preaching in order to highlight that people who embody difference are not excluded in the space; the use of terms such as "hear our prayers" could be offensive and exclusionary to d/Deaf people as it implies that communication with God can only happen through audible means. Lewis (2007) suggests that inclusive terminology (e.g. "Receive our prayers") be used instead.

Furthermore, by making use of Biblical references which imply the need for healing in people with disabilities, such as the [in]famous, *"Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer and the mute tongue will shout for joy"* (Isaiah 35: 5-8)[59], CC displayed blatant disregard of people with disabilities and d/Deaf people's embracing of their identities, and a hegemonic approach to dealing with difference. It also shows a lack of understanding of people's identities and stifles all room for the presence and celebration of the diverse identities created by God. Finally, the use of this passage further perpetuates the manner in which people with disabilities are excluded even in spaces which pretend to be inclusive, non-judgemental, and safe.

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to provide insight into observations and findings during the ethnographic process of data collection. It has introduced and discussed findings at each site, and findings specific to certain sites. From comparing and contrasting the fieldnotes of each site I have concluded that although each site responds to difference in unique ways, ultimately each space aims to be inclusive and welcoming and to encourage people to pursue relationships with God, although this might not always be achieved successfully.

At both NLC sites, conservative belief systems (which some might consider to be religious indoctrination) often played a role in the church's resistance towards the acceptance of LGBTIQA+

[58] And other Sign Languages including SASL

[59] This was used in a service, making an example of the how God's people will be blessed and restored through divine intervention, as God seeks vengeance against the enemies of [His] people.

identities. CC was similar in their stance; although I have no evidence towards CC excluding and rejecting LGBTIQA+ people, they displayed tendencies of excluding minority groups through the use of exclusionary language. HPW had the complete opposite approach, where congregants had come from conservative Christian backgrounds but had turned their experiences of marginalisation to efforts to embrace all embodiments of difference and provide a safe place and space of worship for people from all walks of life.

Thus, it can be concluded that although marginalized groups tend to be less violent and more welcoming towards people who embody difference, hegemonic structures such as heteronormativity, White supremacy, and audism are still more powerful than, and oppressive towards LGBTIQA+ identity and embodiment.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the collected data, with the aim of analysing the data in relation to the theory in the Literature Review chapter. I will start by introducing the method of analysis (Thematic Content Analysis, discussed below) and the reason for selecting this method. I will then discuss each major theme and sub-theme that emerged during the process of analysis; the chapter will end with a brief summary of the findings that emerged after analysing the data.

Method of Analysis

In order to facilitate the discussion of the findings, I have chosen to use grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) by looking at themes which emerge from the interviews and field notes as a starting point. This is known as Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) (Anderson, 2007), and is useful in analysing ethnographic data and semi-structured interview data. A successful TCA will have no input from the researcher's assumptions[60], but will rely on trends and patterns which emerge from the data collected as the researcher transcribes interviews and makes notes from the field notes and other interactions with research participants. The reason I have chosen to use this method is to attempt to ensure that any conclusions established are not based on my own personal experience or influenced by my thoughts and expected outcomes, but instead based on the experiences of the research participants and the stories they have shared. However, if I do give input of my own experiences, it will be based on experiences that have come out of the research process, not on assumptions and expected outcomes.

Themes

From the three main categories of participants, grouped according to how they self-identify (d/Deaf and Christian mainstream[61], d/Deaf, Christian and LGBTIQA+, hearing, Christian and LGBTIQA+), I identified certain patterns within the narratives of the participants' experiences, some which were common across all participants in my study, and others which were specific to how they identify. For example, I found that there were intersections across the experiences of the d/Deaf participants, irrespective of sexual orientation, and similarly there were intersections across the experiences of LGBTIQA+ participants, whether d/Deaf or hearing; these intersections will be discussed in more detail below, and within these discussions I will also include the various ways that each theme manifested. Furthermore, I noticed that participants shared similar experiences with many of the stories I had read in various literature (Van Wyk, 2009; Germond and De Gruchy, 1997) about the marginalisation of difference in mainstream religious spaces. The similarities, differences and intersections in these experiences shaped the following main themes and sub-themes:

[60] It must be noted that a purely unbiased conclusion is difficult to guarantee, as the formulation of questions used during interviews is based on the interests of the researcher, to ensure that the collected data is in line with the research topic; hence, the researcher's search for specific knowledge will influence the answers given by participants during the research process.

[61] 'mainstream' in this context refers to all churches which encompass normative and conventional practises – heteronormative, able-bodied, homophobic, ableist church spaces where anything that is considered "different" is rejected, marginalized, and othered.

1. Violence

Under the theme of Violence, I found the subthemes *Church as a Safe Space vs. Church as a Violent Space,* and Covert Expressions of Violence in the Church on LGBTIQA+ Identity and d/Deaf Identity which covered *Structural Violence* and *Covert Exclusion of Identity Groups in Church Spaces. Violence* also included *Explicit Demonstrations of Violence in the Church on LGBTIQA+ Bodies and d/Deaf Bodies,* where instances of *Physical Violence* and *Sexual Violence* came up.

2. Reconciliation and Healing Through Religious Practise

The second theme covers various subthemes as well, including *Cognitive Dissonance and Identity Conflict* and how *Histories of Exclusion, Oppression and Violence Lead to Religious Practise of Inclusivity.* This led to the discussion of *LGBTIQA+ and Christian Identity Conflict Resolution,* and the final sub-theme, *Religious Practise of Inclusivity* discusses how each inclusivity was practised at each research site.

Under each theme and sub-theme, I will discuss the ways the participants experienced violence and oppression, how some participants came to find inclusive, safe spaces, and how others were not as fortunate. I will also discuss how LGBTIQA+ participants came to find resolution to the internal conflict caused by having constructed an identity that comprises being LGBTIQA+ and Christian, and not wanting to give up either aspect in favour of the other. As much as I will attempt to discuss these themes in their individual capacities, various forms of violence might occur simultaneously in certain situations and hence there will be many instances where the themes may overlap.
The following section introduces and discusses the first major theme, *Violence*, and this will be followed by a discussion on the second major theme, *Reconciliation and Healing Through Religious Practise*, which looks at participants' responses to Violence as discussed in theme one.

1. Violence

Introduction

This section begins with a definition on violence in its various forms, and then moves on to discuss how participants experienced violence in various church spaces.
Violence does not always take a physical form; violence often can be inflicted without the perpetrator or the receiver of the act being aware that a violent act has occurred. Thus, aside from physical violence (including sexual violence) we also find structural violence[62] and psychological (mental and emotional) violence. According to Galtung, "violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations." (1969:168). Violence also refers to "anything avoidable that impedes human self-realization, including misery or alienation" (Ardizzone, 2007: 3).

Violence[63] is a constant theme throughout the data I had collected, occurring at least once to each participant in one of its various manifestations. However, the one form that seemed to occur more

[62] Structural violence refers to systematic means of disadvantaging, disenabling or harming individuals, often by social structures. It is subtle, does not take physical form, and often there is no single person who can be named as responsible for enacting this violence. (Lewis, 2018)
[63] The types of violence that the participants encountered may not be the typical forms that we are used to, and thus may not be considered to be "acts of violence" by all who read this, but I am using Galtung (1969)

frequently was structural violence. Structural violence refers to “violence that results in harm but is not caused by an identifiable actor” (Vorobej, 2008: 84); it lacks accountability and conspires to constrain individual agency and is inflicted upon people whose social status constrains their opportunity of social progress (Farmer, 2004).

The nature of structural violence reflects the concept of hegemony, where ‘ruling groups’ often establish and maintain power or control over ‘less powerful’ or subordinate groups. The following quote from Donaldson supports this perspective, as it reiterates hegemony as a form of power which rejects non-normative ideas and performance: “Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear "natural" "ordinary," "normal."” (Donaldson, 1993: 645). Although Donaldson speaks specifically to hegemonic *masculinity*, where my research does not explicitly look at forms of violent masculinity, his work seems to be applicable to a broader idea of hegemony not only pertaining to masculinity, which are reflected in my findings, such as heteronormativity, homophobia and audism being a basis for hegemonic action, where majority groups (in my case, heterosexual and able-bodied people) perpetuate the oppression of minority groups (LGBTIQA+ and d/Deaf people).

This led me to the assumption that structural violence and hegemonic practise occurs in church spaces more regularly than might be expected, given that 9 out of 9 of the participants encountered this form of violence at some point during their church experiences. Pastors are aware of the current state of the economy, health, and other socio-political struggles that members of their congregations are not exempt from; they are also aware that people seek liberation from the constraints of socio-political issues (Mokhoathi and Rembe, 2017). They can use this knowledge to their advantage, using religious authority to manipulate congregants to internalize guilt about their identity, to question or completely alter their beliefs, and also for personal gain (financially, and sometimes, unfortunately, sexually) known as spiritual opportunism (Price, 2008). The justification for the enactment of violence usually occurs by preachers stating that what they say can be found in the Bible – however they fail to acknowledge that the portions they preach are taken out of context due to being read in isolation from the rest of the text (Vines, 2014). Moreover, it seems that the enactment of this violence is not specific to any particular identity (i.e. it was not only violence against LGBTIQA+ identity, but also towards female identity, HIV/Aids, d/Deaf identity), so each experience was more or less unique but still parallel to the others. This will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

It was also interesting to discover how some of the participants who had experienced structural violence and had been upset by it, had gone on to enact the same form of violence against others – this is known as horizontal or lateral violence (Fanon, 1963) - (specific examples will be discussed below), in some cases consciously but in most cases, this seemed to have occurred unconsciously (Van der Wolk, 1989). At the d/Deaf church, NLC2, for example, there were instances where the pastor would preach against the representation of womxn in roles of leadership both in church spaces and home spaces, stating that womxn must submit to their husbands, and men are meant to be leaders. Presumably this was a value upheld by the church as I attended a service one Sunday

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and Ardizzone (2007) definitions of violence throughout this section; this includes many instances of Vorobej’s (2008) structural violence.

when the head pastor was not there, and the man who preached in his place told the story of Jesus feeding 5000 people with only two fish and five loaves of bread (Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:44, Luke 9:16, John 6:1-14) and stated that only men were present at the event, as womxn and children were not permitted to be there. Such evidence does not exist in these scriptures; instead the scriptures do not give an exact amount of people, but rather state that of all the people present there, 5000 were men, but womxn and children were present too (Matthew 14:21, Mark 6:44; John 6:10). Hence, I took this as an unconscious re-enactment of structural violence as traditionally in church spaces men are in positions of leadership with womxn submitting to them and not being visible in spaces where men are, and he reinforced this belief with his interpretation of the aforementioned scriptures by erasing the presence of womxn and children entirely.

The unconscious enactment of structural violence is what makes accountability for the act quite difficult (Galtung, 1969). Many people reinforce ideologies and beliefs that they were taught growing up, which they may not realize is hurtful to others who may have different experiences to what they've had. This speaks, again, to the concept of hegemony (Gramsci, 1935) according to Donaldson (1993) above. In the above instance the preacher may not have deliberately erased womxn and children from his preaching of the scriptures, but perhaps his previous exposure to church spaces had unconsciously led him to interpret them in the way that he did. In some ways this perpetuation of oppression could be the re-enactment of past trauma (Van der Wolk, 1989), as Van der Wolk's study gives evidence to individuals who have a history of abuse or traumatic experiences often tending to repeat the actions of pain inflicted on them, to others. I draw the link between the re-enactment of [structural] violence and hegemony, as people previously marginalized who have since gained certain rites of power, often unconsciously using this power to exercise control over the institution.

However, for those who have been made aware of how their actions impact others, and they still continue to do, this becomes a problem where people who identify with what might be perceived as "deviant" or different to what is considered "normative" (such as LGBTIQA+ people and in our ableist society, d/Deaf people) begin to feel "othered", marginalized, and alone (Ladd, 2003) . Many people who have had this experience will feel uncomfortable returning to the space where they experienced the violence, and sometimes they may even avoid going to similar spaces, as they fear being triggered (retraumatized by the re-emergence of previous bad experiences) by a similar experience. For people who have experienced this marginalisation or othering, the idea of "safe spaces" – a concept which emerged in the late 20th Century womxn's movement (Kenney, 2001) – could become appealing. In order for a space to be considered *safe* "there must be absence of threat in the [space]. Absence of threat and care go hand in hand. Absence of threat encompasses not only physical safety but also safety from intimidation and stress". (Kinnaird, 1996: 405).

As such it is important to keep in mind that while the concept of safe spaces is undoubtedly well-intended with the intention being for all who encounter the space to feel no threats of violence or harm, it can be problematic. This is because it is almost impossible to create a space where every person who enters said space will feel completely safe (Fox, 2007). Different people have different experiences [of trauma] and are triggered by different things (Ehlers & Clark, 2000); what feels safe for one person might leave another feeling vulnerable or exposed (Brown, 2017). "A single physical space can be considered safe by and/or for some people, but unsafe for others of a different gender,

race, sexuality, class, age or other identity" (Roestone Collective, 2014: 1349); hence it is important to note while creating safe spaces, that these issues of social difference may occur, and will need to be recognized and acknowledged in order to be addressed.

1.1. Church as Safe Space vs. Violent Space

Church as a safe space refers to the notion of the church being a place where all are welcomed as they are, and one does not experience "othering" or rejection. It also refers to church being a space where one would not expect to encounter physical and sexual abuse, and especially not at the hand of a church leader or a pastor. The opposite of this is of course the church as a violent space where people have the experience of feeling vulnerable, different, sinful, wrong or bad. This violence is not always explicit and mostly not even physical except in some cases of non-consensual laying of hands, and, previously rare but lately becoming notorious – aggressive behaviour towards congregation such as hitting members or forcing members to perform dangerous acts, such as the various cases of South African pastors and making members eat grass in 2014, drink petrol and eat snakes in 2015, be sprayed with "Doom" insecticide in 2016, drink engine cleaner and "Rattex" rat poison mixed with water in 2017 in order to be healed or experience "financial breakthrough" (Jamal, 2017; eNCA 2015; Dayimani, 2016). Reports (The Citizen, 2016) also show pastors forcing people to lie on the ground and walking or driving over them. Some have died, some are afraid to speak out, and others continue to go back as they believe they are being anointed and witnessing God's power. Over the last few months evidence of sexual abuse in the church has been surfacing, with the Catholic Church being accused of numerous counts paedophilia (BBC News, 2018), as well as the case of Timothy Omotoso, a Nigerian pastor, who has been sexually abusing young girls in his church for well over a decade. Thirty young womxn have recently spoken about their sexual abuse at the hands of Timothy Omotoso as his court case has been taking place in the Port Elizabeth High Court (October 2018). From the research I gathered, I came to understand that participants often experienced church as a violent space, contrary to a supposed biblical understanding of church as a safe space where everyone is welcome, and nobody will be rejected based on their appearance or identity. People recounted experiences of being marginalized or excluded from church services in an apparently non-invasive way, that is, the exclusion occurred so subtly that they only realized it because they had been personally affected by it. The following extract from *Aliens in the household of God* (Germond & de Gruchy, 1997), which refers specifically to how the heteronormative society at large continuously condemns homosexuality, highlights the problem of normative structures and concepts as they perpetuate a structurally violent form of hegemony, and ongoing methods for the exclusion of non-conforming/non-normative groups:

> *"For heterosexuals there might be a 'homosexual problem' but this assumes that heterosexual people have a monopoly of what is normal. Once this is subjected to critique and rejected, we can acknowledge that for homosexual people there is a heterosexual problem, that this experience of heterosexism and homophobia is real and is objective" (De Gruchy, 1997:3).*

Even though the above statement makes very specific reference to normalizing heterosexuality, the idea can be applied generally to the out-grouping or othering of non-normative groups, as it essentially states that problematizing a certain group of people is itself a problem, as it is not possible to say that a group of people is a problem without making the assumption that there is another group that is normal, or the 'status-quo' by which other groups are measured.

By this it can be said similarly to homosexuals being deemed 'abnormal' for not conforming to heteronormative practise, d/Deaf people are also viewed as 'abnormal' for having the inability to hear, as hearing is a normative state of being, according to the hearing majority. The lack of access to information for d/Deaf people in said normative church spaces reiterates the marginalisation of the d/Deaf community based on audism and ableism, and the tendency to want to 'heal' d/Deaf people from their 'affliction'. For millennia, dating back to the New Testament, being d/Deaf has been considered a disability, and according to Matthews and Clark (1999), the 'disability' was seen as "moral failing on the part of the sufferer" (1999: 240). The same connotations might still apply in present times, with preacher believing that in order to be holy and acceptable to God, an individual ought to fit normative standards; some might not say it explicitly, but the implication remains, by way of the choices of scriptures preached and by way of patronizing or chastising those who deviate from normative standards.

The effects of these implied and covert expressions of marginalisation presented themselves to me during the research process, in the way participants had either broken away from mainstream spaces and created new, inclusive alternative spaces where they would feel safe and comfortable, or participants had completely left all church spaces and decided to pursue personal, one-on-one relationships with God. The following section will discuss how covert expressions of violence occurred in various church spaces, to participants across all identity groups, as a result of embodying a form of 'difference' which deviates from normative systems or practises that people in church spaces may expect or may be familiar with. It will also elaborate on how forms of violence influenced participants' aforementioned decisions to remain in mainstream religious spaces, to create alternative inclusive religious spaces or to refrain from entering religious spaces and instead praying and reading the Bible in their own private capacity.

1.2. Covert expressions of violence in the church on LGBTIQA+ bodies and d/Deaf bodies

For most Christian people who consider themselves "normal" and "whole" (e.g. heteronormative and hearing), the church is generally thought of as a safe space, given that it is meant to be a space of no judgement as the Bible states that should you judge another, God will judge you in the same manner, and with equal measure (Matthew 7:1-2) and Jesus told His disciples in Luke 6:37, "Judge not, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven"; however, many people do not experience the feeling of safety in the church space, because judgment occurs most often in churches, with preachers condemning people for a multitude of reasons, which leaves people feeling unwelcome, rejected and sometimes fearful (Jovanović, 2013). A preacher's preaching of a 'word given by God' is indeed a perpetuation of structural violence, as this 'approach' takes the onus and responsibility off of them when people in the congregation are left hurt or offended by the sermon. Of course, it is difficult to challenge this approach because we as Christians are also taught that to question God's word is to question Their[64] authority, and that those who preach the Word are Their servants and not to be questioned (Cole, 2007).

[64] There is a lack of evidence of God having a gender (although for most Christians God is considered to be male); I will thus use They/Them pronouns (with initial capitals) to refer to God.

Structural violence

All participants experienced structural violence to varying degrees in the various mainstream religious spaces they found themselves in. Some d/Deaf participants recounted to me their experiences of not having access to interpreters in hearing churches and that they had trouble following sermons in hearing churches, as the pastors would talk too fast for them to lipread. Johan, a d/Deaf gay man from Soweto who has struggled consistently to find a church where he would feel comfortable, and is currently not attending church due to the a number of negative experiences in church spaces (examples will be given throughout the chapter), told me about his experience in a hearing LGBTIQA+ affirming church which he sometimes attended, and how on one occasion he attended the memorial of a member who had passed away:

> *"There was no interpreter, it was very frustrating, but I said its fine, I know Patrick is always trying to help me out by interpreting." (Johan, d/Deaf gay black activist from Soweto.)*

Patrick was the pastor of the hearing church at the time, who invited Johan to visit the church as he knew that religion was important to Johan. He attempted to learn SASL so that Johan would feel more at ease; however, on the day of the memorial Patrick could not be there, hence Johan felt frustrated as he was once again in a vulnerable situation of being unable to understand what was being said.

LGBTIQA+ participants spoke about the times they had heard preaching about homosexuality being a sin. During an interview with a womxn named Maggie, she told me about her experience of marginalisation in the church (Word of Faith Bible Church (WOFBC)) she attended before she finally found her home at the LGBTIQA+ affirming church in Soweto, called Highest Praise and Worship (HPW). Maggie lives in Soweto and identifies as a womxn who loves womxn. She is also HIV-positive and does a lot of work in raising awareness about HIV/Aids, how to live with the disease and still have a fulfilled life. Maggie felt covertly marginalized on the basis of being a womxn who loves womxn, and overtly marginalized for her HIV status (extract further below, pg. 78).

> *"Previously, that's the reason I left the church. It's a sin, It's a no-go zone. So, for me I had to suppress who I am, for a long time. Because when I was ready to accept that I'm not straight, the teaching at the church was opposing it." – (Maggie, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn, and leader at HPW, Soweto)*

Structural violence can be categorized as a form of mental and emotional abuse against people, since it does not take physical form (Galtung, 1969) but instead causes an impact on how one thinks and what one believes; structural violence tends to be hegemonic, as explained above ('ruling groups' establish and maintain power or control over 'less powerful' or subordinate groups), and religious people tend to heed to pastors or priests who they believe to hold religious authority, thus making religious people probable victims of structural violence through hegemonic religious practise (Gilligan, 1997; Lee, 2016). While all churches might not overtly be inflicting violence upon the people who visit their spaces regularly, the messages they preach, and the things they say or don't say can often affect the way people think about or perceive themselves.

During interviews with participants, I noticed that people who attended NLC2, who had previously attended hearing churches, had a tendency to continue excluding people from attending certain events, even though they had experience on how it felt to be excluded. My perspective on the exclusion of hearing people from certain activities is that the exclusion was based on the need to create a safe space for d/Deaf people to grow in their Christian identities without the presence or influence of hearing people. Paul, a d/Deaf man who is one of the leaders at NLC2, told me about some of the activities held for d/Deaf Christians over the years to help them develop a better understanding of Christianity:

> *"We ran many workshops, seminars, workshops, conferences, some were to address short term issues, other were for long term issues. For example, we had a marriage seminar for 1-2 days; a finance seminar, training workshops, hands-on training for various things, I've been involved in many things […] We've done research and conducted training sessions to reach out to the d/Deaf community; training in leadership, training on projects, training on marriage, training on the self, and many other things, and always remembering to involve Biblical knowledge. I once led a week-long workshop and training conference with d/Deaf and hearing people, but separately, and we got good knowledge and information from that!" – (Paul, a White d/Deaf man and leader at NLC2)*

Here Paul has stated that the main aim of the workshops he is involved in is to empower the d/Deaf community without input from hearing people; even when hearing people were invited to a workshop, d/Deaf and hearing people were separated, though he acknowledges that both groups contributed usefully to the event.

NLC2 participants also stated that they were not accepting of LGBTIQA+ identities in their church; although they would not blatantly exclude or turn away a LGBTIQA+ person as we are all sinners in God's eyes according to Romans 3:10, they would insist that remaining in the church would depend on committing to seeking help and rejecting a LGBTIQA+ identity:

> *"How the deaf church should deal with the sensitive situation when the homosexuals attend the church has always been a thorny issue. […] We have at present two lesbians in the congregation and they need to be shown acceptance and love from the other congregants. If they are genuine in desire to seek help with their problem, they are treated with sensitivity and compassion. We were once invited to a lesbian wedding last year. After seeking advice from the elders of the other large church where my son is one of the elders we decided to attend the wedding. […] the head pastor (a straight guy himself) has a gay relative and had accepted the invitation to a gay wedding. […] though he is opposed to homosexuality, he needs to show love to that gay relative by his presence at the wedding. However, should the gay person ask the pastor to pray blessing upon the couple, he would refuse to do so as it is not supported by Scripture. In my experience of ministry, I have encountered the situation several times. […]. A few years ago, a gay deaf person was transferred from a church of another city to join the deaf church. We welcomed him. A few months later he queried about homosexuality and whether it was an acceptable way of life in a Christian church. I had no alternative but to be honest with him by quoting the relevant verses. Shortly afterwards he left the deaf church to join the other gay church. Sometimes thankfully the other gay persons accepted the admonition and remain in the church. Sadly the others left to join the other gay church or go back to the worldly way. We need to respect their rights to refuse the offer of support from the church and choose to continue their gay lifestyle." – (Wesley, White d/Deaf Head Pastor at NLC)*

However, at HPW, there were consistent instances where the reverend and other leaders insisted that HPW is an inclusive space, open to all people, irrespective of race, gender, orientation or language, because, as Noreen said, we are all God's children, made perfectly in His image, the way he wanted us to be:

> *"[…] but God, who has created all of us, He knew that meant finding a way of [...] making us feel that we are all important. And we are all equal, no-one is better than the other […], when the Bible says God created all of us in His own image, […] I also end up being created in that image, and you, in our own different ways in that kind of image. So no-one knows exactly what the image of God is all about so […] we might be different but we're all from that image." – (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).*

Structural violence is not the only form of violence found in churches. Some people are unfortunate to experience sexual violence and physical violence as well. Physical and sexual violence will be discussed later in this section.

During my field work, and particularly on my visits to the churches, I got a glimpse of how structural violence played out in these spaces. Below are excerpts from conversations with people but also from the sermons that were preached and the general doctrines of the various churches which showcase how these instances of violence took place. Here in the extract from my interview with Maggie (referenced above, pg. 76) from HPW, where she talks about how she constantly felt marginalized and like a burden in her old church (WOFBC), where she went before she found HPW; she had tried for very long to create awareness about HIV/AIDS and healthy ways to live with the disease but she was constantly put down because the pastor at the time did not feel it was an important matter to discuss in church:

> *"Yes, it's because of that and also they had a stigma against HIV. So as a person living with HIV and also working in the HIV field where I believe that the churches are not doing much, I believe that there's a big role to be played by the church… and I could see that it's not their thing, people who have got HIV are seen as a problem... When a person is sick [the pastor] will call me, "Got a call from so-and-so, she's sick, go there. Go and do what? Assist the person to the hospital, and when the person is at the hospital, on Sunday when he announces, he'll always say, you know we're blessed in this church, we've got nurses we've got doctors, so this person is at [Baragwanath hospital], and sister so-and-so - he'll count the professional nurses, but the person who was there [to help]... the person is not [mentioned]. So for me it was homophobia and anti-HIV." – (Maggie, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn, and leader at HPW, Soweto)*

This excerpt shows how the pastor of this church has stigmatized HIV/Aids to the extent that it is a completely irrelevant issue until the pastor needs the assistance of an otherwise-marginalized member living with HIV/Aids – one can assume that the pastor himself has little knowledge in dealing with HIV/Aids, and hence needed someone with more knowledge of the disease to assist those who are newly diagnosed. Furthermore, the person who assisted (Maggie) is then further marginalized by not being acknowledged for their assistance, while others with bigger titles (doctors, nurses) are mentioned even though they didn't provide the core assistance and counsel that Maggie did. However, Maggie does mention, seen in the excerpt below, that she received a sense of spiritual

healing from this church, from a previous pastor who appears to have been more compassionate and empathetic; he has since left the church:

> *"...I believe I'm cured from HIV, I got spiritual healing - not the physical, it's still there, but on the inside, everything, I'm ok, and I got it from that church because when I went there I was invited by my cousin after I disclosed to her, and it was a revival and they prayed and called an alter-call for people who are sick. I went to the alter-call. And I don't know what was happening, they asked me what's wrong and it was still early, I was scared, I told the pastor, I was like, "Pray for me", and confidentially, he prayed in tongues, after that he was like, "Please after church can you see me". And the counselling that I got, I got to understand the types of healing. So for me it was like if I didn't go to that church I wouldn't be where I am spiritually, the forgiving and all that. And going forward I thought they would continue with that. Unfortunately, that pastor left and it didn't continue." – (Maggie, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn, and leader at HPW, Soweto)*

Some people might not regard the above as an act of violence, but if we follow Ardizzone ("anything avoidable that impedes human self-realization, including misery or alienation" (2007: 3)) definition, we see that Maggie experienced violence in the following ways: the previous pastor who had prayed for her and provided her with counselling had made her feel comfortable and safe in that church. After he left and the new pastor arrived, Maggie's experience changed completely to one where her ideas for raising HIV awareness were shut down, and where she was forced to suppress her identity as a womxn who loves womxn because that was not condoned in that church space; hence she was not allowed to be her true self, which impeded her self-realization and prolonged her journey to self-acceptance as a womxn who loves womxn; her efforts around HIV awareness campaigns were not acknowledged, and she was made to feel that being HIV+ is shameful. Ultimately this caused misery and resulted in her leaving that church.

Other participants felt similar feelings of alienation in the church space, either on the basis of being d/Deaf, or being LGBTIQA+. Danelle is a d/Deaf lesbian from Eldorado Park, who studied at eDeaf and who has been a friend of mine since her participation as a case study in my Honours research project. Her experience of churches, similar to Maggie's church experience, was, but this based on the fact that she is the only d/Deaf person in her family and there were no interpreters for her at the Catholic church her family attended. She attended services when she was younger, but it wasn't beneficial to her at all, as she could never understand what was being said:

> *"My first church experience was a hearing church. The priest was preaching, I was watching but I couldn't understand anything. I didn't know what he was saying, when he was preaching, and praying, I had no idea what he was talking about. I felt very uncomfortable, so I left." - (Danelle, a d/Deaf Black lesbian from Eldorado Park).*

Danelle currently does not attend any church, although after her experience at her family church, she did try to attend other churches as well – however, she always experienced a sense of marginalisation based as a result of her lesbian or d/Deaf identity:

> *"I went to a Jehovah's Witness (JW) church. They had an interpreter there! I went there and saw what they had to say. JWs have MANY rules! There was no acceptance for gays and lesbians there. They would not accept me. I figured that I would never feel at home there. So I went to a Deaf church. I saw that there was a variety of race groups there. They also did not accept gays and lesbians. So I stopped going to church, but I still read*

my Bible on my own and have a relationship with God, I just didn't go to church because I didn't feel a connection to any of the churches I went to." – (Danelle, a d/Deaf Black lesbian from Eldorado Park).

Some other d/Deaf church-goers had an experience where, although the hearing church they had partnered with had made an attempt to be inclusive, it was still difficult for the d/Deaf community to fit in seamlessly. Below is an excerpt from an interview with a pastor of the New Life Church, a d/Deaf church which uses SASL as the medium but is open to having hearing people as part of the congregation if they are able to follow sermons in SASL:

"I tried to work with a hearing church [which] had an interpreter, to see if it would be good for us to work as a team, preaching to the Deaf and hearing, or if we should have a Deaf church of our own. We went to the mixed church; the sermons were good, the interpreter was good, but the sermons went quickly, the Deaf people could not follow and did not feel comfortable. So we left and formed our own Deaf church a few years later." – (Wesley, White d/Deaf Head Pastor at NLC).

During Wesley's journey to becoming the head pastor of NLC, the churches he was involved in transitioned from an all d/Deaf church to become an integrated church under the instruction of his mentor; a few years later, after many challenges with the hearing leadership of the integrated church, NLC was formed. The previous chapter on Ethnography and the history of the research sites explains these transitions in a detailed manner. Without dismissing the experiences of some of the participants as trivial or insignificant, I think it is important to remember that not all churches and not all preachers feel that the embodiment of difference is a bad thing – in fact for some, their attitudes towards difference can make one feel welcome and extremely safe in a religious space.

On my first visit to NLC1, after I introduced myself as a hearing person studying SASL at Wits University and explained that my signing abilities were not very efficient, everybody was welcoming and made me feel comfortable; they also slowed their signing speed when communicating with me to accommodate for my non-fluence. I had a similar experience of being welcomed and treated warmly at NLC2.

In the LGBTIQA+ church space, I experienced many sermons preached which affirmed the validity of LGBTIQA+ people in God's eyes. I recall one instance which I thought would be negative but ended up being a positive experience for me. A gay male preacher, Pastor Cedric, started preaching about LGBTIQA+ people and outlining stereotypical behaviours particularly of effeminate gay men. He used 'out-group' language which appeared to exclude him from the people he was describing, which could have been read by an outsider as him disparaging the LGBTIQA+ community. His language appeared to be a performance of his comfortability in the space, and members of the congregation laughed at some things he said. He also went on to mention how the existence of disability can be disputed because all beings have different abilities, no body is perfect, every body has faults but God cares about the Spirit inside the body, and our attitude towards our own identities will affect the quality of the Spirit:

"[Pastor Cedric] somehow manages to introduce the 'Factory Fault' theme again (I had lost track and don't remember how it got introduced). He talks about "You gays" as if he is not part of the community – because I know he is, I don't get offended… He sort of made it seem ok when he mentioned our attitudes towards our sexual orientation and for

some reason also mentioned how parents of people with disabilities' attitudes and the attitudes of the people themselves determines a lot about their lives, where some would say that despite the body not being perfect (which nobody's is, disabled or not), the Spirit is whole and that is what matters because our physical bodies are temporary vessels to hold our souls while we are on Earth." – Extract from field notes journal, 2017.

The above is the most significant memory I have of Dr Cedric, although I also do remember the very first time I saw him, feeling taken aback by the presence of men in this church space where I had previously felt extremely safe because there were no cis-gender men present:

"At the end of it we sat down and announcements were given at which point I learned that my dear Rev Noreen was out of the country for a short while. Even though this made me feel slightly disappointed and stressed that I would spend the entire service feeling uncomfortable, I still felt better than I usually would in a strange space given that there were only womxn and lesbians all around me. A lesson to never count your chickens before they hatch: Shortly after announcements something weird happened – a man walked in with a small entourage of men… Men? In this lesbian church of mine?? One of the men sat next to me – short, bald head, wearing jeans and a t-shirt and sandals, Bible in hand. A few minutes later another 2 men walked in. And later, a taaaallll man with a bald head save for a tiny patch on the very front of his head in line with the tiny little soul patch resting just beneath his bottom lip" – Extract from field notes journal, 2016

My fear might seem irrational based on this – me being in an LGBTIQA+ space, a church space, which should be safe and secure, but the reality is that the safety of womxn and especially queer womxn, is always compromised in the presence of men, as according to Msibi, "Homophobia and sexism are, therefore, connected; it is often men who portray violent forms of homophobic expressions." (2009: 519); furthermore, Kimmel and Mahler (2003) state the following:

"...Homophobia – the terror that others will see one as gay, as a failed man – underlies a significant amount of men's behaviour, including their relationship with other men, women and violence. One could say homophobia is the hate that makes men straight." Kimmel and Mahler, 2003: 1446.

The man with the jeans, t-shirt and sandals later stood up to preach, and that is when I found out that he is Dr Cedric, and is in fact a gay man and a preacher, which made it slightly less stressful and also made me realize why he was there - to bring the Word in Reverend Noreen's absence. The other men were presumably part of his entourage, as I saw them in two other services which I attended when Dr Cedric preached, both times just walking behind him, carrying his bible, bringing him a glass of water, moving his car when he asked, and generally just being systems of support to him. I had previously only seen feminine bodies as members and leaders in the church, and so to see HPW's inclusion of male gay preachers in the church, realized that the space truly was inclusive. Moreover, the presence of men whose identity was ambiguous - as they looked heteronormatively masculine, dressed in formal suits with shirts, ties and formal shoes - iterated the inclusivity of the space; heterosexual men are known to be the main perpetrators of violence against woman and LGBTIQA+ bodies (Msibi, 2009), and yet the presence of a group of five heteronormative-presenting male-bodied people in the space did not cause any obvious anxiety amongst the congregants.

Covert Exclusion of Identity Groups in Church Spaces

Religious spaces are capable of excluding people, based on how they identify, in a passive and covert way; that is, by not actively including a particular group of people it is generally assumed that this group is organically accepted, but this is not always the case. For example, members of the d/Deaf community may attend a hearing church where there are no interpreting services available; in this case the church has not actively stated that d/Deaf people are not welcome but by default the d/Deaf visitors will not feel completely comfortable. Sometimes this covert exclusion reveals itself in the messages that are delivered from the pulpit, which I experienced during a service at Church B (hearing church with d/Deaf participants and SASL interpreters) where the pastor preached from the book of Isaiah,

> *4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." 5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. (Isaiah 35:5, New International Version)*

This particular choice of scripture made me feel uncomfortable as it covertly implied that to be d/Deaf is to have a problem (*deaf ears*) that needs to be fixed (*unstopped*) by means of *divine retribution*, and only then can salvation will take place. Essentially it is saying that d/Deaf bodies are imperfect, and therefore not worthy of God's unconditional love.

Modern-day Christians more often than not fail to acknowledge that we are now living in a completely different context to the times the Bible was written; given the context of this particular scripture, at a time when being disabled was even more stigmatized than in recent times, where there is no evidence of the recognition of a d/Deaf community existing, having its own language and culture, and d/Deaf people self-identifying with the concept of Deafhood (Ladd, 2003), it would make sense that this sort of body restorative healing would be desired. However, in our current society, Deaf Pride and Deaf Culture do exist, and in a church where a Deaf community exists, where the services are even interpreted into SASL for this Deaf Community, it was quite shocking to experience this sort of preaching which propagates the stigmatization of d/Deaf people. Unfortunately, as the front two rows were reserved for d/Deaf church members only, and because the next few rows were already filled up, I was not seated close enough to the d/Deaf community to get a sense of their reaction towards this statement since I could only see the backs of their heads and they were quite focused on the interpreter, from what I could see. The setup of the space also speaks to the attitude of the church towards the level of inclusion of d/Deaf bodies in the church, given that the straight rows of chairs were not ideal for d/Deaf people to have unrestricted access to the interpreter; this is related to Rosen's (2017) concept of Deaf sensescapes (see *Ethnography*). These subtle manners of exclusion all exemplify how structural violence is expressed in church spaces. The following section discusses more overtly expressed violence against marginalized groups in the church space.

1.3. Explicit Demonstrations of Violence in the Church on d/Deaf Bodies and LGBTIQA+ Bodies

The previous section has attempted to provide evidence for the presence of non-physical violence inflicted on people who embody difference and who enter religious spaces performing this embodiment. Because we currently have a majority of hetero-normative, hearing (i.e. mainstream)

churches in South Africa and by extension in Johannesburg as well, there are limited religious spaces where LGBTIQA+ and d/Deaf people are truly free to embody their differences without being stigmatized and marginalized; however, while speaking to the participants I noticed that although both d/Deaf people and LGBTIQA+ people experienced marginalisation in various religious spaces, it seemed harder for LGBTIQA+ people to find their place in these spaces. All the LGBTIQA+ people had left the church for some portion of their lives, some having gone back eventually, but others still say that they are yet to feel comfortable enough to even attempt to find a church where they feel welcome and comfortable. The participants who had managed to find place in a church space were the hearing LGBTIQA+ people, HPW in Soweto, while the d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ participants all currently do not attend church as the churches they have attended which have SASL interpreters or d/Deaf preachers are quite homophobic, and the LGBTIQA+ churches they have attended have unfortunately not had interpreters available during the services.

Timothy, a d/Deaf gay man from Soweto says that God is important to him but that he cannot afford to go to church as he would have to pay for an interpreter to accompany him:

> *"It was a mixed church. Do you know the church in Lens? They never used to have an interpreter because they didn't have funding for that, so if you were d/Deaf you had to bring your own interpreter. You know Preston? He was the interpreter at the meeting we went to, you do know him. He used to go with me." – (Timothy, a Black d/Deaf gay man from Soweto)*

He has also stopped going to church because of how people judged him for openly and unashamedly embracing the gay aspect of his identity:

> *"Ok, going to church, I used to go to church, it was d/Deaf and hearing mixed, but I left because there was a lot of focus a lot of attention on me and say that I need prayer because they could see that I'm gay. I told the pastor that I can't change from being gay […]" – (Timothy, a Black d/Deaf gay man from Soweto)*

Physical violence

During my interviews I found that acts of physical violence that were spoken about openly were experienced by LGBTIQA+ people, both d/Deaf and hearing. These experiences of physical violence exerted on them, in the church, were justified as necessary for the exorcising or driving out of so-called demons which were causing them to have sexual attraction to people of the same sex. Some of the experiences were of a sexual nature, which will be discussed in the following section; this section will look at the experiences of physical assault on the bodies of LGBTIQA+ people in church spaces, often inflicted by members of church leadership. Below are examples I received during interviews, of experiences by members of various churches:
Noreen, who is a leader at HPW in Soweto, and who identifies as a womxn who loves womxn, speaks below about her experience of physical abuse in the church she grew up in, after being outed to the church leadership. In the excerpt below, she is telling me about how the church leadership would violently lay hands on her and her partner who had been outed, while praying for them.

> *"N: Ok. I think eventually when this prayer business was going on because every Friday they would come to our house and we'd have an all-night prayer -*

J: Specifically for this?

N: Yes, for us […] A serious prayer was needed to sort out... So every day they'll come and they'll stay in - there was this other family who was attending church, so they'll come around 8o'clock and do their own prayers or whatever, then 9o'clock this business starts. So this business, the first week it was ok, then the second week, I think what was really irritating was the fact that now you get beaten up, and then you're screaming there, you're feeling the pain and then you are told that this demon is talking, so they needed to do things to you. So I think in that moment, at some point, then we were just tired because the following day your body is sore, you have bruises, you keep on asking yourself, why am I putting myself through this because the more they pray, the more this thing is not getting anywhere, it gets very, I feel like I love womxn so why am I putting myself into this..." - (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).

Noreen's experiences were of very obvious physical violence which left her feeling very unwell in her body and also in her spirit. Further in the interview after she stated how she wondered why she put herself through this pain, she went on to say that to avoid any further violence against her, physically and otherwise, she decided to lie about her feelings:

"...and then I then decided, I'm tired, I can't be living like this. My body is sore, and emotionally, it's emotionally, physically, psychologically, this thing is taxing. So if prayer works then it needs to work, without all this that I don't want. So we then lied, we said no we're fine, we don't feel the devil anymore, we wanted to come back to church..." – (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).

Danelle, a d/Deaf lesbian from Eldorado Park, also had an experience of hands being laid on her for the sake of 'healing' from being d/Deaf. I included an extract from an unplanned and unprompted conversation with Danelle which occurred one day when we were both attending a d/Deaf poetry workshop at Wits. During our break she started talking to me about school experiences, attending Mass at school and also about attending church with her family:

"She went to church with her mother. The way Danelle described the church makes it sound like a charismatic new-age church although she says they are Catholic. In this church, they called people to the front to pray for them and people would fall over or faint and cry etc. etc., so she went to the church with her mother and during the service they called people up for prayers and Danelle was also called. She didn't want to go but her mother forced her. When she got to the front the priest told her he will pray for her to be healed from deafness. He laid hands on her and prayed; people stood behind her to catch her if she falls. As much as they prayed she never fell. They wanted to "remove the demons" from inside her. She says they put Holy water on her and people kept laying hands on her and it went on and on and on. When they stopped the priest asked her if she can hear. She says even though she could lip read she pretended not to understand and just looked at him." – extract from fieldnotes journal, 2017

Danelle's family went even deeper at some point by bringing someone to her home to pray for her without her consent:

"They might think that because I'm Deaf and lesbian, I have a sickness and I need to go to church or to wash. One day my aunt came to visit, she came with a prophet, to pray for

me so that I would no longer be Deaf, and lesbian feelings would be gone. I said its fine, they can pray. So they prayed and prayed for the Deafness to go away. They prayed for hours, the entire family got involved in the praying. Then the prophet said, ok you're a girl now, you're H-E-A-L. I was like, what… I'm still Deaf, still lesbian. Nothing has changed. They thought something is wrong with me, so they prayed again… Same story. And in the end, I was still the same. So my family thought I'm not a normal child. Anyway, time went on. So this happened since the time I was 21, until now – I'm now 28 years old, and this has happened over the years."- (Danelle, a d/Deaf Black lesbian from Eldorado Park).

Although there has been some acceptance by some members of her family over the years since she first came out, Danelle still faces some instances of her family telling her there is something wrong with her or that she needs healing. I recall one time shortly after Danelle's favourite aunt had passed away, the only one who never questioned or tried to change her after finding out about her orientation and continued to love and support Danelle, I had been visiting to offer my condolences to the family, and another family friend came to visit, the following event occurred:

"A middle-aged womxn with slightly wrinkled brown skin and pitch-black dyed hair, wearing a pastel yellow polar-fleece zip-up jersey and black pants, walked into the lounge. She has a light, but clearly visible moustache, and her tiny teeth make it look as if she has no teeth at all. In fact, everything about her is quite small – she is short, with tiny hands and small, narrow eyes. I notice her hands because she keeps using absurd gestures when talking to Danelle. I greet her and introduce myself as Danelle's friend, and because Danelle is sitting opposite me I sign simultaneously in English structure as I talk. She answers me in Afrikaans, talking in a normal voice at regular volume for the distance we're standing apart. However, when she turns to talk to Danelle, she raises her voice and talks slightly slower while, as I said, gesturing with her tiny hands. I found this absurd as I was always aware of Danelle's mom and brother communicating with her using regular speech while Danelle would lip-read. Danelle's response to the womxn's actions was to just respond to her by speaking, in the same way she would with her mother and brother…" – extract from fieldnotes journal, 2017

The womxn's actions were a real-life caricature of the way the hearing community attempts to communicate with d/Deaf people and also indicated some of the ways in which other members of Danelle's family communicate with her, which she later confirmed with me. Danelle's family's reluctant to accept her identity as d/Deaf and lesbian can be defined as an enactment of violence against Danelle in the form of audism (Humphries, 1975; Lane, 1999) and homophobia.

Homophobia is played out by her family's consistent attempts at 'religious intervention' to 'cure' Danelle of her lesbianism; historically homosexuality had been classified as a mental illness (Green, 1972), and Danelle's family appears to perpetuate the old ideas surrounding LGBTIQA+ identities by continuously treating Danelle's lesbian identity as something wrong that needs to be changed, fixed or healed.

Despite Danelle being d/Deaf for most of her life, her family has not learned SASL and continue to prioritize spoken language over SASL, forcing her to lip-read, while they talk loudly and slowly to her with exaggerated mouthing; this is known as oralism (Higgins, 1990). This rejection of SASL and d/Deaf identity is an example of viewing deafness from a medical perspective, which views d/Deaf individuals as disabled, and advocates for the use of cochlear implants and hearing aids to enable

d/Deaf people to integrate into a hearing world by adopting hearing culture (Butler, Skelton & Valentine, 2001; Lane, 1997).

Sexual violence

Mokhoathi and Rembe (2017) state that some South African churches sometimes abuse and violate human rights because of religious liberties within the Constitution (1996). They state that religious leaders might overstep the bounds of the Constitution, validating this abuse of power as 'religious authority'. It is becoming more common practise, or rather, more widely spoken about in recent times, that the abuse of power in the church manifests as sexual harassment, sexual molestation, paedophilia, and rape (Mokhoathi and Rembe, 2017; Terry, 2008; McLaughlin, 1994, Germond and De Gruchy, 1997; Van Wyk, 2009). All of these are forms of sexual violence.

Sexual abuse in the church space should not come as a surprise to any of us; reports of children being molested by priests and pastors forcing congregants to perform oral sex on them during services in order to "receive their healing" through his "holy milk" (Kantiola, 2016) is something that has made headlines in the news on a number of occasions. Not only do these acts incite deep trauma in the victims, it is also a health hazard as it exposes victims to the risk of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It also speaks to how religious people can be manipulated and exploited by people who possess religious authority, because of their 'blind' faith (Mokhoathi and Rembe (2017); for example, the pastor who made his congregants drink petrol, saying it was for their healing, was reported (Christian Post, 26 September 2014) to have said to his congregants:

> *"'Do you believe in the Father?' Daniel asked the congregation. 'Can you imagine not being able to have a baby and you come here, drink petrol and tomorrow the doctor says, 'no more barrenness, you are pregnant because you drank petrol'" (Christian Post, 26 September 2014).*

By posing the question, "Do you believe in the Father?", this pastor was able to manipulate his congregation by alluding to the fact that to not believe they would be healed with this petrol, they are not believing in God's divine power. A pastor or priest might justify their abusive actions and attempt to remove the responsibility of their actions by stating that they do things as God leads them, and they are fulfilling God's will, as Cheryl Zondi stated during her time on the witness stand during the Timothy Omotoso trial (2018).

Given the high statistics (South African Police Services, 2018) of sexual assault in South Africa, where over the last ten years the minimum number of reported cases has been 49,660 in 2016/17, and currently, in 2017/18 there have been 50,108 of which 40,035 have been reports of rape, it becomes expected that some of these instances of abuse would occur not only domestically or in the workplace, which are the cases that are mostly reported, but also in the church space. However, this does not make it in any way acceptable or less disturbing than it is.
Recently, reports (Monama, 2018; Romero and Nunez, 2018; Beck and Harlan, 2018; Reuters, 2018) about sexual abuse of children by clergy in the Catholic church have been surfacing, however the allegations are not new; plenty of the accused have been covering up their actions and many victims have feared speaking out for decades. Terry (2008) states, in a research paper regarding child sexual abuse in the Catholic church between 1950 and 2002, that 99% of the catholic churches contacted

for the study responded to offer information, and of that 99%, 4392 priests had allegations of abuse and 10 667 victims made allegations. McLaughlin (1994) in a study about the effect of sexual abuse by clergy on church members shows that amongst Catholics and Protestants, church attendance decreased after victims had experienced abuse.

The outcry about abuse in the church in places such Chile and the US has had a ripple effect internationally for people to speak out about sexual abuse in their own religious spaces. In South Africa we are currently witnessing the Cheryl Zondi vs. Timothy Omotoso trial, mentioned above, as well as the recent defrocking of three Catholic priests who have been accused after 35 cases of sexual abuse have been reported. While many pastors and priests manage to escape the law, particularly in South Africa where the Constitution may exempt religious institutions from certain laws which state that "beliefs that believers hold sacred and thus central to their religious faith may strike non-believers as bizarre, illogical or irrational" (Constitutional Court of South Africa [CCT36/00, 2002], 25 January 2002 at para.[42]), which should hold "the protection guaranteed by the right to freedom of religion" (Constitutional Court of South Africa [CCT36/00, 2002], 25 January 2002 at para.[42]), we have been fortunate to see justice taking place, pastors being arrested, being forced to step down from ministry, and sitting through trials like any normal citizen would (Goodstein and Otterman, 2018; Spies, 2018; Justice, 2015).

Because I have been aware of instances of sexual abuse in church spaces, having heard about sexual abuse in the churches I've attended growing up, I was not particularly taken aback when three out of the nine participants revealed that they experienced explicit sexual abuse by members of the churches they had attended. This sexual abuse took place in various forms. Some participants had also experienced sexual violence outside of church spaces, and I will mention some of these instances here but because this research deals specifically with people's experiences in church spaces, I will not discuss these in-depth. I think it is important to note that all the participants stated that the violence they experienced was at the hand of a man – as seen below, most instances of violence have been inflicted by men:

> *"Incidents of violence in South Africa continue to be among the highest in the world, with African men being largely seen as the perpetrators. Posel (2005) refers to this violence as the 'scandal for manhood'. Such violence is often directed at women, but people who engage in alternative sexualities are also not excluded. The continuing 'curative rape' of lesbian women, for example, is an example of such violence" (Msibi, 2009:519).*

Of the three participants, two were hearing womxn and one was a d/Deaf gay man. Their experiences are described below:

> *"[...] then I decided, I said to my friend, me, sick and tired of this because now you can't have men touching you inappropriate... And I think somehow in their mind, some others will think that we have two, you know, body parts, so now they will -"*
>
> **gestures towards genitals, to show where they were fondled**
>
> *"- Yes. And then their excuse will be they're praying so they have to pray for all the body... So it was that kind of humiliation, and then I then decided, I'm tired, I can't be living like this. My body is sore, and emotionally, it's emotionally, physically, psychologically, this*

thing is taxing [...] I think along the way in that, we were given an opportunity to come back to church. But then I got gang-raped, in that whole situation of them finding out, some people from the church, and then people came in my house - it was the issue of now, "Ja, God was really punishing you because you didn't want to change". […] You're sitting and listening to people saying this[...] And you don't understand [...]" – (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).

After Noreen was exposed as a lesbian, seemingly by a fellow congregant, in front of her entire church, she was gang-raped by some men from the church who wanted to 'change' her, to make her not be a lesbian anymore. In Van Wyk (2009), Noreen talks about her experience of corrective rape, her response, her family's response and her community's response to it:

"[…] shortly after coming out as a lesbian to my family, I was brutally raped. So many people – church people and even members of my own family – told me that this was God's was of punishing me for being a lesbian. Because I was unwilling to "change", they said, God was using this method to teach me a very hard lesson […] I was hurt in two ways; firstly, I was dealing with the pain and humiliation of the rape, and secondly, I suffered because of my people's judgement […] even though I had received medical help an counselling, felt lonely and rejected." – Noreen in Van Wyk (2009: 165)

This is the experience of many lesbian womxn, and this experience is especially prevalent in township spaces. Homosexual identity is protected by the South African Constitution (1996) but the unfortunate reality is that in practise, many LGBTIQA+ people are at risk of being violently attacked every single day – these attacks may be in the form of assault (being beaten up, stabbed, shot, etc.), sexual violence (harassment, rape, punitive/'corrective' rape), verbal abuse, and often, murder (Mathebeni, 2011). Mathibe (2015) states that this violence and discrimination, and the negative attitudes of the Christian church and community towards L[GBTIQA+] people, are an indication of the lack of acknowledgment and respect for the existence of LGBTIQA+ people.

A lesbian womxn, Nelly, from Riverlea, who is a member of HPW in Soweto, told me about her experience of being sexually assaulted by members of her community. These were people she had grown up around, who, after she came out to her grandmother, misunderstood the concept of being a lesbian. In the extract below, Nelly mentions her experience of being physically undressed by neighbours to see her genitals:

"They teased me, they even undressed me, some of my neighbours even undressed me to see whether I'm a boy or a girl. That was my journey. Because they never saw me wearing a dress so they thought, they suspected - actually according to them they suspected I'm a hermaphrodite, so it was something they wanted to see, like undressing me, to see whether I have two – I have a dick and a pussy…" (Nelly, a Black hearing lesbian womxn from Riverlea and member at 2, Soweto)

Johan, a gay man from White City in Soweto, also told me a small bit about his experience of harassment from a man in the LGBTIQA+ affirming church that he was attending; the church was part of the HUMCC, and the pastor was a gay man named Patrick:

"Then I met a person named Thendani; the first time we met, he had a crush on me. I was taken aback. We both lived in Soweto, in two areas that were next to each other -I was in W-J, he was in Jabulani – so we drove together to Soweto and he dropped me at home, I

> *said thanks, it was nice to meet, and he left. Then, a while later, Thendani SMS'd me to ask me to come to church with him even though there's no interpreter. I said fine, and we went together. Church was good, Patrick interpreted for me. When church was over Thendani asked if he could drop me home again, I said, that's fine, thank you. As we were driving he started touching me on my leg. I was so shocked. He asked me, "Why are you shocked? You like me." I thought, ok its fine, and I left it and didn't say anything about it to anyone. He dropped me at home." – (Johan, d/Deaf Black gay activist from Soweto)*

The impression I got from this interaction is that the guy who gave Johan a lift felt like he deserved some sort of compensation for having dropped him at home. The concept of 'quid pro quo' suggests this – sexual harassment which occurs as a result of someone feeling that they should receive sexual favours in return for doing something for someone else. Quid pro quo usually happens in the workplace, where an employee is expected to provide sexual favours, usually to someone in a position of authority, in return for something that would ordinarily be rewarded, such as a salary raise, a promotion, etc. (The Advocates for Human Rights, 2007).

Johan had kept quiet about what had happened to him when Thendani had given him a ride home, which is often the case with sexual harassment cases, as there is a stigma against sexual abuse being the fault of the victim as opposed to the perpetrator (this blame tends to come from outsiders who shame the victim), as well as a tendency for the victim to not be believed (Ullman, 1996; Davies, Pollard and Archer, 2006). This sort of victim-shaming and victim-blaming is a common occurrence amongst people who have experienced abuse, particularly womxn and LGBTIQA+ people. As Johan had feared speaking out about his experience, nobody was aware that Thendani had crossed boundaries with him. Johan goes on to tell a story about a memorial he had attended for a church member who passed away; the memorial ended after the time that public transport stopped working. Johan decided to approach the pastor, Patrick for help. Patrick had introduced Johan to the church and been a constant source of help, by learning how to use South African Sign Language so that Johan would be able to understand the sermons better. He suggested that Johan should go home with Thendani as they lived close to each other:

> *"Later when the memorial ended it was after 8pm, there was no public transport for me to get home. But it was fine; I would ask Patrick to help me look for transport. He suggested that Thendani takes me again. Eish!" – (Johan, d/Deaf Black gay activist from Soweto)*

The extract suggests that Johan was traumatized by his previous encounter with Thendani, but in that moment he felt too afraid to mention what had previously happened. In addition to the stigma against sexual abuse being the fault of the victim and the reluctance to believe victims, there are also many instances where victims internalize the blaming and shaming from others, and then believe that they are to blame too. According to Ullman (2006), victims need to make sense of why the assault occurred, and thus question themselves (and others) about the reason for the assault. They might blame it on their behaviour leading up to the assault (behavioural self-blame) or blame it on their personality or character (characterological self-blame). Negative social reactions (such as not being believed and being asked questions which incite doubt, when speaking out about the assault) tend to encourage victim self-blame, which creates a negative psychological adjustment for the victim (delaying the process of healing or moving forward) and could contribute to heightening Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in victims (Ullman, 2006).

Conclusion

After analysing and discussing the subthemes relating to violence, the main finding across all participants, interestingly, is that all participants had experienced marginalisation in a church space, and all participants decided to take a break from church spaces at some stage. Those who have not returned to church spaces yet (Danelle, Timothy and Johan, who all identify as d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+), have some hope that when churches are able to cater to their needs and not make them feel marginalized, they will return. The other six participants' instances of abuse experienced in various church spaces may have led them to leave church spaces for a while but ultimately, they re-entered church spaces after overcoming some of their previous traumas. Some even used these traumas as a tool to help them create a space that was open and inclusive for any person who had ever had a similar experience of discrimination, marginalisation and abuse in a church space. The second main theme below speaks to the process that some participants went through in the attempt to create these safe and inclusive spaces, and how that process also led to them becoming leaders in these spaces.

2. Reconciliation and healing through religion

Introduction

In this theme I will discuss how participants used their faith as a driving force to reconcile cognitive dissonance and identity conflict (discussed below) and cultivate healing from negative experiences of trauma caused by marginalisation and oppression. As mentioned above, all participants had experienced varying degrees of trauma in religious spaces, having been excluded from certain spaces and roles, being stigmatized for embodying difference, or for being resistant to change from who they are to what is acceptable in heteronormative and/or ableist spaces.

Although most participants channelled that trauma into creating open and safe, inclusive spaces, I found that members of the d/Deaf church, NLC, were selectively inclusive, having created a space that is welcoming to all people, but within that, people who embody or perform LGBTIQA+ identity are still seen as sinners who need to change and embrace heteronormative lifestyles, on the basis of Leviticus 18:22 which says "Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable"; thus, d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people who seek a place of worship may not experience NLC as a safe space.

Another group of participants, namely the members of HPW (an LGBTIQA+ affirming church in Soweto), were entirely inclusive of all persons irrespective of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, language [modality], culture, or financial status. After my first visit to HPW I met with the Reverend Noreen at Jabulani Mall in Soweto for a cup of coffee and to explain to her how I had found out about HPW and my desire to have HPW be one of the research sites for my MA. She was interested in my work and we discussed my research at length; she told me about some of her experiences of being a Christian womxn in leadership, and the difficulties of dealing with being a womxn who loves womxn, while also wanting to have a relationship with God and being told that God hates homosexuals.

On my third visit to HPW, I had an experience which made me uncomfortable; after the Reverend, Noreen, had stood up to open in prayer and welcome everyone to the service which she did entirely in English, presumably for my benefit, another congregant stood up to deliver the announcements and also mentioned that as this was a safe space for her she felt that she prefers not to speak English as it is not her mother tongue and those who have trouble understanding will have to find a way to make ends meet. As she received nods and murmurs of agreement from other congregants, I suddenly became hyper-aware of my own presence as the only person who could be perceived as from a different race group. I tried to make myself as small as possible as my social anxiety kicked in and it felt like all eyes were on me, watching to see my reaction; I reminded myself that I had to just remember to observe and make notes and immerse myself in the culture for the sake of research, whether or not I understood what was going on. The service went by without any major hiccups, and at the end before closing in prayer Reverend Noreen stood up and addressed what the womxn had said. She said that as a church filled with people who understand what it's like to be shunned for being different, we should do all we can to make any and everyone feel welcome, and that it is disrespectful for people to be excluded because of language barriers. She said it is God's house and all God's children are welcome there. From then on, at every service I attended, English was the main medium used during announcements and sermons, and eventually I felt more at ease in the space.

Feelings of unease or being judged in church spaces often lead to people experiencing cognitive dissonance and identity conflict. The following section explains cognitive dissonance and identity conflict and the differences and similarities between the concepts; it also discusses the potential causes of cognitive dissonance and identity conflict, as well as how participants who experienced cognitive dissonance and identity conflict managed to resolve internal conflict using the same Bible used to discriminate or oppress them. I will also include extracts and anecdotes from literature which elaborates on and supports the experiences of oppressed and marginalized people in a broader South African and International context.

2.1. Cognitive Dissonance and Identity Conflict

In this section I will begin by explaining briefly what cognitive dissonance is, what identity conflict is and what distinguishes one from the other; I will then provide examples where participants felt a sense of cognitive dissonance and identity conflict. Thereafter I will use theory to analyse the participants' ability to overcome the feelings of conflict, once again making reference to examples from my interactions with participants. It is important to note that while d/Deaf people in the broader d/Deaf community may experience cognitive dissonance or identity conflict as far as their d/Deaf identity and Christian identity are concerned, owing to mainstream Christian churches regarding 'deafness' as a disability (from the medical model of being deaf), within this study I did not perceive this to be the case – all participants embraced being d/Deaf as a cultural identity.

Cognitive dissonance is one of the most widely studied areas of psychology and is defined as an uncomfortable tension caused by having two conflicting thoughts at the same time, or when the thoughts/beliefs we have conflict with our behaviours (Festinger, 1957). Often, we would change one of the behaviours/attitudes in order to restore internal harmony (Egan, Santos and Bloom, 2007). According to Mahaffy (1996), Christians perceive the claiming of both a Christian and LGBTIQA+ identity to be incongruent, holding on to the belief, as mentioned before, that to have an

LGBTIQA+ identity is a sin, and furthermore that the family structure should consist of mother, father and child(ren), and should uphold rigid and particular traditional gender roles (Mahaffy, 1996). The result of this is that Christians who do not align with this lifestyle, such as LGBTIQA+ Christians, tend to experience cognitive dissonance.

Rodriguez (2006) chooses to use the concept of 'identity conflict' (Baumeister, Shapiro and Tice, 1985) as opposed to cognitive dissonance to account for the feelings of conflict that LGBTIQA+ Christians may encounter. I found the basic tenets of cognitive dissonance and identity conflict to be similar with the difference being that where cognitive dissonance deals with conflicting internal *thoughts* or *behaviours,* identity conflict deals with a multiplicity of sub-identities which contribute to an individual's total identity; the interaction of these dynamic *identities* would possibly lead to internal conflict (Rodriguez, 2006). Instead of being different, I viewed these concepts as being reflections of one another, given that both are psychologically intrapersonal, both ultimately result in internal conflict, and also that an individual's identity may have an effect on their thoughts and behaviours. Hence, I concluded that participants in this study experienced both cognitive dissonance and identity conflict, resulting in internal conflict which they ultimately sought to solve.
Alongside the internal conflict, Christian LGBTIQA+ individuals may experience deeper confusion and possible self-doubt and self-hate (Englund, 1991; Spencer, 1994) because while Christian doctrine regards LGBTQIA+ identity as unnatural and perverse, it also states that God's love is unconditional, and that there is a place in Heaven for all who love God (Perry, 1990; Piazza, 1994).

Maggie from HPW had difficulty coming out to herself as she had grown up in churches which upheld the beliefs of LGBTQA+ lifestyles being a sin. When she was 18 years old, a friend told her that they suspect she might be a lesbian. She could not understand or accept that, because of the influence of her religious upbringing and the teachings of her church (WOFBC) at the time. During our interview she told me she took a long time to accept her identity:

> *"[…] Coming out. For myself, accepting, it was difficult accepting - I'd come across different people who'd say, hmm mm, there's something wrong with you. I was in denial for a long time - from the age of 18, the first person told me when I was 18, then I was like, no, it can't be, I'm made in the image and the likeness of God and God created Adam and Eve, so there's no way there can be another Eve." – (Maggie, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn, and leader at HPW, Soweto)*

This internal conflict is reiterated by Christian teachings which state that heterosexual reunions are the only unions recognized by God, and all others are regarded as sexually immoral, sinful, abominable, lustful and wrong in God's eyes. Some churches also teach that being a homosexual means that you have been possessed by a demon. Christian LGBTIQA+ people often battle with the internal question, "How can I love God while I am something God hates?" According to Welman as cited in Germond and De Gruchy (1997):

> *"People for whom God is the centre of their reality have great difficulty in dealing with their sexuality. Very often people come to us with deep and severe scars and blows dealt them by their churches, ministers and Christian friends. Almost all experience such rejection by the church as rejection by God personally and thus deny God's love for them." (Welman in Germond and De Gruchy, 1997: 62).*

Danelle had an experience of internal conflict which was quite similar to Maggie's in that her conflict was based on the Christian doctrine of heteronormative couples, and feelings of doubt concerning God's love for her if she identifies as a lesbian. In this extract she speaks about her experience of coming out to herself and her difficulty with accepting her feelings of affection towards other womxn:

> *"When I was 18 years old, I never wanted to accept my feelings for a womxn. Never, never, never! I tried to force myself to go to church and pray about it and date boys. While dating guys I realized there's no connection there, I felt nothing. So one day I read the Bible. I'm not sure if I remember correctly what chapter or verse it was, it was in Sunday School. I had to lip read. So I saw the Sunday school teacher talking about gays and lesbians and saying that to be gay or lesbian is a sin, God will never accept that, and they're going to hell. I was a bit scared, so I went to read my bIble [on my own] and it said a man and a womxn must be together because God made Adam and Eve, so I read the bible and thought, I am sinning. If I have feelings for a womxn, I'm sinning." – (Danelle, a d/Deaf Black lesbian from Eldorado Park).*

Noreen had similar experiences in the Church after her incident of being outed to the church and also to her family; below are examples of situations she describes where she felt confused about her identity as a lesbian. One example is from her life story as told in Van Wyk (2009) and the others are extracts taken from my interview with her.

> *"My family said, "You know, Noreen, you need to leave home because we can't take this, really. We don't understand what this 'gay' is." The church I was attending at that stage believed that if you were a demon, you had to be demon-possessed. I was told that God does not love a person who is practising homosexuality. This was very hard for me to hear, because I love God so much!" – (Noreen in Van Wyk, 2009: 165-166)*

Noreen's experiences with her family are similar to those that many LGBTIQA+ people face, where their families are not accepting of them because they do not understand LGBTIQA+ identity; often when the families of LGBTIQA+ people are religious, they would tend to fall back on the traditional beliefs mentioned above, to justify their rejection of the LGBTIQA+ person. The extract below from my interview with Noreen provides more detail on her family's reaction and reasoning (introduced above), and she also talks about how that eventually led to her decision to stay out of church for a short period:

> *"Because I think even at that point my family just couldn't understand how to react to these things, now having a lesbian child who has demons, and then having to defend what the church has been saying, this is their message that they gave to me, then I decided that I don't want to be part of it, I don't want this God anymore... So, that's how, I think three, almost two or three years, that's me sitting and not [going to any church]..." - (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).*

Maggie had the experience of leaving church for a short period as well, after her long struggle with coming out to herself, when she finally accepted herself as a womxn who loves womxn, and she could no longer agree with the preaching and teachings at her church (WOFBC):

> *"It did damage my Christian walk, because of what the Word says and this thing that feels so good and feels so right. So for some time before I started going to that church, the old*

church, the pastor used to randomly - he'll preach whatever but randomly there's something about [homosexuality]... that will always come out. And he's done that for years and it never bothered me but then when I came out to myself it offended me. I'd go to church and he'll preach and I'll receive whatever and immediately when he starts, and then I'd switch off. Until I thought, I'm going there but spiritually I'm not growing so I'll rather stay [home] and not go to church." – (Maggie, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn, and leader at HPW, Soweto)

Noreen opened up to me about her journey of finding her way back to the Church space, how traumatic events in her life made her feel that that is where she belongs.

"Well, I think during all [these] situations at my church I tried to commit suicide, but then somehow it didn't work out - then I found myself being alive. Then waking up from that whole situation made me start thinking there must be a reason why I'm still alive today, and there must be something that God has for me. [I was] still angry with God but at the same time I needed to find some peace. In the mix I think I met this other pastor, coming here in Joburg, who I was introduced to. He was a gay man, and we had a conversation that I said I'm not sure how can I accept something that all my life I hear people telling me that I was a mistake, God didn't create me to be like this, I'm a demon, I'm an abomination, all these things - I have a conflict inside me. And you know, now you read the bible with different eyes. And he said now there's a verse in Jeremiah verse 1 where God says before [I created you], I knew you. Before, I knew you. It was just so powerful to me, that before anybody knew me, God knew me and created me in a way that now this is the result of [that creation], you know, God has a plan in my life, so I needed to read now with a new set of eyes. – (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).

This section has outlined the instances of cognitive dissonance and identity conflict that participants faced specifically in relation to their desire to pursue Christianity, and to not feel like they are bad people for having an identity they did not choose, namely the LGBTIQA+ identity. Ending the section with Noreen's epiphany about how God created her as she was meant to be serves the purpose of briefly introducing the following section, the resolution of conflict, along with a discussion about oppression, marginalisation and violence being a key factor in participants' decisions to create inclusive spaces.

2.2. Histories of oppression and structural violence lead -to the religious practice of inclusivity

As mentioned above, this section will discuss how participants who experienced internal conflict overcame the conflict through their faith, using the Bible as a source to validate their identity. It will also discuss how participants, whether d/Deaf, hearing, LGBTIQA+ or heterosexual, used their experiences of marginalisation and oppression to encourage the possibility of creating inclusive spaces where people who have had similar experiences could come to share their experience and find healing and comfort. I will first discuss how LGBTIQA+ participants resolved their internal conflict, and then discuss the establishment of safe, inclusive spaces.

LGBTIQA+ Christian identity conflict resolution

Many LGBTIQA+ participants struggled to resolve the internal conflict they felt, because they questioned their own identities and also questioned why God would create something that would

then be considered 'bad' in Their eyes. However, all LGBTIQA+ participants managed to reconcile their Christian and LGBTIQA+ identities; the overall method of conflict resolution was entrenched in self-researching biblical passages, finding evidence for God's unconditional love in the Bible, and not isolating single verses from the entire passage of scripture.

For Noreen and many other LGBTIQA+ Christians (Germond and De Gruchy, 1997[65]), the Bible has always been a source of strength and comfort. Germond and De Gruchy collected narratives of LGBTIQA+ people who had struggled with coming to terms with their sexual orientation due to discrimination in church spaces; however, many of the contributors to the collection of narratives had found consolation in the Bible and by not sacrificing their relationships with God. Reid (2010) supports this in his research at HUMCC church, which is an ethnographic study of LGBTIQA+ identity in a Christian church space, where Biblical teachings were used to create a liberated theology which aided in reconciling Christian and LGBTIQA+ identity. Nkosi and Mason (2017) found that fifty percent of LGBTIQA+ students in their study regarded the bible as a comforting text during the process of reconciling the Christian and LGBTIQA+ identities.

In the previous interview extract (pg. 94) Noreen mentions Jeremiah 1:5 which says that God knew what we would be even before creating us, implying that we are created the exact way it was intended for us to be created. In Van Wyk (2009) Noreen says that one day before entering Bible school, she made a decision to believe that God loved her:

> *"One day I just told myself: "I don't care who says what; I'm a child of God, and I won't allow other people to tell me that I do not belong to God." (Noreen in Van Wyk, 2009:166).*

In the extract below, Noreen talks about another verse, Genesis 1:27, which provided her with reassurance about God's love for her; in this statement Noreen expresses the importance of realizing that although we are all different, we are all created by God as perfect and whole as we were meant to be:

> *"We are all equal, no-one is better than the other in the way that when the Bible says God created all of us in His own image, meaning that I also end up being created in that image and you, in our own different ways, in that kind of image so no-one knows exactly what the image of God is all about so we might be different but we're all from that image." – (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).*

Noreen's recollections all ultimately say that she believes that God creates things on purpose, and that every person is created uniquely but perfectly, and that as humans we judge one another but God does not judge us the same. This is a direct reflection of Danelle's experience when she had difficulty coming out to herself; after doing research of her own and speaking to a gay religious leader she felt more comfortable and able to accept her identity as a lesbian:

> *"But then I changed when I was 20 years old and I did my own research and realized that if I love a womxn, its fine. Only people would judge, God wouldn't judge me. One day I met a gay priest and he explained everything to me, saying that God accepts gays and*

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lesbians; only people judge us"- (Danelle, a 29-year-old d/Deaf Black lesbian from Eldorado Park).

Similarly, Maggie came to a place of understanding and comfortability with her sexual orientation after hearing a message preached by a gay pastor, Pastor Cedric, at HPW:

"Resolving the conflict... It's... Listening to different preachings and getting to understand that the Bible - anyone can interpret the Bible to suit them, so there's Pastor Cedric, he normally visits the church and preaches […] And until I heard him preach about Adam and Eve, and then I got to understand […] there's a scripture that says some will be born like that, some will choose to be like that, and accepting them, it's up to you whether you will accept them or not. So for me, I was like ok, I think I'm one of those who was born like that but I didn't realize, so if the Word does talk about homosexuality that is something is there, so it means, I'm God's creation."– (Maggie,a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn, and leader at HPW, Soweto)

I found Maggie's comment about anyone being able to interpret the bible to suit them interesting, as it has been something I believed for a long time; it speaks to a point made previously about religious leaders using their positions of authority to manipulate and exploit congregants (see *Sexual violence*) (Mokhoathi and Rembe, 2017), and how blind faith makes congregants susceptible to indoctrination. Teaching people that homosexual identity is a sin, as an attempt to remove that portion of their identity does not destroy LGBTIQA+ identity but instead destroys their relationships with God, themselves and those around them (Germond and De Gruchy, 1997). Some people are unable to re-establish connections with God after this experience.

Using scriptures to justify the condemnation of LGBTIQA+ identity is problematic, as the condemnation is essentially based on the premise that your interpretation is the correct one; Germond (1997) states that reason that Biblical theologians and scholars reject LGBTQA+ identity is because of the Bible being read with the assumption that heterosexuality is normative, and that homosexuality is a deviation from the norm, supported by six specific portions of scripture which are believed to align with Christian doctrine. He compares the deeply-embedded and overarching assumption of heteronormativity in Christianity to a canvas that has been painted on:

"The canvas is assumed to be neutral, it contributes nothing to the painting except that it carries the painting. Similarly the assumption that heterosexuality is normative is like the canvas on which the theology of sexuality is painted. But ask any painter and you will be told that the quality of the canvas makes all the difference to a painting. So too does the assumption that heterosexuality is normative make all the difference to our theology of sexuality. We need to strip off the accumulated, encrusted paint of centuries of theology in order to see the canvas of assumptions for what it is." – (Germond, 1997: 193)

This analogy helps us understand how Christian perspectives of LGBTIQA+ identities as being sinful and wrong are perpetuated, and why there is limited space for alternate perspectives. It also accounts for the presence of dissonant thoughts and internal conflict in LGBTIQA+ Christians who have grown up learning Christianity from this perspective; it is difficult to break away from this assumption, in the way that it is difficult to unlearn behaviours that we learn from a young age. However, if a LGBTIQA+ leader has an interpretation that is opposite to the interpretation of a heterosexual, heteronormative leader, that interpretation should be valid.

Alternatively, the Word should be delivered as plainly as it is written, without any influence based on personal opinion or fear of difference. Reid, as cited in Germond and De Gruchy (1997) relates a story about a reverend who preached in an LGBTIQA+ affirming church who was confronted by a heterosexual man, who asked if in his preaching, the reverend is "changing them". The reverend responded that he is only preaching what he knows from the Bible to them, and that they don't need to be changed but instead all sinners regardless of race, age, gender or sexual orientation need to "hear the Word of God… repent of their sins, they shall be saved. It has nothing to do with the gay gospel whatsoever." (Germond and De Gruchy, 1997: 103).

This section has discussed how LGBTIQA+ participants overcame the stigma attached to having LGBTIQA+ identity, accepted this identity and strengthened their Christian identities by using the Bible as a means of validating God's unconditional love for them.

The Religious Practise of Inclusivity

This section aims to discuss how participants used their negative experiences of being rejected, marginalised or oppressed for embracing and embodying non-normative identities in exclusionary church spaces, to think about ways of creating church spaces which are inclusive for all people regardless of how they identify. I will first discuss each site separately, stating my observations of how they practiced inclusivity during my fieldwork, while drawing on evidence from interviews with participants from each site to support my claims.

New Life Church, Rosebank

The first d/Deaf church I visited, which was held in the old chapel in Rosebank was inclusive in that they did not turn away hearing people. Although the church services were run using SASL throughout, any person was welcome to join. The size of the congregation was small, and most people there used SASL, although some hearing people attended with their d/Deaf family members. Integration into the space was easy as they used SASL accompanied with mouthing and PowerPoint presentations which made it easy to follow if one did not fully understand the signing. One Sunday morning two hearing men came to visit the church; it was their first time and they were unaware that it was a d/Deaf church. It was remarkable to see everyone being friendly and welcoming to the men who seemed confused and overwhelmed, but who decided to stay for the service. The preacher's wife, who was also d/Deaf but could communicate well in English, assisted the men in introducing themselves to the congregation and then went on to translate the sermon from SASL to spoken English for them. As this was my first service at the church I stayed afterwards to introduce myself to some of the congregants; when I told them that my SASL is not very good they signed slower so that I could understand better. I also saw the two hearing men speaking to the preacher's wife.

At my next visit to the church, some of the people that had been there previously recognised me and were once again welcoming and patient with me. This was my first meeting with Wesley, the head pastor of NLC; once again there were PowerPoint slides which made it easy to follow the service at times when I could not understand signs.

New Life Church 2

Similar to NLC1, NLC2 in Lombardy East was run entirely in SASL, with PowerPoint slides to accompany what was being said. I found the idea of having PowerPoint slides interesting as we had learned in SASL courses that d/Deaf people prefer not having slides as it is not easy to follow; however, as stated before, because some d/Deaf people are accompanied by hearing family members, this might be beneficial to the hearing congregants. Also, the use of images in between the texts on some slides could be of assistance in keeping people's attention, and also makes retaining messages easier as images are often easier to recall than text or signed/spoken language.

The seating arrangements at NLC2 were clearly set up in the most convenient manner for d/Deaf people, in a semi-circle, which makes it easier for people to see the person signing at the front of the room. It was also arranged so that the shorter chairs were in front and longer wing-back couches at the back. The ramps at the entrance to the building, wide door openings, flat non-slip floors and moveable furniture in the room also made it easily accessible for people using wheelchairs, walkers and crutches which was created for the convenience of the old people at the old-age home but ultimately made it more accessible for any person who uses mobility assistance.
During an interview at NLC2, Paul told me about how he and some other d/Deaf church leaders had created resources to assist hearing people in understanding more about the d/Deaf community:

> *"I once did research about d/Deaf people […] I travelled a lot, to Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein, East London, all over, and interviewed d/Deaf leaders, and collected information. That was compiled into a book of about 300 pages, I'm not sure, with the intention of being able to reach d/Deaf people and give them access to issues like d/Deaf religion, culture, language, positive and negative things about d/Deaf church, and the same time to help them understand the needs of d/Deaf people […] If any hearing person had questions I would give them the book and let them read it and if they had more questions they could come to me and I would clarify things" – (Paul, a White d/Deaf man and leader at NLC2)*

Christ Church, East Rand

This church had a majority hearing congregation and a small community of d/Deaf congregants; a small section which was situated on the side pews, was reserved for d/Deaf congregants, where an SASL interpreter would be seated at the front of the group. This ensured that all d/Deaf visitors or members would be able to find a seat in the same vicinity as the interpreter. Visibility of the SASL interpreter was not very clear as the chairs were arranged in straight lines; the fact that the interpreter was seated on the same level as everyone made visibility harder for those not seated in the first two rows who would have to peer around those in front of them to gain clear visibility. Screens were erected on the walls which had slides projected on them to make following the service easier, although services ran at the pace of the hearing pastor who delivered the sermon, meaning that it was quite fast-paced, however the interpreters kept up and followed easily. Also, having more than one interpreter on duty at a time meant that they could exchange places every 30-45 minutes to stay refreshed and focused while interpreting.

The front entrance of the church was accessible for people with mobility issues, as the surfaces were flat and non-slippery. They also had ushers at the doors who could assist with finding seats or spaces

for people in wheelchairs, as well as to guide d/Deaf people to the reserved area as there were no signposts to provide this information.

The churches above were created to be inclusive for d/Deaf people, hearing people and people with mobility issues. However, they were less inclusive towards people who identify as LGBTIQA+, as is evident from the messages they preach and the lack of out LGBTIQA+ people in the church spaces.

Highest Praise and Worship

Highest Praise and Worship is a church which initially was part of the broader international LGBTIQA+ affirming Christian HUMCC church body but broke away after the Reverend, Noreen, felt that she would like to run her church independently of HUMCC. It is open to any person who wishes to grow in their Christian identity and is physically accessible to people with mobility issues. Being close to public transport access and located on a main road means that people can easily visit the space even without access to a private car and without having to spend exorbitant Uber fares.
As the church leadership and congregants are entirely made up of LGBTIQA+ people, it is evidently open, inclusive and non-discriminatory towards LGBTIQA+ people. During interviews, participants told me that the church is welcoming to all people, especially LGBTIQA+ people:

> *" It's accommodating to everybody so there's no discrimination, everybody is welcome, irrespective of sexuality. So I think part of the vision of the church, it's inclusive, it's inclusive of everybody […] [There are] no [inclusivity] policies at the moment. But I think, with the church growing, there'll be room for that, and also the need hasn't arisen yet." - (Maggie, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn, and leader at HPW, Soweto)*

Noreen stated that the church is even open to those who do not have a relationship with God and who are still struggling to find themselves as far as their identity is concerned:

> *"So for us it is something that we, I don't think we might have a discussion about it because it's something that is obvious, that we accept and we are welcoming of everyone... We don't judge anyone according to how they look, how they feel, or what they do, or whatever, it's just a home for everyone who loves God. Even for people who don't love God because sometimes we say these things that are only for people who love [God] and then what happens to those people that are trying to find themselves and finding their own ways? They will say, "You know we don't even love this God," but it's a place that is open for everyone, whomever, regardless of where they come from, what's their background, what they have done or whatever, it's just that place." – (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).*

When asked about the church's perspective on having what people might perceive as 'disabled' people attending church services, Nelly responded with the following:

> *"As we said, the church is welcoming to everyone, so there won't be, maybe, if you're blind, they'll be welcoming. Like I have a cousin, she's a lesbian, she's paraplegic, so I've been inviting her to church, so I know that she should also be welcomed […] If there's a need to be catered to then the church has to organize that so they can feel at home - remember, you're there to feel at home, not to be difficult or to come as a side-line. So whatever they need, the special need that they have, they'll have to cater for them. Or maybe there's someone who's actually specializing in that department, to teach the*

church as well, of how to be welcoming to people like that." – (Nelly, a Black hearing lesbian womxn from Riverlea and member of HPW, Soweto.)

Noreen's response to the question overlapped with Nelly's response, reiterating the church's desire to be as inclusive as possible, highlighting the current shortcomings as far as inclusivity is concerned, and the challenges they need to overcome to get there:

"I think I can say it's something that we wish for our own church, to be able to cater for each and every one of us in a way that - ok maybe I can make an example of the fact that we have different languages and then people that attend might not be able to speak in Zulu or they might be Zulus so they might not be understanding Sotho, or maybe, those kind of things. For me I wish that at some point in our church we can be able to get to a place that even the songs we sing, people - we'll have them somewhere and do the interpretation of what it means for if someone doesn't understand the Zulu or the Sotho and things like that - that is what being inclusive is all about. So it means that we haven't even began to get there but it's my wish to drag everybody along to seeing my wish coming true, in the sense that when you say you are an inclusive church it means that, you go the extra mile into making everyone feel that this is a house where I feel that my needs are catered" - (Noreen, a hearing Black womxn who loves womxn from Soweto, and Head leader at HPW, Soweto).

Johan's experience of being d/Deaf in a majority hearing church, which was also part of the broader HUMCC body, reflecting what HPW members had said about the desire to be more inclusive; he attended the HUMCC church in Mayfair where the pastor, Patrick, invited John to attend a service. After John expressed his concerns about being in a hearing church as a d/Deaf person, Patrick insisted that John at least visit the church and make a decision thereafter. John explains below:

" Then we were done working and Patrick invited me to Mayfair to the church where he was a pastor. It was some time around 2005, I'm not exactly sure – so Patrick asked me to come to church. I told him, the problem is that I'm d/Deaf. He said, it doesn't matter, try to visit, because we have some gay people there and it is gay friendly […] I did a bit of research, and realized that a problem is that there are no interpreters. Patrick tried to help me – he could sign a little. Not perfectly, but it was fine. I said next time we work together I would teach him sign language. So we worked together and his sign language improved, we were both happy. One day Patrick asked me to come to church. I thought about it at first. He wanted me to come because the amount of gay people in church was fluctuating. I decided to go. I met someone named Enzo, he used to go to St Vincent's school. He was a gay rights activist. He tried to interpret for me, but I couldn't understand because he used American Sign Language. It was a bit frustrating […] Some time passed again, and then in December there was a celebration at the church … I saw Patrick there, he told me he was trying very hard with learning and using sign language. I was excited because he was working very hard and he was passionate. He kept moving between MCE and SASL during the service." – (Johan, a Black d/Deaf gay activist from Soweto).

Johan was unfortunate to encounter a few negative experiences in that church space which prevented him feeling comfortable to go back. On one occasion he was at a party and he saw one of the church leaders engaging in acts that were regularly preached against in the church, and Johan did not like being led by someone who exercised the same hypocrisy as leaders who condemned LGBTIQA+ identities. Much like the other d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ participants, he currently does not attend a church as he has not found a church which caters to his need for an SASL interpreter; he

still has a good relationship with God, and prays and reads his Bible. He would return to a church if he was certain that it would be accessible for him. This condition was shared by all d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ participants.

The accounts from participants expressed above bear testament to the manner in which marginalized groups who have been shunned from churches and religious communities for embracing their differences and refusing to repress an important part of their identity, used the oppression and marginalisation as a driving force to create inclusive spaces for other marginalized individuals. These inclusive spaces continue to be places of safety where identities that were previously vulnerabilities have been transformed into points of strength, where a Christian identity can be strengthened through a message of inclusivity preached from the Bible. These spaces create a feeling of hope for the future of religious practise amongst marginalized groups, who often dismiss or reject religion because of the manner in which human religious leaders preach which does not reflect the true unconditional love of God.

Limitations of the Research

Research was limited to a small sample of members of the d/Deaf, LGBTIQA+ and d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ communities, thus it cannot be assumed that the findings reflect the opinions of each community at large.

The interview data gathered at NLC2 was lacking because I had failed many times to successfully carry out interviews at this site; as such I felt afraid to express questions regarding the church's perspectives on welcoming LGBTIQA+ people in the church once I had finally managed to get people to allow video-recorded interviews to take place. Hence, the initial data I received from interviews at NLC2 was helpful in analysing d/Deaf people's experiences in mainstream hearing church spaces, but did not help me to understand if marginalised d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ Christians would be welcome in the space.

I conducted brief follow-up interviews via email with participants to ask questions about their views on LGBTIQA+ identity and the church's policy regarding this. Given that the responses from both middle- to older aged participants were opposed to LGBTIQA+ identity I pose that the perspectives shared by participants at NLC results from generational influences of education, culture and teachings about sexuality which were more conservative then than now.

Although mentioned in passing, to keep the scope of the research manageable, I excluded factors such as race and social class as contributing factors to the findings in the research; however, to accurately analyse findings from a group as diverse as my group of participants it would be better to include all aspects of identity as these all contribute toward individual experience.

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to analyse the effects of the religious institutions, namely Christian churches, on the Christian identities of LGBTIQA+ and/or d/Deaf South Africans. The analysis process involved identifying themes which were present throughout the research process and which occurred across

all research sites and amongst all participants. Finally, this chapter discussed the limitations of the research, and some of the challenges faced.
The following chapter will summarise the main findings of the study in relation to the research question and sub-questions.

Chapter 6: Final Conclusions

This research aimed to discover how churches respond to the embodiment of difference, according to the performance of identities which deviate from what mainstream churches consider 'normal', i.e. people who subscribe to heteronormative and able-bodied practice. The main finding was that violence in varying forms is enacted on people who embody perceived difference, in this case LGBTIQA+ people and d/Deaf people, in mainstream church spaces.

It was found that churches have a tendency to enact violence on congregants; this violence is expressed overtly, such as sexual and physical violence, and covertly in the form of hegemony and structural violence.

Often congregants were unaware that they had been victims, or sometimes perpetrators, of structural violence. Ironically it can be said that victims of structural violence become perpetrators of structural violence: when participants enacted structural violence, it tended to be an unconscious re-enactment of beliefs that they had learned while growing up which they do not question but continue to accept as 'from the Word of God'. These instances of violence were only re-enacted by heterosexual participants, who particularly condemned LGBTIQA+ identity as well as representation of womxn in ministry.

Other forms of violence occurred more explicitly, such as physical violence and the more infamous sexual violence. In this study, only LGBTIQA+ participants, both d/Deaf and hearing, acknowledged that they had experienced physical and sexual violence; all accounts of sexual and physical violence had men as the perpetrators. There were no accounts of physical or sexual abuse expressed by heterosexual participants in this study.

Of the six LGBTIQA+ participants, three had experienced some degree of internal conflict regarding their desire to be both Christian and LGBTIQA+ while being told that these identities cannot coexist. The other three only experienced external conflict regarding their families' or communities' difficulty with accepting them as LGBTIQA+; these three participants had always been confident that God would love them unconditionally irrespective of their identity.

One d/Deaf participant experienced minor internal conflict regarding her d/Deaf identity as she was told that being d/Deaf was God's punishment for her LGBTIQA+ identity. No other d/Deaf participant experienced internal conflict about being d/Deaf and Christian despite being oppressed and rejected by the hearing society; all d/Deaf participants ultimately believed that being d/Deaf is not a disability but merely a difference, the same as being left-handed instead of right-handed, for example.

All nine participants have strong Christian identities, despite their negative experiences in various church spaces. Participants in positions of leadership in church spaces have used their experiences to create and continue to hone these spaces into safe inclusive spaces; while d/Deaf heterosexual leaders are still opposed to embracing people with LGBTIQA+ identities without trying to change them, they have still created a space where all d/Deaf people can feel safe and comfortable.

Many d/Deaf LGBTIQA+ people might not attend church, but they maintain a relationship with God in their personal capacity through Bible study and prayer. They have accepted themselves as simultaneously d/Deaf, LGBTIQA+ and Christian, and believe that God loves them because they were created perfectly in God's image and likeness. They all maintain that should they find a church that caters to their needs as d/Deaf LGBTIQA people, they would consider joining that church.

Similarly, hearing LGBTIQA+ leaders are yet to create spaces which are accessible for d/Deaf people, but they are not opposed to the idea, and have committed to working towards this outcome.

Thus, I have concluded that while d/Deaf and LGBTIQA+ people have all experienced forms of violence and discrimination in mainstream church spaces, LGBTIQA+ affirming spaces are more open to the idea of unconditional inclusivity, while d/Deaf churches are open to all and yet maintain traditional, conservative Christian norms and practices, including heteronormativity and patriarchal practise.

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Appendix A: Ethics Certificate

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Jacobs

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H16/11/43**
PROJECT TITLE	The impact of religious institutions' separatist treatment of difference on the intersectional identities of South African deaf lesbians
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ms J Jacobs
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Language, Literature & Media Studies/
DATE CONSIDERED	18 November 2016
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved
EXPIRY DATE	29 November 2019

DATE 30 November 2016 **CHAIRPERSON** (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Drs R Morgan and K Gillespie

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

05 / 12 / 2016
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Good day,

My name is Jade Jacobs and I am currently completing a Master's degree with the Department of South African Sign Language at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The focus of my study is on how religious institutions treat the dynamics of difference in respect to d/Deaf lesbian identities, in a separatist manner.

I would appreciate your participation in my study; you have been selected on the basis of your position as leader/member/congregant in an alternative[66] religious institution.

The research process will require you to allow me to conduct a one-hour long interview with you, which, with your consent, will be voice-recorded. This is so that I have access to the interview once it is completed, as I will need to refer to it when compiling results. Because this research is about religious identity in relation to marginalized identities, the interview will include probing questions about your experience in mainstream (hearing and heteronormative) religious spaces as well as your interactions with, and feelings towards marginalized groups such as LGBTIQA+ people and Deaf people.

Confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed as far as your identity is concerned; however I will need to use the information you provide me with in order to compile my dissertation. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time, should you wish to do so. You may also choose not to answer any questions you might feel uncomfortable with. Please understand that because your participation is voluntary, you will not receive any payment for your participation.

The information gathered in this study will be compiled into a dissertation; this may be presented at an academic seminar held by the SASL Department, where the contents of the study will be disclosed; your identity will still remain anonymous and I will use a pseudonym to identify you if you do not wish to disclose your identity. The dissertation will otherwise be kept by the SASL Department. After the dissertation has been completed there is a possibility that this work will be published in an academic journal article.

In the event that the research awakens any feelings of past trauma, I have arranged for counseling with a Social Worker and a SASL interpreter. The details of the Social Worker are below.

Please feel free to contact me, the researcher, or my Supervisors, if anything is unclear or if any problems or questions arise. You may also contact us to request a summary of the research details.

Researcher:
Jade Jacobs
Email: jadajacobs04@hotmail.com
Cell Number: 0840458920

Supervisors:
Dr. Ruth Morgan
Email: Ruth.Morgan@wits.ac.za
Cell Number: 0834592709

Dr. Kelly Gillespie
Email: Kelly.Gillespie@wits.ac.za
Cell Number: 0822943402

Social Worker:
Liebe Kellen
Cell Number: 0823462880

[66] *Alternative* is used as this space is not the same as "mainstream" religious spaces which do not cater for marginalized groups such as the Johannesburg Deaf community.

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

I, _____ (full name) hereby consent to take part in this study.

I understand and acknowledge the following (please tick):

- ☐ That this participation is voluntary, and that I may choose to withdraw from the study at any time.
- ☐ That I may refuse to answer any questions I do not feel comfortable answering.
- ☐ That my personal details will not be disclosed to any person aside from the researcher.
- ☐ That I will receive no payment or compensation for my involvement in the study.
- ☐ That should I choose to disclose my identity in this study, I will be contacted for my permission should any third-party request access to the completed research essay.

Participant's Signature Date:

_____ _____

Appendix D: Video Consent Form

Video consent Form

I _____ (full name) hereby consent to the collection and use of my personal image by video recording (please tick the boxes below if you agree).

- ☐ I acknowledge that my image may be used in academic seminars, conferences and publications relating to the study, which will reveal my identity.
- ☐ I understand that no personal information, outside of that which is presented as data, will be used in any publications whatsoever.

Participant's Signature Date:

_____ _____

Appendix E: Voice-recording Consent Form

Voice-recording consent Form

I _____ (full name) hereby consent to the recording of my voice during the interview process (please tick the box below if you agree).

- ☐ I understand that no personal information, outside of that which is presented as data, will be used in any publications whatsoever.

Participant's Signature Date:

_____ _____

Appendix F: Research Site Permission Letter

Research Site Permission Letter

I hereby grant permission for Jade Jacobs to conduct research at _____
(Name of research site) in line with the ethical considerations put forward by the University.

Title:
Name:
Siganture: _____
Contact Details:

Appendix G: Interview Questions Guideline

Interview Questions Guideline

Religion and religious identity

Tell me about your religious background

- Do you identify with any religion?
- Which religion do you associate/identify with?
- Have you always been part of a religious group?
- Are you currently a member of a religious institution or do you regularly visit a particular (or many) religious group(s)? If so, which one(s)?
- DO you attend alone or with your family?
- How does your religious institution respond to homosexuality (do they see it as a sin or are they accepting of it)?
- Are you out as a lesbian in your religious institution?
- If yes, please describe your coming out experience – when did it happen, how, and what motivated you to come out in that space?
- If no, why not? How do you feel about hiding that part of your identity in that space? Do you plan to come out to the people in the space at any time?
- Is your religious institution a Deaf/hearing space or a Deaf-space or a hearing-space?
- How does your religious institution respond to Deaf people? Do they view being deaf as a disability?
- Would you prefer to attend a religious institution that accepts Deaf people but not lesbians, or one that accepts lesbians but not Deaf people?

Lesbian identity

Tell me about your experience of coming out as a lesbian.

- How did you react to it, personally?
- Who have you come out to? Why?

Which part of your identity is more important: Deaf identity or lesbian identity?

Resolving religious/lesbian conflict

- As a lesbian, what has your experience been of reconciling your lesbian identity and your religious identity?
- How have you dealt with any internal conflict that you might have felt?
- How does your religious institution's response towards homosexuality affect your religious identity?
- How does your Deaf identity impact on the development of your religious identity?
-

(Note: Participants are in no way forced to answer any questions they don't feel comfortable answering. Above questions serve as a guide; the idea is for participants to offer information freely, while interviewer uses prompts to guide the interview)

Appendix H: Counsellor's Letter

Liebe Kellen (Social Worker): Registration Number 10-14438, PR Number 0310549

P.O. Box 3263
Houghton
2041

24 August 2016

Dear Jade

This serves to confirm that I am willing and available to counsel participant(s) in your research who may be distressed as a result of the research opening up previous trauma.

Yours sincerely

LKellen

Liebe Kellen (MA Social Work)
082 346 2880