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# Transition towards gender equality

Namibia between the empowerment of women and violence of men

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“Change means growth, and growth can be painful”

(Audre Lorde, 1997:380)

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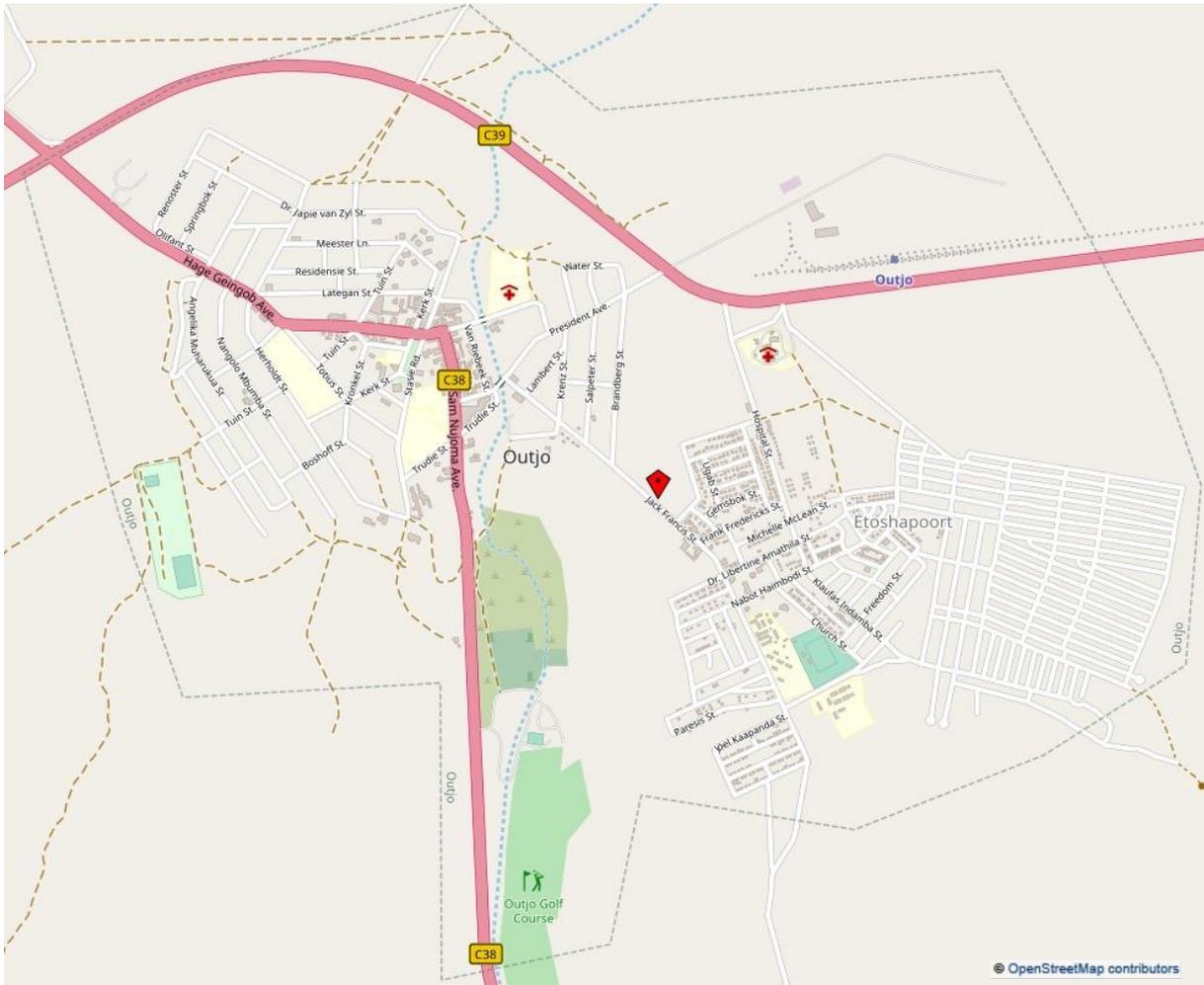
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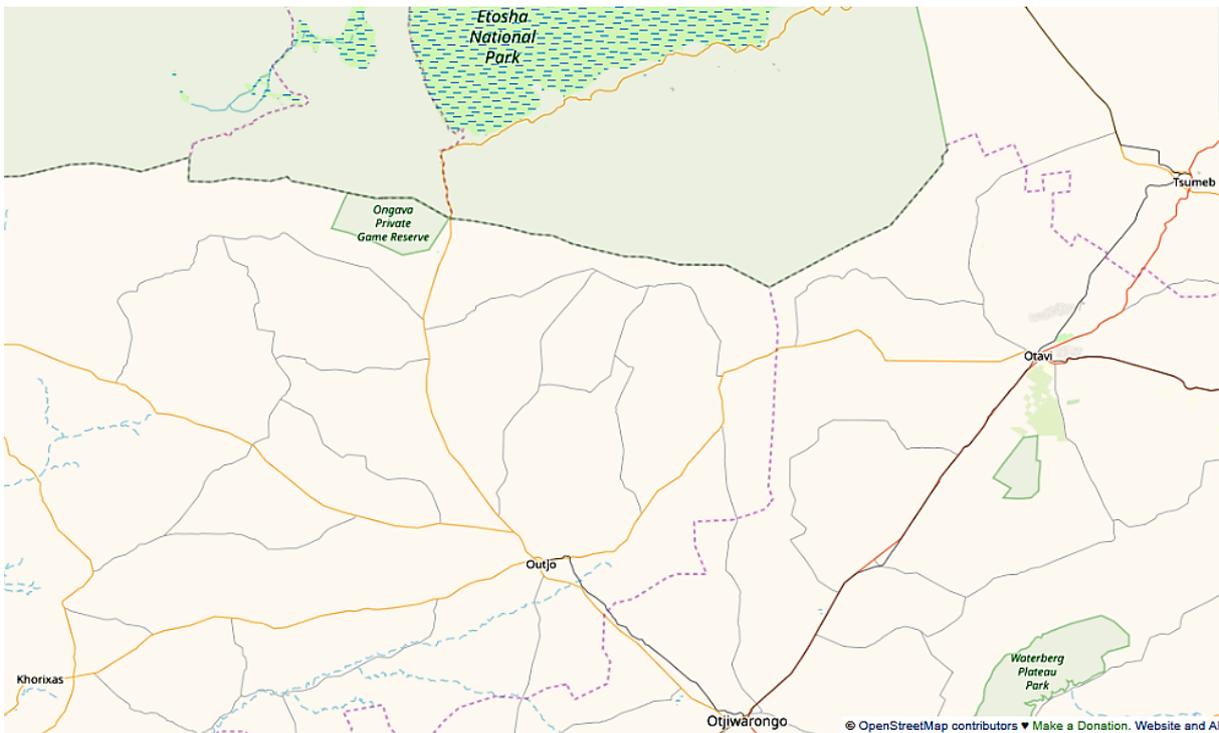
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Map 2 Outjo town and Etoshapoort



Map 3 Areas around Outjo

## List of abbreviations

ACACIA	Arid Climate Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa
ACN	Action Christian National
BIG	Basic Income Grant
CA	Constituent Assembly
CBOs	Community-based Organisations
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics (later NSA)
CCGR	Committee on Changing Gender Relations
CCN	Council of Churches of Namibia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women
CPP	Crime Prevention Project
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
DWA	Department of Women Affairs in the Office of the President
ECN	Electoral Commission of Namibia
EJSS	Etosha Poort Junior Secondary School
ELCIN	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
ELCRN	Evangelical Church of the Republic of Namibia
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FCN	Federal Convention of Namibia
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GRAP	Gender Research & Advocacy Project
GoN	Government of Namibia
HAART	Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICD	International Classification of Diseases
iiba	information in brackets added
KAP/B	Knowledge-Attitudes-Practice/Behaviour
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
LGBTTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, and queer gay, bisexual people
LPC	Laodecia Pentecostal Church
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals

MGEWCW	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MRC	Multidisciplinary Research Centre
MRLGH	Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing
MWACW	Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare
NamCol	Namibian College of Open Learning
NAMEC	Namibian Men for Change
NAMPOL	Namibian Police
NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
n.d.	no date
NEET	not in employment, education or training
NDHS	Namibia Demographic and Health Survey
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NGP	Namibian Gender Policy
NGMP	National Gender Mainstreaming Programme
NGPA	National Gender Plan of Action
NNF	Namibia National Front
NPF	Namibia Patriotic Front
NSA	Namibian Statistical Agency (former CBS)
OoP	Office of the President
OPO	Ovamboland People's Organisation
OSISA	Open Society Initiative in Southern Africa
OSS	Outjo Secondary School
OCPF	Outjo Crime Prevention Forum
OYO	Ombetja Yehinga Organisation
PEACE	People's Education, Assistance and Counselling for Empowerment
PEP	Post Exposure Prophylaxis
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PO	Protection Order
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PSM	Private School Moria
RDP	Rally for Democracy and Progress
SA	South African
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADF	South African Defence Force
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

SGA	Sonja Gierse-Arsten
SIAPAC	Social Impact Assessment and Policy Analyses Corporation
STD	Sexual Transmitted Diseases
SWANLA	South West African Native Labour Administration
SWC	SWAPO Women's Council
SWAPO	South West African Peoples' Organisation
SWAPOL	South West Africa Police
SWATF	South West Africa Territorial Force
TB	Tuberculosis
TRP	The Rainbow Project
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UNAM	University of Namibia
UNCN	United Nations Council for Namibia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTAG	United Nations Transitional Assistance Group
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WAD	Women's Action for Development
WCPU	Woman and Child Protection Unit
WCG	Western Contact Group
WHO	World Health Organisation
WIMSA	Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa



# Chapter 1 Introduction

Imagine the following scene: A woman is running away from a man who is following her and shouting angrily. He quickly catches up with her and starts beating her up with a stick. Then he drags her behind him by her hair, like a hunter taking a scared and intimidated game animal that does not merit any respect.

This could be a scene from a movie, but it really happened in Namibia; it happens every day, worldwide (WHO et al. 2013, WHO 2005, Fulu et al. 2013, Merry 2009). It was a real incident that my student colleagues and I witnessed 50 metres ahead of us while walking through Etosha Poort, the township<sup>1</sup> of small town Outjo in northern Namibia in 2001 (see Section 1.4 for more information on Outjo). Once we got closer to the man and the woman, the man smiled and greeted us in a very friendly manner as if nothing notable had happened. My colleagues and I were all very shocked but did not react – as *none* of the other people nearby did anything either.<sup>2</sup>

This was my first encounter with the violence of men against women in Namibia. It made me wonder what was going on in terms of gender relations in Namibia. How could it be possible that this man dared to attack the woman in public, and faced no direct consequences at all while giving the impression of behaving normally? What prevented others (and us) who witnessed the incident from intervening? These questions continued to fester in my mind. Thus, I decided to investigate gender, gender relations and violence in Namibia in my doctoral research.

Namibia's modern constitution promises equality for all and prohibits discrimination "on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status" (GoN n.d., Article 10:11). Since its independence from the violent and racist South African apartheid regime in 1990, the requirements of democracy and equality have represented an immense change for Namibian society. Thus, it marks a major watershed in Namibian history. Many of the research participants' narratives reflect this, drawing significant contrasts and comparisons between the pre- and post-independence eras in various respects including gender relations.

Independence after 100 years of colonial occupation was a great success for the people of Namibia and was thus associated with high hopes and expectations. During colonial times,

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term township in the same sense that Seckelmann (2000:IX) does. These are the areas where mainly black people lived in the apartheid past, and still live today. They were established as a result of the *Urban Areas Acts* of 1923, whereby residents from areas close to the centre were forcibly removed to the town's periphery. In Outjo the term location or *lokasie* (Afrikaans) is commonly used to refer to the township and is therefore also adopted in this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> I witnessed the scene described above while taking part in a six-week field research internship in Namibia, organised by the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Cologne, Germany.

the majority of Namibian people were exploited, violated and denigrated, initially by German, and then by South African colonialists, while few enjoyed any benefits. Many people in Namibia experienced, witnessed and used violence during the colonial era (see Chapter 2). Women in particular were seen as second-class citizens, who were legally subordinate to men. They experienced several types of violence and received little protection from the law (Wallace 2013).

Since independence the legal status of women and children has been improved substantially by several new laws. The government policy of empowering women and promoting gender equality became increasingly important. Namibia ranks highly in international comparison regarding gender equality (see also Hubbard 2010a, LAC<sup>3</sup> 2017). In the Gender Development Index (GDI), which is one of the five indicators used in the Human Development Report created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Human Development Index (HDI)<sup>4</sup> is calculated on a gender aggregated basis. The 164 countries are classified into five groups by absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values (UNDP 2018b). Namibia is ranked in the best group with the fewest inequalities, according to the gender aggregated HDI.<sup>5</sup> This shows that Namibia has made huge strides towards achieving gender equality, despite having fewer resources available compared to a high-income country such as Germany, which is assigned to the second best ranking group. Within the African region, Namibia is ranked third after South Africa and Rwanda based on the Africa Gender Equality Index, which is provided by the African Development Bank Group.<sup>6</sup>

The United Nations assume that gender equality leads to less violence against women (see Section 1.1.1). However, the violent scene described above is no isolated case. It is an example of the widespread violence against women by men (Alweendo et al. 2018, Edwards-Jauch 2016), often within intimate relationships. In several cases the female partner has

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<sup>3</sup> The non-governmental organisation (NGO) Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) in Windhoek was the counterpart organisation for my research in Namibia. I cooperated with the Gender and Advocacy Project (GRAP) in particular (see Section 1.3 and Chapter 3).

<sup>4</sup> The HDI is published in the Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In this Statistical Update the HDI for 2017 is used (UNDP 2018a). The report points to the fact that, due to “revisions and updates of the underlying data and adjustments to goalposts”, the HDIs of different years are not simply comparable (UNDP 2018a:1). Thus, they included adjusted statistics in their update. For more details about human development in Namibia see Section 4.1.

<sup>5</sup> This measures three areas: health (female and male life expectancy at birth), education (female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years of education for adults aged 25 years and older); and command over economic resources (female and male estimated GNI per capita) (UNDP 2018b). Group 1 includes countries with high levels of equality between women and men in terms of HDI achievements (absolute deviation of less than 2.5 percent) and group 2 includes countries with medium to high equality between women and men in terms of HDI achievements (absolute deviation of 2.5–5 percent) (for the other three groups with medium, medium and lower, as well as lower levels of equality see UNDP 2018b:37).

<sup>6</sup> Three items are measured for 52 of the 54 African countries: Economic opportunities for women: Namibia ranks twentieth; Human development: Namibia ranks fifth; and Laws and Institutions: Namibia ranks fourth (LAC 2017:17).

even been killed.<sup>7</sup> The Namibian media frequently reports on such cases of femicide. However, often the euphemistic term “passion killing” is used (see Section 8.1.2). lipinge and LeBeau assume that there might be a link between formal gender equality and growing gender violence (lipinge/LeBeau 2005). The widespread violence against women reveals the persistence of imbalances between the genders.

The gender inequalities that still exist become clearer if additional factors are considered. According to the UNDP’s Gender Inequality Index, a measure that considers the maternal mortality rate, teenage birth rate, female seats in parliament, percentage of the population with at least some secondary education, and the labour force participation rate, Namibia is only ranked 115 out of 160 countries, while South Africa is ranked 90th and Botswana 98th (UNDP 2018a). This means that, although Namibia has already made good progress regarding gender equality, significant gender inequalities reflected in areas such as teenage birth rates remain. Within the economic realm there are also many inequalities. Many people live in poverty while a minority enjoy an affluent existence. From an economic perspective Namibia is one of the most unequal countries in the world (Melber 2018b, see Chapter 4). Women, in particular, are still disadvantaged and do not have the same access to resources as men (Jauch et al. 2011, see Section 7.1).

Although my research took place in Namibia, it could have been conducted in any other country<sup>8</sup> in either the global south or global north<sup>9</sup>, as violence perpetrated by men against women is a global problem. However, the outstanding discrepancy between successes in terms of gender equality and the severe and widespread violence against women needs to be researched in depth. Moreover, as long as women continue to experience violence at the hands of their “beloved” partners and other men, there will be no real gender equality in Namibian society. Violence is an important element of gender inequality, thwarting democracy within gender relations. The massive scale of the violence against women points to ongoing conflicts between men and women. From this research, it became clear that many people feel uncomfortable with the current situation regarding gender relations (see Chapter 5). Gender relations are in turmoil in Namibia. Therefore, the main research question of this study is: How has the idea of gender equality been perceived and put into action in the life of

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<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I have focussed on non-lethal violence in my work (see Section 1.3).

<sup>8</sup> See for example the international #MeToo debate (see WEB FB MeToo).

<sup>9</sup> The term “global north” can be seen as a further developed replacement for the earlier term “western”, used by the scientific community. It is understood to mean affluent actors (countries, transnationally operating companies, and the economic elite) of Europe, the USA, Australia etc.; all profiteers of the neoliberal capitalist world order. It is more of a metaphorical than a geographical term. It expresses imbalances in power and access to resources, in terms of knowledge production as well as economic opportunities. The logical counterpart of this concept is the term “global south”, comprising countries which are underprivileged in the neoliberal world order. However, within the global north, there are also underprivileged actors, and similarly there are powerful players in the global south. I am aware of the problems associated with this oversimplified and generalised concept. However, I use it to stress the worldwide injustices and inequalities that constitute structural violence in the living conditions of the majority of people in the global south – including Namibia – and to emphasise the responsibility of the global north in this regard. (WEB GNGS) However, most Namibians I met used the term “western”. Thus, I also use it when discussing direct statements made by research participants.

people? Secondly, I researched which factors are important in understanding the huge scale of violence by men against women.

## **Outline**

In **Chapter 1** I introduce the theoretical and methodological building blocks of my research. To answer the research question it is important to investigate how gender in general terms is constructed in Namibia. In Section 1.1.1 the conceptual focus is on gender as a category of differentiation and as a regulative norm. Gendered injustices and the ensuing demand for gender equality with entailing polarisations are described. As male violence against women impedes gender equality, in Section 1.1.2, the conceptualisation of violence is explored, and in particular how violence that is normalised in a Culture of violence is displayed. In this regard, several concepts collected by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2009), such as structural and symbolic violence, as well as trauma (Herman 2015), proved useful. In Section 1.2, an examination of the current state of research in Namibia reveals a lack of anthropological research on gender and violence. This anthropological study therefore aims to fill the research gap by studying the violence of males against females using a holistic approach, focussing on individuals perceiving and behaving in a social environment, to understand the normalisation of violence. In Section 1.3, the methodological foundations of the research are explained. I emphasise the use of qualitative research methods necessitated by the sensitive research topic. The field research conducted in 2006 and 2009 is described and the challenges faced by the research are examined, as well as how these were handled. In the case of field research on violence, it is important to strike a balance between empathy, distance, and attention, as well as giving recognition to the victim/survivor. Subsequently, in Section 1.4, the research site of small town Outjo, situated in the Kunene Region, is described which is still shaped by colonial legacies, by white influence, racism, and inequalities.

In **Chapter 2** the historical background to the research is presented, which is vital for understanding the overall transition that has been taken place within Namibian society. Approximately 100 years of colonial repression was officially ended by independence, but today people are still influenced by the previous gendered Culture of violence. Women's position during colonial times in particular has a lasting legacy, as women were legally made minors under their fathers' or husbands' power, and experienced severe and widespread violence, which was regarded as normal.

In **Chapter 3** Namibia's aspirations since independence and emerging challenges are described. Two sources of gender equality in Namibia are discussed: first, the new constitution after independence which reflects human rights and general equality; and second, the involvement of non-governmental women's organisations involved in raising

political awareness of women's situation. In the subsequent section the gender equality policies of the government as well as the enforcement of formal gender equality by new laws are illustrated. Finally, I give an overview of the societal challenge presented by violence against women and the interventions used to address it.

In **Chapter 4** the uncertainties of daily life that people are confronted with, regardless of gender, are examined. The difficult and unequal economic conditions and their ramifications are described. An important feature of the prevailing uncertainties is the ambiguous perception of violence. On the one hand, people identified the pervasiveness of violence. On the other hand, I found a widespread acceptance and normalisation of violence. Further uncertainties are revealed in the generational relations that have been changing dramatically since independence, thereby also showing the fundamental transitions taking place within families since independence.

In the following three chapters, gender constructions are examined that serve to create male and female living realities. **Chapter 5** illustrates how gender and gender relations are constructed in general. In the first section, the constituting factors of religion, tradition and the new idea of gender equality are described. Gender is perceived in a static way and constructed by religion and tradition. However, the new idea of gender equality is challenging this construction. In the second section gender relations within intimate relationships are explored. The focus is on difficult contextual factors for intimate relationships, and points of conflict are identified. The common pattern of commodified intimate relationships and the widespread concurrent multiple sexual relationships of men are important for understanding dependencies, conflicts and violence.

In **Chapter 6** the perspective of males in Outjo is explored. In the first section, the focus is on the norms for males. Gendered admonishments that are used within the male social environment to produce unequivocal male dominance are explored. Mens' relations with women are also examined. In the second section, initially, male perceptions of male violence are described. Subsequently, insight into situations in which males become victims of violence is provided. In the third section, male involvement in reducing violence against women and its limitations is discussed.

**Chapter 7** focuses on the living realities of females. Similarly to the chapter on males, female gender constructions are first presented, followed by gendered admonishments of the social environment that serve to perpetuate the notion of a subordinate femininity. In the second section, the perceptions of females regarding male violence against women are examined. The chapter concludes by describing situations in which females acted as perpetrators of violence, something which is tabooed and often overlooked.

In **Chapter 8** I focus on the perspective of females confronted with male violence. In Section 8.1 narratives of women affected by violence are presented. The first sub-section analyses the transition in perceptions of sexualised violence. In the second sub-section, violence that occurs within intimate relationships is dealt with. In Section 8.2 attitudes from the social environment of women affected by violence, as well as of service providers, are examined, revealing a Culture of profound victim blaming. Finally, the effects the violence of males against females have on the individual victim, on other females, on males, on intimate relationships and on the society are displayed.

In **Chapter 9** the research results are presented and interpreted. Gender equality so far has been achieved at a superficial level. The violence of males against females has to be seen in context of a still influential colonial Culture of violence against women and children. To make a sustainable change towards substantive gender equality, I offer new perspectives.

### **Personal note**

I am impressed by how far Namibia has already come on the path towards gender equality despite an ongoing lack of resources and many other challenges. Although I adopt a critical view regarding the transition towards gender equality, of course, I do *not* wish to imply that gender equality should be abandoned because it presents some challenges. Rather, my perspective is intended to advocate for the improvement of mechanisms to reach substantive and sustainable gender equality by taking a holistic view. Today, we are living with the fruits of the struggle fought by many brave women's activists worldwide. I appreciate gender equality as an important cornerstone of a democratic, peaceful way of life and also as a means of creating violence-free gender relations as a final result. In my ontological vision gender equality means that men and women can adopt so-called male and female characteristics and behaviour, and take on equally valued, interchangeable and shared responsibilities with regard to the division of labour and decision-making, as well as having equal access to resources and rights.

The search for understanding does not imply at any point in this work to justify or relativise violence perpetrated by men against women – or vice versa. This dissertation also serves to increase empathy towards people who have been or are in violent situations, as well as to enable society to take appropriate actions against violence and for the adequate support of victims/survivors<sup>10</sup> of violence.

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<sup>10</sup> In this thesis I use both the terms “victim” and “survivor” because both are appropriate. If there is any connotation at all, then it is associated with the point in time at which it occurs. When a person becomes violated, s/he becomes a “victim” or is victimised at that moment. This situation may be characterised by feelings of helplessness, fear and suffering. After some time has passed and the individual has come to terms with it, one can speak of “having survived the violence”, and therefore “survivor” may be appropriate. However, it is not easy to differentiate between them.

I believe all people are equal but we are also different. We are equal because we are all humans and deserve to live in situations free of violence and in dignity, but we are different because we have all grown up in different places, in different times, under different conditions, and with differing life chances and opportunities as resources are abundantly available to some but lacking for others, due to power hierarchies and remaining colonial legacies. Thus, to understand perceptions and behaviour, and also to change them, we need to take into account these intersecting differences with regard to age, gender, class, skin colour, traditions, religion, and sexual orientation. However, regardless of these differences, all humans want to live their lives free of violence, but with access to necessary resources, and with mutual appreciation, to discover and fully realise our human potential.

## 1.1 Conceptualisations of gender and violence

Violence against women perpetrated by men is happening all over the world. Most physical violence in intimate relationships is perpetrated by people gendered male and directed towards people gendered female (WHO 2005, WHO et al. 2013, Merry 2009). The society and community in which it occurs form the frame for the violence (Merry 2009). That means the perception of violence is dependent on the cultural and historical context of a society (see below). The question of which gender norms are expected depends on Culture<sup>11</sup> at a certain point in time. A man who beats a woman does so under the influence of the prevailing norms for males and females, as well as the gender relations associated with that particular time and place. The reactions of a woman who experiences violence and that of her social environment are also influenced by those norms and by the opportunities that society offers them. Accordingly, both the categories of gender and violence are culturally and historically constructed and thus are subject to change. Consequently, they are important categories of analysis for understanding male and female realities, the scope of action, and the use of violence, as well as the response to violence in Namibia.

As categories influence perceptions and behaviours, in this work I differentiate between two perspectives: people's reality as it is perceived and presented at a certain point of time and space; and the ontological vision which opens up the minds to possible alternatives in the future. With regard to the latter, we could imagine a future in which gender and skin colour no longer has any significance, where just being human is what counts; a future in which violence is a remnant of the past and no longer regarded as acceptable. To reach such a future, we first need to understand contemporary reality. In order to understand how gender and violence are constructed in Namibia and how they are analysed and interpreted in this research, the conceptualisations and perspectives used are explained below, starting with gender constructions.

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<sup>11</sup> Culture is written with a capital 'C' because it refers to the broad definition of Culture, rather than culture in a more specific sense (see below).

### 1.1.1 Constructions of gender

#### **Gender as a category of differentiation**

An early conceptualisation regarding the understanding of gender constructions was the still widely applied differentiation between “sex” and “gender”.<sup>12</sup> This distinction between the biological “sex” versus the cultural or social “gender”, made it possible to shed light on the variability of the status of men and women and to oppose biological essentialism. However, this division has been criticised since the 1980s by several poststructuralists, queer theorists, as well as social and cultural anthropologists (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994) and sociologists (Oyewumi 1997), among others. The US philosopher Judith Butler (1990), in particular, and others have stressed that the physical part – sex – is also constructed, meaning there is no pre-language option for humans to perceive. The sociologist Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997) identifies the origin of the sex-gender-differentiation within global northern theory construction reflecting the European dichotomous tradition of separating mind and body, but which is not easily transferable to African studies.<sup>13</sup> Ifi Amadiume stresses in her anthropological study on the changes in women’s role within Igbo Culture that, in pre-colonial Igbo society, gender and sex did not automatically overlap (Amadiume 1987). By taking a broader perspective it becomes clear that masculinity as well as femininity is not necessarily bound to the body (Amadiume 1987), but can be seen as a continuum of characteristics (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994, Merry 2009:12). These different varieties of gender constructions illustrate the fact that, if viewed ontologically, gender does not have to be dichotomous, and it demonstrates the constructional and fluid character of gender.

Moreover, Klein points to the powerful role of biomedicine in defining what is normal regarding gender (Klein 2012). Biomedical knowledge about gender is culturally and historically contextualised in the global north. It has been perceived as a matter of fact, in other words as absolute knowledge, until the present day. Standard texts such as the *International Classification of Diseases* (ICD) by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which is used worldwide, or the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) by the American Psychiatric Association, classify which biological state of gender is seen as “normal” and which as “pathological”. However, those classifications have changed over time, showing that it is a convention. For example, homosexuality was seen as a mental disorder until 1990 when it was removed from the DSM (Klein 2012). In many countries people are classified as female or male at birth, although there is no clarity in bodily signs.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For the origin and development of the terms see Klein (2012).

<sup>13</sup> However, this European tradition is also not static. The perception and classification of gendered bodies has changed over time from a one-sex body, in which the male organs were seen as located outside and the female organs as located inside, to a two-sex body. This transition only happened in the 18th century (Laqueur 1990).

<sup>14</sup> If babies do not have clear bodily signs that indicate they are male or female at birth, since 1960 in Germany and in other parts of the world where biomedicine dominates, those babies have often been operated on to create clarity, frequently without any medical indication and sometimes even without the parents’ consent. Later on in the

In some countries people can be classified as having an unidentified gender, represented by an X on their identity cards.<sup>15</sup> If we meet people whose physical appearance we cannot clearly identify, we may easily become irritated. This shows that it is important for people to be able to distinguish a person clearly as female or male (see also Mascia-Lees 2000), although gender is constructed (Scott 1986). Moreover, it sheds light on the underlying power<sup>16</sup> relations.

Notwithstanding, it has not yet been convincingly researched and explained whether there are more differences between males and females than simply the ability to reproduce. Taking into account the rapid progress of reproductive medicine, it is questionable how long this dimorphic classification of gender (men/women and sex/gender) can be maintained in the future. Luce Irigaray views gender difference as an open question of modern times (Irigaray 1991), a question that so far remains unanswered (see also Butler 2009).

At this point of time, in Namibia and many other countries in the world, people are most often perceived in the dichotomous way as male or female (Mascia-Lees 2000). Gender is a reality and plays an important, structuring role in people's lives. Currently, it can be said that, in many societies of the world, gender is a significant category of differentiation. Thus, it is essential to find out more about the differences in gendered realities and their implications. In this dissertation I use the term gender (and not sex) to describe and analyse people's perceptions, experiences, expectations, roles, norms, and ideals according to how they see themselves, how they behave, and how they are seen and reacted to as gendered male, female or diverse.<sup>17</sup> Femininities, masculinities, and other gendered diversities are assigned, socialised, adopted, changed and varied. South African researchers Rebecca Helman and Kopano Ratele (2016) place emphasis on "non-binary constructions of gender as they relate to disruptions of problematic constructions of masculinity and femininity" (Helman/Ratele 2016:5, see also below). Cultures do not only prescribe gender norms for each gender, but also how they are expected to relate *to each other*. In particular, norms regarding the division of labour and who has responsibility for what task and the power to decide are constructed according to gender. Gender constructions include femininities, masculinities, as well as alternatives and diverse forms which are bound together in a social system. Therefore, I refer

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individual's life, this decision could prove to be wrong, and could have serious consequences. In Germany, this practice was subsequently changed and it was required that a baby's gender should be recorded as male, female or left blank.

<sup>15</sup> At this point in time it includes the following countries: India, Pakistan, Brazil, Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Denmark, Germany, Canada, Columbia, Malta, Nepal, and New Zealand.

<sup>16</sup> "Power" is seen here as operating within any social interaction (Foucault 1975).

<sup>17</sup> Therefore, I also avoid conceptual differences in the terms "male" referring to sex, versus "masculine" referring to "gender", and "female" versus "feminine" respectively. Moreover, I do not imply any gender identity here, as this might be misused in an identity politics discourse (Connell 2014a, Miescher et al. 2007, /Khaxas 2010). Connell (2014a) gives an overview of the developments in the term "identity" and of the problems emerging from "identity politics".

to these constructions as a “gender system”. They are time and space dependent and therefore fluid and changing.

### **Gender as a regulative norm**

Notwithstanding the constructional character of gender, worldwide, people assign norms and regulations to those two poles of gender (Mascia-Lees 2000) within the gender system of their society. People are expected to follow binary gender norms and, if they do not, are admonished or punished. Butler states:

Gender is not exactly what one “is”, nor is it precisely what one “has”. Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalisation of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms – hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative – that gender assumes. (Butler 2014:413)

There has been a strong normalisation discourse (Foucault 1975, Butler 1990, 2004) or naturalisation process (Connell 2013, Lorway 2015), which reinforces the tendency to perceive gender as essentialist, that is, as normal, natural, God-given and thus unchangeable (see Chapter 5). However, gender norms are learnt, starting early in life. They are often subtle and permanently linked to regulation, and thus have a strong effect. Butler (2004) points to the power of gender norms as the German translation of her book suggests (Butler 2009).

Gender socialisation is the process of learning how to behave and perform according to the gender norms of a specific time and space. Gender norms and their processes of construction and normalisation are rooted and referred to in different fields of social practice. Gender norms obtain their power through their relationship with religion or tradition. Linkages with religion or tradition provide the frame of reference when middle-aged and older people involved in the process of bringing up younger people try to keep children and young people within the boundaries of a specific gender system. People refer to religion or tradition in order to legitimate behaviour and to maintain those norms: “A norm operates within social practices as the implicit standard of *normalisation*” (Butler 2014:412, italics in original).

Butler highlights the dual character of norms. On the one hand, norms keep a society going. They maintain a peaceful way of living together and establish a foundation on which ethical and political practice is based. As such, norms are useful for a society. On the other hand, norms have a restrictive, regulatory, exclusionary, normalising and thus violent character. They might lead people to behave in a way that misfit their needs. Thus, norms can lead to violence and suffering as well (Butler 2009:348).

In order to gain a better understanding of the social processes involved in maintaining gender norms, I developed the concept of “gendered admonishments”. Admonishments by caregivers, teachers, relatives or peers are aimed at correcting behaviour perceived as gendered that is not seen as appropriate for either females or males in a certain gender

system. Helman and Ratele describe what I mean when they speak of “discouraging or encouraging children’s participation in particular activities” (Helman/Ratele 2016:3). Caregivers often believe it is important to keep the main poles of the gender continuum – female and male – distinctive, legitimating this through religion or tradition. This means that girls are admonished to behave “like a girl”, and boys are admonished to behave “like a boy” (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7). In this regard, transgressions into gender spaces beyond currently accepted gender norms have to be prevented. If people challenge the default scope of action of what a wo/man can do (e.g., decision-making, division of labour), it can cause conflicts<sup>18</sup> within gender relations and within the person’s own gender group. People are bound into social relationships (family, kinship, employment, communities) whose members identify with certain gender norms and who may not be very flexible regarding changes in gender. Thus, if people do reflect on their gender and see themselves as deviating from a norm, they need to decide whether they want to risk jeopardising their social relationships in order to live the life that they really want or need: “Gender is thus a regulative norm” (Butler 2014:423).

The “right” sexual orientation is part of the regulative norms of gender. In hegemonic gender norms, women to men combinations, that is heterosexuality, are generally considered normal. The anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff define hegemony as, “that part of a dominant ideology that has been naturalised, and having contrived a tangible world in its image, does not appear ideological at all” (Comaroff/Comaroff 1992:29). However, there are many people who do not fit into this construction, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTTIQ) people. The heteronormative order restricts people in relation to their individual needs and their freedom. In many parts of the world, including Namibia, people who deviate from the heteronormative order are discriminated against and violated, as people on the heterosexual spectrum seem to feel threatened by alternatives (see Chapter 5).<sup>19</sup> On the one hand, this is because people identify with gender norms perceived as static and, on the other hand, gender is linked to certain powers and privileges, and thus underpins regulations (Butler 2014). Thus, if people do not follow the required dichotomous gender norms of a gender system, they are admonished, sometimes violently, to correct their behaviour (Lorway 2015, Jewkes/Morrell 2010, Merry 2009, and see Chapters 6, 7 and 8). Moreover, many people feel challenged in regard to their own gender by such ‘deviant’ behaviour. (Connell 2013, Butler 2014)

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<sup>18</sup> Conflicts are understood as differing and as irreconcilable seen interests of at least two parties involved (referring to Krämer 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Queer studies are concerned with the LGBTTIQ realities of life (e.g., Klein 2012). Fester mentions that queer studies at African universities at that time (2016) were not institutionalised, although there are African scientists who study and publish on these subjects (in Namibia e.g., /Khaxas/Wieringa 2007), as well as scientists originating from the global north (Lorway 2015, 2009, Currier 2012).

## **Gendered injustices, the global demand for gender equality and resultant polarisations**

In many societies of the world, it makes a big difference whether you are seen and treated as a man or a woman, regarding status, available resources, division of labour, workload, decision-making power, sexual and reproductive freedoms, freedom of movement, income potential, professional opportunities, etc. Thus, Culture and the historic moment determine who is regarded as able or unable to be or to do what, and who gets access to which resources.

Gender systems with an imbalance in power relations are asymmetric gender systems. They are built on complementarily attributed and differently valued characteristics, abilities, and responsibilities of males and females. In several parts of the world, women and girls are ascribed fewer rights and privileges than men and boys.<sup>20</sup> Laws and rights are often gender specific. Only in a few countries do people of both genders have exactly the same rights, and even then, the legal reality is not necessarily in accordance with the de facto reality of people's lives. In this regard the concept of "problematic constructions of gender", defined as "dominant and highly sexually active constructions of masculinity and subordinate and acquiescent constructions of femininity" (Helman/Ratele 2016:1), are useful. Helman and Ratele assume that these reproduce gender inequality, and "are linked to practices of violence and sexual risk" (ibid:10).

Global injustices in gender relations were generalised as universal worldwide subordination of women to men by feminists from the global north. This was used to fight for women's rights globally. However, it also led to the image of the "oppressed third world woman", as Namibian women's activist /Khaxas<sup>21</sup> points out:

Third world women are objectified and constructed as 'always-already oppressed' and passive 'other women', while western women represent themselves as modern, educated and having superior womanhood. (/Khaxas 1996:13)

This generalisation and thus determination of women as victims<sup>22</sup> and not as active agents is not realistic. Males and females may become victimised or be able to perpetrate or perpetuate violence, as Sections 6.2.2 and 7.2.2 show. Moreover, black feminists strongly condemned the supposed worldwide sisterhood (Oyewumi 1997, Mohanty 1988, Crenshaw 1991). They pointed to existing differences within the category of "woman". The majority of women from the global south face different challenges to those of women from the global north. Moreover, even inside a country, there can be several differences within the category of women, for example regarding class, age, religion, and Culture (see Chapters 6 and 7).

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<sup>20</sup> A good overview of this unequal situation is given by Connell 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Her name is a Khoekhoegowab term. The "r" symbolises a click in pronunciation which, according to Pauli, is the "(affricated) dental click" (2009:40, footnote 26).

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 10 for the use of victims and survivors.

The categories of gender, Culture, age, religion, class and global influences intersect, mutually influence and relate to structures of domination such as racism<sup>23</sup>, sexism, and homophobia, etc. (Crenshaw 1991, Cockburn 2004), as well as to different levels of access to power. This implies multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage for some and also privileges for others, and is thus important in order to understand people's different living realities. In this regard, in Namibia, categorisation by skin colour is seen as important for many people and still has legacies and implications for current realities.<sup>24</sup>

There are various orientations within feminism: liberal, cultural, radical, postmodern and intersectional, for example (Vasiljevic et al. 2017). Liberal feminism, which has influenced Namibian Government policies on gender since independence (/Khaxas 1996; see Section 3.2), focuses on abolishing discrimination against women, especially in the realm of law. This form of feminism is primarily associated with gender equality. However, it is limited: "Liberal feminism does not seek to challenge the current social structures and practices, but to open them to women" (Vasiljevic et al. 2017:5). Vasiljevic et al. highlight the male bias in the law, constructed according to male standards, but masquerading as gender neutral. However, today women have different living realities compared to men, and other challenges to cope with. Thus, women will not necessarily benefit solely from having equal rights but instead may experience further injustice. However, equal legal rights are the prerequisite – the first step to achieving lived and substantive gender equality (see also Chapter 3).

Since power is constructed across Culture, class, age, and gender and there are differences within groups, intersecting coalitions of interests between groups of men *and* women are possible. Thus, Edwards-Jauch's suggestion makes sense: "The struggle for gender equality should, therefore, not be perceived as anti-male but rather part of a struggle to end all systems' oppressions and inequality" (Edwards-Jauch 2016:52). It is necessary to include men as agents of change for gender equality. Worldwide, many women and some men are engaging in globally existing but locally situated manifestations of feminism (de Lauretis 1988) to fight for equal rights for women and democratic gender relations. The

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<sup>23</sup> I understand racism as a behaviour or statement, which reveals a generalised negative perception towards individuals of ethnic groups or people of other skin colours (see footnote 24) than one's own because of perceived differences that legitimate the disadvantage of the other person and the privilege of oneself, and even aggression towards the other person (Memmi 1982:103). As such, I classify racism as symbolic violence (see Section 1.1.2).

<sup>24</sup> The categorisation of people according to their skin colour originates from colonial times, and was especially focussed on in apartheid policy, in which distinctions were made between people with white, black and coloured skin with implications for their rights. White people had the most rights and privileges, coloured people had fewer, and black people had hardly any. When looking at the social reality of the people today it becomes clear that these distinctions according to skin colour cannot easily be ignored because they still influence the perceptions and the mutual interactions of the people. Therefore, in my work I talk about 'blacks' or 'black people' and 'whites' or "white people", as local people do. However, it does not mean that I agree with values or stereotypes ascribed according to skin colour or to ethnic groups. The two groups are composed as follows: the white population consists of German, Afrikaaner and English people. The black population comprises the Damara, Nama, Herero, Ovahimba, Owambo, Kavango, Caprivi, Tswana, San people and other groups. There is also a third group, the coloured people, but it was very rare that I came across people who regarded themselves as belonging to that group. Either there were not many coloured people in Outjo or possibly I was not able to recognise somebody as coloured without a self-classification (for information on "being coloured" in Namibia, see Bedorf 2007).

acknowledgement of difference (Fester 2016:23) between different strands and locales of feminism is important, while “alliances across difference are simultaneously fragile and strong, problematic and necessary” (Miescher et al. 2007). Of particular importance in this respect is transparency in science to enable us to understand from which perspective the knowledge is produced and to share solidarity across difference (Mohanty 2003). Originally in this research, I took a feminist stance, but during the research I came to realise that one-sided improvements for women in underprivileged situations are not enough and may even be counter-productive as they may be violently opposed by men. Additionally, if gender is seen as a system (see above), then, changing one factor also affects the other. Therefore, in conducting my research and analysis, I have adopted an emancipatory perspective. Humans, including women, struggle to put their “right to self-determination” (Melber 2018a:18) into action “to ensure further social justice and equality among the Namibian people” (ibid:31).

Gendered injustices led to a global demand for a shift towards gender equality; based on the idea that women’s rights are human rights. Gender equality was initially identified as a global aim by the United Nations (UN). It was demanded, most notably, in the *Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) (see WEB CEDAW), adopted in 1979. This was also seen as a human rights bill for women. Within the aim of gender equality, it is implied that women should have the right to live a life without violence. The UN organisation especially engaging for gender equality and the empowerment of women, UN Women, assumes that if gender equality is achieved, there will be a decrease in violence against women, as it is assumed that this violence is an intrinsic part of unequal gender relations (Merry 2009, and see Holter 2013). Accordingly, there was a report of the World Health Organisation (WHO) published in 2009 entitled, “Promoting gender equality to prevent violence against women” (2009). In October 2017, at the plenary session of the *Five Days of Violence Prevention Conference* in South Africa, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, stated: “Gender inequality and violence against women are two sides of the same coin” (WEB UN Women).<sup>25</sup> It has been seen in a similar way in Namibia: “These kinds of violence are one of many manifestations of gender inequality in the country” (Alweendo et al. 2018:2). The idea is that if males and females live in a state of equal gender relations violence would be rendered unnecessary, and if there are conflicts of interests these would be resolved by democratic negotiations.

However, what is happening on the way to gender equality? I argue that the transition to gender equality can be challenging. As early as 1996, while working towards gender equality, /Khaxas warned about a backlash against gender reform and therefore suggested that:

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<sup>25</sup> In addition, the UN and European Union’s current “Spotlight Initiative”, which is aimed at ending all forms of violence against women worldwide until 2030, includes as a key agenda item, “Promoting gender-equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours” (WEB Spotlight).

“Gender reforms therefore should theorise about what has to be when men go into crisis because of the changes that feminism proposes” (/Khaxas 1996:37).

The embeddedness of gender equality in the human rights discourse has power as well as limitations (Hodgson 2011). The claim that all human beings are equal and have the right to live free of violence and force is very powerful and people worldwide refer to it. However, on the other hand, human rights discourses have to be understood in Cultural and historical contexts, as well as how they are applied and used in local contexts. The human rights discourse is premised on the assumption of an autonomous individual. However, it is important to take into consideration...

(...) other modes of being, belonging, and agency, including a person's various (and shifting) connections, obligations, affiliations, subjectivities and positionings vis-à-vis overlapping collectivities such as their communities, political parties, families, friends, and co-workers. (Hodgson 2011:11)

People do not simply act as individuals, but within their social environment, which may restrict their ability to act. Felicity Thomas, who did research on negotiations about gender equality in Caprivi in Namibia, also highlights the problem of this human rights approach that places the individual at the centre of the change and does not integrate the social environment:

Notions of rights and equality are often posited on an individual's ability to act freely of cultural and institutional constraints, in reality people's choices are influenced by sociocultural obligations. (Thomas 2007:599f)

People do not make decisions in a vacuum, but are embedded into their social environment.<sup>26</sup> Robert Lorway, who did field research about the developments and ambiguities within the Namibian non-governmental organisation (NGO) *The Rainbow Project* (TRP), even suggests that violence may be a reaction to the demands of human rights, if the context in which people live is not taken into account. The TRP leaders, in relation to the TRP youth, drew strongly on human rights discourse, including sexual freedom, without taking into account the living conditions of the young people:

Yet they experienced profound ambivalence when their newly found sexual freedom collided against and collapsed before the stark material realities of extremely high HIV prevalence, sexual violence, gender inequality, tribalism, and underemployment (...). (Lorway 2015:9)

Accordingly, applying the concept of human rights makes it necessary to take into account the Cultural, economic and historic context when demanding equal rights for all people, and to look at possible impediments and reach sustainable transitions.

In their publication on *African philosophy and thought systems*, the Zimbabwean anthropologists Munyaradzi Mawere and Tapuwa Mubaya criticise human rights as an invention of the global north and detect ethnocentrism within it. They oppose the idea of

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<sup>26</sup> This individual centred approach was also applied during the fight against HIV/AIDS and was one reason why behavioural change was not as easy or quickly achieved as desired (Gierse-Arsten 2005).

women's empowerment, gender equality, and gay rights as ethnocentric and destructive. They claim:

In an effort to destabilise and break the African communitarian systems, the issue of human rights was introduced. As a result of this, the patriarchal system was severely challenged (...). Women lobby groups in the guise of protecting human rights were established. The extended family crumbled and moral values that glued the community were questioned and ridiculed. The number of divorce cases rocketed up and the problem of single mothers became the order of the day. Gradually the issue of human rights infiltrated into the education sector and sadly some African countries such as South Africa besides licensing children as young as twelve to indulge in sexual activities have openly allowed children to be pregnant while at school (...). Worse still, they have legalised the issue of gay marriage, a thing that is unheard of in many African countries. (Mawere/Mubaya 2016:223f)

Mawere and Mubaya criticise ideas on human rights and democracy as global northern constructs which are used to exploit and destroy African communities. However, regardless of where an idea originates, it will still spread. Moreover, some ideas originate in several different contexts at once. Mawere and Mubaya contrast human rights with the philosophy of *Ubuntu* as an original African concept. This focuses not on the individual but on the group.

*Ubuntu* encompasses the following norms and values:

(...) the 'core' and 'associated' ubuntu values include the following aspects: Humanness: warmth, tolerance, understanding, peace, humanity; Caring: empathy, sympathy, helpfulness, charitable, friendliness; Sharing: giving (unconditionally), redistribution, open-handedness; Respect: commitment, dignity, obedience, order; Compassion: love, cohesion, informality, forgiving and spontaneity. (Mawere/Mubaya 2016:97f)

This philosophy shares similar ideas with the human rights framework, such as mutual respect, understanding, sharing, and tolerance. The argument against gender equality as a global north invention which is not applicable to Africa can also be found in Namibia by some people (see Chapter 5). On the other hand, Karen Biraimah (2016) proposes an "*ubuntu*-style education" for Namibian schools and points to the importance of equality in *Ubuntu* philosophy. Shanyanana and Zongwe (2017), who also discuss *Ubuntu* in the Namibian context, point to the origins of the *Ubuntu* concept as diffuse, thereby giving much scope for interpretation. They point to the importance of community in *Ubuntu* while individual freedom is not clearly acknowledged, and detect the presence of a patriarchal and paternalistic attitude. Manyonganise (2015) criticises the current perception of *Ubuntu* as African Philosophy as being male dominated and without any gendered perspective. Thus, a reframing of the *Ubuntu* concept is needed, as Shanyanana and Zongwe (2017) also assert. Unfortunately, Mawere and Mubaya do not seek a synthesis between *Ubuntu* and human rights. For example, being tolerant could also mean being tolerant of alternative gender constructions, while sharing and showing empathy could have the consequence of giving women the same rights as men. The *Ubuntu* focus on community could be combined with the focus on the individual of the human rights concept.

The discourse on human rights and the "language of rights" is seen as an important feature of modernities (Varela et al. 2015:252). Different forms of modernities can be found

worldwide, all sharing the commonalities of using the modern medium of communication, recognition of individual rights and the readiness for innovation (Hahn 2013:220). In Namibia, “modern” is associated with human rights, individual freedom, and based on Christian belief (see Section 1.4 and Chapter 5).<sup>27</sup> Moreover, “modern” is seen as opposite to “traditional” (see Section 4.3 and Chapter 5). I use the terms in the same way as the people in Outjo where the research took place: “traditional” as belonging to the precolonial or colonial era; and “modern” as shaped by Christianity and western lifestyles including the idea of human rights. By “tradition” I do not mean a “true” historical past but an imagined construction of the past – people’s historicity. The ideal-typical differentiation between history – as a collection of empirical facts<sup>28</sup> – and historicity, which “concerns the ongoing social production of accounts of pasts and futures” – is useful (Hirsch/Stewart 2005:262). People use ideas of a past tradition as cultural scripts, perceiving them as realities and legitimising their contemporary beliefs and behaviour with them. They choose which parts of tradition and of the modern world fit with their needs and aims (Spiegel/Boonzaier 1988, van der Vliet 1991). Especially in the realm of gender, people polarised around self-identifying with “being traditional” and “being modern”, as is shown in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

### **Use of the terms tradition and culture/Culture**

Many people in Namibia used the terms “tradition” and “culture” interchangeably when referring to factors that influence the construction of gender norms (see Chapter 5). The whole topic of Culture is a sensitive and complex one, especially in Namibia with its history of colonialism<sup>29</sup> (see Pauli 2009). Stereotypes based on culture were created and reinforced during the colonial period, and used for racist purposes, to support the colonial ‘divide and rule’ strategy. The Namibian Government therefore chose to use the notion of language for statistical purposes instead of “ethnic group” or “culture”. I use “culture” in this context in the same way as the Namibian people, equating it with tradition for the purpose of distinguishing specific ethnic groups. These are emic terms, which I subsume under the narrow definition of culture. In Namibian society the main ethnic groups are: Owambo, Damara, Nama, Herero, Himba, Kavango, Caprivi, Tswana, San, German, Afrikaaner and English. However, these are not static groups and there is much fluidity between and within them, especially in urban areas; thus, it is appropriate to talk about “hybrid cultures” (Bhaba 1994, Hailonga 2005). Culture is always in flux and dynamically negotiated between different forces of society, within and in exchange with other societies. Hodgson (2011) provides the following definition:

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<sup>27</sup> Christianity is the religion of the overwhelming majority in Namibia, although there are also other religions (see Section 5.1).

<sup>28</sup> It is clear that those facts perceived as historiography are always dependent on the time and context when they were written.

<sup>29</sup> I use “colonialism” to refer to German as well as South African administrations.

(...) we understand “culture” to refer to the assumptions, meanings, ideas, and practices that shape and are shaped by people’s everyday interactions, then culture is (...) a dynamic, historical, contested part of all of our lives and institutions. (Hodgson 2011:6)

When I use the term Culture in this broader sense, differentiating it from the static, emic version of how the Namibian people perceive it, I write it with an initial capital: Culture, meaning the broad definition of culture. This etic understanding of Culture incorporates the view that Cultures influence, intersect with, and change each other (see also Section 9.2).

Globalised images of gender, sexuality, and intimate relationships are circulated via global Cultural flows<sup>30</sup> (Appadurai 2006<sup>1</sup>:589), by the media, including television, the internet, and social media, but also through migration to other countries for study or work, or during the apartheid era by people in exile, or global companies (see also van Wolputte 2016 for Namibia, and Chapter 2). Cultures of the global north, where other gender constructions are prevalent, form an important influence, due to their economic domination, originating in the former colonial power of several countries of the global north. Since the sexual revolution of the 1970s, in the global north, there is a demand for women’s rights, individual choices, and sexuality independent of marriage, the ideal of romantic love, among other things, which are regarded as particularly important (Giddens 1992). Another example is the development of a “dating culture” since the beginning of the twentieth century in the US, in which men use their money to take women out on dates (Bailey 1988), and is linked with “men’s role of providing for women” (Hunter 2015). These developments are important for gender relations and the commodification of intimate relationships in Namibia as well (see Section 5.2).

Having explained the conceptualisations used in the study with regard to gender constructions, in the next section I focus on the concepts that are applied concerning violence.

### 1.1.2 Constructions of violence

In this thesis I focus mainly on ordinary violence as the social anthropologists Bouju and de Bruijn understand it: “violence of ordinary people in ordinary situations” (2014:1), referring to the French anthropologists Janin and Marie (2003). This interpersonal violence includes violence that occurs between intimate partners and within families during daily life. However, as this study includes narrative accounts of the past, it also includes violence that took place in colonial times, including war, which had implications for contemporary behaviour and perceptions.

Bouju and de Bruijn discuss the difficult process of the conceptualisation of violence as violence by the researcher. This depends on the perspective of the observer and is culturally

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<sup>30</sup> Appadurai differentiates between “(a) ethnoscapes, (b) mediascapes, (c) technoscapes, (d) financescapes, and (e) ideoscapes” (Appadurai 2006<sup>1</sup>:589). One example of newer Cultural flows is those resulting from China being economically active in Namibia. However, as it did not play a role in the research site of Outjo during the time when the research was conducted, I did not include this in the analysis.

and historically influenced, as well as by the individual's personal experiences. Moreover, the classification of something as violence by the researcher might differ from how it is perceived by the local people. In their publication on ordinary violence in different African countries, the researchers concentrate on the suffering which they observed, stating: "... human suffering is not a narrative. Beyond our subjectivity and our ethnocentrism were the very real beatings, cries, pain and suffering that hit our conscience, generating mixed feelings of horror, anger and pity (...)." (Bouju/de Bruijn 2014:5) In my research I followed this approach, and therefore, the suffering of victims of violence led me to categorise something as violence. That means that even if a victim did not precisely describe something as violence, but it was connected to suffering, I defined it as violence. The categorisation of violence may also differ among members of a community and thus might also reflect social change. This is shown in Section 8.2 in particular.

The definitions regarding violence given by research participants were many and various. Interestingly, many learners<sup>31</sup> who participated in the School Survey (see Section 1.3) included physical and emotional elements in their definitions of violence, and stressed that it occurs against the will of the victim. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois also emphasise that, in order to understand violence, it is important to go beyond its physicality. They point to the relevance of "assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim" (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2004:1). During the interviews, research participants most often mentioned physical violence in their narratives, as it is the most obvious and visible form of violence. However, I included both the aforementioned forms of violence. Moreover, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois regard violence as a "slippery concept – nonlinear, productive, destructive, *and* reproductive" (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2004:1, in italics in original).

### **Culture<sup>32</sup> of violence**

In the case of many medical, biological and psychological studies, only the individual perspective is explored and not the context (Merry 2009) and violence is assessed as deviant behaviour. In anthropological approaches such as the compilation by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2008), violence is not seen as pathological but as a "human condition" (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:2). That means that every human being is able to use violence as well as to reject it. People growing up with the idea that violence is normal are more likely to use it as adults (see below). Accordingly, it is important to look at the social and cultural context in which individuals choose the violent option (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois

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<sup>31</sup> The term "learners" is a locally used term for pupils.

<sup>32</sup> See Section 1.1.1 for the differentiation between the use of the broad versus the narrow definition of culture.

2008, Wies/Haldane 2015).<sup>33</sup> Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois stress: “We are social creatures. Cultures, social structures, ideas, and ideologies shape all dimensions of violence, *both* its expressions and its repressions” (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:3, italics in original). In a society, norms and values are shared, and thus, the society constructs the framework for how violence is perceived. I speak of a “Culture of violence” if confronted with a society in which a Culture is prevalent which tolerates violence against one group (for example children), meaning it is not regarded as violence, but normalised (see also Becker 1995, Edwards-Jauch 2016, and Kandirikirira 2002 and in Section 1.2). Here I apply the broad definition of Culture (see in Section 1.1.1), stressing its dynamic character and implying its changeability and rejecting any essentialistic and static connotation.<sup>34</sup>

How violence is assessed by people varies culturally and historically. Children are taught the norms and values of their Culture by their caregivers<sup>35</sup> and other people within their environment. They learn what is normal, what is right and what is wrong, regarding gender, violence and other issues. Analogous to gender socialisation (see above), is the socialisation of violence. Children learn from role models such as caregivers and their social environment (families, neighbours, friends, and communities): when they witness violence; when people speak about violent incidents; and when they do not speak about violence that has occurred. Children learn how people around them react to violence and in which situations it might be seen as legitimate to behave violently. In short, they learn what is perceived as violence (see Abrahams 2002).

What is regarded as violence in one cultural or historical context can be seen as legitimate behaviour in another (Merry 2009, Bouju/de Bruijn 2014). If certain behaviour is assessed as violence, there might be sanctions or punishments to prevent it:

The physical substrate of violence is about pain, injury, and death but its conversion into a social offense depends on culturally embedded understandings of gender, family, community, and nation. (Merry 2009:22)

If it is seen as legitimate behaviour, there is no reaction, no sanction (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008), and no change. Therefore, this violence will continue to happen. One example of the differentiation between legitimate and illegitimate violence is corporal punishment:

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<sup>33</sup> Another useful approach is offered by the book *Cultures under siege*, in which psychological and anthropological perspectives meet (Robben/Suarez-Orozco 2000). However, here the focus is only on collective violence, not interpersonal violence.

<sup>34</sup> Thus, of course, this does not mean the culture of certain ethnic groups but that of the entire society or community.

<sup>35</sup> By “caregivers” I mean people close to children, who are involved in raising them, and have responsibility for them, such as parents, but also aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc. In Namibia, many children do not grow up with their biological parents or they live just with one of them, usually the mother (see Section 7.1). Moreover, such caregivers can also vary. See Section 4.3 on foster children. Therefore, the term “caregivers” covers a wider range of people.

(...) police, social workers, and family-court judges must decide whether spanking a child with a hand, a hairbrush or a leather strap, or throwing a child across a room, or slamming him or her against a wall is a violent act or a culturally defined legitimate expression of parental authority and responsibility. (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:2)

People who have experienced violence in childhood are more likely to use violence on others (Fulu et al. 2017). Many people who have experienced violence in childhood go on to see it as a normal part of raising a child. I found often that people mentioned that they had been beaten when they were a child and which had not damaged them (e.g. Man 23, Men's Debate). Then they concluded that corporal punishment is good for their children, too (see Section 4.3). Moreover, there is a link between former victimisation through repeated violence and the use of violence (Fassin et al. 2008:237, Fulu et al. 2017). It is also the case that "past humiliations may be passed on from parent to child, and from one generation to the next" (Suarez-Oroszco/Robben 2000:23). This all shows that violence has a self-perpetuating character (see also Krämer 2007).

Children learn if and when it is seen as normal to be punished for behaviour that deviates from social norms. They might learn that the conflict between them and their parents is resolved by their parents' use of corporal punishment. Thus, violence comes to be seen as an accepted means of conflict resolution (Orywal 1996). And, if something happens on a regular basis it might be seen as a normal part of ordinary life and the threshold for the use of violence is lowered. Abrahams (2002) looked for risk factors for men behaving violently towards their partners. She identified among other risk factors, boys experiencing corporal violence and boys witnessing violence by their fathers towards their mothers. They learnt that violence is a normal part of intimate relationships (Abrahams 2002). This process reflects a Culture of violence against women. In this regard Jewkes et al. explain:

(...) violence against women and girls does not occur in a social vacuum, but arises out of a context of gender inequity and social norms of gender relations that are largely supported by both men and women. (Jewkes et al. 2015:1586)

Consequently, it is useful to view the whole range of social norms, values and expectations shared by a group of people at a certain time and within a particular space (also reflected in the legislation) which allows violence to happen with little or no sanctions.

Much of the violence that occurred during colonial times entailed no sanctions at all. Although I focus on ordinary violence, the severe violence of colonial times, which became inscribed in societal structures, had legacies for the violence of the present. To encompass the violence and atrocities experienced by people in Namibia during colonial times, I use the term colonial violence (see Chapter 2) and I describe the violent conditions (German *Gewaltverhältnisse*, Krüger 2004:92) prevalent during colonial times (see Chapter 2), as the colonial Culture of violence. Bennett's (2010:24) conceptualisation of colonialism as violence is also used in this thesis.

## **Context of violence: structural and symbolic violence**

Regarding the analysis of contextual factors that contribute to violence, the concepts of structural violence and symbolic violence are vital. It is important to include difficult, restrictive and unequal living conditions in our understanding of violence. Therefore, Johan Galtung established the term structural violence: “The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as un-equal life chances” (Galtung 1969). Structural violence limits people’s abilities to act and react (Farmer 2008). People inevitably suffer under structurally-endorsed poverty, inequalities, and displacement. Namibia is one of the most economically unequal countries in the world (Edwards-Jauch 2016, see Section 4.1). Wilkinson and Pickett view inequality as structural violence (Wilkinson/Pickett 2009:159). Bouju and de Bruijn draw a link between inequalities and ordinary violence: “It is the inequality of power that is deeply rooted in social relationships that allows ordinary violence to occur” (2014:9). In the hierarchy of human relations, a different kind of appreciation and respect<sup>36</sup> towards a person is associated with a certain rank in the hierarchy, while a divergent access to resources is also implied. Colonialism was characterised as extremely hierarchical. The withholding of civil rights, as well as the expropriation of land and displacements by the colonial administration constituted structural violence (Edwards-Jauch 2016). Bennett summarises some conclusions reached by postcolonial<sup>37</sup> research as follows:

Research reveals diverse layers of colonial praxis as saturated with hierarchical notions of gender, sexual coercion of women, (...) and the consistent overall degradation of women. (Bennett 2010:24f)

Structural violence limits agency and thus creates vulnerability to violence. Women who are mainly responsible for children and have less access to employment are particularly prone to prostitution and transactional intimate relationships (see Sections 2.2, 5.2 and 7.1). Because of their poverty they have less power to negotiate safe and violence-free sex (see Chapter 8). They live in intimate relationships that they are not happy with because they feel dependent on the men or, as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois put it: “the violence of poverty, hunger, social exclusion and humiliation – inevitably translates into intimate and domestic violence” (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:1). However, structural violence often operates invisibly and seems like a normal living condition; thus, a normalisation takes place: “Structural violence is usually concealed within the hegemony of ordinariness, hidden in the mundane details of everyday life” (Merry 2009:5).

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<sup>36</sup> The term “respect”, and conversely, a strongly felt lack of respect, occurred very often during this research in different interview settings, informal conversation and especially in the Men’s Debate (see Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7). It has two different connotations relevant for this research. On the one hand, respect is equated with fear and, as such, is part of a gerontocratic hierarchy of human relations (Jewkes et al. 2007, and see Section 4.3). On the other hand, to have respect can also mean esteeming somebody, or feeling mutual respect. However, the first meaning is more common in Namibia and especially was during the colonial era (see Section 2.2.1).

<sup>37</sup> The term “postcolonial” is applied to the time since formal colonial rule has been over. However, similar to the term “postconflict” (see footnote 379), the implications of colonialism have lasted up to today.

The concept of symbolic violence (Bourdieu/Wacquant 2008) is important for understanding contextual factors involved in violence. It encompasses legitimations for injustices, and for unequal access to resources, as well as for other kinds of violence. It usefully highlights how violent thoughts are connected to violent behaviour. UNESCO includes symbolic violence in its constitution, claiming that violence starts in the minds of people (Orywal 1996). The concept is used to refer to violent dominating attitudes, such as racism, colonialism, and sexism, etc. (Bourdieu/Wacquant 2008).

During violent conditions such as colonialism or war, people use violence on command or strategically against “the enemy”. The enemy is dehumanised, thereby lowering the threshold for violence and murder. Thus, certain people are perceived as worthless. This makes violence and murder possible:

Any increase in inequality, any widening of the gap between nations and classes, between men and women, weakens the inhibitions against aggression. It legitimates violence toward people considered worthless. (Cockburn 2004:43f)

Such legitimations for violence are linked to the perceived otherness of people encapsulated in racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, misogyny and other kinds of symbolic violence:

(...) extreme forms of “us” versus “them” can result in a social self-identity predicated on a stigmatized, devalued notion of the other as enemy. (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:14, see also Suarez-Orozco/Robben 2000)

For example, during the colonial era, white men legitimated their violence towards black men as a necessary punishment as they saw them as less valuable, as did white women towards black women or children. The genocide against the Nama, Hereros and San groups provides a shocking illustration that the symbolic violence of racism might and often did turn into lethal violence.

The symbolic violence of misogyny and homophobia are important for understanding gender violence and both were reflected and inscribed in the colonial legislation: women were legally seen as minors and intimate relationships between two males were strictly prohibited. Misogyny ranges from the devaluation of female experience to open discrimination, subordination and hatred of females. It is one factor underpinning men’s violent behaviour towards women. Women, and female experiences, actions, and perspectives are seen as less valuable. This also applies to the sexualised<sup>38</sup> violence white colonialists perpetrated on black women as a weapon of war (Edwards-Jauch 2016, Britton/Shook 2014, Wallace/Cleaver 1990). Rather than sanctioning the rape of a black woman by a white man, the perpetrator was pitied and condemned by his own white community who perceived this act as an aspect of *Verkafferung*, a racist and derogatory German term for “going native” (Edwards-Jauch 2016:55). Homophobia plays an important role in fixing gender

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<sup>38</sup> The term sexualised violence stresses the power aspect over the sexual aspect (Mischkowski 2008<sup>2</sup>:16).

constructions and thus in hindering the development of alternative masculinities, femininities or diverse forms, as well as sustainable gender justice (see Section 5.1).

## **Gender violence**

The focus of this research is on the violence of men perpetrated against women, because it is the prevalent form of violence between males and females in Namibia. There the most commonly used term for it is gender-based violence. Sometimes I found very broad hidden definitions. The Namibian NGO Legal Assistance Centre<sup>39</sup> (LAC) offered the following definition:

Gender-based violence is violence that is related to the way men and women are expected to behave. It could be that a woman is beaten for failing to cook the dinner on time, or a man has to prove his manhood by showing aggression to a woman. Gender-based violence can be directed at children, adults or the elderly. A boy-child may be beaten if he cries because men are not supposed to show emotion. An elderly woman may be beaten if she fails to care for her children and her grandchildren, because traditionally elderly women are supposed to do this. (LAC 2008:3).

In this definition, the subject description refers to the pre-conditions for such violence. However, although it seems to be a superordinate classification, it is clear that it means violence perpetrated by men against women. In Namibia the term gender-based violence is frequently used to mean violence against women perpetrated by men.

There are two Namibian laws directed against the phenomenon of violence against women: The *Combating of Domestic Violence Act* and the *Combating of Rape Act* (see Section 3.3). In the *Combating of Rape Act*, “rape” is defined as “intentional commission of a sexual act under coercive circumstances” (LAC 2001:7). The term “domestic violence” includes “intimate partner violence” and “violence against children and old people”; however, the role of gender is not specified. O’Toole and Schiffman’s (1997) definition of “gender violence” helped to orientate this research in its early stages:

... gender violence is any interpersonal, organizational, or politically oriented violation perpetrated against people due to their gender identity, sexual orientation, or location in the hierarchy of male-dominated social systems such as families, military organizations, or the labour force. (O’Toole/Schiffman 1997:xii)

This definition is gender neutral: males and females can be victims and perpetrators. However, again only the victim is given primacy. The fact that the perpetrator is particularly influenced by existing gender norms is not mentioned. But, dominant masculinities imply violence; violence as the last resort through which to enforce dominance. In Namibia, men are expected to exert control in order to be respected, to lead, and to be strong and powerful (see Chapter 6). On the other hand, since the end of the 1990s, women have expected to be empowered (see Chapter 7). Bouju and de Bruijn see the overall change that has occurred in societies as constituting an important framework for violence in interpersonal relationships:

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<sup>39</sup> This was the counterpart for my research in Namibia. See Sections 1.2 and 1.3.

A major issue in ordinary violence lies in the possibility of maintaining or changing the content of role obligations and expectations that characterises close relationships. The possibilities are related to changes in the norms and values that organise unequal relationships in societies that are undergoing accelerated mutations. (Bouju/de Bruijn 2014:9)

This means that previous hierarchies are challenged: power relations are at stake and the struggle for formerly determined privileges might involve violence. According to Hannah Arendt “violence appears when power is in jeopardy” (Arendt 1969:13). Moreover, such transitions in norms and values are accompanied by uncertainties as mutual expectations are no longer clear and need to be negotiated.

The Namibian Domestic Violence Act distinguishes between different types of violence: physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, trespass, emotional/verbal or psychological abuse and threats or attempts (LAC 2004:11f). Ongoing long-term emotional, verbal or psychological abuse of a partner is often part of a conglomeration of violence that occurs within the long-term intimate violence of a male partner (Rose-Junius 2007, Chikuhwa 2011; see Chapter 8). It is important to take psychological violence into account in order to understand the behaviour of violated women who stay in abusive relationships (see Section 8.1.2).

I use the term gender violence to include all acts of violence (physical and sexualised infringements, threats, coercion, humiliation, and control) that are influenced by existing and changing gender constructions. Thus, gender plays an important role in violence. On the one hand, often the threshold for violence perpetrated by men is different to that for women as a result of different socialisations, gendered expectations associated with the social environment, or of the individuals themselves, and historical processes. I apply the term gender violence as a superordinate category, partly to avoid an essentialising dichotomy between men acting as perpetrators and women as passive victims. Furthermore, this term leaves space for the existence of other types of violence, like the violence of women against men, women against women, men against men, violence in relationships between lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTTIQ) people, or hate crime against those who deviate from gender norms.

It is especially illuminating for our understanding of violence in the intimate sphere to look at the reverse side – the “not-usual” side (see Sections 6.2.2. and 7.2.2). However, researching these tabooed forms of violence, such as sexual violence perpetrated by men against men (Pelka 1997), or by women, is difficult. This violence is non-narratable, and remains invisible at this point in time, not because it is happening on a large scale, but because it is not compatible with hegemonic norms about masculinities and femininities.<sup>40</sup> The assumption

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<sup>40</sup> In Germany, there is an NGO known as “Thaw” (German “Tauwetter”) which is aimed at men who became victims of sexualised violence in childhood. Although it is mentioned here that adult women also perpetrate violence against adult men, the counselling offered by “Thaw” is only available to victims of violence in childhood, not to adult men (WEB Thaw).

that mirroring the perceptions and experiences of men and women is illuminating the understanding of gender violence is the reason why Chapter 6 on men and Chapter 7 on women are structured similarly. The same criteria are used to make both perspectives comparable while acknowledging their differences. Very often only the differences are stressed and the very basic condition that we are all human is overlooked (Jewkes et al. 2015). However, even if there is violence against men perpetrated by women, the scope and gravity of violence by men towards women means that most cases are incomparable.

As mentioned above, in Namibia the term gender-based violence is often used and not differentiated in a gendered way. This is problematic, as the following example shows. In the recent article by Pasi and Mlambo (2018) about autotelic violence in the violence narratives of Namibian women edited by Elizabeth /Khaxas (2008), the following statistics are quoted: “well over 1,200 men and 240 women have been murdered between 2009 and 2013 in gender-based violence cases which were recorded by police” (Pasi/Mlambo 2018:262). However, it is not specified which gender perpetrated the homicides. If we think in terms of fighting heterosexual couples, it is easy to get the impression that more men are killed by women than vice versa. However, on a global scale, in the vast majority (90%) of cases, men are the perpetrators of lethal violence, against other men and against their intimate partners (UNODC 2019:23). Therefore, it is vital to differentiate clearly. I use the term “violence against women” to specify who is harmed, I apply the terms “violence of males against females” and “violence of men against women” or “male violence” to stress who has the responsibility for the violence. I use these terms as part of a superordinate classification of “gender violence”.

The space in which most violence against women perpetrated by men is located is in the intimate sphere. Thus, I also use the term intimate violence. It includes the violence between a man and a woman who are involved in or were formerly involved in an intimate relationship (including marriage, engagements, dating relationships, cohabitating couples). Moreover, it also includes men and women who are intimate but not necessarily in a formalised relationship or those who are just acquainted as well as those who have no relationship at all (as in a stranger rape). In the latter case, the perpetrators force intimacy on the victim. Moreover, my research shows that there are differences in how it is viewed, depending on whether perpetrator and victim have had or have a relationship or not, which also plays a role in how such violence is assessed within the social environment, with regard to support for the victim (see Section 8.1.1), as well as with regard to reactions towards the perpetrator.

### **Normalisation and invisibilisation of gender violence: hierarchies of rape**

In a violent context people get used to violence. For people living under violent conditions, such as during colonial times, violence is commonplace in everyday life. Thus, violence

became seen as a normal part of life. This involves a normalisation or habituation of violence. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois describe it as “everyday violence” which “encompasses the implicit, legitimate, and routinised forms of violence inherent in particular social, economic, and political formations” (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:21). Bourgois described it as follows: “(...) the individual lived experience that normalises petty brutalities and terror at the community level” (Bourgois 2008:426). In contexts where very serious and cruel physical violence are prevalent, less severe violence is not perceived as violence. The occurrence of violence can be played down, and experiences of violence are minimised and invalidated, thereby becoming invisibilised: “(...) the more frequent and ubiquitous the images of sickness, suffering, and death, the more likely they are to become invisible” (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:26). Violence becomes silenced, thus turning it into a taboo. The invisibilisation of violence is reflected in a lack of terms for it. One such example is if certain types of violence are not legally recognised, such as the rape of a black woman by a white man not constituting a criminal offence during colonial times, as well as rape within marriage (see below).

Violence that takes place in the intimate sphere is often concealed and invisibilised because of shame or relations of dependency, or because forced sex within a marital relationship is not perceived as violence. Society and sometimes also victims themselves differentiate between rape by a stranger and rape by someone known to them. Thus, hierarchies of rape are constructed. Connected to this is the aforementioned process of the othering of violence: real violence is perceived as being perpetrated by the other – the enemy. Both the construction of hierarchies of rape as well as the othering of violence is illustrated in Shikola’s (1998) account. In her article on her experiences within military resistance, she differentiates between “real rape” (Estrich 1986) perpetrated by South African soldiers and “something else, something different” (Britton/Shook 2014:160), describing how women had to learn not to refuse sex demanded by commanders from their own group, despite the suffering and unwanted pregnancies that this entailed, and in many cases not even knowing the names of their children’s fathers (see Section 2.2.2). “Real rape” is constructed as perpetrated by a stranger and the involuntary experience of the victim trying to fight against the attacker (Estrich 1986). Other forms of rape by people the victim knows are “(...) considered questionable in terms of legal and social standards, and often the survivor is deemed culpable in some way” (Britton/Shook 2014:161). One example of this in Namibia is rape within marriage or within intimate relationships (Hubbard 2007, Britton Shook 2014, see Sections 3.3 and 8.1.1).

The construction of a “hierarchy of rape” and “real rape” needs an “ideal rape victim – innocent women and children who are in need of protection” (Britton/Shook 2014:165). However, what does innocent mean? In her pioneering work about sexual violence *Against*

*our will*, Susan Brownmiller (1975) points to the risks some women take in resisting accepted gender norms. As Britton and Shook state: “The more a woman transgresses domestic roles, the more vulnerable she becomes to rape and the more culpable she is held for her own violation” (ibid:166). In Namibian society, the question of what constitutes rape has not yet been answered (see Section 8.1.1). A possible factor that accounts for people not talking about experiences of sexual violence is that the social environment does not want to hear about it, as is the case regarding sexual violence by caregivers (Fassin et al. 2008) and rape within marriage. Nonetheless, women suffer under those kinds of invisible violence and “... suffering is often a solvent of human integrity and dignity” (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:19).

### **Consequences of violence: traumatisation and continuation of violence**

The experience of severe violence leads to psychic injury, which might result in psychic trauma.<sup>41</sup> This is a long-term psychic scar. A psychic trauma can be caused by experiencing a single, several or repeated terrible events, such as torture, rape and other forms of assault, accidents, natural disasters or war. Such a traumatic event makes people feel overwhelmed by its horror, leaving them with strong feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. Normally, people try to forget distressing incidents. However, even if it happened long ago, a trauma is retained, because “atrocities (...) refuse to be buried” (Herman 2015:1). A traumatisation means that the memory which was traumatising is split off from the conscious part of the memory and, as such, is not integrated as part of an individual’s personal development. However, the violent memory does not disappear as a result of having been split off, and there are often physical ramifications such as migraine, sleeplessness, and even cancer is suspected to be a result of trauma, even long after the violence happened (Herman 2015). The agency of the traumatised person can be severely limited. The dissociation of the memory is the reason why traumatised victims are often unable to tell a consistent narrative of the violent event. Some very painful memories are dissociated and are not easily retrievable for the victim. Therefore, people such as service providers<sup>42</sup> sometimes have difficulty in taking them seriously and believing them (see Chapter 8). Thus, the invisibilisation of violence can also be a result of people’s traumatisation.

This special psychic condition was first discovered in soldiers after returning from war, who suffered from sleeplessness, flashbacks<sup>43</sup>, nightmares, insensateness, and congealment, etc. It later became clear that sexualised violence towards children is also traumatising

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<sup>41</sup> This is the Greek word for wound or scar.

<sup>42</sup> In Namibia the term “service provider” is understood as a person who is employed in services relating to health, social work, police, and magistrates’ courts, such as medical doctors, nurses, social workers, HIV counsellors, police officers, and magistrates.

<sup>43</sup> If the victim is confronted with things that resemble the traumatising event in some way, such as certain smells or colours, this might trigger the memory and leads to the re-experience of strong feelings associated with the traumatising event.

(Herman 2015). Psychic trauma, defined as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), was included in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) in 1980 and thus became a hegemonic medicalised concept. Subsequently, it was recognised that trauma not only applied to individuals but also to groups (Robben/Suarez-Orozco 2000).

There has been much criticism of the term trauma being applied worldwide, although it originated in the global north (e.g., Summerfield 1999). Its original use was individualistic and medicalised, as well as being de-contextualising. I am aware of these criticisms but decided to include the concept of psychic trauma in this thesis to emphasise the severe and far-reaching consequences of violence, not only physically but also psychically, thus illustrating the reproductive character of violence (Suarez-Orozco/Robben 2000). People around the world suffer as a result of traumatic events. How they cope with this is culturally influenced. Moreover, this term is neither used to cover up structural violence, nor to privatise suffering, nor to depoliticise it (Colvin 2008), nor to deny the agency of rural populations during the Liberation Struggle (Becker 2015). If we understand traumatised individuals in a social context, we can see that the trauma experienced by one individual is perpetuated in its social setting and is thus transmitted from one generation to the next (Suarez-Orozco/Robben 2000). Primary traumatisation means the person experienced or witnessed a traumatic event. However, the experience of a trauma is so strong that even people listening closely to traumatic narratives can suffer from a secondary or vicarious traumatisation (Haubl 2003, Jegodtka 2013), which refers to an indirect form of trauma. Thus, this implies risks for researchers of violence (see Section 1.3). A further implication of researching violence is to prevent a re-traumatisation by talking repeatedly about the trauma and thus respecting the boundaries of the research (see Section 1.3).

As well as the consequences of the violence for the individual and his/her social environment, there are consequences for the whole community. In societies in which war has taken place, such as in Namibia in the Namibian War of 1904-08 and the Liberation Struggle of 1966 – 1990, there is a continuation of violence. Even when the violent times are over, crime and violence still go on but are sometimes not recognised as such (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008, for Namibia Britton/Shook 2014, Edwards-Jauch 2016). Rape in wartime often takes place in public to denigrate the perceived enemy's whole community. Rape within an intimate relationship during peace time happens in private and is often tolerated, although it is a taboo subject. The only difference between rape in peace- and war-time is how it is perceived by the individual and by the community (Sideris 2002). In areas where sexual violence was used as a weapon of war against women and their community, there is often continuity in peace time: "Women's bodies continue to be the battleground on which violence is waged" (Gobodo-Madikizela et al. 2014:92). How can perpetrators understand that rape in one context is perceived as acceptable, and not in another?

After explaining the conceptual foundations of the study regarding gender and violence, the next section discusses the current state of research.

## 1.2 Current state of research on gender and violence against women in Namibia

There is not much research on gender *and* violence in Namibia. This is especially true for anthropological research. Therefore, in this section, I give an overview of relevant anthropological research as well as that of other disciplines, and highlight the particularities of research in Namibia.

In research on Namibia, statements have often been made about the country as a whole, which were largely based on data from the north or even just the Ovambo group, on the basis that they form the majority of the population. However, some authors have pointed out that it is difficult to make generalisations about Namibia as a whole (Becker 2006, Miescher 2012; Kössler 2007). During the colonial era, the Red Line was drawn, dividing the country into a northern and a southern/central part (see Section 2.1). The south and central part formed the Police Zone where white settlers lived in a commercial farming area. In this zone, in which the research site of Outjo was located, the colonial administration enforced direct rule over the population. By way of contrast, in the northern area there was indirect rule and it was also the main location for the struggles of the Liberation War (see Chapter 2). Due to these differing local histories and conditions, the “significance of past and present local and national alliances” (Becker 2006:47) has to be kept in mind in the case of Namibia. Kössler speaks of “a fragmented past” (Kössler 2007:381) because of the different memorialisations that are present in local histories, due to differing colonial experiences.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, rural-urban differences also play a role. Much research focuses on the capital, Windhoek. Rural areas are ethnically more homogenous, whereas in urban areas the population is more heterogeneous, and thus it is useful to speak of hybrid Cultures in relation to the latter (see Section 1.1.1 and Chapter 5).

There is no anthropological institute at the University of Namibia (UNAM); only the related disciplines of sociology and history are available (Gordon 2015). The anthropologist Robert Gordon, who gives an overview of anthropological work on Namibia, claims that UNAM and the “educated public” take an “ossified view” (Gordon 2015:145) of the discipline of anthropology. This may originate in the problematical connections and collaboration between anthropologists and the colonial forces, especially the leading role played by the anthropologist Bruwer in the Odendaal Commission (see Section 2.2). Another factor that might have contributed to this scepticism towards anthropology is the re-publication of very

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<sup>44</sup> For the differences between south/central and north see Silvester 1998, Pauli 2009, Miescher 2012 and Kössler 2007.

old anthropological stereotypical and racist accounts of ethnic groups, for example by the Namibian Scientific Society.<sup>45</sup> This is further influenced by the prevailing focus of anthropological research on ethnic groups. The Namibian Government avoids ethnic categories due to the risk of stereotyping and racism.<sup>46</sup> Miescher points to the fact that, in general, research on Namibia has often been driven by a focus on ethnicity and explains this development as resulting from the National Archive being organised along ethnic lines – a remnant of colonial rule (2012:6).

Anthropological studies are mainly conducted by researchers based at research institutions in other countries. The *Journal of Namibian Studies – History, Culture, Politics* also publishes some anthropological research, including several research texts I used for this study.<sup>47</sup> It is devoted to international and local research on Namibia in the humanities and social sciences and it is inter- and transdisciplinary. Several anthropological studies were conducted within the framework of the special research programme *Arid Climate Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa* (ACACIA), funded by the German Research Foundation (Kuper et al. 2007, WEB ACACIA). ACACIA was based on interdisciplinary research that included the natural, linguistic, historical, and anthropological scientific disciplines. I published my Master's Thesis *Christ crushes HIV crisis* in this context, exploring how Pentecostal Churches in Namibia dealt with the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Gierse-Arsten 2005). The early stages of my study on gender and violence, including the first piece of field research, took place within ACACIA. The German anthropologist Ute Dieckmann's (2007, 2013) research also originated from this project. Her work is relevant for my study because she conducted her research in the Outjo Constituency and the nearby Etosha National Park on people of the Hai//om<sup>48</sup> ethnic group and on farmers in and around the farms. Moreover, several relevant studies by Boden, Pauli, Gockel-Frank, and Greiner (see below) were conducted within the context of this project.

Although anthropological research is not institutionalised in Namibia, it is plentiful, but, despite its magnitude (Gordon 2015), research that adopts a gendered perspective is rare and therefore other disciplines are included here as well.

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<sup>45</sup> The Namibian Scientific Society, which originated among the German minority, was formed in 1925 and “until recently been confined to a less critical (if not outright apologetic) colonial history and the country's flora and fauna” (Melber 2018a:28).

<sup>46</sup> One example of avoiding the use of ethnic groups is the exclusion of this category from country-wide statistics produced by the Namibian Statistics Agency; instead, they use the “main language spoken at home” (WEB NSA).

<sup>47</sup> These are the following publications: Botha 2016 and 2018, Boulton 2017, Christiansen 2011, Cowser/Barnes 2016, Gockel-Frank 2009, Gordon 2015, Hailonga-van Dijk/Mulunga 2015, Pauli 2010, and van Wolputte/Friedman 2015.

<sup>48</sup> For a long time the Hai//om group was classified under the ethnic group of the San people (formerly termed Bushmen); however, Dieckmann and others pointed to them as forming a “liminal category”, as their language is a Khoekhoegowab language and closer to Nama/Damara than to other San groups (Dieckmann 2007:3f). The “//” symbolises a click in pronunciation, which Pauli describes as the “(affricated) lateral click” (2009:40, footnote 26).

## Research on gender

As in other regions of the global south, African feminists as well as women's studies scholars tend to focus on economic improvements due to other living realities characterised by postcoloniality and the neoliberal economic world order (Nnaemeka 2005, Ernstberger 2017). Therefore, there is a link between political feminism and scientific gender studies. Gertrude Fester summarises the diversity of women's and gender studies in Africa:

African feminisms and hence women's studies are diverse, contradictory, complex and differ ideologically, regionally and within cultural and faith contexts. In Africa, many women's or feminist movements were linked to national Liberation Struggles. (Fester 2016:10)

This interconnectedness between liberation and women's struggles also pertains to Namibia. Moreover, Fester's text shows a division within gender studies in Africa, which occurs along the lines of gender construction. In Africa, the term "gender" often means "women" (Fester 2016, Miescher et al. 2007). Fester mentions that, as a feminist, she personally would have preferred to use the term "feminist studies", but because feminism is a controversial term (see Section 1.1.1) she chose the term "women's studies" in her overview of *Women's and gender studies in Africa* (Fester 2016, footnote 1). However, feminist research on women in Africa is only one strand of research on gender (e.g., Oyewumi 2005, Bennett/Pereira 2013, 2010, /Khaxas 2007, 1996, Hodgson/McCurdy 2001, du Toit 2014). In the aforementioned overview of women's and gender studies, Fester adds that she solely uses the term "women" rather than "gender". This usage fits the content better than the title, simply because she does not include men or research on men at any point in her article. Research about women, men and masculinities has also developed, some of which was inspired by feminism. A few studies have integrated the male *and* female perspectives, such as those by the South Africans Rebecca Helman and Kopano Ratele (2016) and Kaundjua et al. (2014).

The most important interdisciplinary publication on the challenges presented by the transition in the gender systems in Namibia is the collection *Unravelling taboos. Gender and sexuality in Namibia*. It was edited in 2007 by the anthropologist Suzanne LaFont and the English and Law graduate Dianne Hubbard, long-standing coordinator of the Gender Research & Advocacy Project (GRAP) at the NGO Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) in Windhoek.<sup>49</sup> The authors wanted to "unravel the misconceptions, stereotypes and taboos surrounding the concepts of gender equality, sexuality and sexual rights in Namibia" (ibid: blurb). The topics explored range from historical legacies (Becker), to Namibian law reforms aimed at minimising gender inequalities (Hubbard), challenges faced by the youth (Hailonga-van Dijk), violence against women and children (Jewkes, Rose-Junius and Penn-Kekana; Rose-Junius), masculinities (Wise), intimate relationships (Gockel-Frank, Pauli), HIV/AIDS (Steinitz/Ashton, Lucy Edwards), and same-sex sexualities (Lorway, /Khaxas).

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<sup>49</sup> The Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), and the Gender Research & Advocacy Project (GRAP) in particular, was my counterpart research institution (see Sections 1.2, 1.3, 3.2).

Moreover, people employed by or associated with the Gender Research & Advocacy Project conduct research on gender, violence (LAC<sup>50</sup> 2013a, 2012, 2009, 2006a), and other issues like maintenance (2013b), stepfamilies (2011), and cohabitation (2010). They compiled law guides for ordinary people regarding new laws on rape (2001) and domestic violence (2004) (see also Section 3.2). In the LAC reports the term “gender” is often used to refer to women, as the recent comprehensive report on *Namibia Gender Analysis* that the LAC prepared for a delegation from the European Union illustrates (LAC 2017). Some research is conducted by the Gender Training and Research group within the Multidisciplinary Research Centre at UNAM (WEB MRC). The Social Science Division of the MRC published a report entitled *Gender based violence in Namibia* in 2015 (Mgbangson 2015).

There are some anthropological studies which include sections or articles on the differentiated realities of men and women. The German researcher Julia Pauli (2014, 2010, 2007b) has conducted a substantial amount of valuable research regarding gender. She undertook ethnographic field research with Michael Schnegg in Fransfontein, an area that formerly belonged to colonial Damaraland, about the changes in marriage practices but also focussing on aspects of gender (2014, and with van Dijk 2016) and on gender relations (2007a, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014, with Dawids 2017, and with Schnegg 2007). In these publications she explores changing practices within intimate relationships as a consequence of class formation processes, a development that began during the South African colonial era, as well as behaviour in conjugal relations in the context of high HIV rates. These processes have led to decreasing marriage rates which can also be observed across the whole of Southern Africa (see Section 5.2). Martina Gockel-Frank, another German researcher, did ethnographic research on the reproductive decisions of women in the small town of Khorixas (2007, 2009). Both towns are in the same region of Kunene and are relatively close to the town of Outjo where I conducted my research.

In his long-term ethnographic study on poverty in the northern town of Oshakati (2011) the Norwegian scholar, Inge Tvedten, included sections on the differentiated situation of men and women. He also focused on the commodification of social relationships (Tvedten 2011, and see below). The anthropological research by Heike Becker has been very useful for my thesis. She researched the history of gender (2010, 2007), the women’s movement (1995), and memory (2015). She conducted case studies of different ethnic groups (San, Ovambo, Kavango, Herero, Nama) and locales, including urban and rural areas as well as spaces within and outside the former Police Zone, and she works comparatively (2000, 2003, 2006) and historically (2007). In 2000, she published an article focussed solely on male socialisation in Namibia. The following suggestion by her still seems to be worth heeding:

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<sup>50</sup> All the publications mentioned here were produced by GRAP. However, only the LAC is listed as the author.

We need a sufficiently subtle research agenda to focus on the construction of different masculinities – and on change (...). There is a need of a careful investigation of the processes in which masculinities are constructed. (Becker 2000:9)

Moreover, anthropological research on men was conducted by the Dane, Britt Pinkowsky Tersbøl (2006), the South African, Sheila Wise (2007), and more recently by the Belgian scholar, Jack Boulton (2017). Britt Tersbøl's study on the perceptions of unemployed and poor men has a specific focus on HIV/AIDS (2006). She conducted anthropological research on masculinity and femininity in Walvis Bay and in northern Namibia. In this research, the vulnerability of men is emphasised. Sheila Wise has a different focus in her study on elite<sup>51</sup> Ovambo and Afrikaner men in Windhoek. She explores similarities and differences in the behaviour of these two groups of privileged men, introducing the idea of the male "powersexual" (Wise 2007:331). Both groups share a strong identification with power and sexuality. Jack Boulton, who undertook a two-year period of field work, focusses on the perspectives of black men regarding their changing relationships to women in the coastal town of Swakopmund (Boulton 2017). He identifies ambivalence regarding their conceptualisations of masculinities and femininities, and their behaviour. He also explores the men's fears and concerns, as does this thesis.

There are some studies which adopt a consistent gendered perspective, including examining the construction of gender, such as those by the Finnish historian Mari Tarkkonen (2017), the US scholar Suzanne LaFont (2007, 2010, 2015), and the Canadian medical anthropologist Robert Lorway (2015, 2008), the South African scholar Heike Becker (2000), the theologian Johannes Haufiku (2013), and the Canadian scholar Mike Callaghan (2015). Mari Tarkkonen researched the changes in gender constructions in a northern Namibian village, linking them to educational AIDS campaigns (2017). Suzanne LaFont focussed on the perceptions of young people regarding gender and sexuality (2010) as well as on young women and their sexual exploitation (2015). Robert Lorway undertook in-depth research on The Rainbow Project in Windhoek, a non-governmental organisation that draws on identity politics<sup>52</sup> to strengthen queer identities, directed at young people. He explored male and female perspectives and lived realities in the context of high HIV rates in Namibia. Mike Callaghan conducted research in the Namibian coastal town of Walvis Bay, doing fieldwork with male and female patients of an HIV clinic. He found gendered differences in their adherence to the treatment. Male participants, who were mainly impoverished men living in informal settlements, performed less well than women. He traces this back to a certain type of "toxic masculinity" (Callaghan 2015:156, see Chapter 6).

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<sup>51</sup> I use Pauli's definition in this thesis. She defines elite as "a 'privileged minority' occupying the most influential positions and roles in the governing institutions of a community" (Pauli 2019:23).

<sup>52</sup> See Section 1.1.1, footnote 17, on identity politics.

The majority of feminist research stems from disciplines other than anthropology and is concerned with the perspective of women. In 2010 Dianne Hubbard wrote an article entitled *Celebrating 20 years of progress towards gender equality in 2010* (2010a). In 1995 she also wrote the book chapter *The many faces of feminism in Namibia* with C. Solomon, and in 1992 she co-authored and published *Country gender analysis* with Chris Tapscott. Other important gender scholars are Eunice lipinge and Debie LeBeau who compiled *Beyond inequalities. Women in Namibia* (2005), giving an overview of the situation of women. It forms part of a series of publications about the position of women in Southern Africa. lipinge and LeBeau assume a link between increasing formal gender equality and violence against women (lipinge/LeBeau 2005). Moreover, Elizabeth /Khaxas, an educational scientist and founding member and director of the NGO Women's Leadership Centre, as well as a founding member of the NGOs Women's Solidarity, Sister Namibia and The Rainbow Project (see Chapters 3 and 7), has written various articles and books on the theme of gender, focusing especially on the situation and empowerment of women, feminism (1996), sexual rights (2010), and on same-sex relationships, with Wieringa (2007). Moreover, she edited a volume of writings by ordinary Namibian women on life, violence, HIV etc., which included their photographs with the texts (2005, 2007, 2008). The US American women's, gender, and sexuality studies scholar Ashley Currier published *Gender and sexual dissidence in post-independence Namibia* (2012). The Namibian psychologist Nelago Indongo wrote about women's contraceptive choices using the *Namibian Demography and Health Survey of 2000* (2013). She and her co-author Lillian Pazvakawambwa described female perceptions of marriage (2015).

Some research on men has been conducted within other disciplines, such as local sociology, psychology, theology and public health. Mark Shepard Perry (2014) did his doctoral research on *masculinity, male empowerment and HIV/AIDS risk in Caprivi*, written from a public health perspective. He looked at alternative masculinities which also exist alongside dominant masculinities; alternatives that could lead to a reduction in the risk for men and their intimate partners. Theologian Johannes Haufiku (2013) researched fatherhood and masculinity among Ovambo groups in northern Namibia. Research on masculinity was also carried out within the discipline of psychology by the US scholars Jill Brown, James Sorrell and Marcela Raffaelli in 2005. It explores constructions of masculinities, including links to HIV/AIDS, among Owambo men and women in rural and urban Namibia. Jill Brown has undertaken research from both the male and female perspectives on gender relations: in another article on Ovambo women she writes about the female perspective, with a strong focus on foster children (2013).

There are numerous publications in the form of evaluation programmes and consultancy reports. For example, the *Male Involvement Programme*, conducted at the end of the 1990s,

was described and analysed by Pempelani Mufune (2009, and see Section 3.2). Many programmes for prevention relating to issues such as reproductive health or HIV are based on the KAP or KAB approach (Knowledge-Attitudes-Practice/Behaviour), which is “ubiquitous” (Becker 2000:9) in prevention efforts. In this approach it is assumed that “information-based education programmes will succeed in changing people’s behaviours through providing them with information or knowledge” (ibid). Fitzgerald-Husek et al. criticise this approach because: “the KAB model often oversimplifies or ignores other internal and external forces impacting upon behaviour change, such as financial and socio-cultural pressures” (Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011:5). Nonetheless, these studies inform political decision-making in Namibia.

There is some research on gender relations, such as the exploratory research by the sociologists Maria Kaundjua, Lydia Kauari and Pempelani Mufune (2014). They investigated conceptions of gender identity and relations by young Oshiwambo speaking people in rural northern Namibia. They wanted to discover how the legal changes “impact on interpersonal relationships and gender relations and attitudes” (Kaundjua et al. 2014:281). In rural northern Namibia they assessed the “dissonance between existing laws and what is culturally desirable” (Kaundjua et al 2014:291). Research by Fitzgerald-Husek et al. (2011), written from a public health, women’s health and anthropological perspective, investigated the perceptions and experiences of female sex workers in northern Namibia. Their research (as well as that of LaFont 2015 and Tvedten 2011) revealed that the commodified character of intimate relationships is not only limited to prostitute-client relations but extends to intimate relationships in general in Namibia (see Section 5.2). Important research on this topic of intimate relationships and their commodified character was conducted by the Canadian geographer Mark Hunter. He did research in the South African Province KwaZulu-Natal over a long time frame. He highlights how the link between the materiality of intimate relationships and multiple concurrent partners is important for the spread of HIV (Hunter 2002, 2010, 2015, 2016). This shows that commodified intimate relationships occur not only in Namibia but also in South Africa (see also Schaumburg 2013).

Gender equality and its impacts in Namibia have rarely been researched. However, the educationalist Felicity Thomas wrote an article entitled *Global rights, local realities: negotiating gender equality and sexual rights in the Caprivi Region* in 2007, based on ethnographic work conducted in a rural area in Caprivi. She highlights the importance of differentiating between global and local agendas, especially regarding gender equality. Moreover, she stresses that, in northern rural areas, traditions are more important than in other parts of Namibia, especially traditional institutions such as traditional authorities and courts, because of a lack of infrastructure (Thomas 2007). This distinguishes her research site from mine, where traditions are not that important while civil institutions are functioning

reasonably well.<sup>53</sup> Dianne Hubbard from the LAC explored the paradigm of gender equality in the Namibian constitution (2010b) as well as the general idea of gender equality (2007a). Another contribution to studies on gender equality is the research report produced by Rebecca Düringer in 2014, who conducted qualitative interviews with men and women working in NGOs on issues of human rights and democracy to find out how the CEDAW and gender equality have been implemented in Namibia. Finally, there is an older publication *Beijing +10. The way forward. An introduction to gender issues in Namibia*, edited by Justine Hunter in 2004. It contains an interesting chapter by Debbie LeBeau and Grand Spence on *Community perceptions on law reform* which explores how men and women understand the concept of gender equality. They assumed that there is a link between the changing status of women and the violence against women (LeBeau/Spence 2004), which was inspiring for my study.

### **Research about violence of men against women**

For a long time, anthropologists did not focus on interpersonal violence but on violence that occurred between groups. This only changed towards the end of the 1980s as Wies and Haldane (2015) point out. The interdisciplinary and comparative anthology *Violence in war and peace*, edited by the anthropologists Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (2008), includes a discussion of interpersonal violence and is important for the conceptualisations regarding violence in my study. The anthropological study of gender and violence with a focus on the violence of men against women only started in the 1980s (Wies/Haldane 2015). Only gradually has the topic of gender violence attracted increasing attention in anthropological research and also includes taboo topics such as the anthropological researcher being raped in the field (Moreno 1995, Winkler with Hanke 1995). Jennifer Wies and Hillary Haldane edited two books on gender violence (2011, 2015). They give a useful overview of the developments in research on gender violence within the tradition of applied anthropology, which they define as follows: “Applied anthropology begins with social problems and the applicability of research, utilises appropriate methods, and then applies theory to the research process and findings” (Wies/Haldane 2015:3). This approach can be linked with engaged anthropology (see below). In her important book *Gender violence – A cultural perspective* (2009), Laura Engle Merry stresses the universal prevalence of gender violence almost worldwide, but also notes considerable diversity in local expressions:

They depend on particular kinship structures, gender inequalities, and levels of violence in the wider society. They vary depending on how gender is defined and what resources are available to those who are battered. (Merry 2009:1)

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<sup>53</sup> However, this may have changed since the field research was conducted. There has been an effort to re-establish tradition in Namibia. Manfred Hinz edited a series entitled *Customary Law Ascertained* in which the customary law of different ethnic groups in Namibia is written down (Hinz 2010, Hinz et al. 2013, 2016). I have not been able to determine whether and, if so, how this affects local perceptions of gender relations. In these texts I found several contradictions regarding human rights (which include women’s and children’s rights) despite its proclaimed human rights framework (see Section 5.1).

Laura McClusky published an impressive ethnography on Mayan women's accounts of domestic violence in 2001, entitled *Here our culture is hard*. She accuses anthropologists of "turning a blind eye" (McClusky 2001:6) to annoying aspects of the societies that have been studied. She herself was even warned by colleagues not to apply for funding for research on domestic violence as the application would not be successful. Regarding my own research process, I encountered many challenges over a period of several years. As time went by, I found myself having to fight to be able to do this research at all – with regard to funding as well as with regard to problems with or lack of supervision. This could be ascribed to me as an individual researcher; or that for a long time the research environment in Germany has made it difficult for women to conduct research *and* to have children; or it might have had something to do with the research topic that is burdening and still not very popular within academia. Only the third supervision was able to provide the supportive and realistic conditions necessary for me to finalise my research.

There is hardly any anthropological research on gender *and* violence in present day Namibia. A notable exception is Heike Becker's article on gender and violence in three San communities (2003). In this comparative study of different locales in Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa she emphasises the importance of the restructuring of gender and how gender and violence are linked. An earlier article was written by the US anthropologist Debie LeBeau entitled *The changing status of women in Namibia and its impact on violence against women* (2001). She identifies the important discrepancy between the legal and the social status of women and discusses how this affects violence against women. Moreover, the relevance of colonial history as well as social change for such violence is outlined, but she does not examine economic inequalities.

Research on violence in Namibia is mostly limited to the colonial era, by the disciplines of history, anthropology, sociology, and political science (Kössler/Melber 2017, Zimmerer 2004a,b, Gewalt 2003, Krüger 2004, Silvester/Gewald 2003, Hayes et al. 1998). Lorena Rizzo (2012) and Martha Akawa (2014) produced a gendered account of violence during the colonial era. Both books were published by the *Basler Africa Bibliographies*, which Gordon describes as the "major source of scholarly publications on Namibia" (Gordon 2015:145). There are also some older publications on gender and violence during the colonial period (Wallace et al. 1990, Hartmann 2002, McKittrick 1999, O'Donnell 1999).

There is some research within other disciplines on gender violence in the region. Feminist research was initially preoccupied with the topic of violence against women and children. In South Africa, the African Gender Institute published a whole issue of its journal *Feminist Africa* (No 14) in 2010 on *Rethinking gender and violence*. The public health physician Rachel Jewkes, Vice-President of the South African Medical Research Council and Director of its Gender and Health Research Unit, has also written several relevant publications. She

has researched violence against women or children in different African countries, especially in Namibia and South Africa (Jewkes et al. 2007, Jewkes et al. 2005), and more recently also on a global scale. This resulted in publications in the medical journal *The Lancet* (with Shanaaz Mathews and Naeemah Abrahams 2015) and other international journals (e.g., Jewkes/Morrell 2010). She was a member of the research team that worked on the UN *Multi-country cross-sectional study on men and violence in Asia and the Pacific*, which involved over 10,000 men in nine countries taking part in a survey in 2011 and 2012 (Fulu et al. 2013). The South African journal *Agenda – Empowering women for gender equity* published an entire issue on *Men and violence* in 2013 (Volume 27 Issue 1, Vetten/Ratele 2013 is referred to in this thesis). In 2002, South African public health scientist Naeemah Abrahams completed her Ph. D. thesis on *Men’s use of violence against intimate partners in Cape Town*. She identified risk factors that influence male use of violence at different levels such as individual, relationship, societal as well as the inter-connectedness of these factors.

Moreover, the Namibian scholar Hetti Rose-Junius, who adopts a social science perspective, researches violence against women and children, in collaboration with Jewkes and Penn-Kekana (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana and Rose-Junius 2005). She highlights the importance of emotional abuse in intimate relationships (Rose-Junius 2007). Men’s psychological violence towards their female partners and its consequences are also the topic of the Master’s Thesis *Invisible wounds: A Namibian case study of psychological abuse* by the Zimbabwean-Swedish student Eleonora Chikuhwa (2011). She conducted six in-depth interviews with women affected by violence in Windhoek. Najuka Ndeyapo and Elisabeth Shino applied a psychological perspective in their quantitative study<sup>54</sup> of university students at UNAM entitled *Rape myths and victim blaming* (2014). The research by Simon Duff, Mirjam Nampweya, and Jeremy Tree takes a similarly individualist approach, and was published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, which specialises in criminological texts (Duff et al. 2017). They interviewed ten Namibian men convicted of killing their intimate partner. Their study included a brief introduction to “the Namibian context” (ibid:5f), which makes stereotypical, exoticising statements regarding “cultural practices” based on limited sources, none of anthropological origin.

In their 2014 article on *Namibia’s fight to end gender-based violence*, feminist political scientist Hannah Britton and feminist communication scientist Lindsey Shook identified different factors influencing sexualised violence using in-depth interviews with anti-rape activists, social workers, members of parliament, members of NGOs, police and the justice system, and analysed the parliamentary debates that were held in the process of negotiating the *Combating of Rape Act*. They explored the relationship between increasing gender violence in Namibia despite the country’s progressive legislation regarding rape and

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<sup>54</sup> They used the 20-item Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale and a Rape Scenario (Najuka/Shino 2014:85).

domestic violence. Their research sites included one in urban Khomas and two in rural Erongo. An important contribution of their work is their detection of the use of the following categories by Namibians, which I found very useful to classify findings from my own research: “hierarchies of rape”, “real rape” and “innocent rape victim” (see Section 1.1.1 and Chapter 8).

The Namibians Gert van Rooy of the Social Sciences Division of the MRC at UNAM and sociologist Pempelani Mufune used a psychological approach in their research on convicted male perpetrators (2013, and see below). They found that psychological factors played a part in the men’s use of violence and they suggested psychotherapy and psychosocial counselling to change violent behaviour. Moreover, they found that the convicted perpetrators mostly had low levels of education which they “associated with heightened aggression and violent behaviour” (van Rooy/Mufune 2013:5). However, on the one hand, they do not consider that other perpetrators of violence who are better equipped and educated may simply not get convicted or sentenced as they have access to more resources and thus better legal representation. It is possible that these men do have other perspectives and attitudes towards the violence they perpetrated. On the other hand, van Rooy and Mufune’s account perpetuates the stereotype of violence against women being perpetrated only by uneducated men, which had already been refuted by the Namibian substudy of the WHO multi-country study on women’s health and domestic violence (MOHSS 2004:xii) and by anthropological studies at international level. These studies argued that males from all social groups perpetrate violence against women; educated men as well as uneducated ones (Merry 2009). People confronted with the structural violence of poverty are vulnerable to violence as they experience permanently high levels of stress. Moreover, the violence exacerbates the poverty (ibid). Thus, it is important to take into account the economic context (as is done in Chapter 4) but without succumbing to the stereotypical view that violence is limited to men living in poverty.

Gordon points to a “substantial amount of ‘grey matter’ in the form of rather inaccessible consultancy reports” (Gordon 2015:144), produced by local social scientists. There are indeed many reports, some of which are more accessible than others. One example is the research report about a study on *Understanding the perpetrators of violent crimes against women and girls in Namibia*, conducted by the women’s rights organisation Women’s Action for Development (WAD), the Ministry of Safety and Security (MSS), and the University of Namibia (UNAM). In 2006, 200 convicted prisoners (from prisons in Windhoek, Walvis Bay, Hardap, and Swakopmund) were interviewed about their use of violence against women and girls (referred to as WAD et al. 2008). I deduced that the aforementioned publication by van Rooy and Mufune (2013) must have used the data from this study, as van Rooy was involved and they based their research on data about 200 prison inmates from the same prisons cited

in WAD et al. 2008. However, van Rooy and Mufune neither explicitly refer to this study, nor do they specify the time frame of their research.

In contrast to those accounts that prioritise the individual, the article by the Namibian sociologist Lucy Edwards-Jauch (2016) *Gender-based violence and masculinity in Namibia* makes a deliberate attempt to avoid focusing on the individual perspective of the perpetrator underpinned by essentialist ideas. Instead, she suggests looking at “the nature of our society, our histories and ethnographies of violence” (Edwards-Jauch 2016:49), acknowledging “intersections between race, class, ethnicity and sexuality” (ibid), as well as making “patriarchal power and the different representations and performance of masculinity” the focal point of interest (ibid). Moreover, Edwards-Jauch wants to change the way that discourse on gender violence in Namibia is framed, moving away from the legal and policy perspectives, towards using the structural violence framework, in relation to which she talks of a “Culture of violence” (ibid; and see below).

In my research, one recurring theme in terms of factors that contributed to gender violence was the idea “that the violence stems from cultural phenomena”, as Britton and Shook also found (Britton/Shook 2014:158). Britton and Shook strongly denounce this widespread perception of the Namibian people as a “racist explanation” (ibid), arguing that it “fails to acknowledge that violence against women cuts across cultures” (ibid). In their text it gets clear that the authors define “culture” in the same way as many people in Namibia, that is, according to the narrow definition (see Section 1.1.1). Based on this narrow definition of culture, violence is constructed according to certain cultural groups; a culturalisation process takes place (Fassin et al. 2008). Like Britton and Shook, I believe that using culture in this way is nothing less than racist as it stereotypes a certain ethnic group as being violent. Such accounts reflect an “us” versus “them” perspective, that is, othering the violence by attributing it to other cultures (see Section 1.1.2) – an attitude that I also observed with several of the research participants. Moreover, it excludes structural and historical factors such as colonialism, inequalities and poverty. Gender violence occurs everywhere, in all cultures. However, if the broad definition of Culture is used, then the widespread perception that Culture and gender violence are linked, makes sense. From an anthropological perspective, “everyone has culture”, as the anthropologists Adelman, Haldane and Wies point out in their article on *Mobilising culture as an asset* (2012:692). They claim that:

(...) within each culture there exist locally relevant concepts that can be consciously and purposely mobilised to reaffirm identity and demarcate community boundaries, as well as to focus attention and general institutional commitment towards rethinking gender violence. (Adelman et al. 2012:692)

It is important to reject the static, racist idea of culture, as something belonging only to “the other”. Instead of this othering, one could think in terms of “ethnic or cultural groups”, which change over time and intersect with others; in urban contexts they also blend to form hybrid

Cultures (see Chapter 4). Only by adopting this perspective together with Culture in its broader sense, can we understand the ideas put forward by Lucy Edwards-Jauch and Heike Becker when they speak of a “Culture of violence” (2016:49, and Becker 1995:349), and a “society where violence is normalised” (Edwards-Jauch 2016:50), or as Kandirikirira puts it, “a Culture of silence and tolerance of abuse” (Kandirikirira 2002:131). In consequence, it does not help to target just one group of people, such as perpetrators or victims, in an effort to end gender violence, but instead we should try to understand the society as a whole, with its different Cultural segments, and identify those that normalise violence. Jewkes et al. (2015) point to a paradigm shift in relation to the prevention of violence against women: from working with males to changing norms and addressing society as a whole.

### **Summary of research gaps and my research approach**

There is a lack of anthropological research in Namibia on changing gender constructions, including the transition towards gender equality, and how this impacts on gender relations and violence against women. Moreover, there is a gap in terms of researching male *and* female perspectives in the field of gender violence. Furthermore, it is important to research the differences *within* masculinities and femininities (Moore 1996). Thus, differences within the groups of males and females, as well as hegemonic and alternative forms, are explored. Moreover, Namibian researcher Edwards-Jauch demands a holistic approach to gender violence (2016:50).

The anthropological perspective of this work lies in the analysis of the interconnectedness of masculinities and femininities in a *changing* formerly hierarchical gender system (Iipinge/LeBeau 2005) as it moves towards gender equality. This takes into account intersections with class, generation, and Culture, and contextualises them with historical information on colonial legacies (see Chapter 2) as well as current economic inequalities (see Chapter 4) and political trajectories (see Chapter 3). In my research the individual is viewed as integrated into a social context. People perceive, behave and make their decisions within their social environment. My holistic approach prevents a dichotomous and deterministic view of helpless female victims and powerful male perpetrators. People – men and women – are seen as active agents who choose their behaviour (Cornwall 2005), but are sometimes restricted in their scope of action, for example, violence has a limiting effect, as do social, political, and economic structures.

The themes of my research – gender and violence – are focussed on in the context of a small town in Kunene South, called Outjo (see Section 1.4). This fits in two respects with missing links in the research. In his assessment of anthropological research in Namibia, Gordon found that only a few studies had been conducted in small towns (Gordon 2015:146).

Moreover, there is a lack of research about areas within the former Police Zone outside Windhoek.

Edwards-Jauch opposes the racist sentiment within the current gender violence discourse in Namibia towards black men using violence. She states that “white male gender-based violence in Namibia is under-researched” (Edwards-Jauch 2016:54). Moreover, research on white communities or white research participants is rare, with a few exceptions (for example, Wise 2007, Botha 2018, Wise 2007). Although white people do not constitute the focus of my research, I include them as well as people of various other ethnic groups; in order to prevent ethnic stereotyping, the focus of the research lies not on cultures but on Culture. To understand, why, for example, it is possible for males to rape females, it is important...

(...) to ask how the violence of rape is enabled by narratives, complexes and institutions which derive their strength not from outright, immutable, unbeatable force but rather from their power to structure our lives as imposing cultural scripts. To understand rape in this way is to understand it as subject to change. (Marcus 1992:388f)

Therefore, this research contributes to addressing current research gaps by answering the research questions about how the idea of gender equality has been perceived and put into action in the life of people, and which factors are important in understanding the huge amount of violence by men against women. It looks at individual perceptions and experiences within a society with a Culture that normalises the violence of men against women.

After displaying the state of research regarding gender and violence in Namibia, in the next section my methodological approach is presented.

### 1.3 Field research on gender and violence: methodologies, challenges and responses

In light of fundamental postmodern criticism regarding the relationship between anthropology and imperialism, academic colonialism, and sexism, it is important to be transparent about the way in which data are collected (Sluka/Robben 2012<sup>2</sup>:18f). During the research process unequal power relations between researcher and research participants are involved, in the form of access to resources, mobility, status, and education (see also Hauser-Schäublin 2003:52, Weig 2013). This is true to a certain extent in all research contexts but particularly when involving a researcher from the global north conducting research in the global south (see footnote 9). The research was only possible because I am privileged in terms of education and other resources. Generally, conducting ethnographic research in a foreign country gives the researcher the chance to view societal problems from a different perspective and see blind spots – problematic phenomena being normalised. My otherness can be useful for gaining a different understanding. Thus, research can lead to suggestions for improving the living realities of the people participating in the research.

I was not only perceived as an outsider but as an outsider from Germany. People often perceived me in these two ways: firstly, as belonging to the rich global north, calling it “western”; secondly, as a descendant of the former German colonial power. The latter is significant, especially when dealing with members of the Herero, Nama and San ethnic groups because members of those groups were killed during the genocide perpetrated by the Germans during the Namibian War between 1904 and 1908 (see Section 2.1). So far, no compensation has been paid and no official apology has been made by the German government.

In the following sections I describe the conditions under which the research took place, as well as the research process, to gain a deeper understanding of the way I conducted the research (see also DeWalt/DeWalt 2002, Hauser-Schäublin 2003). Furthermore, the descriptions serve to understand the challenges I was confronted with as well as my responses and my own role as a researcher. In addition, a short overview of the data analysis is provided at the end of the section.

### **Field research methods**

In an effort to understand the transitions within gender relations in Namibia and the local characteristics of the worldwide phenomenon of violence perpetrated by men against women, I decided to carry out fieldwork in Namibia. The field research consisted of two parts: the first, consisting of exploratory research, was undertaken from January to July 2006 on my own as an individual researcher; while the main research was carried out from December 2008 to August 2009, when I travelled together with my intimate partner and our one-year-old daughter. Most of the research was conducted in small town Outjo in the south of the Kunene Region.<sup>55</sup>

The sensitive topic of gender violence and its challenges was best approached with mainly qualitative methods, which I used in both research phases. I conducted semi-structured interviews (Bernard 2006), as well as participant observation (DeWalt/DeWalt 1998). After having gained a lot of qualitative information using these methods, at the end of the last research stay I also incorporated a primarily quantitative element: a survey conducted in three schools. These methods were chosen as they leave sufficient space for research participants to speak about their own perceptions and experiences, without limiting their scope for free expression too much as structured interviews might have done. I needed to be mindful of the fact that, I – a white, middle-class woman – and my research participants had different mother tongues and backgrounds. In referring to the people who took part in my research, I followed Fester’s recommendation:

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<sup>55</sup> See the maps at the beginning and Section 1.4 for detailed information.

Those 'researched' were not seen as 'respondents' but rather co-creators of new knowledge hence in feminist/women's studies the term preferred is 'research participant'. (Fester 2016:13)

The classical social and cultural anthropological method of participant observation is a sensitive method led by "involvement and detachment" (Sluka/Robben 2012<sup>2</sup>:1) DeWalt and DeWalt defined it as "a way to collect data in a relatively unstructured manner in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities" (DeWalt/DeWalt 1998:260) of the local society and research participants' life worlds. To become familiar with both tacit and explicit knowledge (ibid) about the life worlds of the people, I took part in everyday activities and some festivities (see below), and sought information through informal conversations, which was captured in field notes. Moreover, I used Log-Books to record the planned activities and appointments as well as the de facto completed ones.

Interviewing people about their knowledge, experiences and perceptions was the main research method. The interviews were categorised into personal interviews and expert interviews. "Personal interviews" were interviews about personal experiences and perceptions with regard to their realities as wo/men, intimate relationships, violence and violence against women. "Expert interviews" were conducted mainly with service providers, office holders, or community activists about their experiences with cases of gender violence in Outjo and their perceptions of gender, violence and violence against women. After gaining permission, I recorded the interviews – with a tape recorder in 2006 and with a digital recorder in 2009. In addition, I designated some of the people I had informal conversations about research issues with as experts (Experts 56, 23, and 52).

In 2006 and 2009 I worked with a research assistant (Expert 1, 2006 and 2009) who at that time was a community activist, a member of a Pentecostal Church, and a volunteer for both the Red Cross and Women's Action for Development, as well as being a member of the Hai//om Traditional Council, and who is therefore well-known within the black community. I had collaborated with him in my previous research stays<sup>56</sup>, when he worked for me as an interpreter and as a key informant. He suggested interviewees to me or referred me to experts. Sometimes he also translated for me. Moreover, in 2006 a participant in the Group Discussion, whom I got to know through my landlady, translated one interview for me (see below). In 2009, another young woman worked for me as an interpreter during one interview with an older woman who preferred to talk only to women about her personal experiences. I got to know this interpreter through her mother, who was among the research participants. Before working together, I conducted personal interviews with both my assistant and my female interpreter in 2009, so that they knew what I intended to talk about, and to enable me

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<sup>56</sup> For my Master's Thesis on Pentecostal Churches and how they dealt with HIV/AIDS (Gierse-Arsten 2005) I had undertaken research in 2001 during a field research internship in Outjo (see footnote 2), and in 2002 I undertook self-organised research in Outjo and Windhoek.

to get to know them better. I briefed them on translation principles and secured their confidentiality via a signed agreement. They were paid by me; the research assistant received a regular salary and the interpreters a payment for each interview. However, only a few interviews were conducted with an interpreter. Most of the interviews were carried out in English by me, while some were in German, and one in Afrikaans. Due to the multi-ethnic composition of the population of Outjo and my aim not to focus on a particular group, I mainly interviewed people who were able to speak English. This excluded people who do not speak English which has been the lingua franca in Namibia since 1990, most of whom are older people.

### **Multi-vocality and selection of research participants: aspirations and challenges**

It is vital to include many views and perspectives in order to achieve a “multi-vocality reflecting multiple realities of life” (Sluka/Robben 2012<sup>2</sup>:20, and Kosack 2001). Therefore, I decided to conduct a study across skin colours, ethnic groups, generations, poor and well-off people. I collected the information about participants’ ethnic groups via self-designation. In a multicultural context such as Outjo, many people have a mixed background, which makes it difficult for an outsider to assign them to a certain ethnic group. I did not focus on a particular group because I did not want to contribute to stereotyped representations of how a specific ethnic group deals with gender and violence (Becker 2000). Doing so might also have further increased the tendency in the country and the community towards othering violence (see Sections 1.1.2 and 1.2). Moreover, in the Namibian substudy of the multi-country study by the WHO on violence against women, it was concluded that “gender violence is a feature that presents itself in all races, at all socio-economic levels” (MOHSS 2004:xii). There are some differences between different ethnic groups in terms of how norms of femininity and masculinity are lived. However, I found evidence of the hierarchical character of relations between men and women, meaning the dominance of males and subordination of females, in all groups (see Section 5.1).

The selection of research participants did not follow a formal procedure but was similar to snowball sampling. Whenever a good rapport and feeling of trust was established during an expert interview, and the expert was willing to talk, I asked if s/he would like to be interviewed about personal experiences and/or her/his perceptions of gender and violence. I also interviewed people whom I already knew from my previous research stays. Moreover, I was referred to other interviewees by experts such as service providers, pastors, teachers, and community activists, my research assistant, friends, and the landlady of the property where I lived in 2006 (see below).

The research took place in Outjo town and the location Etosha Poort (see Section 1.4). The research participants were men and women, old, middle-aged and young, belonging to different ethnic groups, including black and white people, and from different socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>57</sup> Within the location I interviewed people living in the formal settlements, mostly in stone/brick houses. I only included a few interviewees who were living in informal settlements and having to cope with severe poverty. Among the participants in the School Survey were learners from the EJSS in Etosha Poort and they included some with very precarious living realities. During my former research in 2001 and 2002 I got to know these living worlds of severe poverty in more depth. Overall, I neither conducted many interviews with people who were living in severe poverty nor with those who were very wealthy. I wanted to find out how people who live under relatively normal conditions perceive the realities in Outjo and the changes that have occurred in relation to gender equality. Nonetheless, the research participants live in economically different life worlds. Switching between these different living worlds gave me an insight into the extreme inequalities in Namibia (see Section 4.1); however, this was challenging for me (see also Dieckmann 2007:22f).

Outjo is surrounded by farms (see Section 1.4) and many people have connections to a farm or even stay on one temporarily. Apart from one trip to a farm where I conducted an interview, I focussed on Outjo itself and did not include ethnographic fieldwork on farms.<sup>58</sup> I interviewed some people, mostly experts, in Windhoek. In the overview of the research participants, it is noted whether the participant was from Windhoek.

The ease of access I had to white<sup>59</sup> and black people during the research differed. In relation to black people I did not experience major problems with access as I had already managed to establish many contacts and relationships of trust during my previous research stays. However, it was much more difficult for me to establish deeper contacts with the white population. Some white people expressed their views about their experiences with tourists from Europe or overseas who had criticised the behaviour of white people as racist, although these would not have to live permanently with *them* (meaning black people), as one Afrikaner man working in the tourist industry told me.<sup>60</sup> The racism and paternalism (see Section 1.4) exhibited mainly by the white people towards black people was indeed irritating to me. The white research participants were more secretive and less willing to reveal personal information. This corresponds to a widespread view shared by black and white research

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<sup>57</sup> See the overview of research participants in the appendix.

<sup>58</sup> Because of the logistics, this would have required a separate research project (e.g. see Dieckmann 2013). It would be very useful to gain knowledge about the situation of women living on farms (see Section 9.2). When I acquired information about the surrounding farms from research participants in Outjo, I included it in the text.

<sup>59</sup> The categorisation of people by skin colour was also pointed out in Section 1.1.1, footnote 24. As previously described, this distinction still plays a major role in people's perceptions and is therefore used in this work.

<sup>60</sup> His use of "us" and "them" was revealing in this respect, see also Section 1.4.

participants in Outjo (e.g., personal conversation with Expert 37, 2006). One coloured friend of mine who lived in Outjo told me: “they pretend everything is fine. If you ask, ‘how are you?’, they would never say what they feel” (Field Notes, 22.05.06). On the other hand, they may have had reservations towards me as they saw me working with black people. During my first research stay in Namibia, in 2001, I and my university colleagues carried out research mainly in the location of Etosha Poort where most of the inhabitants are black (see Section 1.4). Initially, when we first met Afrikaner people in Outjo, they were friendly towards us, but after they saw us meeting with black inhabitants of Outjo, and accompanying them, for example in the white-owned bakery, this changed significantly. Subsequently only a few Afrikaners continued to be friendly and open towards us.<sup>61</sup> In the end, one third of all the personal interviews conducted in 2009 were with white interviewees. However, these interviews were not as in-depth as those with black interviewees. Therefore, I only used some of those interviews (see below). Thus, I gained more data from black interviewees, who comprise the majority of the population. In cases where there were profound differences in attitudes, experiences etc., between white and black people, I have added the white perspective.

Although it was not intentional, I did not include research participants with alternative sexual orientations in Outjo in the personal interviews. I only came to realise that I had not included lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTTIQ) people at the end of my research stay in 2009, after meeting activists from The Rainbow Project (TRP) in Windhoek. One consideration was that people might have to be very careful about openly living as LGBTTIQ, because of the widespread homophobic views espoused by many people from different backgrounds (see Section 5.1). Additionally, this might reflect my own conservative upbringing. Only a few researchers have concentrated on the perspective of LGBTTIQ people in Namibia (for example, Lorway 2007, 2008 and /Khaxas/Wieringa 2007), but not with an emphasis on violence (see also Chapter 9).

### **Researching violence: methodological procedure, challenges and limitations**

Researching violence is challenging for the researcher and the research participants, and therefore needs to follow certain requirements, as explained below:

While the anthropologist is always a necessarily flawed and biased instrument of cultural translation, like every other craftsman we can do the best we can with the limited resources we have at hand: our ability to listen and to observe carefully and with empathy and compassion. (Scheper-Hughes 1995:417f)

Empathy is central to any anthropological research, but especially when researching (gender) violence. It is vital for gaining a holistic understanding. Listening with compassion to a person's violence narrative might give recognition to her/his experiences of violence and to

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<sup>61</sup> For ethnic relations in Outjo see Section 1.4.

the related suffering. Recognition is important for the healing of victimisation; however, it is often not granted to victims of violence (see Chapter 8). Scheper-Hughes states that research “can be, if done with care and sensitivity, acts of solidarity” with the victim/survivor of violence (Scheper-Hughes 1995:418). In this regard, Robben and Nordstrom point to a “dialectic of empathy and detachment” (Robben/Nordstrom 1995:16). They further claim that: “experience and interpretation are inseparable for perpetrators, victims, and ethnographers alike” (Robben/Nordstrom 1995:4). However, empathy with and immersion in violence narratives imply a heavy emotional burden and even a mental health risk for the researcher of secondary traumatisation (see Section 1.1.2 and below).

Research participants may find it difficult to talk about painful memories of their own lives. It was therefore important to create a space of trust to enable research participants to talk about sensitive issues. I needed to be very sensitive so as to avoid causing a re-traumatisation, which can be triggered by talking about a previously experienced trauma (Herman 2015, see Section 1.1.2). My careful approach was influenced by the recommendations in the WHO document, *Putting women first: ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women* (WHO 2001), which were developed by Charlotte Watts, Lori Heise, Mary Ellsberg and Claudia Garcia Moreno in preparation for the *Multi-country study on women’s health and domestic violence* (WHO 2005; see also Ellsberg et al. 2001:11), which included Namibia.

Before a planned interview, I often did not know whether and, if so, to what extent an interviewee had been affected by violence. It was quite a challenging task to elicit information from potentially traumatised people about their experiences of violence without further damaging them. Therefore, the research was based on the ethical principle not to enforce or persuade anyone to talk to me about personal experiences. Consequently, I kept the personal interviews as open and flexible as possible and decided during the interviews what to ask and how much detail to go into, using a list of core questions structured by themes to prompt me. Consequently, each interview was unique. Most of the interviews took around two hours, and some longer. I held follow-up, in-depth interviews with some participants if we did not have sufficient time to cover everything in the first interview.

Now and then situations occurred when people who I had arranged an appointment with did not turn up, or when appointments were rearranged several times and then did not take place at all. The underlying reasons can only be speculated on, but it may be a consequence of conducting research about personal or intimate experiences, especially if these are painful. If a person who had experienced violence and had been willing to talk to me about her experiences repeatedly shifted the appointment, I respected that, left the invitation open but did not follow it up.

If I found out during the interview that the interviewee had recently experienced violence, I referred her/him to the NGO PEACE – an acronym for People's Education, Assistance and Counselling for Empowerment. PEACE and I had previously decided upon a referral agreement. During the interviews I left it up to the interviewees to talk about their experiences; I asked them to explain whenever something was not detailed enough for me, but if I realised that this was uncomfortable for the person, I did not probe further. I also made sure that, towards the end of the interview, we talked about the interviewee's future aspirations, to bring the interview gently to an end and encourage the person to think about a positive perspective. It may be that, under such circumstances, some information was not revealed but the well-being of the interviewees was paramount.

I had access to female survivors of violence, who I interviewed about their past experiences of physical and verbal violence by a partner, ex-partner or acquaintance. Only rarely did the women talk about sexual violence committed by a current partner. More often women talked about sexual violence they had experienced in the past that was perpetrated by an acquaintance or a stranger.

Another important WHO ethical recommendation refers to confidentiality (Ellsberg et al. 2001:11). This is always important during research, and especially so when researching socially taboo topics. Before I started the interview, I explained my research and also ascertained whether the research participant wished his/her name to be used or preferred to remain anonymous. Most interviewees wanted anonymity. Because of the sensitive issues involved I decided to anonymise all research participants in the thesis as even those who decided their name to be used might change their opinion later. Those who participated in the personal interviews were given pseudonyms and the experts were allocated random numbers. If an expert was interviewed personally, they were given a pseudonym and an expert number. At the end of this thesis there is a list of all anonymised research participants, including some of their characteristics such as age cohort, ethnic group, gender, occupation, and marriage status, if these were available and did not reveal too much information about the person. The protection of research participants' identity was treated as a high priority. Therefore, to protect the research participants from being identified, some information has been withheld. To guarantee confidentiality on the part of my interpreter and assistant, I also ensured that they signed confidentiality agreements (see also Ellsberg et al. 2001:11).

During the research I learnt that *not only* was it difficult to talk about a painful experience, but I also got the impression that the interview itself gave something positive to the interviewees; some even expressed their gratitude, for example for listening to them talk about their narratives and experiences that they had never discussed before. I was surprised by this aspect of the research. In the School Survey questionnaires (see below), some learners wrote their thoughts about the research in the comment section at the end. In the following

there is a selection of comments made by some of the School Survey participants, which reflect their positive attitudes:<sup>62</sup>

I really think it's good to tell people what you think in life or what happened in order not to keep everything in the heart who or what might cause problems in late stage. (17 year old girl, School Survey, 043 A 11)

I really like the questions as I felt relieved having to express myself once in a life time of how I feel. (20 year old girl, School Survey, 48 A 11)

I think that this questionnaire is very helpful and logical to do. Thank you for asking these questions that always falls behind the covers. No one ever asks them. (18 year old girl, School Survey, 75 B 12)

These comments show the participants' appreciation for being given the opportunity to write about their own experiences of a neglected, sensitive topic. Thus, some research participants who were affected by violence saw the research as giving them recognition, which is important for victims of violence (see Sections 8.1.2, 8.3 and 9.1, 9.2).

The most important consideration in regard to research about violence is safety (Ellsberg et al. 2001:11). Therefore, precautions were taken to protect both my research participants and myself. This approach also restricted my access to some people who could have been useful for my research. For example, sometimes I decided not to use a potential interview opportunity (e.g., when a former perpetrator suggested we could go to the bush and talk there). I was also warned by some inhabitants not to stay with my family in the former township of Outjo, Etosha Poort – advice that I followed. Another precaution that I took was to conduct the interviews in a safe place, for example at my office, rather than at the interviewee's home, where a potentially violent partner could witness it. However, sometimes I only became aware of potential safety issues after a situation had occurred. On one occasion, I wanted to talk to a police officer. While I was waiting, another officer introduced me to a woman who needed help with regard to her partner who had threatened to kill her. We had a conversation and, because she had no transport, I gave her a lift to the Woman and Child Protection Unit (WCPU)<sup>63</sup> in Otjiwarongo. Later on I became fearful that the man in question could have seen us in my car and might try to attack me or my family (Field Notes, 15.06.09). Thus, it proved difficult to directly research the use of violence by the male perpetrators themselves.

Originally, I had planned to focus my research on both violence that women experienced by men and violence that men experienced by women. Although this offered a potentially enlightening approach, it proved impossible to achieve. Maybe the fact that I am female was one reason why it was sometimes surprisingly easy to access information about personal

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<sup>62</sup> These positive comments are only from learners who experienced violence. One participant questioned what he would get for his participation, and another learner commented: "Don't be too emotional in life. You overseas' people are too much of a bunch of softies" (18 year old boy, School Survey 112 B 11). However, his questionnaire responses revealed a high degree of normalisation of violence, from his own experiences of witnessing and perpetrating violence.

<sup>63</sup> See more information about the WCPU in Otjiwarongo in Section 1.4 and on WCPUs in Namibia in Section 3.3.

experiences of violence suffered by female interviewees. However, getting access to male interviewees regarding their own use of violence and coping with the violence they experienced by women was far more difficult and, for the most part, virtually impossible. Although it was difficult to talk to men directly about this, many men were willing to talk about their lives in general and in some interviews men revealed in short sequences violent behaviour or how they perceive it (see Section 6.2.2).

Research on violence can be challenging, and at various times this can even extend to blocking the whole research process: in the field, while working on the data, analysing the findings, and even during the writing process itself. Research on violence implies the risk of vicarious or secondary traumatisation for the researcher (see Section 1.1.2) as a result of being close to and empathising with research participants. Even after returning home the memory of violence remains. I had learnt about vicarious traumatisation before my second field research trip, for example, in the case of health personnel, or NGO employees working with traumatised women. At that time, my first priority was to protect the research participants against possible retraumatisation and to ensure their security and that of myself and my family. Although I knew about trauma in theory, I was not able to completely protect myself from the possible repercussions of working with such traumatic research content.

Research about violence entails narratives of painful experiences by the interviewees, which caused me consternation. Sometimes I did not even realise how much some of the narratives about appalling violence or years of suffering affected me. It was only later on that I realised how emotionally draining I found the research (Field Notes, 29.04.09.). One incident demonstrates this clearly. A man killed his girlfriend and her two nephews (a baby and an infant), and attacked a pregnant friend of hers, who survived but lost her baby. The man also burnt down the self-built house belonging to the children's parents where they were staying. Later on, I got to know the parents of the children who had been killed. Relatives offered to show me the burnt-out house. The image of the burnt pram, which remained in the destroyed house, has stayed in my mind. Several years after the second research phase, I was still preoccupied with the memories of narratives, discourses, and media reports of this incident. My intimate partner and I became friends with the couple who lost their two children. I decided not to use the information I obtained from them for my work. In addition, I made the choice to exclude lethal violence from my research, although this was the only case I came across in Outjo at that time.<sup>64</sup> However, this horrific incident had significant effects on people in Outjo. Both the men's and the women's engagement with initiatives aimed at preventing violence against women and children have to be seen in this context. Therefore, I refer to the incident in this work as the "triple murder" (see Sections 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 8.1.2, 8.3).

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<sup>64</sup> However, during the next few years after the research several horrific incidents of men attacking or murdering women (on "intimate partner femicide", see Section 8.3) and children occurred in Outjo. The daily newspaper *The Namibian* reported on such incidents in the whole of Namibia almost every day.

As mentioned above, the stories of women who had experienced violence touched me and so I felt solidarity with them. Thus, as a researcher and as a human being, I supported local initiatives designed to foster change aimed at establishing peaceful gender relations. I was seen as a public person with an official research legitimation. I was invited to public events and to events organised by members of the elite. People perceived me as part of the elite, and the elite is scrutinised during phases of transition. To do nothing would have been seen by the people as ignoring the violent conditions in which they live, or even as tolerating the violence. Therefore, for me it was an “ethical imperative” (Sluka 2012<sup>2</sup>:569) to support local initiatives against violence and thus also the establishment of the Changing Gender Relations Committee, followed by the formation of the Men’s Group in Outjo (see below). I participated in this community work because, establishing “reciprocity between researcher and research community” (Sluka/Robben 2012<sup>2</sup>:22) is important to me. I wanted to conduct research that both parties – myself and the research participants – could benefit from. Therefore, this can be classified as a form of engaged fieldwork (Sluka/Robben 2012<sup>2</sup>:23-27, Sluka 2012<sup>2</sup>; Scheper-Hughes 1995). Hence, I tried to give the research community something back, and not only gain knowledge and data about them but also contribute to their future well-being: “The core *ethos* (...) of engaged anthropology is the conviction that it is driven by an ethical imperative not only to ‘avoid harm’ but to intentionally work to try to ‘do some good’ where is needed” (Sluka 2012<sup>2</sup>:569, italics in original; see also Scheper-Hughes 1995).

Even after the field research, violence still has to be dealt with. Transcribing narratives about violence and having to repeatedly re-play sections can be harmful for the researcher (Haubl 2003). Only later did I learn from a Supervision Workshop<sup>65</sup> aimed at researchers dealing with violence how damaging traumatic research content can be, and hence the importance of qualitative supervision during the research process (see Haubl 2003). Even though, I thought that I was adequately prepared for such challenges; I only realised years later that I often became blocked when I was writing about violence, even if it was only the theory chapter on violence constructions, or when writing about perceptions and experiences of violence by research participants (see also Suarez-Orozco, Robben 2000; and Chapter 9). In my experience, research institutions and their members do not adequately recognise that research into violence has problematic implications for the researcher. However, I observed that other researchers who were investigating violence, experienced problems as well and did not get qualified support from colleagues or supervisors. Never-ending research projects and even health problems such as burn-out are just seen as individual challenges or even failure, and not in the context of a systematic evaluative research process. It is necessary to

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<sup>65</sup> This very useful workshop took place at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Berlin in 2011, led by Renate Jegodtka (see also Jegodtka 2013).

raise awareness of mental health in the research process among scientific institutions and researchers, to improve research and to prevent harm. Working on traumatic data in the form of transcribing and analysing narratives of violence needs to be limited and broken down into manageable chunks that minimise the risk of damage. The researcher needs to find the right balance when dealing with traumatic research content and therefore has to include compensatory positive elements in order to prevent damage and maintain well-being. In this respect, professional supervision is necessary to maintain the professional distance necessary for researchers to preserve their health and well-being (Jegodtka 2013, see Section 9.2).

In conclusion, in violence research, it is necessary to empathise with the research participant and give her/him recognition. Furthermore, a certain amount of distance and careful attention is needed as well: to protect the researcher from vicarious traumatisation as well as to enable her/him to analyse the violence effectively. Thus, violence research needs to strike a balance between empathy, distance, and attention, as well as being supported by adequate supervision.

In the next section, the two different research stays are described. In 2006, the research had a more explorative character; I focussed on perceptions of gender and violence. In 2009, however, the main focus was on experiences and biographies.

### **First research phase: 2006**

The first phase of my field research for my doctoral thesis began in 2006. Initially, I stayed in Windhoek. I lived with a friend of mine whom I had met during a joint Workshop in 2001 with students from the University of Cologne's Institute of Ethnology, and Namibian students from the History Department of the University of Namibia (UNAM). I had my own room in her house and I participated in family life. Through her I made many contacts within Windhoek.

The counterpart organisation for my Ph. D. research in 2006 and 2009 was the Gender and Advocacy Project (GRAP) of the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) in Windhoek. This NGO is very well-known in Namibia. They conduct research about gender as well as compiling publications (see Section 1.2). They also raise awareness about human rights and provide information on legal changes with regard to gender relations among the population. In addition, they work towards bringing about improvements in the laws and their implementation (see Sections 3.2 and 3.3). I was given the opportunity to use their office facilities in Windhoek and took part in workshops and discussions, especially those on gender, women's rights and violence. I was also able to accompany a team from GRAP during a training session on the *Combatting of Domestic Violence Act* and the *Maintenance Act* in Tsumeb in March 2006. This enabled me to visit the local police station and the Woman and Child Protection Unit (WCPU). In Windhoek I took the opportunity to participate

in a conference entitled *We are raped! – 1st National Conference for NGO's and CBO's Activists* from 30th March to 1st April 2006, organised by activists from Women's Solidarity (Field Notes, 31.03.06, and see Sections 3.3, 8.1.1, and 8.2).

During the exploratory phase in 2006 it was not immediately clear which site I would choose to carry out my field research. First, I went to different places within Namibia and spoke to local experts. I also visited the place where my previous research was conducted, the small town of Outjo. When I got to Outjo I realised that, because I had already established so many trustworthy contacts there, a kind of 'credit of trust' existed, and many people had a positive attitude towards my research. Not having to start from scratch when researching such a sensitive topic influenced my decision to return to Outjo to do this research (see Section 1.4).

The accommodation where I stayed in Outjo town was an unused garage with basic living facilities close to the main family house belonging to my landlady and landlord. Often, I was invited to participate in family life, for example at mealtimes and during informal conversations. Over time we became friends. My landlady, an Ovahimba woman, is married to a man of French origin. Mixed-colour couples were quite rare in Outjo at the time that the research took place. My landlady grew up with a white missionary couple. She and her husband had both worked for Kunene for Christ, a missionary organisation (linked to the Dutch Reformed Church, see Section 5.1). Her extensive network within both the black and white communities helped me to acquire contacts. My accommodation was close to the exit road from the town leading towards the Etosha National Park. Some interviews were conducted in the town and others some kilometres away in Etosha Poort, the former township of Outjo. I did not have the financial resources to afford a car to drive the spatial distances within Outjo. Therefore, during my research in 2006 I used a bicycle, which was quite uncommon at that time, especially for a white woman. Possibly I was seen as somehow different and perhaps even strange. Most white people in Outjo used cars to travel around and most black people walked, even long distances. A social worker in 2009 described me in retrospect as the "student with the bicycle". On some occasions I was allowed to use my landlady's car.

After arriving in Outjo, old contacts were revived. New contacts with experts and personal interviewees were established and initial interviews were held. I interviewed men and women of different ages and cultural and socio-economic backgrounds about their perceptions of gender and violence, using semi-structured questions. I also had the opportunity to interview one female survivor of sexual violence; I knew the woman indirectly and she approached me about being interviewed. Altogether I conducted personal interviews with 14 people in 2006. Additionally, I conducted expert interviews with service providers from the police, health sector and magistrate court, as well as religious, political and traditional leaders and teachers from all the local schools. I met representatives of NGOs like Women's Action for

Development (WAD), the Red Cross Society, Medicos del Mundo, and the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA). I asked these experts about what they regarded as the main contributory factors to gender violence, about local discourses on gender violence in Outjo, as well as about violent incidents, and how the people involved in these cases were treated and talked about.

At the end of my stay in 2006 I initiated a Group Discussion in English with four young men and one young woman about sexualised violence, gender relations, gender equality, women's rights and changes in gender norms and relations. I knew the participants from sporadic visits to services held by Kunene for Christ, a missionary organisation that was part of the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>66</sup> One participant in the Group Discussion stayed at my landlady's house for two weeks. Therefore, I met with her regularly and we had informal discussions during that time, and she also translated an interview for me. One of the participants worked as a missionary for Kunene for Christ<sup>67</sup> and he occasionally visited my landlady, so we also met sometimes and talked informally. Because the young woman and this young missionary often engaged in heated discussions on topics such as gender, I suggested a Group Discussion. They liked the idea and the young missionary brought along three other young men to participate in the discussion which took place in June 2006. Two of these young men were cousins. The participants were aged 20 to 25 and comprised four men and one woman. The mother tongue of four of them was Ojherero. One participant belonging to the ethnic group of the Demba was from Ruacana; he did not belong to Kunene for Christ but to the Lutheran Church. None of the participants were married or had children. The atmosphere was mostly friendly, but when emotive and somewhat controversial topics were discussed, such as sexualised violence, they provoked each other, although they maintained a polite manner and were even slightly flirtatious. The young men were very much influenced by their Christian backgrounds. They often presented themselves as caught between old traditions and Christian norms, as well as being challenged by the gender equality policy of the government, which was mostly perceived as a global north construction. However, this position might be influenced by the white missionary pastor of the church who also revealed this perception. The sole young woman who was present largely represented herself as a modern Namibian woman, supporting gender equality. Often there was tension between the positions held by the male and female participants.

After my stay in Outjo I went back to the capital Windhoek. There I met representatives of women's rights NGOs like Gender and Media Southern Africa, and Women's Action for Development, and also those of NGOs reflecting male engagement against violence, like Namibian Men for Change (NAMEC) and the White Ribbon Campaign. I met representatives

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<sup>66</sup> Together with my landlady I sometimes attended their services on Sundays in a back room of the DRC church building.

<sup>67</sup> For more information on religion and churches in Outjo see Section 1.4.

of the NGOs PEACE and the Philippi Trust, who offer Christian counselling and training to gain insight into counselling practices for victims of violence.

I had the opportunity to visit a private women's and children's shelter, where I conducted an in-depth interview with a survivor of domestic violence. Through private contacts I interviewed a mother and her daughter who were suffering due to the violent and repressive behaviour of their respective husband and father. Together with Reverend Nakamhela from NAMEC (Expert 10<sup>68</sup>, see also Section 3.3), who visited imprisoned men on a regular basis in order to educate them, I got the opportunity to visit the Central Prison in Windhoek. Here I listened to a short discussion, led by Reverend Nakamhela, between two inmates about the violent behaviour of men against women, and about male norms, for example being the head of the household. Furthermore, I did a literature search at the University of Namibia (UNAM) and at the Western Cape University as well as the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

After this six-month stay in Namibia I had to temporarily suspend my Ph. D. project due to a lack of financial support. I was, however, able to turn the involuntary break into an income- and information-generating period as I worked for the German women's rights NGO Medica Mondiale in Cologne which supports traumatised women and girls who have been affected by sexualised violence in areas of conflict and war (WEB MM). Following that, I gave birth to my first daughter. I then succeeded in securing a full-time scholarship from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, which enabled me to continue with my research project. Unfortunately, it then took over seven months to receive a research visa for Namibia. Thus, my main research stay started in 2009.

### **Second research phase: 2009**

For this second phase of field research, I travelled together with my intimate partner and our 14-month old daughter to Namibia. Doing research in the presence of my little family changed my status in the community from that of the "student with the bicycle" to that of a "grown-up", a "mother", and a "married woman". This time a car was made available to me and my family through a former university project. We stayed 10 km outside of Outjo in a lodge, although initially – being a social and cultural anthropologist – I had many doubts about living apart from, and thus being restricted from taking part in, the research participants' daily lives. One reason for this separation was my concern about the security of my family (see above). We were warned by several people to stay in the location (for example, Pauli 2009:41, as well as Gockel-Frank in a personal conversation). On the other hand, maintaining distance is also important in research, especially if it is emotionally difficult research, as mine was (see above). This made it easier for me to step outside of it, and not

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<sup>68</sup> This reverend of the Evangelical Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) is very active in civil society. He was active in the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN), in the executive committee of the first private shelter for women and children in Windhoek, and was involved with prisoners and many other issues. Importantly for this research, he is the Chairman of the NGO Namibian Men for Change (NAMEC).

to take it home with me to my family. Thus, we decided to stay at the lodge. Whilst there, we got to know more about the everyday lives of some local people. We gained insights into the living worlds of Afrikaners, especially with regard to relations between white employers and black employees. Many farms and lodges are still white-owned and employ black workers. The co-owner of the lodge where we stayed at that time was one of the most important and successful businessmen in Outjo. The farm manager stayed with his life companion at the lodge; they are both Afrikaners. Our daughter went to a kindergarden in Outjo town, which was managed by a South African, Afrikaans-speaking white woman. This was a good opportunity to meet people I would otherwise have had only limited access to – members of the Afrikaner community (see above).

My intimate partner, who is not trained as anthropologist but is an engineer by profession, accompanied me to Namibia. Primarily, he took care of our daughter and did household chores. On some occasions he also took part in community activities. These were usually activities which, for me, were part of the participant observation process such as church visits, the Miss Independent event or the Men's March (see below). He took part in the activities like other participants. Moreover, he played a supporting role with regard to the formation of the Men's Group (see below). Only once, during the event held to mark the International Day of the Family at the District Hospital, was he invited by the Social Worker to give his view regarding his role in the division of labour within our family which differed from that of most other families. Other than being present and visible at the aforementioned activities, he was not involved in the research process. Interestingly, I was often asked, not only in the field but also afterwards by academic colleagues, about what *he* did or his work. In response to the former, I explained that he takes care of our child and is responsible for the household chores. Sometimes I could see irritation in the person's eyes and sometimes astonishment. This might reflect pure interest or it might reveal the perception that it is still not seen as "normal" for a female academic to conduct research accompanied by her family as well as for a husband just caring for the family. Are male researchers accompanied by family members also questioned to the same extent about the role of their female partner, or is it seen as "normal" for her to care for the children and do housework? (See also Lütges 2002).

The Regional Councillor of Outjo Constituency allowed me to use a room in the old municipality complex in Etosha Poort as an office where I could conduct interviews and provide information about many important social issues by distributing information and awareness leaflets produced by the LAC. I do not think that cooperation with the LAC obstructed my research, because this NGO is quite well known and its work is appreciated in Namibia.

In this research phase I focussed on biographies. Life stories are suitable for use in my research because they enable the developments and influences that people have been exposed to, to be analysed (Rosenthal 1995, Spülbeck 1997). Because I often did not know before an interview started, whether a person had been affected by violence in her/his life, I asked about life histories in the interview, with a particular focus on gender socialisation and intimate relationships. I asked the interviewees to talk about how they had grown up, how they got to know their partners, what experiences they had had in their relationships, and what kinds of conflicts arose. In some cases, people revealed their experiences of violence during this interview, but others did not talk about it until a later interview. These in-depth interviews gave me valuable insights into personal narratives of childhood, relationships, and violence. Moreover, the biographical interviews revealed that some female interviewees had multiple experiences of violence, often starting in childhood (see Section 8.1.2). Additionally, I held semi-structured interviews about people's perceptions of gender and violence. In total I carried out personal interviews with 35 people in Outjo and four in Windhoek. I also interviewed experts in Outjo, such as HIV counsellors, nurses, medical doctors, police officers, a magistrate, social workers, teachers and principals from all the local schools, as well as employees of the municipality, and religious, political, and traditional leaders, to discover their views on gender violence, gender and violence constructions in Outjo and in Namibia, as well as to gain information about recent cases of gender violence in Outjo.

As I understood myself as participating in their society, and spent time listening to narratives about experiences of violence, as well as being aware of my privileged status in having access to several different local stakeholders, I increasingly wanted to engage in or support community activities. During an interview with Expert 7, a women's activist, the idea developed of offering the men in Outjo a forum in which to talk about male norms and their relationship to females; and to include the males in engaging in countering violence against women and children. At that time men were often perceived rather negatively, and linked to conflict and violence (see Chapter 6). During an interview with the Regional Councillor of Outjo Constituency I learnt that he had already begun to focus on men a year before this. He had invited older men to discuss social problems, like those the community has with young people in Etosha Poort abusing alcohol, and the risk of HIV/AIDS (see Section 4.3). So, when he heard about the idea of forming a men's group and trying to motivate men to work against violence, he was immediately supportive. I also discovered that, in the previous year, some men from the Lutheran Church (Evangelical Church in the Republic of Namibia, ELCRN) had already tried to form a men's group at a regional level, which did not work out. Thus, efforts had already been made to include men in initiatives to prevent violence.

Step by step, a multi-stakeholder<sup>69</sup> Committee on Changing Gender Relations (CCGR) was established, which met regularly in the Councillor's office, and used the Regional Councillor's letterhead, while he himself played a leading part in the committee. The rapid formation of the men's group in Outjo must be seen in light of the terrible incident of the triple murder, which happened there in May 2009 (see above and Sections 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 8.1.2, 8.3). This cruel and brutal act was followed by a public outcry in the form of a demonstration organised by women's organisations (referred to as the "Women's March", see Section 8.3) and later on by a men's demonstration (referred to as the "Men's March", see Section 6.2.3) organised by a pastor from ELCRN, who was also a member of the CCGR. I participated in the Women's March and my intimate partner and our daughter participated in the Men's March.

At the end of my research stay in Outjo the CCGR organised an event with the aim of forming a Men's Group. Some stakeholders from the police, churches, schools, businesses, the municipality, and hospital, along with other interested individuals, were formally invited. A public announcement about the upcoming event was made on the radio and also via a loud-hailer from a car being driven around Outjo by my intimate partner. Many men came to the event at the Outjo Community Hall, which is situated in Etosha Poort. A guest speaker from the organisation *Namibian Men for Change* (NAMEC)<sup>70</sup> was invited and addressed the guests at the event. Other speakers were the Regional Councillor, the ELCRN pastor, and the chairperson of the Crime Prevention Project (see Section 1.4). I introduced myself and my research and presented the idea of the Men's Group to the guests. At the end of the meeting a Men's Group consisting of 44 men had been formed and registered.<sup>71</sup>

The CCGR then organised a second meeting of several of these men at the Outjo Community Hall to debate male norms and the new challenges men have had to face since independence. The men were informed about this meeting by SMS messages sent to their mobile phones (38 men had given their mobile phone numbers). English and Afrikaans were the main languages spoken, and contributions in Khoekhoegowab, Oshiwambo, Rugwangali,

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<sup>69</sup> The Committee consisted of representatives from the Regional Council of Kunene, ELCRN, Women support Women Outjo, MGECW, the Municipality of Outjo, the Red Cross Society, Hai//om Councillor, the Philippine district social worker, an Indian social worker and me.

<sup>70</sup> See Section 3.3 for details about the process of forming the national gender-sensitive men's organisation NAMEC.

<sup>71</sup> The composition of participants was obtained using a registration form that the participants filled in. The majority of participants (61%) indicated Damara>Nama as their mother tongue, the second biggest language group was constituted by Hai//om (11%), and 7% were Ojherero speakers. The rest of the men cited Rugwangali, Afrikaans, English or Oshiwambo as their mother tongue. Most of the participants were between the ages of 40 and 60. The age composition was as follows: the youngest participant was 25 and the oldest 79; the average age of the participants was 45. Of the men, 52.3% were younger than 45 and 47.7% were 45 or over. The educational composition was as follows: 5 participants had university degrees, a further 6 participants had secondary school qualifications (grade 12), and 10 had attended school until grade 10. Seven participants had gained primary school qualifications (grade 7), four participants had attended some primary school classes (below grade 7) and 12 participants did not provide any data about their educational background, which could mean that they did not attend school or just that they did not want to give information about it. Regarding marital status, I can only offer a rough overview, because 14 men (32%) did not give any information about it; 17 men were married (39%) and 13 men stated they were "single" (29%).

and Otjiherero were translated by a translator and two other research participants, depending on the language used. However, some participants contributed to the debate and also translated what others were saying. This reflected the normality of the multi-lingual context in which the people lived (see Section 1.4). The atmosphere was good and mainly friendly; sometimes there was laughter, and at other times it became emotional. At the beginning of the debate I introduced my research, asked for permission to record the debate for research purposes, and formulated the leading question of the debate: “What is a man?” The debate then started and 31 men contributed by making statements and discussing their views.<sup>72</sup> Participants offered ideas about male norms and then discussed gender equality. Some of the men revealed their open opposition to gender equality, even blaming it for the social problems and violence that people perceive to have increased since independence. Both opponents and proponents of gender equality were present, although no individual men openly advocated it. During the discussion their doubts about gender equality soon became apparent, and a general unease and uncertainty regarding gender relations was revealed. In the text I refer to this event as the “Men’s Debate”. I gained considerable insight into male perceptions from this debate (see Chapter 6). During the 13 meetings of the Committee on Changing Gender Relations I learnt a lot about the committee members’ diverse perceptions of gender and violence as well as about political divisions. In addition, I found out how different stakeholders in Outjo worked together, and how white and black people sometimes cooperated and sometimes did not.

I also participated in or observed other community activities and I supported further local engagement. I was sometimes accompanied by my family. I attended funerals; we went to a farewell celebration for the departing superintendent of the District Hospital; together with some visitors who were staying with us, and we attended a Beauty Contest at Outjo Primary School (“Ms. Independence”, see Chapter 7). My family and I were present at the Independence Day Celebrations for Kunene in the Etosha Poort Stadium. I attended a meeting of the Afrikaans-based National Women’s Club in Outjo. My family and I went to the “Wildsfees” in Outjo, the biggest (mainly white) event held to mark the auction of livestock. We also attended the Global Prayer Day celebration at the Stadium in Etosha Poort, organised by my former landlady and friend. We attended a fashion parade at the old people’s home, and a private concert at my daughter’s kindergarden in Outjo. I sometimes

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72 I do not have a participant list for this. Because we sent SMS messages to the participants in the first men’s meeting I assumed that most of them also attended that first meeting, but I can only trace the participants’ backgrounds roughly on the basis of the languages spoken. Eleven men spoke a Khoekhoegowab language: that includes men from a Damara>Nama and Hai//om background. I do, however, have more details regarding some of the participants whom I already knew from my research. These included: Expert 5, a teacher and community activist; Expert 21, a white businessman, the chairman of the group; Expert 18, a HIV counsellor; my field assistant, Expert 1; and pensioner, Robert. Man 25, who worked for the MGECW, contributed to the discussion but I did not interview him. One middle-aged farmer assisted with translation (English, Afrikaans, and Khoekhoegowab). The Regional Councillor, Expert 6, contributed his own statements and also helped with translation (from Oshiwambo).

participated in the Di-Tsa group – a group of white women from the Dutch Reformed Church and Youth for Mission, who organised handicraft work with black women from the local area. I also supported local engagement in the International Women’s Day Celebrations at the Outjo Community Hall. My intimate partner and I were invited to a small celebration to mark the International Day of the Family at the District Hospital, organised by the social worker in Outjo. I was requested to give a speech about gender relations and HIV/AIDS, and my intimate partner was also invited to offer his perspective about our alternative and flexible notion of gender relations, such as in regard to the division of labour and decision-making (see above).

At the end of the last research stay, after intensive qualitative research had been undertaken, a quantitative small-scale non-representative survey was conducted in three high schools catering for children from different socio-economic backgrounds in Outjo.<sup>73</sup> In the following section I refer to this as the “School Survey”. This study was not initially planned, because my focus was not on gaining quantitative data. During an interview with a school principal, however, he suggested that I could carry out a survey in his school, and I simply took the opportunity presented to me. I constructed a questionnaire with which I aimed to capture the perspective of the young generation, with both open and closed questions about perceptions and experiences of gender, relationships, sexuality, violence<sup>74</sup>, and leisure time. I then successfully approached the principals of the other high schools in Outjo about the questionnaire. In total, 144 learners filled in the questionnaires when they were at school while I was not present. I had to hand in the questionnaires to the teachers which they later on gave the filled questionnaires back to me. At Outjo Secondary School (OSS) and at Private School Moria (PSM) one class of grade 11 and one of grade 12 learners participated. The learners from OSS formed the biggest group (72), because OSS has the largest class sizes; 28 learners from Etosha Poort Junior Secondary School (EJSS), and 44 learners from PSM filled in questionnaires.<sup>75</sup> The participants were born between 1987 and 1994, and they comprised equal numbers of male and female learners. The majority of the learners were born between 1989 and 1993 (122 out of 144). 44 learners gave Outjo as their place of birth, which does not necessarily correspond to where they grew up. This section of the questionnaire shows how important migration is in Namibia and how flexible people’s place of residence is, as can be seen in other chapters of this thesis as well (see Sections 1.4, 2.2, 4.1., 4.3, 5.2 and 7.1).

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<sup>73</sup> For more information on schools in Outjo see Section 1.4.

<sup>74</sup> In the questionnaire there were three categories of violence: “experienced violence” (meaning whether they had ever been violated), “witnessed violence”, and “used violence” (if they had ever perpetrated violence). However, afterwards it became clear that some learners did not understand it in the way it was meant.

<sup>75</sup> In the text when citations are given from the School Survey, the following form is used: 024 A 12. The questionnaires were numbered consecutively, which is reflected in the first three numerals. Research participants in the OSS have the capital letter A in their designation. The PSM has the capital letter B and the EJSS is identified by letter C. The last two numerals reflect the grade: grade 10, 11 or 12.

Some of the participants in the OSS already knew me because some months earlier I had visited the school to introduce my research and ask if individual learners would like to be interviewed. Following this request, three learners volunteered to take part in in-depth interviews. Two learners from PSM, who participated in the survey, were referred to me by the Pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church and were interviewed by me before the survey was even planned. Thus, these five young people knew about the research in more detail before they participated in the School Survey.

Due to the limited time frame I was only able to give the questionnaires to one class of grade 10 learners at the new Etosha Poort Junior Secondary School, which did not have higher grade classes at that time. However, because many of the learners are much older than one might expect them to be, given their school grade, it did not make much difference with regard to the age range of the survey. The private school charged high school fees that not even all white families could afford. The school in the Etosha Poort location, the EJSS, had the lowest school fees and learners from quite poor backgrounds could attend. The school fees for OSS were somewhere in between the two. Thus, conducting the School Survey in these three schools enabled me to capture data about learners from different economic backgrounds. The School Survey was written in English. However, the English skills of the learners in the three schools were not of equal standard.

Before and after my stay in Outjo, I spent time in Windhoek, where I could use the office facilities at the LAC headquarters. I met representatives from different NGOs such as Women's Action for Development, Women's Solidarity, The Rainbow Project, Childline/Lifeline Project, NAMEC, and others. I had the opportunity to carry out biographical interviews with two of the NGO representatives, thereby gaining an insight into the lives of two women who had been long-term campaigners for independence and for women's rights. I also went to the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) and the Ministry for Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) to collect information leaflets and reports, as well as to talk to some officers. Many people pointed to the relevance of alcohol regarding violence against women, so I attended some Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in Windhoek. This enabled me to hold in-depth interviews with three participants about their life stories, focusing especially on the use of alcohol and violence.

One limitation of this work is that the data used originate from 2006 and 2009. As it was not possible for me to travel to Namibia again and collect newer data, this work has had to be based on that data. Of course, I used also recent scientific literature to contextualise the research and to find out more about changes that have occurred since 2009. Moreover, I read the Namibian news on the internet, mostly via the independent newspaper *The Namibian* (see bibliography, section "Newspaper articles"). I also availed other online sources, and kept in touch with some of the research participants.

## **Analysis of data**

A piece of ethnographic field research involving multiple voices and data inevitably results in a large amount of data. Therefore, I had to be selective. Consequently, the selections that I made, the interpretations and analysis of the data, the representations, and the research process as a whole are intrinsically connected to me as an individual researcher (see also Kosack 2001, Dieckmann 2007). I followed research standards (for example those set by the American Anthropological Association 2012<sup>2</sup>) but both myself and the research participants are all human beings, in relation to each other, and we have blind spots, and can make mistakes or wrong decisions.

I did not use all the interviews (the expert interviews as well as the personal ones) that I conducted. I selected interviews according to criteria such as relevance, trustworthiness, reliability, range of variation, balance of class, age, gender, mother tongue, and religion. At the end of the thesis there is an overview of the research participants whose interviews I used for this text. However, all the interviews were analysed and impacted on the research. Several of the participants in the personal interviews whom I had met in 2006 also participated in the 2009 interviews: Allison, Gisela, Gertrud, Lisa (Windhoek), Timotheus and Sam. These interviews are dated as 2006/2009 or either year. Emma, Peter, Violette (Windhoek) and Lucy were only interviewed in 2006. Meanwhile, Alicia, Hannah, Luthrecia, Hildi, Sandy (Windhoek), Magda, Innocentia, Linda, Laurentia, Loutjie, Pieter, David, Misheke, Carl, Johan, Jeremy, Isak and Robert were only interviewed in 2009. 18 participants in the personal interviews were in the “middle age” cohort (aged 25 to 60), five were in the “young age” category (aged 15 to 24) and five were classified as “old age” (over 60). I used these three categories as their life realities differ: in young age people are still at school or unemployed, often do not have children yet, are financially dependent on caregivers, and only know about what it is like to live in Namibia after independence. In the middle age cohort, most people had children, as well as other people whom they care for and who depend on them. They remember life during the last phase of apartheid rule when they were young. Those in the old age category are in receipt of pensions, and remember what life was like under apartheid.

I transcribed the interviews, marked statements of special relevance and identified topics.<sup>76</sup> In the case of participants whose interviews revealed experiences of violence, I produced personal overviews including all the information that I had collected about that particular person. To flesh out information about the overall context and for each interview I read field notes and used my Log-Books. After several interviews had been transcribed, I began to develop theses. I then designed an Analysis Table using the MS Office computer programme Excel, in which all further fully and partly transcribed interviews were recorded. I compared

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<sup>76</sup> I followed Bernard's (2006) transcription rules. For a list of transcription symbols used, see the appendix.

statements and looked for congruencies and ambiguities, while including information about participants' age, gender, mother tongue, and class. For some interviews I created short summaries. When analysing the data I wrote memos containing ideas for possible correlations, as well as any challenges, irritations and ambiguities.

I transcribed and analysed the Group Discussion and the Men's Debate, and included the statements from these in the Analysis Table. For the purpose of analysis and for quotations I used anonymous names for the participants in the Group Discussion and numbers for the participants in the Men's Debate according to where their statement came in terms of chronological sequence. Finally, I created a table in which I recorded violence narratives and developed theses out of them.

In order to analyse the School Survey I designed a Code-Sheet and a further Excel table, in which I filled in the answers to the questionnaires. I analysed this information quantitatively using filters, but I also included the qualitative responses to the open questions. The filters enabled me to analyse distributions according to mother tongue, school, gender, religion etc. I looked for peculiarities, differences and similarities between the learners from the different schools with different socio-economic backgrounds. Some of the children from EJSS encountered problems in writing English, and some in understanding it. Therefore, I had to exclude 4 of the 144 questionnaires (one from OSS and three from EJSS), but their basic data (information on gender, birth year and place, ethnic and religious affiliation, language, head of household, people they grew up with etc.) was usable. Sometimes the research participants did not understand the question or did not answer them. Then these were excluded reducing further the total number of valid answers. This was decided and analysed according to each different question explaining different total numbers for several questions.

Having introduced the reader to my methodological approach – involving a multitude of voices (Kosack 2001) – I now describe the research site, the small town of Outjo.

#### 1.4 Research site of small town Outjo<sup>77</sup>: unequal living realities

According to the town sign, Outjo is the "Gateway to Etosha" – located south of the Etosha National Park, the country's famous game reserve in northern Namibia. With its 8,335 inhabitants, Outjo is the biggest of three urban localities in the Kunene Region<sup>78</sup> (NSA<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Much of this description stems from the time when the research was conducted, the latest phase being 2009, so there probably have been some changes since then. However, where possible I have supplemented it with newer data.

<sup>78</sup> Much of the data on Outjo Constituency was taken from the Kunene Regional Profile for the year 2014, differentiating between the different Kunene constituencies of Epupa, Opuwo, Sesfontein, Khorixas, Kamanjab, and Outjo (NSA 2014). This Report is based on data collected for the Population and Housing Census of 2011 for the whole of Namibia. There is no other more recent data available for Outjo Constituency specifically. In many cases it makes no sense to use data that refers to the Kunene Region as a whole, as the various constituencies differ substantially because of different ways of life, different ethnic groups, rural or urban localities and also access to employment, water and sanitation. The living conditions of the people are, in many cases, not easily comparable.

2014:ii; see Map 1 – 3 at the beginning). Outjo is surrounded by commercial farms and has a subtropical climate with very hot summers (Dieckmann 2013:258). Outjo Constituency is part of the Kunene Region which is divided into six constituencies, and has the highest annual population growth rate in the Kunene Region: 3.1%. During the decade between 2001 to 2011 Outjo Constituency increased by 3,293 people<sup>80</sup> (NSA 2014:12). The whole district is divided into farming units bordered by fences which is typical of all the commercial farming areas in Namibia (Dieckmann 2013:258).

The infrastructure still reflects the apartheid history of the town (see Chapter 2). Outjo is geographically divided into the town or *dorp* (Afrikaans) where white people and economically well-off black people reside, and the location or *lokasie* (Afrikaans), Etosha Poort.<sup>81</sup> The majority of the population, mostly black people, live in the location. Both parts – town and location – are geographically separated by a kind of buffer zone of around 1 kilometre – a legacy of colonial times (see Chapter 2). Much of the infrastructure described here is located in Outjo town, while only some smaller shops and churches are in the location.

The location Etosha Poort – the former township<sup>82</sup> of Outjo – consists of a formal and an informal settlement. In the formal settlement people live in stone houses. Many of those were built after independence through a governmental housing project, the *Build Together National Housing Program*<sup>83</sup> (see Sections 4.1 and 7.1). In this settlement, people have access to electricity and water (MRLGHRD 2007). However, the informal settlement has been growing rapidly. 33.4% of all households in Outjo Constituency are so-called “Improvised Housing Units” or “shacks” (NSA 2014:40) made of corrugated-iron sheets or of wooden poles with sticks or sticks with mud. They do not offer much protection against the cold, wind and rain, let alone against criminal offences. Only 48% of all households in Outjo Constituency have access to electricity for lighting (NSA 2014:iii). When we drove through the location at night we saw people sitting either in front of a fire or using candles to light their shacks. 46.1% of all households in Outjo Constituency have no access to any source of energy for cooking (NSA 2014:45). 89.4% of all households in Outjo Constituency have access to safe water (NSA 2014:47) although many have to walk significant distances to fetch water from public pipes (30.3%) and only 23.7% of the households had access to piped water inside their houses (NSA 2014:47). Regarding sanitation, the Regional Councillor told me that, in 2007, 103 toilets, and in 2008, 95 toilets, were installed in Outjo. Nonetheless, the sanitary situation for many people is still very inadequate: 47.3% of all households have no

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<sup>79</sup> The National Statistics Agency (NSA) is the former Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

<sup>80</sup> In Namibia the urban growth rate over the last few decades is between 4%-5% (CBS 2010:29).

<sup>81</sup> An overview of the different quarters in Etosha Poort is provided by Dieckmann (2007:19f).

<sup>82</sup> See Chapter 1 for an explanation of the term ‘township’.

<sup>83</sup> The *Build Together National Housing Program* was started in 1992-93 and aimed at finding housing for low-income groups. It involves low income beneficiaries being given favourable credits (MRLGHRD 2007).

access to toilet facilities (NSA 2014:48), and have to 'go to the bush', as people term it. I was told several times that females get attacked and even raped on their way to this "bush toilet".

Informal settlements exist in all Namibian cities and are a consequence of poverty, increasing urbanisation, and historical legacies. People from rural areas go to cities seeking better social services, employment and a cash income (CBS 2010:29), although the situation is not much better in the cities. Consequently, the townships are growing, as has been the case in Outjo. Several people work on farms around Outjo. The farmers have to pay minimum wages and meet minimum standards regarding working hours and housing, etc. (Dieckmann 2007:240f). Many farmers switched from agriculture to tourism, for example establishing hunting or guest farms, which require fewer employees. Alternatively, some farm owners cope with changing conditions by only keeping on qualified workers and dismissing unqualified ones. These conditions prompted many people to migrate from the surrounding areas to Outjo because they lost their jobs on the farms. Whole families moved to Outjo, mostly to the informal settlement area in the former township of Etosha Port. (Dieckmann 2007:240f) However, employment is insecure in Outjo too, and does not pay enough income for people to live on.

Migration plays an important role in Namibia (Greiner 2011, Pauli 2009).<sup>84</sup> Greiner calls the Namibian form of migration circular because usually young people migrate to towns either for education or to look for jobs, while smaller children and older people stay in rural areas. Young people migrate to Outjo to attend schools while staying with relatives or in school hostels, as was apparent from the School Survey (see Section 1.3). When people become pensioners, former labour migrants migrate back to their rural homes (Greiner 2011). In Outjo several people mentioned their aspirations to spend their retirement on a farm. And single mothers send their young children to their grandparents or other relatives on the farm because there are only few child care institutions in Outjo.

The main sources of income of the households in Outjo Constituency are wages and salaries (65.8%), old-age pensions (9.4%), cash remittances (9.1%), business activities (non-farming) (6.8%), farming (5.2%), retirement funds (1.0%), grants for people living with disabilities (0.9%) and grants for orphans (0.7%) (NSA 2014:37). Dieckmann describes several coping strategies common among people with fewer resources (Dieckmann 2007). One observable phenomenon in Outjo, like in other Namibian towns, is that life is structured around paydays, when employees get their salaries or pensions and other beneficiaries receive their grants.<sup>85</sup> Many people are dependent on one income, because the unemployment rate in Outjo Constituency is very high at 35% (NSA 2014:viii). Even people who do have jobs still face

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<sup>84</sup> For more information on migration in Namibia see Section 4.1. See Section 2.2 for the colonial legacy regarding migration. Section 5.2 contains information about the relevance of high mobility for intimate relationships.

<sup>85</sup> See more detailed information on grants and paydays in Chapter 4.

problems. On the one hand, many people are badly paid, and thus “underemployed”. On the other hand, even if people are employed in one of the popular government jobs, they might still struggle due to delays in the payment of salaries. I frequently heard about people in government jobs having to wait several months to get paid. For example, in 2006 I was told that the hospital staff had not been paid for five months by the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) (Expert 37<sup>86</sup>, 2006). My field assistant was working for the Ministry of Education (MoE) as a literacy teacher, but sometimes he had to wait months for his salary. Therefore, even working for a governmental institution does not guarantee financial security.

The way in which the geographical structure reflects the colonial history can be seen not only in Outjo but in the country as a whole. During colonial times, Namibia was divided into a commercial farming area lying within the white dominated Police Zone and communal areas north of the zone (see Chapter 2). Outjo was situated within the commercial farming area, within the Police Zone under direct rule of the colonial administration.<sup>87</sup> During the German colonial administration, white people started to form a settlement there at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it was restricted to those whites who could afford it. In the 1920s – under South African rule – new white farmers settled in the area surrounding Outjo and Kamanjab.<sup>88</sup> Nowadays, Outjo’s economy is still strongly characterised by the farming sector, particularly livestock farming. White farmers still dominate the farming area of Outjo despite efforts to change this situation (Werner 2015). This becomes very obvious for example during the *Wildsfees* – a famous white-dominated annual festival which takes the form of a big livestock auction. When we attended this event in 2009, the few black people there were mainly working as service staff or selling handicrafts. In less than 10% of the farms are the owners female (Dieckmann 2013:259).<sup>89</sup>

The farming area around Outjo is also known for its charcoal production, which started around the year 2000. Many workers were recruited from north of Namibia, mostly from the Kavango and Ovambo areas (Experts 37, 2006 and 18, 2009). The workers often come with their wives or girlfriends and children. In 2009, there were no schools at the farms, so most children did not attend any school. Often the women and children are dependent on a man who works on the farm. If a partner or father is violent, there are few opportunities for the women or children to escape the situation. If the victim reports the violent person to the police, the latter might be arrested and expelled from the farm. Thus, the victim also loses her income and accommodation. Consequently, many victims keep quiet. The Regional

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<sup>86</sup> Expert 37 was a member of the hospital board.

<sup>87</sup> See the police line in Dieckmann (2007:175, Map 8) and see Section 2.1 for details on the colonial era.

<sup>88</sup> They were recruited from the impoverished white population of South Africa in the 1920s to calm the situation for impoverished whites there (Silvester 1998:107). During the 1930s this policy changed. The farmers were often supported by the government during the 1930s and during crises (for more information see Dieckmann 2013:274f).

<sup>89</sup> Dieckmann cites this figure as relating to a time frame that goes up to 2006.

Councillor and two HIV counsellors who regularly conducted medical outreach on farms told me in 2009 that this situation was a regular occurrence at farms.<sup>90</sup>

Tourism is a further important economic activity in Outjo (see also MunO 2008:6). The town is situated on the route to the Etosha National Park and is often visited by tourists, at least for a short stop-off. There are four petrol stations in the town. The main tourist attractions were the Franke House<sup>91</sup> and an old German water tower. Some tourists come for the hunting which is also famously done by many white inhabitants (see also MunO 2008:6).

Outjo town is the commercial centre for the surrounding farms. Important for both visitors and inhabitants is the biggest supermarket, OK Foods, which also functions as an informal meeting place for Outjo residents. I met a lot of research participants here and took the opportunity to make appointments with them. Other notable features relating to Outjo's economy in 2009 were a stone crusher, a brick production factory, a shoe production factory, taxidermy businesses, food production, building constructors, a steel construction factory, two charcoal factories and a tannery. Outjo also had three banks. Telecommunication technologies are available, including the internet, if people can afford it. Most people use mobile phones (64.7%) but the home internet connectivity rate is only 4.9%. Telecom Namibia and the Post Office have branches in Outjo. 66.6% of all households have access to radio and 41.3% to television. (NSA 2014:38)

Another remnant of South African occupation and the predominant role of Afrikaner farmers in Outjo is the language. The main language in Outjo is Afrikaans, spoken by most of its people.<sup>92</sup> Many of the people speak several languages: commonly, the mother tongue, Afrikaans and/or English. Older people tend to speak Afrikanns rather than the official language of English. Governmental survey research has avoided questions relating to the ethnic or cultural affiliation of the inhabitants with regard to Namibia's past as an apartheid society (see WEB NSA). Shortly after independence, in the 1991 Census, people were asked about their first language, which cannot be directly related to an ethnic group.<sup>93</sup> The following statistics for Outjo have to be regarded with caution and are just given here to provide a rough impression of how diverse the cultural composition of the population is. Figures from the 1991 Census show the following linguistic distribution: 59.2% Nama/Damara<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Because I only conducted one interview with a farm worker on the general living situation of farm workers, I do not have much information about women on farms affected by violence. This should therefore be a subject for future research. Moreover, this situation the interviewees told me about in 2009 might have changed since then.

<sup>91</sup> This was a small museum described as showing the history of Outjo but it actually only does so from a white perspective. It was closed. See footnote 121 in Section 2.1.

<sup>92</sup> In Namibia 13 languages are recognised as official languages. These languages were categorised into three main groups: Bantu, Khoesan and Indo-European languages (see Möhlig/Seidel 2007).

<sup>93</sup> Some San people, for example, say that they speak Nama/Damara which is very close to their own language but less marginalised than San (Dieckmann 2007:242).

<sup>94</sup> The Damara and Nama as well as the San group Hai//om speak a common language: the Khoisan language which is known as *Khoekoegowab*. *Khoe* means human being and *gowab* means language (Pauli 2009:46,

languages, 13.2% Herero languages, 10.9% Afrikaans, 9.0% Oshiwambo languages, 3.9% San languages, 0.9% German and 2.9% other languages (CBS 1993). There are no figures for present-day Outjo itself. The municipality of Outjo presents itself as a “multicultural town, at least representing four ethnic groups” (MunO 2008:8). This ethnic variation is also reflected by many individuals. Many people are multilingual (see also Pauli 2017). Sometimes they referred to a certain ethnic affiliation but this had more to do with whom they grew up with than who their ancestors were (see Section 5.1).

The literacy rate in Outjo Constituency is 78.2% (NSA 2014:19). In 2009, there were three primary schools: Jack Francis Primary School; the newly built Maarssen Primary School in Etosha Poort; and, in the town, the Outjo Primary School. Several kilometres outside Outjo there is the Otjikondo School Village, a boarding school for children aged between 6 and 14, situated between Outjo and Kamanjab. In Outjo, there is the Outjo Secondary School (OSS) with a hostel in the town, while the newly built Etoshapoort Junior Highschool (EJSS) is situated in the location. All of these schools are attended mainly by black learners. The Private School Moria (PSM) can also be found in the town, which is a combined school and hostel. Most of its learners are white. It was established after independence and has a strong Christian affiliation. Many white parents who live in the town send their children either to this school or to a school in Otjiwarongo. In 2009, there was no joint integration of black and white learners in schools in Outjo. As previously mentioned, I conducted the School Survey with the three secondary schools in Outjo: the OSS, the EJSS and the PSM (see Section 1.3).

Regarding the health care of the population, there is the District Hospital in the town which is an upgraded version of the former private hospital built in 1949. Before independence only white people were allowed to be patients there. The hospital for the black population was situated at the periphery of Etosha Poort and is still used for state patients, who require hospital treatment, and for the HIV and Tuberculosis clinic. The HIV prevalence rate for Outjo was 18% in 2008 (MOHSS 2008: 13). The Health District of Outjo had the highest HIV rate in the Kunene Region (MOHSS 2008:13). Newer estimates indicate around 11-15% prevalence for Outjo District (see MOHSS 2014: 17).<sup>95</sup> In Kunene more recent statistics show a decrease in prevalence rates for the adult population (age 15-49). It currently stands at 5.7% (MOHSS 2019:52). However, in Kunene, only 55.2% of cases of people living with HIV/AIDS are virally suppressed, compared to the national average of 77.4% (MOHSS 2019:71, see Section 4.1).

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footnote 33). I use the terms Damara>Nama or Nama/Damara because most people I met used this term to refer to their language (Pauli 2009, footnote 26).

<sup>95</sup> These are estimates, because HIV prevalence rates among pregnant women attending the Antenatal Care Department were measured and extrapolated (Gierse-Arsten 2005:9, footnote 8). Only recently have population-based prevalence statistics been available (MOHSS 2019, see Section 4.1). However, the figures are only available for the regions but not for towns.

In 2006 and 2009 only medical doctors from other countries (Cuba, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and other African countries) worked at the District Hospital. In 2009, two social workers were employed by the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS), and took care of the social needs of and challenges faced by the inhabitants of Outjo: one foreign district social worker from the Philippines; and one volunteer social worker from India, who was responsible for people with disabilities. They were responsible for supporting people in need, including victims of violence, relationship problems, and orphans. They also offered psychosocial counselling. Both social workers only spoke English. Language was reported to be a problem by many people. Many inhabitants are not fluent in English and therefore needed a translator, either a relative of the patient or another employee of the hospital. Some people complained about a lack of confidentiality in this regard. The research participants in Lorway's study (2015), set in Katutura/Windhoek, also complained about confidentiality being compromised (see also LeBeau et al. 1999 and Edwards-Jauch 2012). Besides the hospital, there were two private doctors and a pharmacy in the town. People who were in need of psychosocial counselling could be counselled by the social worker or, if they could afford it, they could be treated at the private Psychotherapeutic Centre in Okonguarri which is 70km away from Outjo and the only psychosocial clinic in Outjo Constituency. People in need could also access some NGOs that are active in Outjo, like the Red Cross Society, Medicos del Mundos and Women's Action for Development. In addition, there is also the opportunity to consult pastors or church elders. In regard to counselling, however, some research participants complained about a lack of confidentiality, too.

The Christian religion and faith are very important in Outjo. Many research participants stated that religion is important in their lives. This is also evident from the town's Latin slogan *Nihil sine deo* – "nothing without God". In 2009 there were 19 Christian churches in Outjo. Usually different ethnic groups attend different churches (Expert 4, 2009). This is especially the case in relation to skin colour:<sup>96</sup> in 2009, hardly any of the churches had both black and white members. The biggest black church is the Evangelical Church of the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) attended by mostly Damara>Nama and Herero groups. Services are held in Damara>Nama and Otjiherero, in the presence of visitors such as my family, in English and sometimes in Afrikaans. There is also the Roman Catholic Church. In 2009, they had a visiting pastor and local elders. Many whites attend services at the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), where the service is held in Afrikaans in the main church building. Connected to this church is Kunene for Christ, a missionary organisation that does missionary work in Kunene and in south Angola, as well as carrying out development projects. Some black teenagers and very few whites attend these church services and work as missionaries. In 2006 the services took place in the back room of the local Dutch Reformed Church. Since 2011, these

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<sup>96</sup> See footnote 24 in Section 1.1.1 about the use of skin colour in this study.

services, directed at the youth, have taken place in the main church, and are conducted in English (see WEB KfC). Efforts have been made to unite these “black” and “white” churches, but in 2009 there was still a long way to go. Another white church is the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK).<sup>97</sup> The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) is the church that most Ovambo and Kavango groups belong to. Most of the people who participate in the irregular services held by the Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Kirche in Namibia (DELKIN) are German. The remaining churches are Pentecostal Churches (see Gierse-Arsten 2005).

There is a Magistrate’s Court in Outjo town. The magistrate, whom I interviewed in 2009, identified the issue of child maintenance as a big problem, as fathers do not want to pay for their children (see Chapter 6). The main crimes dealt with at Outjo Magistrate’s Court are stock theft, theft, and assault cases between men (Expert 29, 2009). The white population does not seem to be very well integrated into the justice system. The magistrate I interviewed in 2006 told me that white people do not often go to the regional court. Most cases dealt with at the court relate to tickets for drunk-driving or stolen cattle, not assault cases (Expert 35, 2006). Generally, I got the impression that many white people just do their own thing, live in their own world and have their own rules. The lack of confidentiality previously mentioned in the health section was also apparent at the Magistrate’s Court, where cases were talked about while I was present.

The only Police Station is situated in the town, even though the majority of people (around 70%, Dieckmann 2007:19) are based in the location where there is perceived to be a high prevalence of crime (see Section 4.2). Because people were dissatisfied with the situation, they developed the Crime Prevention Project (CPP) to try to get another police station within the location (see Section 4.2). Among other officers working at the police station in town in 2009 there were two officers who specialised in charges of rape, domestic violence and assault cases. The nearest Woman and Child Protection Unit (WCPU) is located in Otjiwarongo.<sup>98</sup> The WCPUs are special police units designed to deal with and sometimes accommodate the victims of domestic violence and sexualised violence (see Section 3.3). In 2009, some police officers and one social worker worked in the WCPU in Otjiwarongo but the latter was only part-time; the rest of the time she did social work outside of the WCPU. The employees got special training, consisting of the Woman and Child Protection course and follow-up workshops. The station commander complained about having fewer resources than normal police stations (Expert 30, 2006). Another WCPU is located in Tsumeb, which is around 230km away. One of the specialised police officers in Outjo told me that she only

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<sup>97</sup> I was never given access to this church.

<sup>98</sup> Regarding the jurisdiction, Outjo belongs to Otjiwarongo, which lies 70km away in the Otjozondjupa Region and not in the Kunene Region.

refers victims to the WCPU if they insist because she believes that the Outjo police can deal with these cases.

The geographical division of Outjo between the town and location causes a lot of problems as there is no public transport. Most people in the location do not have a car; in 2009 there were only a few taxis. Most black employees stay in Etosha Poort and have to walk to their place of work in Outjo town. Some employers gave their employees a lift home, but most people walked from the location to the town and vice versa. The distance between Outjo town and location is approximately one kilometre. However, because Outjo as a whole extends further, the individual walking distances from home to school, job, municipal services, police, etc., can vary considerably. The learners at Outjo Secondary School in the town have to walk a long way to get home, if they are not staying in the hostel close to the school but in Etosha Poort. The lack of public transport is also a problem for farm workers who want to go into the town. They and their families, who were staying with them, often had to walk because they did not own cars or were not allowed to have a car on the farm, as one farm worker told me (Expert 27, 2009). These long hikes lead to dependencies on others and involve a significant element of danger, especially for children or women travelling alone. Some of the research participants mentioned that some women who lack resources offer sexual favours in exchange for transport. Sometimes taxi drivers would even expect women to do this and behave intimidatingly (Allison, 2009, see Section 5.2).

The lack of transportation also presents challenges for victims of gender violence in this respect. In one case I witnessed, the victim needed transport to the WCPU in Otjiwarongo. Because there is no public transport between the towns either, I offered to give her a lift. The lack of resources such as transportation can be a challenge or even a major obstacle for people who are not physically fit (old, disabled, sick) to participation in community life, access to health, education, and municipal services, and can even prevent them from reporting crimes or simply getting help when they need it.

### **Ethnic relations, paternalism and racism**

One challenge that confronts contemporary Outjo, and a topic which was always present for me as a white researcher from outside the country, was the relations between black and white. Black and white people<sup>99</sup> have a different but shared history. In general terms it is the same history, because they both live in the same area. However, it is a different history too, because white and black people were socialised differently and had different levels of access to power and resources. During the German and South African colonial era difference was stressed disproportionately and linked to the attribution of value depending on skin colour or ethnic group, being part of the racist hierarchy, taken to extremes during apartheid.

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<sup>99</sup> See Section 1.1.1, footnote 24 for an explanation about the use of skin colours.

Nonetheless, both groups have always been connected to one another, by work, by policy, by business and also by hidden romantic and/or sexual relationships. Prior to independence their relations were usually hierarchical and distant in nature.

When I first came to Outjo in 2001, I realised that there was a large social distance between the black and white inhabitants of Outjo. Relations between the white and the black people were mostly working relationships: whites as employers and black people as employees. Apart from that, according to my observations and interviews, there was almost no personal contact between the two groups. However, people talked about hidden sexual contact between white men and black women and their offspring (see also Dieckmann 2007:19). At one shop the entry was still restricted for black people, an illegal remnant of apartheid.

Every time I came back to Outjo (2002, 2006 and 2009) there were signs of the two groups gradually moving closer together. Although in 2009, there were still very few mixed couples, I got the impression that racism<sup>100</sup> overall has decreased. Some white people in Outjo made an effort not to be regarded as racists, but there were also white people who still behaved in an openly racist manner. My intimate partner<sup>101</sup> and I were quite frequently confronted with racist views during our stay at the lodge and in the conversations we participated in or listened to. More than once we were confronted with the opinion that the German dictator Hitler also had some good points.

An increasing number of white people in Outjo have started to realise that racism is problematic and do not want to be linked with it. It is a sensitive topic for them. Although I observed that some white people still had racist attitudes and could exhibit racist behaviour, they often considered their behaviour to be progressive and not racist. Within working relationships between employers and employees white employers revealed paternalism and racism. At our lodge we witnessed one example. A domestic worker suffered from severe and prolonged cough. Only very hesitantly and maybe because of our pressure, she was brought to a doctor in town. When she came back, she did not know what the diagnosis was. Later on we found out, that the doctor was a relative of the manager's partner and the medical results were discussed only with the farm manager, not with the employee herself. When we questioned their behaviour, they proudly stressed that they had taken her to the doctor, showing how well they were taking care of their employees. They did not understand our concerns at all (see also Sylvain 1999). Sylvia Schlettwein describes the paternalistic attitude revealing in the text of a German Namibian author: "(...) he is unable to overcome the paternalistic attitude completely and a sense of superiority of a minority endowed with privileges and power (...)" is remaining (Schlettwein 2018:332). Paternalism might be

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<sup>100</sup> See the definition of racism provided in footnote 23.

<sup>101</sup> For information about the role of my intimate partner during the research see Section 1.3.

originating in the “right to paternal correction” of German colonial origin as well as the “*baasskap* system” of Afrikaner origin (see Chapter 2).

In 2009 a white interviewee, Loutjie, described her relationship to black people in the following way: she did not have anything against black people, but she did not want to sit together with them at the same table and share food. She said that “they”, meaning black people, would have their own culture as would the whites (Loutjie, 2009). This statement is typical of the kind of things I often heard white people in Outjo say. In 2006, a white high-ranking municipality employee told me that there is a lot of racism in Outjo: “The sign of racism is the segregation of minds, not only between groups but also within groups” (Expert 37, 2006). The terms “them” or “they” were often used by white people in Outjo to talk about black people without explicitly using the word “blacks”. It also applied the other way around: black people used “them” to talk about whites. Lots of prejudices and stereotypes remain, as well as paternalism and in the worst cases open racism. As Ute Dieckmann, an anthropological colleague who also did field research in Outjo, put it:

The official public discourse in Outjo is mostly politically correct, but stands in contrast to ‘hidden transcripts’ – discourses outside of power-laden situations of the white inhabitants. (Dieckmann 2007:19)

Another example which illustrates the segregative perceptions of many people was revealed during the process of establishing the Men’s Group in Outjo (see Section 1.3). Originally, it was planned to include stakeholders from all different backgrounds in terms of ethnic groups, religious and political affiliation, Regional Council, Municipality, etc., in the Changing Gender Relations Committee (CCGR) and in the Men’s Group. However, it was not possible to include white stakeholders in the CCGR. The original idea was to establish a *joint* men’s group in Outjo. All the stakeholders listened to the idea and liked it, but they soon started to organise men’s groups just within their own context along racial and religious lines, instead of forming a single group for all men in Outjo. Thus, there was one men’s camp for the whites in DRC, and one men’s group for the blacks in ELCRN. Expert 3 (2009) concluded that it would be helpful for all the men to talk and form an inclusive group, but the white men were not yet ready for a mixed group. He feared that some white men would refuse to work together with black men. At this point in the research I questioned myself, and asked what was more important: to address gender relations or relations between white and black people? Regretfully, I came to the conclusion that it would not be possible to address both issues at that time (Field Notes, 02.06.09).

It is not only ideological or racist differences that exist between white and black people. These historical legacies still manifest in unequal socio-economic living situations (see above). Most of the white people make a decent living; some whites are especially wealthy

and powerful.<sup>102</sup> There are also some poorer white people in Outjo. A black middle class has developed in Outjo as well as a small elite group (see Section 4.1). In contrast to those few who are leading a comfortable or affluent life, most black people live in poverty, like the people who stay in the shacks in the informal settlements in Etosha Poort. Moreover, some of the research participants live in formal houses but also struggle with daily living, because they do not have a regular income.

During the research in 2009 I observed a more positive tone to communications between white and black people, for example in shops. Some white shop owners gave donations for events to help black citizens of Outjo cope with poverty (see also Section 5.1 for the relations between white and black church members).

I concluded that the small town of Outjo has to cope with many challenges. The unequal living worlds have started to connect. However, the remaining unequal life chances restricted by skin colour, Culture, class, gender, age and place of residence have a strong impact on daily lives and relationships in Outjo. A lack of public and private resources, including transport, is hindering people's access to infrastructure, impairing their participation and fulfilment of individual potential and even putting people at risk. Moreover, racism and prejudices impede cooperation and development. In an effort to understand people's current living realities, it is important to shed light on the colonial past.

## Chapter 2 Gender and violence in Namibia before Independence<sup>103</sup>

In Namibia in terms of both gender and violence, massive changes have happened during historical transformations. The construction of the past is relevant to today. People identify with their past and draw on it for their "contemporary subjectivities" (Becker 2015:117). Moreover, they often use the past to legitimate current behaviour and assess the present in comparison to the past (as several of the men did, see Chapter 6).

In the constitution adopted when Namibia gained independence in March 1990, it was determined for the first time that all people of Namibia are equal before the law: not only those formerly classified as white, but coloured and/or black people, as well as poor and rich people, adults and children, and women and men (see Chapter 3). This represented a profound change for the Namibian people. Regarding gender relations, it is intended that

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<sup>102</sup> I recall being shocked by the very luxurious house of a white farm owner only 500m away from black plastic tents with no windows where his black charcoal workers stayed with their families. Here, similar poor housing for the workers existed, as complained about in a report on social conditions in Namibia in 1984 (UNCN 1984:7). It was at this farm where my intimate partner was indirectly approached by a teenage girl (see Section 7.1).

<sup>103</sup> In this section, the main developments, especially within the so-called Police Zone, with a focus on gender and violence, are described (for further information on the history, see Wallace 2013).

partnerships involving intimate relationships should be equal, in contrast to the legal subordination of females to males which prevailed before independence.

Most of the older and middle-aged people in this research referred to independence as a major point of change in their lives, without being specifically asked about it. It surprised me that several people referred to the past as being better (for discussion see Chapter 4). Boden found that some older people even view independence as “*the watershed of change in inter-generational relationships*” (Boden 2008:118f, italics in the original).

Moreover, as in other countries that are transitioning from violence and repression to peaceful democracies, former political positions and alliances play a role in shaping the way that people live and work together today. This is especially clear from the section on resistance to the South African occupation (Section 2.2.2), in which two research participants (Peter and Timotheus) give different accounts of their pasts. Even young people born after independence have been shaped by the past as they were raised by people socialised under a repressive system (see Section 4.3). Thus, to comprehend current gender constructions, conflicts, and violence and human interactions more generally, it is important to look at what gendered life was like before independence. In Section 2.2.1, the violence narratives of an older couple (Magda and Robert) and three middle-aged women (Lisa from Windhoek, Emma and Gisela from Outjo) are interwoven. Moreover, looking into the past enables us to understand the geographical differences that exist; and the “fragmented past” of people’s memories, as Kössler termed it (Kössler 2007:381).<sup>104</sup>

Present day Namibian society is influenced by legacies of a violent history of colonial occupation which began roughly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the German colonisation and was continued after the First World War by the South Africans. In Namibia as well as in other formerly occupied countries, the colonialists contributed to substantial changes in local life and perceptions. Thus, recent history and historicity (see Chapter 1.1.1) reveals interesting legacies and continuities.<sup>105</sup>

## 2.1 German colonial era: African and European gender concepts, Christianisation and establishing a system of violence

Many significant changes in social concepts and human relations took place during colonial times. European and African concepts of gender<sup>106</sup> differed, but also shared some similarities when people came into contact during the colonial occupation.<sup>107</sup> In the African living

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<sup>104</sup> See Section 1.2 regarding overgeneralisations about Namibia.

<sup>105</sup> Of course, I do not want to imply that Namibian history began with colonialism, nor that violence only occurred when colonialists arrived. For more information on the general history of Namibia see Wallace 2013.

<sup>106</sup> By this I mean norms about masculinities and femininities as well as their relations, also called gender constructions, which form a gender system (see Section 1.1.1).

<sup>107</sup> Here, only a short overview of the different gender concepts of Europeans and Africans is given. For more detailed information see Becker 1995 and 2007, McKittrick 1999, O’Donnell 1999, Walther 2004; Walker 1990 for

spheres, family relationships were based around production and reproduction, which were strongly intertwined (Becker 1995:59).<sup>108</sup> Women were not restricted to the reproductive sphere, but were also important producers of subsistence (ibid:62). Since both men and women contributed to subsistence, both were given recognition for doing so.

At the advent of colonialism, men of the Ovambo, Nama and Herero groups controlled most of the resources as well as the fruits of women's labour (Becker 1995:74). Becker concludes that "men were indeed more powerful than women but that the latter were not totally subjugated beings" (Becker 1995:74). Men and women lived in "different spheres in a complementary social duality" (Becker 1995:77). It was mainly men who held political positions (Becker 1995)<sup>109</sup>, but even if there were female leaders too,<sup>110</sup> the Europeans reinforced their own gender inequality by insisting on negotiating only with men (Iipinge/LeBeau 2005:15, Becker 2006). Consequently, female chiefs sent male relatives to meet with the Europeans, and were sometimes later disempowered by them (LeBeau/Iipinge 2004:2, see also Becker 1995:90, footnote 44). Under South African rule, there was the example of the long-standing colonial administrator Hahn, who "surprisingly frequently ignore[d]" (Gordon 1991:98) the matrilineal succession system among Ovambo groups. Male successors were chosen by colonial officials. Thus, polarisations between males and females were intensified, and we can speak of a gendered strategy of divide and rule (Becker 2007). Moreover, this colonial policy led to a specific perception of tradition, which had significant consequences for gender relations:

(...) the alliances of colonial administrators, male traditional elites, and the Christian missions contributed to the creation of an image of an allegedly ancient, immutable tradition which defined authority in the family, the community and the state as exclusively male domains. (Becker 2007:34)

Today many people who are campaigning for gender equality blame "tradition" or "culture" for the oppression of women (see Section 5.1). Becker doubts that current gender inequalities are rooted in patriarchal cultures. She sums up her findings as follows:

While definite conclusions about gender power relations in [pre-colonial] indigenous Namibian communities cannot be drawn, it can nevertheless be stated that the generalised assumption of women's "traditionally" oppressed inferior position is highly disputable. (Becker 1995:77, information in brackets added (iiba) by SGA)

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Southern Africa; Stoler 1989 and Gouda 1993 for a perspective that combines race and sexuality under colonialism.

<sup>108</sup> Becker focuses on three groups of Namibian people: Ovambo, Herero and Nama, which comprised the majority of the Namibian population at that time.

<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately, there are no unequivocal "facts" about gender history before the colonial encounter, because history was passed on through the generations by oral tradition. Moreover, the first written sources are mainly those produced by missionaries and, as such, are biased in two important ways: they give only the European and the male view (Becker 1995:53+59). Later on, scientists only wrote history from a male perspective – which was seen as universal – about male political leaders.

<sup>110</sup> Becker mentions one Ovambo group, which was outstanding in its tradition of female rule until the 1860s, but are no longer remembered (Becker 2006).

Among the Ovambo, Herero and Nama groups, girls and boys were raised with a strong emphasis on gendered tasks (Becker 1995:62). Polygamous marriage was the prevalent ideal (ibid:68, Soiri 1996:23 also mentions this in relation to the Ovambo). During pre-colonial times and up to the 1970s, marriage in Southern Africa was a rite of passage. It was a constitutional institution for intimate relationships (Pauli/vanDijk 2016), in which reproduction was controlled too, as a space for constructing, enacting and passing on (gendered) norms. In none of the ethnic groups did women have the right to extra-marital sex, but their husbands enjoyed the privilege of sex with multiple partners through the institution of polygyny. Only sex with another married woman was seen as adultery because it transgressed her husband's rights. In the Ovambo, Herero and Nama/Damara groups the institution of *lobola* was practiced (LeBeau 2001:191). This entailed money being paid for a bride by the groom or his family to the family of the bride in order to foster good relationships between the two families of origin and gain control over female reproduction (see Ambunda/de Klerk 2008, Mufune 2009, LaFont 2007). It was important to have children within marriage and, among the Ovambos, only after the girl's initiation ceremony. Otherwise it was feared that ill fortune would be brought on the whole community (McKittrick 1999). The consequences of getting pregnant if uninitiated were gendered, reflecting the perception that the blame was placed primarily on the girl: the head of a boy who impregnated a non-initiated girl was shaved but the girl was severely punished.<sup>111</sup> She also kept the lifelong stigma of having sexual intercourse without being initiated, even being called by names which translated as "pregnant girls". As long as a girl did not scream during sexual intercourse, the community did not believe sexual violence could be a possible cause of pregnancy. Thus, the girl was to blame because she did not prevent the boy from committing a forbidden act. Among the Hereros, if a child was born outside marriage all parties involved would be killed. The concept of female virginity did not exist among the African groups in the region and was only introduced by the missionaries (Walker 1990:76, Becker 1995). At the advent of colonialism there was a strong emphasis on controlling "women's reproductive potential" (McKittrick 1999:283). Among the Ovambos, divorce was easy to obtain. A woman could, for example, leave her husband in the case of ill treatment and go back to her family, while the children belonged to her (Becker 1995, Soiri 1996:24). Among the Hereros divorce was more difficult to obtain. They believed that the guilty party must be identified and that the children belonged to the father.

One other factor that was important for power relations in families was age. A system of gerontocracy prevailed. Inter-generational relations implied reciprocity over a person's whole life course: "Rules of behaviour reflect the expectation that children owe respect, obedience

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<sup>111</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was dealt with differently in various Ovambo kingdoms. In some kingdoms, the girls were expelled, while in others the child was killed, either during pregnancy or at birth. There was a perception that such pregnancies would endanger the king and the girls' lineage (McKittrick 1999:268).

and services to their parents and grandparents, in exchange for being or having been provided with the necessities of life during childhood and as young people” (see Boden 2008:1). Today, people complain that these expectations are not fulfilled by the young people anymore (ibid, and see Section 4.3).

At the beginning of the colonial period, it was almost exclusively European men who came to what is now called Namibia, as in the late 1840s many missionaries, adventurers, hunters, traders, administrators, soldiers and settlers of German or English descent had come to the area that we now know as Namibia, as well as *trekboers* from the Cape Colony (Hartmann 2002, Miescher 2012:102). They were socialised with European (Wilhelminian and Victorian) gender perceptions (Becker 1995). Among other characteristics, this meant the idea that women were subordinate to men (Gouda 1993).<sup>112</sup> They were excluded from higher education and the idea of the male breadwinner and the female homemaker (Walker 1990), reinforced by the newly industrialised capitalist society, was emerging.<sup>113</sup> Consequently, in Europe women’s role was seen as being mainly within the private, and particularly the reproductive, sphere (Walker 1990:11). The colonists’ gender perceptions were clearly influenced by the attitude of male dominance.

The missionaries<sup>114</sup> viewed their own European gender system as favourable to women and that of the Africans as “denigrating and oppressing women” (Becker 1995:57),<sup>115</sup> referring to the *lobola* and polygynous marriages. They claimed that they wanted to spread “civilisation”. They established schools, churches, and missionary households, which, as socialising institutions, influenced people’s perceptions (Walker 1990:13). In doing so, they were “implanting the specific social norms and practices of their home country onto the indigenous population” (Becker 1995:101). Cock goes even further and concludes, in the context of her research on Xhosa women in South Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that missionaries, in their own view, did not just want to bring “civilisation” to African people but, through evangelisation and gender-specific education, also wanted to liberate women from being “poor degraded females” (Cock 1990:86). In this regard, it was especially important to establish the concepts of Christian marriage and family in the colonies (Mamozai 1982, Cock 1990:86). However, this included hierarchical gender relations, especially the subordination of women: “The attributes of the good Christian woman were obedience to the authority of husband and father, piety, decorum, thrift, and service to others” (Walker 1990:14). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Only after the turn of the century, years after universal suffrage had been granted to men, did women in Europe gain the right to vote – and only then after a long struggle.

<sup>113</sup> Although working class women had always had to do waged labour, the idea of the homemaker became the prevalent ideological ideal (Becker 1995:80).

<sup>114</sup> The group of missionaries at first comprised only men, and then wives of missionaries and, since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, female missionaries (Engelhard 1993).

<sup>115</sup> See also Walker 1990, Cock 1990:85. As Sally Engle Merry observes, this colonialist attitude could be found in several colonised countries worldwide and was seen as a feature of colonised countries’ “backwardness” (Merry 2009:26) even though women were also subordinated in their home countries.

century, female missionaries also began their work and concentrated mainly on the Christianisation of women and girls (Engelhardt 1993:22). As Engelhardt put it:

The aim of the women's mission was the 'education' of the African women to Christian, devoted spouses, housewives, and mothers, including the subordination under the man. (Engelhardt 1993:25, translated by SGA)

It was in this period that the concept of a "Christian housewife" was created (Becker 2004:47) which is still prevalent in present day Namibia (Pauli 2012:423). Equally important was the focus on monogamous relationships. Christian marriage was characterised as a relationship between two individuals and thus differed from marriage in pre-colonial times, where group relations always played an important role (Cock 1990:86). One result of this Christianisation of marriage was that male converts were not allowed to keep all of their wives. They could only keep one wife and had to abandon the others. The concept of monogamous relationships was also strongly linked to female virginity and chastity, and any violation of this rule was associated with shame and sin, which can still be seen in current constructions of femininity (see Section 7.1). Consequently, missionaries focused on the premarital sexual activities of women (Becker 1995:101). On the one hand, the Christian ideal of a monogamous loving marriage is still prevalent today, which is encouraged by the ideal of romantic love espoused by the media (A. Becker 2009; see Section 5.2). On the other hand, the social practice of having multiple concurrent sexual partners is common nowadays but is kept hidden. Although European colonisers thought of their own gender perceptions as "right" and as favourable to women, they contributed strongly to the limitation of women to the private sphere, their subordination to males and the control of their sexuality. Missionaries such as the politically and socially influential Heinrich Vedder<sup>116</sup> and others displayed "a misogynous worldview" (van Wolputte 2016:3).

The missionaries introduced schooling into the colony. All school children learnt reading, writing and arithmetic. Education was gender-differentiated: boys were educated in crafts like brick making, building and gardening; and girls learnt how to knit, sew, cook and wash (Becker 1995:102). Mamozai concludes that the aim of girls' education was to create homemakers (Mamozai 1982:93, Engelhardt 1993:25). This gendered division within education was suited to the gendered division of labour that already existed in pre-colonial times. It was adapted to European perceptions. Up to the 1990s, Namibian students made their career choices in a gendered way. However, one part of the government's gender policy after independence has been to neutralise gender-stereotyped career choices (see /Khaxas 1996), and this approach has achieved some success. In the Gender Policy of 2010, it was reported that equal numbers of females are now enrolling to study traditional male subjects (MGECW 2010).

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<sup>116</sup> His book on the old South Western Africa (German *Das Alte Südwest Afrika*, 1934) was part of the school curriculum until independence (van Wolputte 2016).

Another influence brought with them by the missionaries was the idea “of individual autonomy, rooted in western individualism” which was “threaded through the dominant ideology of female subservience” (Walker 1990:16). Some women used the concept of Christian marriage as a defence against unwanted polygamous marriages (Becker 1995:104, Walker 1990:15) and thus to empower themselves. Some young people left their families to live with missionaries, where they were given new names and clothes and learnt how to read and write. The existence of missionary communities and colonial administration in Ovamboland “(...) created significant conflicts along the fault-lines of gender and generation” (McKittrick 1999:266).

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in 1896-97, the Rinderpest pandemic threatened Southern African agriculture. Before the Rinderpest, African farmers owned more cattle than European farmers did. The colonial government initiated an inoculation campaign. Because more cattle belonging to the Europeans were inoculated than those belonging to Africans, more of the European settlers’ cattle survived the pandemic. Cattle became a scarce resource, and its value therefore increased. Thus, the Rinderpest significantly shifted power relations in favour of the Europeans (Miescher 2012:30). Many Africans became impoverished because they had lost their subsistence foundation (Miescher 2012:31). Later, many Africans died because of diseases (malaria, anthrax and others), which became rife during the following year, as a consequence of the poor health conditions (ibid). Another consequence of the Rinderpest was that the Germans installed a Rinderpest cordon<sup>117</sup> which formed a geographical border north of Outjo close to the Etosha National Park. It was met with indigenous military resistance (Miescher 2012:33). After the Rinderpest the colonial government wanted to keep control over animals and people. Therefore, many of the posts that had originally been provisionally installed became permanent (Miescher 2012:41f). Thus, trade and travel was controlled, and later, the Red Line was established, forming the northern border of the Police Zone (see below).

In the early stages of colonisation, only European men came to Namibia and they had the perception of being superior in terms of gender and skin colour. Thus, it is not surprising that there was also sexualised violence against African women as these women were not seen as equal human beings (see also Hartmann 2002:125, Engelhardt 1993:28). Zacharias (2002:92) gives examples of African men being killed in the struggle to defend their women against rape. Hartmann (2004) mentions that families moved away to protect their daughters against sexual attacks by white men. The sexual violence perpetrated by white men was either not prosecuted or the perpetrators were given only lenient sentences (Wallace 2013). One reason why the Herero signed the so-called “Protection Treaties” with the Germans in

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<sup>117</sup> There were 16 military outposts across a 500km area. European and African people worked at these outposts (Miescher 2012:23, 25).

the mid-1880s was that they were assured that European settlers would accept the laws and customs of the African population. Local rulers hoped that the “violent excesses of European men” (Hartmann 2004:183, translated by SGA) could be restricted by the treaties. Therefore, they included the rule that the German men were not allowed to have sexual intercourse with local women; not because this violated the women concerned but to appease the indigenous men who had the rights over their women. This was formally guaranteed in the treaties (Becker 1995:82).

In the colony of South West Africa<sup>118</sup> life was characterised by many restrictions, asymmetric human relations, as well as different forms and levels of violence. As Krüger writes, colonialism needs to be understood as “violent conditions” (Krüger 2004:92). She concludes that the colonial approach was not only intended to subjugate and control the indigenous population but also to bring about their psychological and symbolic subjugation (Krüger 2004:99).

German colonialism was characterised by a white minority rule, not only with regard to the colonial administration but also to white employers. They had the “right of paternal correction” (German *väterliches Züchtigungsrecht*, Krüger: 2004:93, Wallace 2013:186) in their private homes, which extended to employers in charge of farms and mines (Krüger 2004:93). However, these “rights” were also gendered. The white male head of the household was allowed to corporally punish the female and male workers as well as the children. And, because females were not seen as having the same value as males, they had to suffer incomparable intimate violence. The white wife of the head of the household could also “discipline” their workers and the children. This “right to discipline” is an example of the violent conditions (Krüger 2004) that people had to cope with under colonialism (Sylvain 1999). This also has implications for present day society. Over long years of violent colonial rule, violence became regarded as relatively normal and only harsh violence led to outrage (e.g., O’Donnell 1999) having its legacies for today (see Chapter 4).

There were several uprisings and military attacks by Herero and Nama to fight the German colonial rule (Wallace 2013). In the Namibian War<sup>119</sup> of 1904-1908, 80% of the Herero and 50% of the Nama were killed by the German troops, with the full intention of exterminating them because they were seen as racially inferior (Becker 1995:122, Zimmerer 2004a). Today there is a scientific consensus that this constituted genocide (Zimmerer 2004a, Wallace

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<sup>118</sup> During colonial times, Namibia was called “South West Africa”. Mostly, I use the name Namibia, following Wallace (2013:8). In 1976, the UN adopted “Namibia” as the official name, which was then also used when independence was gained (Wallace 2013:289). The term “Namibia” originates from the Namib Desert, which is situated along the coastal plain in western Namibia.

<sup>119</sup> Here I use Wallace’s term the “Namibian War” (2013:353, footnote 2). It avoids any ethnic connotations (unlike the Herero or Nama war) because it had consequences for the whole region. Moreover, ‘war’ is the appropriate designation because, during that time, more people died in combat, in flight or in concentration camps than in any other wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century and many people lost their land and cattle (ibid).

2013:177, Kössler/Melber 2017).<sup>120</sup> German military leaders and soldiers directed their violence not only against armed men but also against women and children (Gewald 2003), which was criticised by some German contemporaries (Krüger 2004). However the aim of the German military action was destruction. It is estimated that half of the population of Hereros died (Wallace 2013:178) and the Nama population decreased by an estimate of one third (ibid:178). Similar figures are assumed for San and Damara people; however there are no statistics (ibid). In contrast to the German approach, the Herero military leaders ordered their fighters to spare missionaries, white women and children as well as men of other origin than German (Wallace 2013:157).

Due to the war, 14,500 German soldiers (Miescher 2012:57) came to Namibia. With the increasing import of German soldiers, there was also more sexual contact between German men and African women: either voluntary, or forced, or through prostitution. Gewald explains that “German troops raped Herero women and regularly made use of sexual services offered” (Gewald 1999:201). One example of the sexual violence perpetrated by the German military involves the German major general and last commander of the euphemistically termed *Schutztruppe* (German for Protection Force), Victor Franke. Between 1899 and 1902 he was the leader of the Outjo District. The historian Gewald describes his cruelties towards women as follows: “More than a hundred years on, the descendants of women raped by Franke recall the callous and casual way in which he raped their ancestors” (Gewald 2003:119). However, this violent past has not found its way into local history or historicity at all. His former residence, called the Franke House, housed Outjo’s small museum between its opening in the 1990s and its closure in the 2010s.<sup>121</sup>

The Germans introduced concentration camps where people suffered from malnutrition, generally bad conditions and were subject to rape, and other kinds of violence. There were not only fighters imprisoned but also many women and children (Krüger 2004:93). Women were abducted and taken to the concentration camps to be “sex slaves for both German civilians and soldiers” (Edwards 2016:55). It is estimated that at least half of the prisoners died (Wallace 2013:176). The Namibian War, the genocide and the forced labour were characterised by structural, symbolic, collective and individual violence and led to a brutalisation of social relations in everyday life. Krüger identified a specific colonial form of

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<sup>120</sup> For a long time there was no concerted policy of taking responsibility for these past wrongs, although some pressure was exerted by German civil society groups. Only at the end of the 1980s did the German government speak of a special responsibility of Germany for Namibia and invested in development projects in Namibia. In 2004, the German development minister Heidemarie Wiecezorek-Zeul asked for forgiveness on her own account. In 2015, the president of the German Bundestag, Norbert Lammert, used the term “genocide”. Only since mid-2015, has the government of Germany used the term “genocide”. Since then there have been negotiations between the two countries (see Kössler/Melber 2017).

<sup>121</sup> This museum was described as introducing histories of the town but only shows minerals and glorifies white settler history. During my field research in 2009 not a single critical word was said about the violent behaviour of Victor Franke. Van Wolputte also visited this museum in 2002 and was so appalled by it that he mentioned it in the introduction to his article (2016). He also mentioned that the museum had been emptied and the items transferred to South Africa by its owner, when he visited it again in 2014.

everyday violence (Scheper-Hughes/Bourgois 2008:21 and see Section 1.1.2), which was rationally intended (Krüger 2004:93). After the war, particularly on remote farms, a “culture of beatings” (German *Prügelkultur*, *ibid*) came into being, because German farmers had adopted the “right to discipline” their workers (*ibid*). There were feelings of fear and a desire for revenge, which sometimes led to such an “exorbitant brutality that even the German authorities intervened” (Krüger 2004:101). Wallace concludes that “(...) in 1907 the population of the Police Zone had been defeated, demoralised and deeply traumatised” (Wallace 2013:188).

One consequence of this violent condition that was characterised by power inequality and sexual repression was that there were many children of mixed descent (Hartmann 2004). Between 1906 and 1910, Herero women gave birth to more children by German than by Herero fathers (Gewald 1999). Thus, the strict racial division between black and white became blurred, and uncertainties regarding land ownership developed. Therefore, the German colonial administration perceived this development as a problem (calling it the “mixed marriage problem”). As a result, the colonial administration strongly promoted the migration of German women to the colonies as marriage partners (Zacharias 2002, Engelhardt 1993). German women were seen as the guardians of German culture, civilisation and sexual mores for the German men (Zacharias 2002, Mamozai 1982, Engelhardt 1993). For the German women, their female status was linked to their performance as housekeepers and their perceived high standards of morality (Zacharias 2002, Mamozai 1982, Becker 1995).

A consequence of the genocide was a change in the gender system of the remaining Herero group. While during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the responsibility for the Holy Fire laid solely with women, today this is unthinkable for many Herero people. Becker explains that they lost this important role during the 1920s when a process of reconstruction took place among the remaining Hereros (Becker 2006): “(...) such reinventions of tradition during the process of reconstruction buttressed male hierarchies” (Becker 2006:41).

In 1907, the German government decided to designate the area of colonial control and protection for the white settlers. Therefore, a map was drawn up of Namibia, on which the “Protection Area” was clearly shown. In this Police Zone the European settlement was promoted under armed police protection (Miescher 2012:44f). The colonial government assigned land to the white settlers (Dieckmann 2007:175, map 8). The local population was displaced from the lands that they used for living and cattle-grazing. Dispossession of land and cattle in the Police Zone led to the impoverishment of local people and forced them to take employment on white commercial farms (Pauli 2010). The former cordon fence (see above), formed the northern border of the Police Zone. This Red Line cut the country into two distinct areas during the colonial era: the northern part above the line had little settler

involvement; while the so-called Police Zone in the centre/south with white settlement (Becker 1995: 81, Miescher 2012, Gordon 1991:87). Although the borders of the Police Zone were shifted several times prior to independence, the locality of Outjo always remained within the zone, meaning that the inhabitants were under (strict) colonial control (see Dieckmann 2007:175, map 175). Since 1907 every black human being had to be registered with the colonial administration and wear a metal badge which functioned as a pass. The white population was allowed to arrest Africans without a pass and hand them over to the police (Dieckmann 2013:259f). German colonial administration did not rule the area north of the Police Zone (Miescher 2012:23). The area north of the Police Zone was seen as “the land of the Ovambo” (Miescher 2012:49), and subsequently “Ovamboland”. Trade in weapons, munitions, horses and alcohol<sup>122</sup> between the two areas was banned (Miescher 2012:49).<sup>123</sup> Even now the Red Line still forms a border in the minds and memories of the people (Miescher 2012).

During that time the contract labour system came into being and was later intensified by the South African colonialists (see Section 2.2). The German colonial administration enforced the Indigenous Ordinances (German *Eingeborenenverordnungen*): nearly all Africans had to work for Europeans, and they all had to carry standard passes and additional passes, called service books, giving information about the current contract labour situation. They were not allowed to own land and stock, with a few exceptions (Becker 1995:83, Miescher 2012:44). Due to the ban on trade between the north and south/central area, the north experienced a shortage of goods. The colonial administration hoped that the Ovambos living north of the Police Zone would thus be forced to migrate into the Police Zone and engage in contract labour (Miescher 2012:50). The Indigenous Ordinances of 1907 had the aim of “establishing total control over all Africans within the Police Zone and forcibly integrated them into the colonial economy” (Miescher 2012:61). However, the extent of the control varied between different places. In towns and their surrounding areas there was a “near-totalitarian level of control” (Zimmerer 2004b:130, translated by SGA). Even after the Namibian War, “genocidal acts, including slaughters of indigenous groups in 1912-15” (Britton/Shook 2014:156) were perpetrated. Gordon points to the overlooked genocide of the San people (Gordon 2009). Even after the war the lethal racism of the German colonialists continued.

Colonial thinking was characterised by the idea of European or white superiority. This also has ongoing legacies for present day society. Kandirikira (2002) claims that people have become accustomed to such racist stereotypes as they were socialised with it. Many

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<sup>122</sup> Before the Europeans arrived in Namibia, the Africans produced alcohol from fermented fruits, grain, and palm trees. When the Europeans came they also traded in alcohol and imported beer and spirits. Siiskonen mentions that, over a short time period, spirits became the most important trading commodity (Siiskonen 1994).

<sup>123</sup> Due to the focus of this work, it is not possible to provide detailed information on the former “Ovamboland”. Only when significant differences between the north and south/central area occurred, is this shown.

Namibians were socialised in a very restrictive, segregative system based on hierarchical human relationships – with regard to gender, age, class and skin colour. This entailed a rigid division and hierarchy in the following colonial order: at the top were the white men, followed by white women, then white children, then black men, then black women, and both last and least, black children. However, sometimes there were coalitions between the different groups: for example, white and black men united in the suppression of women (Becker 1995). On the other hand, white men and white women were legally allowed to “discipline” black employees and frequently did so (see below). White women also experienced violence by their husbands (Edwards 2016), and black male traditional authorities collaborated with the white administration to control their fellow black compatriots. Moreover, children were disciplined by caregivers using corporal punishment.

Following the loss of the First World War, Germany had to cede all its colonies. At the end of the German colonial period in 1915, the Africans in the Police Zone had lost much of their land and livestock (Pauli 2009:83) and had experienced massive changes to their original lifestyle, including gender constructions. They had had to endure terrible and widespread violence, and in the case of the Herero, Nama and San, even genocide (Zimmerer 2004a, Gordon 2009). The German colonial era was characterised by extreme violence, including sexualised violence, structural violence, symbolic violence, male dominance, dispossession of land and cattle, as well as a change in fundamental religious beliefs, and colonial control of the black majority by the white minority.

## 2.2 South African colonial era: continuation and expansion of a violent system

In 1915, the transitional phase began and, after the First World War, Great Britain was given authority over South West Africa. Britain transferred it to South Africa who then applied for a mandate from the League of Nations, the predecessor of the United Nations (UN). This is one reason why the South African government recorded many of the offences which were perpetrated by the Germans in the so-called *Blue Book* (see a reprint by Silvester/Gewald 2003). Moreover, because they wanted to distinguish themselves from the German colonialists, during the period of martial law (1915-20), they introduced a more liberal style of rule (Dieckmann 2007). They also abolished the right of paternal correction of white settlers towards their employees established by the Germans (Wallace 2013:214). Notwithstanding, the South Africans took a paternalistic view of the African population of Namibia (Miescher 2012:69, Silvester et al. 1998). In 1916, the Police Zone border was closed and one could only cross the border with a special permit (Miescher 2012:71). South Africa was granted the mandate in the early 1920s. Consequently, Namibia remained formally under the protection of the League of Nations but was administered by South Africa.

South Africa established a civil administration in 1921 and was obliged to report regularly to the League of Nations about developments within the country. After South Africa was granted the mandate, its policy changed. The issues that became important were: gaining control over the black population, the exploitation of their labour for farms and mines, and the occupation of land, similar to within South Africa itself. In 1919, South Africa introduced Roman Dutch Law in Namibia (Gordon 1991:88). For gender relations this meant that the subordination of females to males was legally formalised. Roman Dutch Law treated females as legal dependants of men:

(...) African women in Namibia were treated by the colonial administration's policies as dependants of men, i.e. their fathers, uncles, brothers or husbands. Male traditional authorities and, to a lesser extent, male relatives were put in charge to exercise social control over their womenfolk and thus to substitute for state action that, towards males, was directly executed by government institutions. (Becker 1995:91)

In general, an unmarried woman above the age of 21 had the same rights as an unmarried man but she lost many of her rights when she married. The husband was the head of the household in all civil marriages. He was allocated a position of "marital power" and he had to confirm the wife's decisions (Becker 1995:92f). With a few exceptions, the wife was not allowed to sign a contract. This meant that the husband took the final decisions in all matters regarding the family: the residence, raising children, and financial issues (Hubbard 1991:6). If the couple got married without a pre-nuptial contract then they automatically married "in community of property". This meant that property and debts that both partners gained after marriage became joint property. This became problematic because of the husbands' legal position of "marital power". This resulted in him having control of all their joint property (Hubbard 1991:6f). Thus, the wife was made financially dependent on the husband because she did not have access to resources. North of the Police Zone labour migration for females was prohibited until the 1970s (Winterfeldt 2002, Becker 1995:96). There were many laws that favoured men and disadvantaged women (Lipinge/LeBeau 2005:9, see also Hubbard 1991). A married woman could not lay a charge of rape on her violent husband, as it was not seen as a criminal act (Hubbard 1991:23), something which has ongoing legacies for present day perceptions (see Section 8.1.1).

In the 1920s, a new geographical order was established which included the reserves in the area north of the Red Line, and the central farming area south of it. Within this Police Zone, Africans had to live either in the reserves (later called homelands or *bantustans*), on farms or in urban areas divided along ethnic and racial lines in the townships. Later, in a report by the United Nations Council for Namibia (UNCN) the "overcrowded and unsanitary conditions" (UNCN 1984:7) in which black people lived in Namibia were criticised. The reserves were ruled by a Native Commissioner and chiefs legitimised through the South African administration. The chiefs "were controlled by a white municipal official" (Gordon 1991:88). Since the first settlements had been established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, up until the mid-1950s

the area within the northern central region below the Red Line was assigned (Dieckmann 2007:175, map 8). The entire area was divided into commercial land, communal land in the reserves for the black population, and government land including the Game Reserve of Etosha.<sup>124</sup> The original area of the Etosha National Park was reduced, and in 1954 the original inhabitants, people from the Hai//om group, were expelled except those who worked in the game reserve.<sup>125</sup> They were ordered to move to farms and work as labourers. In the Police Zone the black population was restricted either to living in reserves, and later homelands, or in townships or on farms (Gordon 1991). Within the Police Zone most Africans were “proletarianised” (Gordon 1991:87) and under the direct rule of the South African colonial administration. During the first phase of the South African administration from 1915 to 1946, South Africa established its rule over Namibia.

White settlers occupied the land by taking over existing black farms or establishing new ones (Silvester et al. 1998:47). As early as the 1920s, the South African administration started to distribute land to poor white settlers in Namibia, especially in the Outjo area (Silvester 1998:107). Settlers living in conjugal relationships with black women were excluded from getting land, and a farmer who already had land could even lose the lease if it was discovered that he had relationships with black women (Silvester 1998:107). Thus, the South African administration restricted – like the German administration before it – sexuality and relationships between black and white people (O’Donnell 1999, see also Stoler 1989).

To enforce a clear division between north and south, and to prevent contagious animal diseases from infecting herds inside the Police Zone, a buffer zone of over 10,000 square kilometres in the Outjo district north of the Police Zone border was created in 1930. Consequently, forced removals of the African population took place (60-80 km in the west and 120-150 km in the northwest/north) (Miescher 2012:101). The buffer zone reinforced the development of a solid border within the country, separating the north from the south and central area. Even now, it is important to keep this border in mind to understand the different experiences and perceptions of the people who lived inside or outside of the former Police Zone (see Section 1.2).

Outside the Police Zone, the African population had to live in reserves and was only allowed to leave those if they could prove that they were employed in the other zones by showing the required passes. The restriction of movement of black people was managed by a systematic passbook system. Black people were required to have a passbook in which movements between towns or from towns to farms were noted, including permissions issued by farmers and municipalities (Dieckmann 2007, Peter, 2006). If a person stayed longer than the pass permitted them to, they could be beaten and arrested by the police and even jailed. The

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<sup>124</sup> See the land allocations around Outjo in 1937 in Dieckmann 2007:140, map 6.

<sup>125</sup> The fence around Etosha was completed in 1973 (Dieckmann 2007:176, 191).

same applied in cases where a person stayed out after the curfew set by the white authorities.

In the north, outside of the Police Zone, the South African administration established a system of indirect rule, via traditional authorities, who were not elected or inherited by their tribe but appointed by the South African administration. In this regard, Friedman points to the “ambiguous nature of colonial rule” (Friedman 2007/8:73), which “cultivat[ed] ambiguity” (ibid). The traditional rulers controlled their people by so-called customary law. However, this customary law was manipulated by the traditional rulers themselves and also by the South African officials in the interest of maintaining control and acquiring a cheap labour force for the Police Zone. Thus, this law is not simply a “remnant of the past”, but an “invented tradition” (Becker 1995:88), created in the interest of certain local elites<sup>126</sup> and colonisers to enable them to control resources and sometimes also simply to enrich themselves.<sup>127</sup> It was a system which was open to abuse and despotism as the traditional rulers were neither obliged to keep records of court cases nor to justify their actions (Gordon 1991): “Chiefs and headmen had to be kept strong enough to control their own people but weak enough to be controlled by the regime” (Gordon 1991:100). This reflects the colonial hierarchy of power very accurately.

Changes in customary law during colonial times had a gender-differentiated outcome: women from the northern parts were not allowed to enter the Police Zone and thus were subject to and object of this traditional rule. Gordon reported on several changes in customary law from the Kavango and Ovambo areas that reflected a reduction in women’s power and autonomy (Gordon 1991, and see Becker 1995). The changes that disadvantaged women often originated from the (male) colonial authorities but were welcomed by (male) traditional authorities as well (Gordon 1991, Becker 1995:90). Gordon concludes: “The arrogant paternalism of many commissioners showed a close fit with the behaviour of feudal lords” (Gordon 1991:98). Thus, the black and white men stood united in their efforts to subordinate women.

Even though the South African administration wanted to separate the living worlds of white and black people, the white employers in the Police Zone needed workers for the mines, railways, road construction, factories, fishing industry, and commercial farms (Dieckmann 2007, Winterfeldt 2002). The origins of the contract labour system were established during the German colonial era, but under the South African colonial administration, it was formalised. Because the south and the centre was not very densely populated, due to the war of 1904-1908 and the genocides, the labour recruitment ambitions of the South African administration focussed more on the north than those of the German colonial administration.

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<sup>126</sup> See the definition of the term elite in footnote 51.

<sup>127</sup> Gordon gives various examples (1991:94, footnote 29).

Labour recruitment was organised by a southern and a northern labour organisation, which merged in 1943 to become the South West African Native Labour Administration (SWANLA<sup>128</sup>) (Winterfeldt 2002:54). These agencies were supported in their recruitment drive by traditional authorities, churches and missionaries who were ordered by the Administrator General to persuade people to search for migrant work (Winterfeldt 2002:55). Everybody who owned less than the minimum amount of cattle had to find paid work. That meant that chiefs who owned more did not have to go into contract labour. During the 1920s many people were forced to migrate to the Police Zone because of the economic conditions in the colony (Greiner 2011). The labour contracts were initially issued for six months, but later 18-month contracts became common. The labourers themselves had no say in their working conditions. The contract labourers suffered as a result of poor working and living conditions. For example, they had to live in overcrowded special male compounds also called Single Quarters. The Single Quarters in Outjo Etosha Poort were only demolished in 2007 (see Chapter 4). Contract labourers were also employed on commercial farms. They did not have the option to leave a farm if the conditions were bad (see below): their only choice was to desert (Dieckmann 2007:215).

Most contract labourers from the north who came to the Police Zone were not allowed to take their families with them. Thus, the men had to leave their families behind for long periods. Consequently, children grew up without their fathers (Hailonga 2005). The present phenomenon of “absent fathers” might have some origins in this context (see Chapter 6). Men had additional relationships where they worked, while the women left at home did so with men in the locality (Spiegel 1991). However, the migrant workers were subject to less social control by their elders, which women who stayed in the reserves were forced to endure.

Within the Police Zone, the gendered impact of the contract labour system had a further consequence. Sylvain (1999) relates that Ovambo men were seen as a good catch by local women because they had a regular income – as distinct from local men who were not included in the contract labour system and were thus paid irregularly or even only once a year. They offered to support local women financially in exchange for sexual services. The local men took a dim view of these intimate relationships.

Although the contract labourers were absent from their families in the north, their female partners were not allowed to take important decisions on their own. Thus, women “lost status and authority through the introduction of contract labour and cash economy” (Becker 1995:100). Women complained about absent partners coming home after a year with almost

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<sup>128</sup> The labour recruitment agency was dissolved in 1972 after a nationwide labour strike in 1971 demanded the abolition of the labour contract system, which did not in fact happen. Other bodies replaced this agency and still the worker could not negotiate his own working conditions nor choose which employer to work for. Only the medical classification and the terminated contracts were abolished (Winterfeldt 2002).

nothing and the fact that the men were having additional sexual relations, fathering many children but failing to support their own family (Becker 1995:98f). This labour system led to the social disruption of relationships (Winterfeldt 2002:57) and families.

However, having multiple sexual relations was not only common among contract labourers but also among men who came from within the Police Zone and who were often allowed to stay with their families. As Robert's case (see below) shows, even if their intimate partner was close by, men had additional sexual partners. Some interviewees reported both men and women having children with different partners (e.g., Robert, Timotheus and Isak, all 2009, Emma, 2006). Emma describes this situation as follows:

That time, that man [her partner] got many girlfriends. And once, we were three. Both of us we were pregnant ((laughing)). Then he went to the army and left us with the babies. When he came back he chose one lady [the other one]]. (Emma, 2006, iiba by SGA)

She added that, "these children of mine, every child has its own father ((laughing))" (Emma, 2006, see also the similar title of Pauli's article 2007a). Several interviewees mentioned step-siblings by different fathers or mothers who were procreated outside of steady relationships (Timotheus, Magda, Carl, all 2009, Allison and Gertrud, both 2006/2009). Sometimes women also had to raise the children of their husband's girlfriends (Magda, 2009, and see Gockel-Frank 2009).

After the National Party won the elections in South Africa in 1948, the system of apartheid was also introduced in Namibia and guided South African politics until 1977 (Winterfeldt 2002:55). People were classified according to four skin colour groups of white, Asian, coloured and black people, and forced to live and develop separately. In 1962 the Commission of Enquiry into South West African Affairs (known as the Odendaal Commission) was established to develop a strategy for this policy of separate development. In 1964, the Odendaal Plan was released. In 1984, the UN judged the plan to be "a more sophisticated version of the long-standing colonial strategy of "divide and rule", which was "aimed at preventing the African majority from organising and acting in unison against domination by the white minority" (UNCN 1984:3). Namibia was now administered as a new province of South Africa. The Odendaal Report included recommendations for establishing self-governed ethnically homogenous homelands to replace the former reserves that originated in the German colonial era, plus some additional land. The government bought 426 farms, "which were considered unsuitable for commercial farming" (Dieckmann 2007:176) in order to establish the new homelands of "Damaraland" and "Namaland". Many forced removals from the Police Zone to the reserves were made in order for these recommendations to be implemented (see Wallace 2013:264<sup>129</sup>).

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<sup>129</sup> It was suggested that 130,000 Africans should be removed, which amounted to 29% of the black population (Wallace 2013:264).

The Odendaal Commission also suggested repealing the alcohol prohibition policy. In consequence, trade and home distilling was then allowed. Although there were regulations on who was allowed to sell alcohol, these were not enforced by the South African administration. Everybody could produce and sell alcohol; for some farmers or teachers it proved to be a useful source of additional income. Sometimes workers were only paid in liquor, not in cash. Since then, there has been a “rapid growth of alcohol consumption and an increase in alcohol abuse among the African population” (Siiskonen 1994:81), a phenomenon that still affects the Namibian population (see Chapter 4).

Because most of the land in the homelands was not suitable for agriculture, and the size considered necessary for a family to survive on was so small that it did not reach the subsistence level (Pauli 2009:90), many men had to do contract labour. In contrast to the contract labourers of the north, men within the Police Zone who had to do wage labour could often take their families with them to their place of work (Pauli 2007b:186). The African population inside the zone lived where they were employed; either on commercial farms, where at least one member of family was employed; or they lived in the townships if they could afford the municipal services such as electricity, property leases, and water supply. Often those who worked in the towns for a certain time afterwards went back to the farms where their relatives worked (Dieckmann 2007:204).

The South African Administration started to privilege a small group of black men as administrators of the homelands with the following intent: “South Africa hoped that a loyal and stabilising class within the homelands would emerge” (Pauli 2009:89). In the homeland of Damaraland, which was established close to the area where I conducted my research, the traditional authority formed the homeland administration. Moreover, the South African administration invested in an administrative apparatus and the creation of some infrastructure in the homelands as well as in towns: hospitals, schools, and hostels. Thus, these few older black men employed in the homeland administration were privileged among the black population and had access to resources which most other black people did not have, as job opportunities in the homelands were generally limited. Although these older men were more powerful than others, the “headmen and chiefs in the Police Zone were essentially dependent auxiliaries in colonial administration” (Becker 1995:88). Thus, they were part of the colonial apparatus.

The men employed in the Damaraland administration were responsible for assigning the rare jobs that existed in the homeland. They distributed the resources and jobs “along personal and political preferences” (Pauli 2012:413). Access to those resources was still limited for most females. Some gave women jobs in exchange for sexual relationships (Pauli 2009:98f). These influential, well-resourced and often older men also had multiple sexual relations with other women (Pauli 2010:30). Women worked in hostels, as cleaners, cooks,

or hostel matrons, or as teachers or nurses (Pauli 2009, Dieckmann 2007). In return, the men got sex, love, political support, loyalty, and children. All of these women described by Pauli also had children with their male patron. The women sometimes got lifelong jobs which they kept even after the relationship had ended (Pauli 2010:38). Women used the privileged few men of the new middle class to get jobs and make a living. Thus, a “female middle class” of financially independent women developed (Pauli 2010:36). These women were relatively autonomous and also had relations with other men.

In addition to the development of a small, female middle class, many of the other women had access to this new source of cash mainly through their husbands, which further strengthened the men’s position. Those women who married a male patron became homemakers, meaning that they were well provided for but also financially dependent and subordinate, as not a single homemaker was mentioned as head of a household (Pauli 2010). Hence, differences in stratification within the groups of men and women developed. One consequence of this process was that a “shift towards conceptual equation of ‘work’ and ‘wage labour’” (Becker 1995:97) took place. According to this perception, people are only regarded as working if they do wage labour, and work such as running a household and caring for the family is not acknowledged (Sylvain 1999). Moreover, women worked as domestic workers or in their own households, and were thus confined to the domestic sphere (Sylvain 1999).

In general, in the 1970s a small, new middle class developed (see Pauli 2009:95f). By the end of the 1970s, ten percent of the people belonged to this middle class, earning an income as teachers, nurses and miners (Greiner 2011:608), or working in administration (Pauli 2014). This little elite gained access to resources and thus could afford what the majority could not, such as cars, houses, good quality food, and expensive weddings (ibid). This stratification symbolised by expensive wedding rituals led to decreasing marriage rates (Pauli 2009) and to a “monetarization of social relations” (Becker 1995:96). For gender relations it meant that women and men became involved in transactional intimate relationships: these intimate relationships included sex in exchange for resources (see Section 5.2). Thus, the development of this new elite had a profound effect on gender relations, as “a specific kind of male patronage emerged” (Pauli 2012:413). Moreover, a pattern of commodified intimate relations developed which still characterises intimate relations in Namibia today (see also Section 5.2). These relationships are often connected to males having additional sexual partners.

### 2.2.1 Living in and around Outjo in a violent system: gender, skin colour and inter-generational relations

Today, the apartheid period is still reflected geographically in Outjo (see Section 1.4). It was split into the town for the white people and the location of Etosha Poort for the black people, divided by a buffer zone of around 1 kilometre. Roughly in the middle of this zone was the municipality for the black population. Here, the issuing of passes was controlled and water bills and rent were paid. Up to the time when I carried out the research in 2009, there were few buildings in that space. All the houses in Etosha Poort were the property of the municipality (Timotheus, 2009). If the inhabitants could not pay the monthly lease or if they could not cope with the urban system and pay for the services they used, the municipal truck would come and take all their belongings and forcefully remove the person concerned to an “ethnically suitable” homeland such as Damaraland or Hereroland (Timotheus, 2006 and 2009).

#### **Violence against children: educational deprivation, corporal punishment and sexual violence**

During apartheid, the South African administration established an ethnically based, segregated school system. Black children were generally assigned to the so-called Bantu Education, the aim of which was to create willing employees to serve the colonial economy. There was no compulsory school attendance for black children. For children living on the farms that meant that whether they could attend schools outside the farms depended on the goodwill of the farmer. Dieckmann reports that generally most farm owners took the attitude that education is wasted on Hai//om children – but some farm owners did care and paid school fees and provided transportation (Dieckmann 2007:215-17). The general language of instruction was Afrikaans, the language of the colonial administration. Schools for the black children were were massively underfinanced.<sup>130</sup> For black children there was a primary school in the township of Etosha Poort, the Uchab Primary School (now Jack Francis Primary School), but no secondary school. What is now the town’s Outjo Secondary School was only for white children.<sup>131</sup> A teacher, Expert 12 (2006), told me that many teachers were under-qualified during apartheid. Parents or sometimes the children themselves (see below) had to find money for school fees, school uniforms, transportation, food and accommodation at hostels. Many children who could go to school had to live in hostels, far away from their families. There was not always enough food and learners often went hungry, as Timotheus reports who went to the Primary School St. Michael’s (and see Dieckmann 2007:217). Thus,

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<sup>130</sup> In the Report *Social conditions in Namibia*, published by the United Nations Council for Namibia in 1984, it is stated that seven times more was spent per white child than per black or coloured child (UNCN 1984:4).

<sup>131</sup> Children who stayed in the vicinity of Outjo could go to the following schools: the Roman Catholic Primary School St. Michael’s (located between Outjo and Kamanjab), the Welwitschia Junior Secondary School in Khorixas, and the Braunfels Agricultural School near Khorixas (Dieckmann 2007:215). Thus, if they were lucky enough to go to school at all, they were separated from their families (Timotheus, 2009).

only a few black people had the opportunity to get an education. One teacher describes the circumstances under which she got her education:

It was not even easy for me to get matriculated. Because I was collecting bones and bottles and just sell them, and so on. When I was in secondary school, then I got a scholarship from someone who knew my parents how they are, to help me up to pay my school fees. For the rest, the clothing and all the things, I have to look for myself. And I was forced to come back every holiday and work in the backyards of certain people, especially, I don't want to be rude, the white people, that's how the system was; and to work there, and after to get some money and go back to the school. All these years, 12-14 years; that's the way how I was struggling ... Nowadays I am the only breadwinner. (Expert 12, 2006)

Under these difficult conditions, it is clear that even if a child could attend school, there were often challenges and interruptions to his/her school career. Consequently, only a few black children completed their school education. Dieckmann found in her research among Hai//om<sup>132</sup> people that all the elderly Hai//om from the Outjo area were illiterate. Most younger Hai//om (born from the 1960s onwards) went to school but did not complete their education until they graduated (Dieckmann 2007:217). In 1981, 83% of the black children received a basic education at primary school, but the figure dramatically decreased for secondary school: only 16% of the black children attended secondary school (UNCN 1984). There was no university in Namibia at that time; only in 1992 was the University of Namibia (UNAM) established. Excluding children from education is defined here as structural violence (see Section 1.1.2) and has consequences for present day society, as many can only do unqualified work which pays a low and insecure income (see Chapter 4).

In schools, hostels and at home children were also violated physically by corporal punishment. Many interviewees spoke about how they had been punished physically when they were children (Emma and Expert 12, both 2006, Magda, Carl, Alicia, Man 23, all 2009, Gertrud 2006/2009). Emma described her father as "(...) a naughty man, he beat us, e.g., when I had quarrelled with my teacher" (Emma, 2006). It was normal and legal for parents to discipline their children at home and for teachers to discipline them at school by violent means. Magda and her siblings grew up being regularly beaten by their parents. In addition, research participants Magda and Robert (see below) also had beaten their children, "if they had done wrong and didn't stop" (Magda, 2009:17). One participant in the Men's Debate (Man 23) said he still thinks that it is right to discipline children physically, legitimating it with the argument that he was beaten himself (see Section 4.3). Thus, the violence is perpetuated (see Section 1.1.2). Corporal punishment was also used in schools. Gertrud gives examples of instances where violence was used: "if you failed a test, they beat you, with stick on hands [girls], and boys on back side" (Gertrud, 2006/2009, iiba by SGA). Expert 12 (2006), a teacher, relates her own childhood experience as follows: "When I was in grade 1, if you did not understand, the teacher just came and beat you up, and throw you into the wall and so

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<sup>132</sup> See Section 1.2, footnote 48 on the classification of the Hai//om ethnic group.

on. It was very aggressive. It was a form of abuse” (Expert 12, 2006). Only in 2001 was the corporal punishment of children in schools legally prohibited. The way in which violence has been used to set boundaries still has ongoing legacies (see Chapter 4). The corporal punishment of children was not seen as violence by society, which means they could do nothing about it.

Another kind of violence that victims could not much do about was sexualised violence. I interviewed three middle-aged women, two in Outjo (Gisela, Emma) and one in Windhoek (Lisa), who had experienced sexual violence during the apartheid era when they were adolescents, by men with whom they were not having intimate relationships, as they stressed (see Section 8.1.1).

In the late 1960s, Emma (53 years old in 2006), was raped when she was 14 years old by a man she did not know. However, she was trapped by a friend. One evening she went out secretly to go to a disco with some friends. The friend then enticed her back to her house pretending that she needed to get a jacket. There was a man waiting at her house, to whom the friend said: “Here she is” (Emma, 2006). Emma explained: “that man grabbed me there and he raped me” (ibid). When asked why her friend acted as an accomplice to the rape, Emma answered: “maybe she wanted me to take that man as a boyfriend, because every time she was saying ‘oh, why don’t you have a boyfriend?’” (ibid). However, after the friend discovered the blood in her house where the rape had taken place, she was shocked. This also shows how naïve and uninformed people were regarding sexual violence. Emma told the perpetrator she was going to report him to the police. He escaped the consequences of his criminal act and he went into exile. Thirty years later he went to see her and apologised (see Section 8.1.2). Then he explained his behaviour in the following way: “Because he was so in love, he told me” (ibid). She did not tell her caregiver<sup>133</sup> about the rape until a month later, because she was afraid of being beaten. Emma had expected to be punished for the violence she experienced because she went out in secret. Her caregiver then blamed her for sneaking out, and for bringing the violence on herself (see below), thereby showing a total lack of recognition of her violent experience.

In the 1970s, Lisa (51 years old in 2009) was living in a township in Windhoek. During that time, she and her boyfriend had discussed whether to have sex, which would have been the first time for her. She was sent to a shop by her mother. On her way a neighbour took her hand and accompanied her without even asking her permission. He then took her hand and gave it to another man who was waiting for them. That man, a friend of her step-sister, whom she did not know, forced her to come to his house where he raped her. She went home and told her mother, who was angry, and argued with the aforementioned neighbour because he

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<sup>133</sup> See footnote 35 on the use of “caregiver”.

had facilitated the rape. Later on, her mother swore at the rapist. Although she wanted to take Lisa to hospital and even report the rapist to the police, she did not do so – presumably because she was very sick at that time. Lisa concluded that “nothing happened” (Lisa, 2009). However, she was impregnated as a result of the rape and her relationship with her boyfriend broke up because he suspected her of being unfaithful and she did not tell him about the rape.

Her step-sister claimed that Lisa had an intimate relationship with the rapist. Lisa strongly denied such a relationship. The dispute between the sisters has continued until the present day. It must be contextualised that the two sisters had grown up with different caregivers in their childhood and, when they subsequently came to live together, they had a very competitive relationship. Lisa described how she, as the younger sister by several years, was maltreated and harassed by her older step-sister for a long time. The man was never called to account for the violence he perpetrated on her, and her sister continued to spend time with him. This shows that the perspective of the victim and that of her social environment are not necessarily congruent, which makes it even worse for the victim as her suffering is not acknowledged. In both Emma and Lisa’s narratives the victims did not know the perpetrator. However, in both cases an acquaintance (a neighbour and a friend) facilitated the rape. Thus, I think the term “stranger rape” is not appropriate here.<sup>134</sup>

In the late 1970s, Gisela (2009) was raped several times, and she became pregnant as a result. After she had given birth to the child, the man visited her again at her parents’ house and raped her once more:

And when I got my son then, one day he come to ... see the the child. And ... because I respected my parents really when heee was coming I was also I was so feeling shamed but I... [voice trembles] tried to sleep, he ... made me like that, and he break me again... and [breathing in] ... I got my firstborn and so [19]78 like that I got again a girl (...). (Gisela 2009, iiba by SGA)

Thus, she had two children as a consequence of the rapes, one in 1977 and the next in 1978. She never told her parents or her friends about her experiences of violence: “I was shamed really to tell that” (Gisela, 2009). Another reason that prevented her from talking to her parents was because she “respected” them. This “respect” has to be understood as deference.<sup>135</sup> She left her home and her children, and went to stay at a Bible School where she was counselled by the sisters. It took almost thirty years for her to tell anyone about these old wounds. She first talked about it with a women’s rights activist during the empowerment campaigns after independence (see Section 3.2). Other women have just blocked out or suppressed their violent memories in order to live their lives and survive. During the interview she insisted on not calling it a relationship, as the following interview

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<sup>134</sup> The role of people who facilitate a rape, such as the neighbour, should be grounds for further research (see Section 9.2).

<sup>135</sup> For more information about use of the term respect see footnote 36 in Section 1.1.2.

extract shows: “Ja,<sup>136</sup> because, IT was rape! It was not REALLY a relationship!” (Gisela, 2009). This shows that she rejected the idea that the rape can take place in a relationship. However, regardless of whether it happens within a relationship or not, sexual intercourse against the will of a sexual partner is still rape. All three cases reflect the fact that their suffering was not acknowledged and communication, even with people close to the victims, about sexual violence was not possible.

Allison (2009) gave a further example of violence against children. When her mother was an adolescent, she had an intimate relationship with a teacher and became pregnant when she was still in school. She did not finish school. The elder relatives of the couple negotiated but the girl was rejected by the mother of the teacher and thus, although everyone knew it was his child, his mother decided that this was not the case. Therefore, they ended the relationship and he did not support his child. Allison’s mother left school and gave Allison to her great-grandmother who supported her. She looked for and found a job in another town. This also shows how the commodification of relationships can sometimes be linked with an age gap, in this case disadvantageing a school girl and her child for their whole life. Moreover, today this behaviour would qualify as criminal act (see Section 8.1.1).

Women and girls in the townships experienced sexual violence which was not acknowledged but it had consequences for their whole life. Women living on farms and in homelands also experienced violence (see Pauli 2009).

### **Farm life: *baasskap*, violence and gendered relations**

Around the research site of Outjo commercial farms have been important, both for living and working on, up to the present day. Within the Police Zone the white population lived on farms that they owned themselves or leased from the colonial government. Alternatively, they stayed in the town centres, which were known as the white areas. Although the whites were privileged, conditions on the farms were far from easy. The farm owners had to cope with challenges like droughts, poisonous plants and cattle diseases. Although they were given some financial support by the South African administration to help them cope with these conditions, some had to do additional wage labour as drivers, road construction labourers, and cattle inspectors, etc. (Dieckmann 2013:270).

The black workers lived on separate parts of the farm, often in shacks. Men were employed as farm workers and women sometimes as domestic workers (Dieckmann 2007), as it was the case for Magda and Robert (both 2009). The concept of *baasskap* (in English boss-ship) is important to understand the social fabric of farms in Southern Africa during apartheid (Dieckmann 2007, Sylvain 1999, 2001). It describes the hierarchical relations between the white farm owner and the black workers and their families. The white farm owner was the

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<sup>136</sup> *Ja* is Afrikaans and German and means yes in English. It was often used to during the interviews.

head (Afrikans *baas*) with vast and far-reaching power (Dieckmann 2007:207). The position of the white farmer has been “shaped by a paternalistic stance often combined with racial-evolutionary attitudes about the various degrees of civilisation in regard to the ethnically heterogeneous farm-labourers” (Dieckmann 2007:207, see also Sylvain 1999:227). The *baas* viewed himself and was regarded by the workers as a kind of authoritarian father figure who has both the duty to discipline and to care for the workers, who were considered to be like children and in need of regulation. This system contains two basic elements: gender and age. Sylvain points to the significance of “respect” in this regard (Sylvain 2001): it is not understood as mutual respect but as deference linked to subordination. Dieckmann reports on how the Hai//om farm workers acquiesced to this system: “The farmer’s role to assist, help and feed, even his right to punish, was taken for granted by most of the elder Hai//om” (Dieckmann 2007:209). Up to the present day, the relationships between black Africans working on farms and their white employers are influenced by this institution (Dieckmann 2007:207, Sylvain 1999:238, Sylvain 2001).

The conditions for the black workers on white farms were often appalling; humiliations by employers were the rule rather than the exception. Pauli describes the situation thus: “Relations between white settlers and indigenous Namibians were in general problematic, conflict laden and tense” (Pauli 2009:83). Since the end of the 1930s, migrant labourers from the north had come to work on farms in the Police Zone, and also around Outjo (Dieckmann 2007:179, Silvester et al. 1998:25). For migrant workers there were fixed rates for food rations and wages, but for local workers the system was more flexible: some workers just got food, tobacco or alcohol and some farmers only paid workers once a year. Workers bought things they needed in the farm shops on credit, which was then subtracted from the cash they earned. Therefore, an employee could be in debt to his employer, although he was working for him.<sup>137</sup> Other farmers gave out daily or weekly rations in the form of *mealie*<sup>138</sup>, sugar, coffee or tea, tobacco, sometimes milk and, less frequently, meat. When workers were staying on a farm for a longer period, they were sometimes given extra livestock (Dieckmann 2013:277, Pauli 2009:83). Many workers did not receive enough food (Pauli 2009:79, Dieckmann 2007:178f, 219). The workers suffered from malnutrition and diseases associated with a weakened constitution. Pauli mentions miscarriages and the death of infants (Pauli 2009:87). Farm workers had different ways of coping with the difficult labour conditions: “high mobility, theft and slaughtering livestock, shirking and refusals were part of the repertoire” (Dieckmann 2013:277). That meant that many farm workers frequently moved around from one farm to another, until they found a better employer (Magda and Robert, 2009). Most farmers used “deterrent methods such as beating or making threats, while a few

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<sup>137</sup> I think that the current widespread perception among white people that black people cannot manage money very effectively partly originates from these structural restrictions, patronising as well as racist practices.

<sup>138</sup> This is corn flour, which is a staple in Southern Africa.

also used incentives (...) or even tried to build up a trust relationship” (Dieckmann 2007:230). Violence on farms was prevalent and a characteristic of farm life (ibid). People got used to it and even the workers themselves thought it was legitimate in some cases, for example if someone made a mistake. Dieckmann asked rhetorically: “is this either an indication that the order of things had become naturalized, or was it the acknowledgement of one’s own relatively powerless position?” (Dieckmann 2007:214). In this context, a farm owner was perceived as “good” if he only beat workers for misdemeanours that constituted justifiable cause and did not use excessive violence. However, if a farm worker defended himself against beatings, he could be imprisoned (Dieckmann 2007:225).

The authoritarian system of *baasskap* derived its power from the applied structural, symbolic and physical violence (see Section 1.1.2) and this violence as well as the violent system became normalised. The *baasskap* system is one example of the structural violence blacks had to suffer from. Moreover, the *baasskap* system reflects the entire colonial hierarchy of human relations which was structured by gender, skin colour, class and age. Thus, for decades and for several generations, people were patronised and corporally punished in a violent system: black adults by white adults, women by men and children by adults.

Although local workers could leave a farm if the conditions there were particularly bad and go to another, they did not have complete freedom of movement because of the pass legislation and the fact that “vagrancy” was prohibited (Master and Servants Proclamation), a system which remained in operation until the mid-1970s. The pass that the farm labourers needed was issued by the farmers. They would also give references if a worker wanted to leave (Dieckmann 2007:221) or if a worker wanted to travel to another place. Some farmers did not make use of this order – because they were greatly in need of labourers (Dieckmann 2007:223). However, if the police caught the workers without a passport they could be imprisoned or beaten. The law was repealed in 1975 and some of the pass laws were abolished (Dieckmann 2007, Sylvain 1999:74).

The *baasskap* system is also structured by gender. The white farmer as the *baas* is not only the master of the workers but also of the entire white household. In a subordinate position to the *baas*, black male workers on Afrikaner farms in the Omaheke region “form a consensus with Afrikaner men over the terms on which they can live on a farm (...) and these terms include maintaining a superordinate position over their women folk” (Sylvain 2001:736). Sylvain observed this phenomenon even after independence during the 1990s. The women were treated as subordinates in need of guidance and disciplining by men (see also Sections 4.3 and 6.2.1).

There were only a few job opportunities as domestic workers on the farms. Sylvain describes the situation of the Ju/'hoan <sup>139</sup> women who, before being integrated into the settler economy, had been occupied with gathering food within the Omaheke region, which were located within the Police Zone: “Their relatively equal access to the means of subsistence was undermined and their access to a livelihood within the settler economy became contingent upon their association with a male worker” (Sylvain 1999:166). Often just the man was employed at a farm and the woman and children were only allowed to stay while the man was working there. The woman’s dependency on the man for residence and income limited her choice to leave a violent partner. Several authors describe how, during the colonial era, gender relations in former hunter-gatherer societies of the San people were transformed from being relatively equal into a system of hierarchical relations in which women occupied a subordinate position (Boden 2008, Sylvain 1999, Becker 2003).

The general subordination of females and its consequences is reflected by the narratives of the older black couple, Robert and Magda. They talked about their life on a white farm within the Police Zone during the 1970s where they stayed and worked together. When Magda was younger, she stayed together with her two sisters at the farm together with her elder sister’s intimate partner. Her elder sister had to endure long-term violence by him. Magda sometimes had to witness his violence. She describes:

(...), he’d sometimes beat her with a piece of chain, metal chain. And it would be very terrible for her because she might also get a bleeding from her head, her eye might be swollen, it was very terrible. (Magda, 2009)

Magda explains that her sister’s partner behaved sometimes violently in the house but not outside in front of others. When he intended to beat his female partner, they were always out fetching wood. Magda identified his jealousy as main reason for the violence. The violence was so bad that Magda and others tried to get her away from her partner, as described below:

There was this one time when we called one white man so we can go and pick her up, but she refused and only loaded her clothes and she lied saying that she will come [but she did not come]. (Magda, 2009, iiba by SGA)

But although there was help available to get her out, she decided to stay with him, “because she loved him too much” (Magda, 2009), was Magda’s interpretation. Moreover, her sister believed that somebody is only beaten if s/he has done something wrong, as a legitimate means of discipline. Only later on did she fight back and, eventually, she left her violent partner because she feared that the violence could end up killing one of them.

Because of her experiences of witnessing the suffering of her elder sister, Magda was cautious towards men and did not want to marry. Robert and Magda lived at the same farm and had five children together without being married then. During that time they lived in

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<sup>139</sup> The Ju/'hoan group is part of the San group.

different houses at the farm. Magda worked as a domestic worker and her partner, Robert, as a farm worker. Workers were employed according to this gendered order (Magda, 2009).

On Saturdays Robert went to visit his other girlfriend and the children he had with her at another farm. Magda was unhappy about this and, when he came back, she refused to prepare food for him and demanded that he stop these visits. This caused arguments and fights between Robert and Magda. If she did not stop arguing, he would be violent towards her. Then he would take out his belt and “beat her like a kid” (Magda, 2009), thereby “disciplining” her for not being subordinate to him. He also “punished” his other girlfriends with the *sjambok*, a whip, when they disagreed with or questioned his behaviour in having multiple concurrent girlfriends (Robert, 2009). When Magda kept quiet, he did not beat her. At that time, women were expected *not* to show jealousy and to accept the behaviour of the men. Magda describes people’s perceptions during that time:

Sometimes some people used to say ... ‘only a jealous lady would get angry if her man goes to be with another lady. She can just stay, even if there are two women with one man. A lady that is not jealous wouldn’t care about it.’ So they used to say that she [the jealous woman] is a bad woman. ‘She thinks that the man will only stay with her, now she’s arguing with the man’.  
(Magda, 2009, iiba by SGA)

This attitude might be one reason why she did not talk to anyone outside the family about experiencing violence at the hands of her intimate partner. She only confided in her younger sister. She advised her to keep quiet, cook nice food for him and appease Robert in this way. Magda said that, in former times, women tried to keep the violence they experienced to themselves, which was confirmed by other interviewees. Conflicts within the family were kept private (Men’s Debate, Expert 6, Robert, Magda, Hannah, all 2009). Moreover, Robert confirmed that in former times it was important that children should not witness arguments and violence between their parents. Because of this norm of keeping problems within the private sphere, the women did not seek help from neighbours or others. This also shows that women experienced violence – including severe violence – before independence. However, people did not openly talk about it and thus, many people simply did not know it went on. This stands in contrast to the perception of several research participants, that the violence that occurred prior to independence was less serious (see Chapter 4).

Magda is still influenced by this view: she was proud to say that she “never ran out of the house and screamed” and showed that she was afraid. I concluded that being disciplined like a child also induced shame (Magda, 2009). Magda and other women of her generation had learnt that someone was punished for their wrongdoing, so it was perceived as “legitimate violence”. Thus, it is not surprising that she did not want to talk to other people about it. Moreover, to be beaten like a child was a humiliating experience.

However, the violence was so serious that Robert's grandmother<sup>140</sup> intervened. She protected Magda and advised him to change his behaviour of having several sexual partners with the consequence of fathering many children.<sup>141</sup> Even the white farm owner told him to stop being violent. The fact that the farm owner knew about the violence implies that it was very severe. Robert's grandmother advised them to marry. She advised Robert to choose Magda and leave his other girlfriend. At that time Magda and Robert already had four children together, but Magda did not want to marry, because she feared that he would continue beating her. In the end he convinced her by telling her that he could change his behaviour. They married at the end of the 1970s. They reported that, since the marriage, he has changed his behaviour, and has stopped having additional girlfriends and beating her.

When Magda and Robert had their church wedding, community elders advised them how to behave towards each other, including gendered responsibilities and the division of labour. According to this, the woman was responsible for the inside of the house, while the man was in charge of everything outside the house, especially if it was determined that the man is the head of the household (Robert, 2009). Magda described how they practiced this division of labour and the problems that it caused. She gave the example of not having washed the dishes or cooked the dinner when her husband arrived home. In these cases he became angry, but Magda thought it was understandable, because he could not cook while she was in the house. It was against the prevailing gender norms for men to cook when the female partner was available. Robert did not like it if the house was dirty or the food not ready. If she justified her behaviour – perhaps she had not cooked yet because she had spent the whole time washing – he would not be angry. But if she had not done anything during the day while he was at work, then he was very angry (Magda, 2009). It was also possible for this to happen in reverse, for example if she wanted to cook porridge and he had not chopped enough wood, she became angry because she was not able to chop wood: "a lady cannot chop wood" (Magda, 2009:694). This shows that in the hierarchical complementary gender system there are mutual dependencies which might lead to conflicts and violence.

### 2.2.2 Resistance against South African occupation, Liberation War, and exile

The living conditions in Namibia were so bad, especially regarding health<sup>142</sup>, education, labour and many other issues (see UNCN 1984) that resistance within Namibia grew. Men and women were both involved. However, the protests were violently suppressed, for example in Windhoek against the forced removals into the new location of Katutura outside

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<sup>140</sup> Robert grew up with his mother and her parents. They lived on a German farm.

<sup>141</sup> When I asked Robert he counted his children and they totalled 11.

<sup>142</sup> Serious racial discrimination operated within the health system. This was especially evident regarding health expenditures per group. In a UN Report, the health services for the black population are described as "rudimentary or virtually non-existent" (UNCN 1984:4). By comparison, the health services for the white population were quite good.

of Windhoek. It ended in a massacre at 10<sup>th</sup> of December in 1959 (Akawa 2014:31, Becker 1995).<sup>143</sup> The forced removals in Windhoek marked a turning point for the Africans in Namibia (Akawa 2014, Becker 1995, Wallace 2013) and for women especially: “The day marked the beginning of women’s involvement in the resistance to colonialism” (Akawa 2014:31; and see Section 2.2.3).<sup>144</sup>

Political resistance grew and by the end of the 1960s military resistance was also increasing.<sup>145</sup> Another cause for protest was the contract labour system and its exploitative conditions. Workers could neither negotiate their contracts, nor their wages, nor the duration of their employment (see above). Thus, first the Ovamboland People’s Organisation (OPO) was formed in 1959 and later became the South West African Peoples’ Organisation (SWAPO) to emphasise that this was an interethnic liberation fight. SWAPO organised the resistance via its offices across the whole country. In 1971, there was a nationwide strike involving 20,000 workers (Akawa 2014:32). In Ovamboland the strikes developed into a general rebellion against the apartheid regime, their homeland policy, and the homeland authorities. Men and women were actively involved and widespread rallies took place (Akawa 2014:34). The South African Administration sent armed police reinforcements to the north, which resulted in intimidation, arrests and killings. A state of emergency was proclaimed (Proclamation R17) in which meetings were prohibited and people could be arrested without charge. SWAPO started to send people into exile so they could get military training. In 1966, the armed struggle began and the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) was established. In 1976, the UN proclaimed SWAPO the “sole authentic” representative of the Namibians (Wallace 2013:288). Local women supported the PLAN fighters by supplying them with food and shelter (Becker 2015).

The South African colonial administration tried to block the resistance by enacting several laws starting in 1967: the death penalty, life sentences, long periods of imprisonment and preventive detention (UNCN 1984). People who did not conform, for example, supporters of SWAPO, were subject to violence by the South African forces. Cleaver and Wallace claim that the “tactics of the ‘security forces’ (...) have been (...) one of intimidation and terrorization of the civilian population in order to inhibit popular support for SWAPO” (Cleaver/Wallace 1990:11). They used special units but the South African administration also made use of local spies and thus further deepened the internal divisions among the African people (see below). Another method used to decrease resistance and support for resistance was public floggings of male and female suspected political activists, which were

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<sup>143</sup> 11 people were killed and 54 injured (Becker 1995:133).

<sup>144</sup> After independence, the date of 10th December was chosen as “Namibian Women’s Day” because many women lost their lives during this protest.

<sup>145</sup> Because this work was not concentrated on the Liberation Struggle itself, only some of the key points are described here, regarding the main topics of gender and violence and their legacies for present day Namibia. For detailed information see Akawa 2014 and Wallace 2013.

implemented by so-called tribal courts, meaning they were under the command of the local chiefs (Akawa 2014:34).

Many opposition leaders went into exile.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, many ordinary people left the country to live in exile, in refugee camps first in Tanzania and Zambia and later in Angola. When the border with Angola opened after its successful liberation from Portuguese colonialism, many people – men and women – escaped during the mid to late 1970s. However, it was not even safe to be in the refugee camps, as South Africa also operated in Angola and attacked SWAPO bases there (Edwards 2016). In one attack on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1978 the refugee camp at Cassinga was targeted: as a result of this operation known as “Reindeer”, 1,200 people – men, women, and children – were killed (Wallace 2013).

SWAPO sent almost 400 children from SWAPO camps located in Angola and Zambia to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) between the end of the 1970s and early 1980s to offer them safety and to create future leaders for an independent Namibia (Krishnamurthy/Vale 2018:13). The so-called “GDR kids” returned to Namibia after the GDR collapsed and Namibia gained independence. There were also parents who went into exile and left their children in Namibia, where they grew up with relatives. One example of this was given by the interviewee, Misheke, who grew up in the north with his grandparents. They told him that his parents had died:

Only when we started to grow up, they said they were forced to go in exile because the country is under colonialism, so we hope that maybe one day they will come. (...) since they left, we never heard anything about them'. (Misheke, 2009)

After independence, when he was a teenager, he met up with his parents again, more than ten years later.

Initially it was mostly men who went into exile, but since the mid-1970s, women also began to leave Namibia.<sup>147</sup> Becker distinguishes two main groups of women: young individual women without family, with secondary school education, some trained in jobs as clerks, nurses, teachers and others, eager to further their studies and in some cases to fight for independence. These women were already politically active in Namibia. A second group were middle-aged women who fled from the difficult and dangerous living conditions in the war zone; many were illiterate and they often came with children and a partner (Becker 1995:147f, see also Akawa 2014:47). There was also some overlap between the two groups. Within the first group of women, Becker identifies the women who acted as “major agents of reshaping gender perceptions within the liberation organisation from the mid-1970s” (Becker 1995:148f). They lived alone without families and not within the social network of their

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<sup>146</sup> Countries of exile were Cuba, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and other countries in the eastern bloc (Wallace 2013), but also other countries like Finland.

<sup>147</sup> Regarding repatriation, according to UN figures there were 40% women and 60% men living in exile (Becker 1995:147).

communities, which would have restricted them to certain gender norms. Thus, they had to develop their own roles and perspectives.

Men in better positions, for example commanders, abused their status and resources to get sexual access to women (Akawa 2014:132f, Gobodo-Madikizela et al. 2014) and also to keep control over their female comrades (Britton/Shook 2014). Sexual intercourse happened both with and without consent (Britton/Shook 2014), as Shikola describes below:

Sometimes the chiefs would call out these poor young girls fresh from home. The chiefs made love to them, and the women became pregnant without knowing the person who impregnated them (...). Some commanders had fifteen or eighteen kids. It is not really rape in a direct way as such but just the way the chiefs were. (Shikola 1998: 143)

The women did not have much option to refuse this kind of sex as it could have been construed as a lack of patriotism. However, Shikola does not see this behaviour as rape; she only classifies violent behaviour by the enemy as “real rape” (see Section 1.1.2). She said that she did not know of any women who reported such behaviour by the commanders. This view complies with the laws SWAPO established to regulate the struggle for independence. In this document rape was defined as follows: “whoever acquires a carnal knowledge (sexual intercourse) of a woman not living in matrimonial union with him and does so by violence or by threatening with a direct attack on life or limb shall have committed a felony” (quoted in Akawa 2014:129, brackets added by Akawa). This view presents a clear objectification; the individual woman is not taken into account at all.

It was expected that the women would keep quiet and “their silence sustained the facade that these sexual exchanges were voluntary and consensual” (Britton/Shook 2014:161). Therefore, “often rape was not taken seriously or acknowledged as a violent crime and was normalised as ‘part of life’” (Edwards-Jauch 2016:56). Akawa also describes the “normalisation and invisibilising of abuse” (Akawa 2014:138), which surrounded the topic of rape. Women living in a refugee camp simply were not expected to say “no” to sex with a commander. Women were scared of being accused of insubordination. In this situation, no one asked if the women consented. Moreover, if women experienced rape and did report it, there were no consequences for the perpetrator (Akawa 2014:97), or the women’s accusations were seen as a betrayal. Britton and Shook comment that: “Silence is always a problem for gender violence, but when silence is infused with calls for loyalty, nationalism, and patriotism, it becomes more intractable” (Britton/Shook 2014:161).

Exiled men who came back, for example from the USSR, where they received military or other kinds of education, gave women sweets, soap, and underwear but also better food like meat in exchange for sexual favours. As mentioned above, there were not many opportunities for women to earn an income of their own, so many women were forced to earn money by engaging in sexual relations in exchange for resources. Edwards (2016) also

mentions that sexual transactions were a means for women to gain access to scholarships and education in exile. However, the decisions that women could make about whether or not to agree to these kinds of sexual demands were restricted. In this regard, Edwards highlights that some women who did not comply with such demands were accused of being spies. These are all examples of the commodified character of intimate relationships which has prevailed until the present day. People still view the man as the giver of material goods and the woman as giving her body in exchange (see Section 5.2).

The South African Administration wanted to restrict the war to the area north of the Police Zone. Therefore, the Liberation War was experienced differently north and south of the Red Line: in the north, a state of “full-scale war zone” existed (Akawa 2014:37) with all its consequences (see also Wallace 2013:308). The inhabitants of the Police Zone were affected differently, as there was a compulsory conscription for men and South African driven agitation against SWAPO (see below). Thus, one striking difference between the current collective Namibian memory, which is strongly influenced by SWAPO rule, and the perception of people living within the former Police Zone, is their perception of the Liberation Struggle (Kössler 2007).

When I came to the research site of Outjo, I wondered why many black people I spoke to took a surprisingly positive, or at least neutral, view of the apartheid past (see Chapter 4). Many interviewees did not voluntarily talk about that time at all.<sup>148</sup> When I asked people about life before independence they described it primarily as a time when things were easier than today. Initially, that was surprising for me because I was influenced by the general Namibian historiography, which takes a very positive view of the Liberation War as an act of resistance against the colonisers, and focusses on the gaining of freedom after independence. Two interviewees spoke about the Liberation Struggle in more detail. Interestingly, both had opposing perceptions due to their differing political positions at that time. Timotheus (2009) took part in resistance activities and was a member of the so-called “*aksie kommittie*” (in English Action Committee). By contrast, Peter (2006) was a member of the black Advisory Council that worked under the South Africans. Thus, understandably, he did not view the time before independence as being as bad as Timotheus did.

Internal and external resistance and international politics led the South African administration to pursue a policy of liberalisation on the one hand and, on the other hand, to the “Namibianisation of the war” (Wallace 2013:293, Akawa 2014:44, Cleaver/Wallace 1990:9). This process began in the 1970s with the Turnhalle<sup>149</sup> process. There were also negotiations

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<sup>148</sup> Dieckmann also experienced this (Dieckmann 2007:206).

<sup>149</sup> The Turnhalle conference was an unsuccessful ethnically-based constitutional conference to which SWAPO was not invited, but homeland leaders were. It started in 1975 and lasted for 18 months until 1977. It took place in the sports hall of a German gymnasium in Windhoek (German *Turnhalle*). After the failure of the conference, the political party, Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) emerged, which constituted an alliance of various Namibian

at UN level. In 1971, the International Court of Justice changed its position towards South Africa after an application by the UN Security Council. They called the occupation “illegal” and demanded that South Africa remove their administration from Namibia (Wallace 2013:274). In 1976, the Resolution 435 was passed by the UN Security Council to enable the transition of Namibia to an independent state (see Section 3.1). The South African Administration held elections in Namibia in 1978, which were boycotted by SWAPO. The DTA, funded by South Africa (Wallace 2013:292), won by a large margin as they had local support but also due to coercion and intimidation during registration and voting. They established the interim government which received no international legitimation (Wallace 2013). The new government abolished the strictest apartheid laws, such as pass laws and the *Urban Areas Act*. However, several issues remained almost untouched by these relaxations in the law, including many of the white population’s privileges.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, restrictions such as those prohibiting interracial sexual relationships were re-introduced in 1980 (Wallace 2013).

The Namibianisation of the war was further exacerbated by the establishment of the South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF), the Namibian military wing of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in 1980, and South West Africa Police (SWAPOL) in 1981. Inside the Police Zone all males above the age of 16, regardless of their ascribed ethnic group, were subject to compulsory conscription to SWATF and had to fight against their fellow Namibians (Wallace 2013:294).<sup>151</sup> SWAPO fighters were called “*terrorister*” (English terrorist) within the Police Zone (Timotheus, 2009, see Dieckmann 2007:206). As early as 1974, some San people were working for the South African army (Dieckmann 2007:228, Wallace 2013:293, Boden 2008). Some Hai//om people in the Outjo district formed groups of “commandos of farmers who were supposed to join forces with the South African Defence Force in the event of an attack” (Dieckmann 2007:206). In West Caprivi, some Khwe people worked for SADF, and lived in SADF training camps. For several weeks each year the Hai//om men staying in the Etosha National Park had to participate in an army camp, which was well-paid, where they worked as “trackers for locating guerrilla fighters” (Dieckmann 2007:206). They could not refuse because the risk of being identified as SWAPO supporters was too high (Dieckmann 2007:206). This Namibianisation of the war further contributed to the internal divisions among the Namibian people (Akawa 2014). The South African administration

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parties within the Police Zone, established with its original leaders Klemens Kapuuo and Dirk Mudge. It pursued a moderate policy towards the South African occupation and was financially bound to South Africa. (Wallace 2013) Since independence, it has been one of the bigger opposition parties in Namibia.

<sup>150</sup> For example, although the Bantu Education system was officially abolished in 1978, the schools for black children remained under-financed, and racially segregated schools existed until independence (Becker 1995:176). This issue was also of concern during the negotiations within the Constituent Assembly (see Section 3.1). Even now, many white people prefer to send their children to expensive private schools than to state schools, as it is the case in Outjo.

<sup>151</sup> Timotheus (2009) also states that he was summoned to join the army in the three following years, but he did not want to shoot his brothers. Because the director of the school where he worked as a teacher stressed that he was indispensable to the school, he wasn’t conscripted (Timotheus, 2009:60, see also Becker 1995:173f).

distributed propaganda leaflets across the whole of Namibia in which people were warned not to support SWAPO (Akawa 2014:45). Therefore, in their publication of 1990, Cleaver and Wallace express fears that this would cause difficulties for the future because, “since conscription, families have been split, with members on both sides, and the forces that should normally maintain law and order have been trained for murder and war” (Cleaver/Wallace 1990:11). This involvement of Namibians alongside South Africans, as well as the indirect rule by traditional chiefs who worked with the South African administration and also used or ordered violence against political activists, contributed further to the divisions within the country (see also Becker 2015).

Within SWATF and Koevoet, “ethnic battalions” (Becker 2015:122, footnote 3) were established. The feared paramilitary unit *Koevoet* (in English crow bar) was a special unit of SWAPOL, established in the late 1970s, to suppress the insurgency comprising 3,000 mainly black Namibians from the Owambo region under the command of white officers. This specially trained unit operating in northern Namibia was “known to have perpetrated mass killings; it was the most feared and hated of all the South African forces” (Cleaver/Wallace 1990:9).<sup>152</sup> In 1984, the UN Council for Namibia report concluded that the Namibian people “endure an army of occupation and a police force which intimidate and brutalise the entire Namibian population” (UNCN 1984:13). With the formation of *Koevoet*, reports of sexual harassment and rape increased (Akawa 2014:47). It was reported that white members of the military went into villages in the north and raped black girls while black soldiers had to watch (Edwards 2016). In this context, rape was perpetrated as a weapon of war, a further abhorrent strategy of the gendered divide and rule system. However, SWATF soldiers were also blamed for rape (UNCN 1984:9). In general, “increasing reports of rape of Namibian women” (UNCN 1984:9) in the northern war zone were of concern to SWAPO and the international community.

Sometimes *Koevoet* soldiers also posed as PLAN fighters in order to attack the civilian population (Wallace 2013). Furthermore, if they took prisoners, “they were usually interrogated and ‘turned’ to become agents for the South African forces, or killed” (Wallace 2013:295). The South African strategy of using spies, and forcing prisoners to switch their allegiance to their side created much mistrust and fear within SWAPO. This climate of mistrust led to violence towards their own people. Fellow combatants were suspected of working for the South Africans. In the 1980s there was a “spy crisis within SWAPO” (Wallace 2013:281). However, there were also other factors fuelling the violence within, such as differing opinions on strategies, aid distribution, and lack of food, as well as corruption (Edwards 2016, J. Hunter 2010).

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<sup>152</sup> For more information about the atrocities perpetrated by *Koevoet* see UNCN 1984, Wallace 2013, Stiff 2001, Edwards 2016.

Those suspected of being spies were subject to severe violence. They were kept in dungeons consisting of cells in the ground.<sup>153</sup> Sandy's boyfriend was suspected of being a South African spy and was incarcerated and tortured, and finally he was released (Sandy, 2009). Later on, Sandy herself was accused of being a spy, too. She was incarcerated in a dungeon for two years. She had to leave her daughter with somebody else but took her baby son with her. She was beaten every day to try to make her admit to being a spy. She said: "I didn't know what to say. I screamed, cried, the boy was crying. They told me what to say". She thought this was helpful, "otherwise they would have killed me". Thus, she invented a story about how she had been trained as a spy: "I was acknowledged to be a spy". There was a group of spies who were incarcerated. However, "they all lied", all admitting to being spies under torture: "Either you die or you agree with what they say." (Sandy 2009) Torture of suspects and the resulting confessions was also mentioned by Wallace (2013). Under these conditions Sandy's son stopped walking and became very ill. He became permanently disabled because of the neglect they suffered. He died at the age of two while Sandy was incarcerated. Some time later she found out that a lady had made up a story which caused the SWAPO to suspect her of spying (Sandy, 2009). Experiencing such horrific violence was traumatising for her. She developed alcohol problems and had volatile intimate relationships with men involving many fights. She also beat her partner. This topic is still difficult for Namibian society to cope with and is not openly talked about. Wallace concludes that such themes are "still highly contested in Namibia, where the issues they raise have not been resolved" (Wallace 2013:281, see Edwards 2016 and Section 9.2). The policy of creating divisions and mistrust among the occupied population finds a sad expression in this kind of violence within the defeated group.

In the 1980s, several churches, student groups, women's organisations and other Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) played an important part in the internal-Namibian resistance (Becker 1995:181). Especially within churches, women were active (see below). Churches were described as "the most important force in Namibian society" at that time (Becker 1995:190).<sup>154</sup> Even today, churches are still very important (Horn 2008 and see Section 5.1). Before 1970, the churches had a policy of being ethnically divided<sup>155</sup> and not becoming involved in politics. In the 1970s, and even more so in the 1980s, that changed: a Namibian Black Liberation Theology arose in some churches. In addition, different churches

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<sup>153</sup> Wallace mentions that hundreds of people were incarcerated in Lubango in Angola and that people died because of the "harsh conditions" (Wallace 2013:298).

<sup>154</sup> German Lutherans from the Rhenish Mission came to Namibia in 1844, while the Finnish Lutherans arrived in 1870. During the German colonial era, German Roman Catholics came to Namibia in 1894. During the South African colonial era, the Anglicans and the Dutch Reformed Church came to the country (Wallace/Cleaver 1990:103).

<sup>155</sup> For example, the Lutheran Church consisted not of one body but of different churches for the Germans, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church (DELK), for the Afrikaners (DRC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) for people from the north (based on the Finnish Mission) and the Evangelical Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) for the rest. These divisions still existed at the time of research (see Section 5.1).

were affiliated under an umbrella organisation called the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN) in 1978.<sup>156</sup> Its aim was, “in the struggle for justice [to] speak for the voiceless with a united voice” (cited in Becker 1995:191). However, there were also churches that supported the South African administration, especially the Afrikaans churches such as the Dutch Reformed Church, the Apostolic Faith Mission and the Pentecostal Protestant Church.<sup>157</sup>

Timotheus described the living conditions among the black inhabitants of Outjo as harsh, especially the violence inflicted by the police and the torture that some people had to endure (Timotheus, 2009). Peter also confirmed that the black inhabitants of Outjo had to endure a great deal of violence, especially by white policemen (Peter, 2006:12). In Outjo there were black and white police. During those times people learnt that trying to involve the police in the interests of black people was unlikely to be successful (Dieckmann 2007:212). Instead, they were part of the violence that the colonial administration used to keep the Namibian population in line (UNCN 1984:13, and see below). In Outjo, plain-clothed policemen told the SA administration what was going on in the location and people assumed that the Advisory Council was part of that. Timotheus stressed that not everyone who worked for the South Africans was a spy (2009: 166-170). He gave an example of police violence in which a local spy was involved. In the late 1970s, a German pastor talked about birth and shared his knowledge of the subject in his sermons. He was betrayed by a local spy, then taken by the police, and beaten up. He was then taken to Walvis Bay prison and later removed to Germany (Timotheus 2009).

The members of the Action Committee in Outjo also provide an example of local engagement and reaction to poor living conditions. They met regularly at different places to prevent spies from finding out. They protested against the local municipality of Outjo and against the “South African marionettes” of the Advisory Council, consisting “just of old men” (Timotheus, 2009). Those five men of the Advisory Council had the task of delivering information and resolutions from the municipality to the African community but did not take part in decision-making for the black community (Timotheus, 2009). The Action Committee organised demonstrations and protests involving actions like pouring the contents of toilets into the town clerk’s car (Timotheus, 2009). They fought for greater political participation and representation of their rights. Finally, they succeeded, the Advisory Council was removed, and two black people were included in the new council around 1988/89 to exert pressure on the council in favour of the black majority in Outjo (Timotheus 2009). This is an example of civil resistance and shows the agency of the local population within the Police Zone. Becker highlights the silencing of the local populations’ agency during the Liberation Struggle in the

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<sup>156</sup> Initially, member churches were among others ELCRN, ELCIN and the Roman Catholic Church (for further information see Becker 1995:191, footnote 17).

<sup>157</sup> Horn (2008) gives an overview of the different groups of churches and the positions that they adopted towards the Liberation Struggle.

master-narrative on collective memory by the postcolonial Namibian state (Becker 2015). Although she was only referring to civil resistance or support for the Liberation Struggle in the northern war zone, this example shows that *within* the Police Zone people were also active in improving their living conditions and supporting the struggle for freedom.

### 2.2.3 Women's activism against the double oppression of South African and male domination

In 1970, SWAPO established councils for women, elders and young people to address these groups more directly in order to win their support for the Liberation Struggle. The SWAPO Women's Council's (SWC) first congress only took place in 1980 in Angola, where its constitution was approved (Akawa 2014:50). Two important aims were declared: firstly, to convey SWAPO's policy and persuade women to support its Liberation Struggle, and secondly, to fight for female equality. It operated within Namibia and in the refugee camps outside Namibia. In each camp, there was a branch of the SWC. They produced a magazine entitled *The Namibian Woman*, from 1984 onwards, aimed at women in refugee camps.<sup>158</sup> Regular meetings for women were held in order to motivate them to support the Liberation Struggle. Moreover, the message was conveyed to women not to "sleep around" or sexually give in to their boyfriends to prevent them from getting pregnant. Information on family planning was also given (Akawa 2014:55). From today's perspective, this "advice" offered to the women reflects the paternalistic stance that the Council adopted towards them. Moreover, it appears very cynical considering the constraints and sexual violence the women experienced in the camps perpetrated by men. They were expected to accept rape as an act of subordination and loyalty within strict hierarchical power relations between commanders and female comrades (see above).

The SWC conceptually linked the advancement of women's rights with modernist assumptions in contrast to "sexist oppression in 'centuries-old', 'out-dated' values" (Becker 2006:31). This was directed against traditional authorities who were part of the colonial administrative system and thus perceived as collaborators of the South African Administration (Becker 2006, 2010). Today, many people still view gender equality as being in opposition to traditional values (see Section 5.1). Herein lay the foundations for the post-independence gender policies of the SWAPO dominated government (see Section 3.2).

At the congress in 1980, it was determined that the SWC was primarily serving the aim of national liberation and thus the aims of SWAPO. The SWAPO leadership supported the SWC but remained exclusively male. The empowerment of women was also sought through equal access to education, such as studying medicine, law, or engineering in exile (Becker

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<sup>158</sup> Finnish donors financially supported a six-month journalism workshop for Namibian women. The magazine was only published for a short time and stopped at the end of the 1980s (Akawa 2014).

2010). Thus, the SWC organised scholarships awarded by international donors for women to study abroad. There they were exposed to other types of gender systems.

In SWAPO presentations, women were portrayed ambiguously, as victims and as heroines (Akawa 2014:95). On the one hand, they were presented as victims of sexualised violence by the South Africans. As victims, they had to be protected – and as such, they were used to mobilise male fighters. On the other hand, on SWAPO posters, women were depicted as tough heroines of the Liberation Struggle (Akawa 2014:101). Although, in reality, only a few women were deployed at the front (see Akawa 2014:61f), this image of a female fighter supported the idea that anyone can be a soldier, regardless of gender. It showed a different conception of gender, which helped to bring about changes in gender relations according to male and female attitudes (Becker 1995:150). In the last 10 years of the struggle, women played an increasingly active role (Becker 2010).

The SWC's secondary aim of achieving equality for women was subordinated to the higher aim of national liberation (Akawa 2014:50f, Becker 2010, Britton/Shook 2014). Martha Ford, a leading SWC member within Namibia, stressed that, as well as motivating women for the Liberation Struggle, another important task of the SWC was “to make them [the women] conscious that they have the same right and obligation as men to make decisions concerning their nation's interest” (cited in Akawa 2014:52, iiba by SGA). This second aim proved difficult to attain, too, as women continued to experience inequalities. Akawa speaks of a “mental colonialism: a woman was reared and socialized to believe that men were superior to them. In addition, they were oppressed by the apartheid system” (Akawa 2014:52), which Becker sums up as a “double oppression” (Becker 2010:183). The women not only had to change their own minds, but also those of their fellow men who had been socialised as dominant within gender power relations (Akawa 2014:52).

Feminism in Namibia was seen as something negative, which would divert energy away from the primary aim of the Liberation Struggle: “In the South African apartheid context feminism has been regarded as not only a western but also very much as a ‘white’ concept.” (Becker 2010) Becker references the women's activist and politician Nora Schimming-Chase who, in the late 1980s, associated feminism with women's struggle for equality in the global north. She believed that those countries of the global north which she associated with would support the South Africans. Thus, she could not identify with this type of feminism because of how she understood it (Becker 2010:185f). There were accusations against black women who characterised women's struggles as “having become white” and “anti-men” (Becker 1995:243).

By contrast, focusing on motherhood to mobilise women was largely accepted. Women were addressed as mothers, and “motherhood [portrayed] as [a] nationalist duty” (Currier

2012:444, iiba by SGA), in order to engage them in the Liberation Struggle (Soiri 1996). Often, when women were addressed in the Southern African context, the concept of motherhood played a crucial role: this is also the case regarding the *volksmoeder* (Afrikans for mother of the folk) concept as well as in relation to the African National Congress, but also in church-based women's organisations (Becker 1995:37, Soiri 1996, Currier, 2012, Brink 1990). SWAPO applied a pronatalist policy in answer to the South African policy of population control (Rigillo 2009).

In 1974 the South African administration had started a campaign to promote black family planning as they suspected there had been a significant increase in the black population. Mobile teams toured the whole country offering free contraception (Gockel-Frank 2009). They also carried out forced and uninformed sterilisations of Namibian women, and under-age girls, as well as in cases of rape, to reduce their fertility rates (Wallace/Cleaver 1990). White employers forced their female employees to use contraception, often in the form of hormonal injections of Depo Provera<sup>159</sup>; otherwise they could lose their jobs. They also made it a precondition of getting a job as a domestic servant (Gockel-Frank 2009). Gockel-Frank found that, in the age cohort of women born between 1929 and 1951, in Khorixas, 50% of the women had been sterilised (Gockel-Frank 2009:8). Sometimes the entire uterus was removed without the woman's consent, or, if a woman wanted to get treatment to prevent her from getting Tuberculosis (TB), she would only be given it after consenting to be sterilised (Gockel-Frank 2009). This violence towards females in offending their bodily integrity and taking away their chance to have children was particularly harsh in a society in which children are regarded as so important (see Chapter 4). The South African policy towards the black population stood in contrast to their pronatalist policy towards the white population (Currier 2012).

Besides the SWC, many women were organised in churches. Gradually, a Namibian feminist theology also evolved (Becker 1995:192f). In the 1970s the Lutheran Church became the first church in Namibia to ordain female pastors; at the time when independence was won, there were three of them. Other churches followed slowly (Becker 1995:193). However, the churches themselves remained male-dominated for a long time. Robert mentioned that, when he went to the Lutheran Church, he learnt that "die vrou moet unter die man wees" (Afrikaans for "the woman must be under the man") (Robert, 2009). Women's groups within churches had existed since the outset, but they had little if any involvement in politics because politics within the Police Zone was perceived as a male issue. Moreover, the media presented politics as "dirty", as an activist interviewed in 1991 explains:

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<sup>159</sup> Today, the use of Depo Provera is very controversial (see Chapter 7).

The whole media had that kind of way of making people apolitical, saying, politics are dirty. If you come and say something dirty, you are talking politics. So people became (...) they don't even want to talk about their concerns because that is political. (Cited in Becker 1995:196)

However, since the mid-1980s, women have started to organise themselves. This happened independently of the SWC, as their activism did not address the daily challenges and problems they faced regarding reproduction, housing, and child-care. Spontaneous actions against unpopular things like increases in local electricity and rent prices occurred and led to grassroots activism and resistance in which many women were involved<sup>160</sup> and played leading roles, in contrast to the political realm which was still male dominated (Becker 1995:183). Several community-based organisations were established to improve daily living conditions, in Katutura and Khomasdal in Windhoek but also in rural areas. Mainly women organised themselves to create kindergardens, alternative schools, and to build houses (Becker 1995).<sup>161</sup> One of the first women's organisations, Namibian Women's Voice, was ecumenical and the CCN strongly supported its establishment in 1985.<sup>162</sup> They organised themselves as women to achieve empowerment (Becker 1995:196, Hubbard/Solomon 1995). They even established branches in different regions. They were aimed at supporting ordinary women in their daily fight for survival, including issues like child-care (Becker 2010). They created income-generating projects, organised workshops for women, supported discussions about community problems and were also politically active. They conducted a campaign against the forced administering of the contraceptive Depo Provera (Gockel-Frank 2009, and see Chapter 7). Becker highlights important differences between the NWV and SWC. The NWV stressed that, in current SWAPO politics, issues of everyday importance to women would not be addressed. By contrast, the SWC opposed this independent women's organisation outside of SWAPO. The acting secretary of the SWC dismissively commented publically in 1988 "that no African country had ever gained independence through a "separatist feminist women's struggle" (Becker 2010:185). Moreover, they were portrayed as "endangering the national liberation movement's standing" and some members were persuaded to leave and join SWAPO instead (Currier 2012:453). Due to a combination of different factors, the organisation broke up in March 1989.<sup>163</sup> The tensions between various individual agents and between different groups of women's activists continued and impeded

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<sup>160</sup> E.g., in a housing cooperative in Katutura 97% of the approximately 500 members were women (Becker 1995:183).

<sup>161</sup> There were many groups such as workers' associations, residents' associations, and community cooperatives, as well as many community activities such as establishing local newspapers, theatre groups, and growing vegetables.

<sup>162</sup> The fact that churches became involved in women's empowerment was also a result of two international processes: the UN announced the "International Decade for Women 1975 to 1985" and the World Council of Churches followed by declaring the "Ecumenical Decade 1988 – 1998: Churches in solidarity with Women" (Becker 1995).

<sup>163</sup> There is no clear consensus on the reasons: some blame personal conflicts between the leaders, others presume that they became too powerful for the male leaders in the church and the political parties (see Hubbard/Solomon 1995). Becker also concludes that the pressure exerted by SWAPO led to its dissolution (Becker 2010, and see Currier 2012).

a unified fight for women's empowerment in the first few years after independence (see Chapter 3).

## 2.3 Summary

Colonialism in Namibia caused death, suffering and poverty. Many people died during the Namibian War and the Liberation War when the Namibians resisted and fought against the violent regimes which were countered against terribly by the foreign colonial forces. Many Namibian people lost their lives in the genocides and other cruelties perpetrated by the German colonial powers. Many died and were traumatised in fights with the South Africans and by South Africans led fights between Namibians. Others died and were harmed as a result of the widespread everyday violence as well as structural violence by German and South African colonialists. This was made possible in the first place by the symbolic violence of profound racism.

Living in a colonial system meant that structural violence was a pre-condition (Krüger 2004). Both colonial systems involved structural and symbolic violence (see Section 1.1.2) enacted through unjust laws in favour of the white minority. This included restricting the mobility and free choice of the black population and enforcing a strict control system, for example via pass laws. Moreover, by means of the contract labour system, workers were exploited and paid very low wages, thus creating a precarious and uncertain lifestyle for them (see Dieckmann 2007). Furthermore, the restricted education limited future prospects for the black population. The colonial society was shaped by privileging one group or certain individuals, while disadvantaging others. The political strategy of "divide and rule" implied ambiguity and uncertainty (see Friedman 2007/8). The strategy of working with local collaborators (as administrators, soldiers or spies), especially during South African occupation, and the privileging of a minority within the society, generated inner divisions, mistrust, and violence. In this context, men were legally and economically privileged over women.

During colonial era there was a strong focus on difference (with regard to gender, ethnicity, skin colour, age, and class). Moreover, the internal geographical border of the Red Line, first established by German colonialists at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then determined during South African rule, created further divisions. Namibia has become a "divided and unequal" country (Jauch et al. 2011:194): There is the north, which was affected by indirect rule, the Liberation War, and the migration of mainly male contract labourers into the Police Zone. By contrast, in the south/central area of the former Police Zone, people were subject to direct colonial rule. Here, white and black people lived together but apart. Towns were divided into black and white areas, where the black people lived under strict control and all men were conscripted. In the Police Zone the dispossession of cattle and land as well as forced removals form important parts of people's memories. Many people resisted (passively and

actively) colonial rule within and north of the Police Zone, others adapted to it and some collaborated with and benefitted from it. This led to an internal stratification (Pauli 2009:89) and fissures within the population. Across the whole of Namibia hierarchical divisions, which were strongly enforced including violence and paternalism, existed between black and white, between different ethnic groups, between men and women, and between old and young.

Symbolic violence occurred during colonialism in the form of racism. It still has implications for present day Namibia. Kandirikirira describes the idea of white supremacy ruling over black subordination as “dehumanisation of the black population” (Kandirikirira 2002:131). This, as well as the domination of males over subordinate females, has ongoing legacies. Taking into account the violence men perpetrated against women and how it was not perceived as violence in certain contexts by society, reveals a profound devaluation of the female perspective. This double mental colonialism (Akawa 2014:52 and Becker 2010:183) experienced by black females was enforced via the use of violence. It implied a lesser value being ascribed to females. This led to decreased self-esteem, the lack of a voice, and fewer opportunities and life chances for females. Their victimisation through violence in the past also has significant implications for their present lives (see Chapter 8).

Numerous people experienced physical, sexual, and psychological violence on a daily basis: violence within working relationships by white employers towards black employees (see Diekmann 2007, Pauli 2009, Sylvain 1999), and also in the private sphere in the form of violence by male heads of households against their subordinates, women and children, as well as of parents against their children. Both forms were interlinked in the *baasskap* system on farms. Moreover, the corporal punishment of children in schools was also an ordinary part of that life. Violence by the police and violence as a means of repressing political opponents also happened on a regular basis including towards suspects on their own side during the Liberation War. Moreover, the subtle strategies employed by the white South African administration such as the use of spies created mistrust, hatred and violence among the Namibians. This psychological warfare has left its mark on contemporary society. All groups involved used sexual violence as a weapon of war against female opponents but also against their own subordinates as a means to control them and display power (Britton/Shook 2014). This chapter shows that many people had to endure and many perpetrated violence.

Females suffered exceptionally from violence: in their homes, in concentration camps, in refugee or military camps, by domestic employers. Sexual violence by males against females took place. However, it was only noticed if it became extreme or it happened outside of marriage or outside of the own group. Then it was seen as “real rape”. Was the sexual violence perpetrated by the own partner, within marriage or within the own group such as in a camp this violence was simply part of the overall male domination and was neither talked

about nor recognised, it was just “something different” (see Section 1.1.2). This hierarchy of rape still has implications for present day society (see Section 8.1.1).

Even in the medical realm women suffered violence, as their right to procreate was taken away by forced sterilisations or when their children died due to incarceration (see also Gobodo-Madikizela et al. 2014).<sup>164</sup> This left ineradicable wounds. In general, both oppressive colonial regimes were obsessed with controlling female reproduction and sexuality (van Wolputte 2016, Gockel-Frank 2009), which also reflects the formal and ideological degradation of women (see also Bennett 2010). All the examples of violence against women show how little the will of the female victim or her consent to or refusal of sex counted for. The older interviewee Magda (2009) mentioned that women were not regarded as equals, but were treated as being on the same level as children (Magda, 2009, see also Wallace 2013). And (black) children were perceived as the lowest group within the colonial hierarchy. This exemplifies the violent system and its gendered hierarchy, and especially implying the de-valuation of women’s perspective and the invalidation of female experiences. This also still has legacies for females today (see Section 8.2).

Regarding intimate relationships, many changes took place during colonial times. Tearing families apart through enforced long-term contract labour in faraway places, and children or parents going into exile for years have left long-lasting legacies: a lack of liability and commitment in human relations; parent-child relations, as well as intimate relationships, remain challenging in present day society (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Several factors led to the commodification of intimate relationships and their normalisation during colonial times: *Firstly*, the artificial and forced separation of families and couples by the contract labour system led to a situation where males had cash and females did not. *Secondly*, the European gendered system of male breadwinner and female housewife had an important influence, especially when linked to the legal marital power of the husband who also controlled property. *Thirdly*, pre-existing traditional ideas of *lobola*, in which the woman is given to a husband in exchange for cattle and other items, also played a part (see Section 2.1). *Fourthly*, the privileging of male elders by the colonial administration led to a system of male patronage and moreover to high-cost weddings, which only a few people could afford, further decreasing marriage rates among the majority of the population (Pauli 2009). Consequently, sexuality and reproduction became separated from marriage, households became less stable (see Section 4.1), and relations within families and intimate relationships less committed (see Sections 4.3 and 5.2). The hierarchical system of gender relations was

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<sup>164</sup> Many more examples are given by Wallace 2013, Mc-Kittrick 1999, Wallace et al. 1990, Soiri 1996, Becker 1995, and Shikola 1998. Akawa (2014) writes about the sexual violence that women had to endure in the northern war zone and the exile camps or when fleeing from Namibia. In this chapter, only some of the cases and conditions in which women experienced violence are discussed.

manifested by the pattern of commodified intimate relationships which has persisted until today.

During colonial times men practised multiple sexual relationships. This still common behaviour has several origins: the tradition of polygyny among all African groups in Namibia before the missionaries came (see Section 2.1), and the fact that men had access to resources meant they could provide not only for a long-term intimate partner but also for girlfriends. Women who lacked opportunities to earn cash looked for providers. Moreover, the migrant labour system as well as restrictions on the freedom of movement for black people led to long-distance or interrupted relationships, resulting in men to having relationships at both locales.

The dispossession of the indigenous population's land and cattle in the Police Zone, which began during German colonial times and developed further during the South African era, led to terrible poverty for the black population and thus to severe economic inequality. At independence in 1990, 73% of the Namibian farmland belonged to 4,450 white farmers, while more than 100,000 black farmers were confined to 27% of the communal farming land (Jauch et al. 2011:195). Colonial policy created commercial land for the white, and communal land for the black, population. Jauch et al. conclude:

The 'dualistic' structure of Namibia's agricultural sector is thus a result of systematic colonial policies, which simultaneously created wealth (for a minority) and poverty (for the majority). (Jauch et al. 2011:196, inverted commas and brackets in the original)

Stressing differences between groups (regarding gender, ethnicity and class) and linking it to varying levels of access to resources led to glaring inequalities, which were inscribed onto Namibian society and led to poverty for the bulk of the population (Hubbard/Tapscott 1992, see also Jauch et al. 2011). As Jauch et al. explain:

Namibia's historic legacy of apartheid-colonialism resulted in enormous levels of socio-economic inequality, primarily along racial lines, but also according to gender and class. (Jauch et al. 2011:243)

At independence in 1990, it was estimated that 5% of the elite had control over 71% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), whereas the majority of the poor (55%) controlled only just over 3% (Hubbard/Tapscott 1992:1). Among these people who were disadvantaged by the system, black women were the most disadvantaged group, especially regarding the labour situation and laws in general.<sup>165</sup> In pre-colonial times many women were disadvantaged in some areas, but not in others. However, during the colonial era, women lost rights and status as colonial, religious and traditional powers joined forces to re/produce female subordination (Lorway 2015, Jauch et al. 2011). At the time when independence was won, gender relations

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<sup>165</sup> For example, in 1988, women represented only one third of the formally employed and they mainly worked as domestic workers, which meant they did not even get the very basic level of protection from exploitation by employers that formally employed workers got (Hubbard/Solomon 1995, Hubbard 2010:2). Women in jobs such as domestic work had to endure long working hours, very low wages and a lack of benefits and job security (Jauch et al 2011:190). Women also worked as teachers, nurses and stenographers (Becker 1995).

were unequal and characterised by the domination of men in the public and in the private spheres. The man was the head of the household according to colonial law, religion, and tradition. He took the decisions and women were expected to be subordinate. Several research participants believed that mutual gender norm expectations were clear and therefore were not discussed or questioned.

This conglomeration of inequalities, injustices and internal divisions within society had to be dealt with by the people engaged in the struggle for the new independent state. The question thus arises of what their aspirations were and how they tried to achieve these with regard to gender and violence.

## Chapter 3 Aspirations and challenges since Independence

### 3.1 Constitution-making and political awareness of women's situation

#### **The Constituent Assembly**

To meet the challenges posed by the end of the repressive apartheid system and to build a peaceful democracy, a new constitution was crucial. Many different Namibian, Southern African, and international stakeholders were included in the process of Namibia becoming an independent state. Human rights and gender equality were inscribed in the Namibian Constitution. Because of the multitude of influences involved, and in order to understand current ambiguous attitudes towards gender equality and human rights, it is useful to examine who put their mark on the nation building of the new Namibian state.

Following negotiations which had been going on since May 1988, the South African, Cuban, and Angolan governments signed the Geneva Protocols (Wallace 2013). In consequence, the UN Resolution 435 was enforced in April 1989, although it had already been passed in the late 1970s (WEB UN 1978, see Section 2.2.2). The transition to independence was accompanied by the presence of international peacekeeping troops from the United Nations Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG)<sup>166</sup>, who were stationed in Namibia from April 1989 until March 1990 (WEB UNTAG). One key component of Resolution 435 was the election of a Constituent Assembly (CA), which was held in November 1989. Prior to that date, more than 42,000 exiles returned to Namibia (Wallace 2013:306). During the election campaigns the two main political parties SWAPO and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance<sup>167</sup> (DTA), had both included the issues of women's empowerment and legal equality between men and women in their political manifestos. SWAPO won the elections with 57.32% of the vote,

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<sup>166</sup> 6,000 people belonged to UNTAG, which consisted mainly of members of the military and a smaller civilian membership (Becker 1995:227).

<sup>167</sup> See footnote 149 about the DTA.

followed by the second strongest political party, the DTA, with 28.55%, and in third place was the Damara-dominated United Democratic Front (UDF), established in 1989, with 5.64% (WEB IPU). However, SWAPO did not win the two-thirds majority necessary to form a majority government. Therefore, the different groups of former “enemies” had to work together.<sup>168</sup>

The CA consisted of 72 elected members. Among them were only six women (Hubbard and Tapscott 1992:5, Melber 2010:36).<sup>169</sup> This was a very small number, considering the emphasis the political parties had placed on the topic of women’s rights and empowerment in their election campaigns. Some accused them of doing so for strategic reasons, because now that women were also allowed to vote for the first time, they wanted women to vote for them. The DTA in particular had never put women’s issues on their agenda before the electoral campaign – neither in their manifesto nor within the day to day politics of their interim government (see Section 2.2.2). The only prominent female DTA politician at the time expressed the situation as follows: “Most of it [involvement with women’s issues] was verbally. In their hearts they still cling to the idea of women being inferior” (cited in Becker 1995:234, iiba by SGA). It was not only the DTA who had few female election candidates, but also SWAPO. Moreover, even those few were not given prominent rankings on the candidate lists.<sup>170</sup> Thus, Becker concludes: “In fact, the political parties did not live up to their verbally proclaimed commitments to women’s empowerment” (Becker 1995:234). Only the small Namibia National Front (NNF) made women’s rights the focus of their electoral campaign and gave female candidates high rankings on their candidate list. The Standing Committee<sup>171</sup> who drafted the constitution consisted of 21 members of the Constituent Assembly<sup>172</sup>, but included only one woman, the Secretary of the SWAPO Women’s Council, Libertina Amadhila<sup>173</sup> (Becker 1995:238f, Geingob 2010).

At an early stage, the SWAPO members suggested adopting the *Constitutional Principles*. This text was composed by the Western Contact Group (WCG)<sup>174</sup> in 1981 and was part of Resolution 435. The principles also included a Bill of Rights that not only gave a commitment

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<sup>168</sup> On the difficult negotiations between the “former enemies” about the new constitution, see Geingob 2010, Horn 2010, Melber 2010.

<sup>169</sup> SWAPO won 41 seats, DTA 21, United Democratic Front (UDF) 4, the white party Action Christian National (ACN) 3, and each of the following small parties won one seat: the Baster party Federal Convention of Namibia (FCN), the Namibia National Front (NNF) and the Namibia Patriotic Front (NPF) (WEB WIK CA).

<sup>170</sup> SWAPO ranked their first female candidate at number 10, the next at 15, then 33, etc. The DTA ranked their first female candidate at 14, the next at 22, etc. (Becker 1995:234).

<sup>171</sup> This means the *Committee on Rules and Standing Orders*, see Geingob 2010.

<sup>172</sup> In the Standing Committee, the distribution of political parties was as follows: SWAPO -11 seats, DTA - 5 seats, and each of the following small parties got 1 seat: NNF, FCN, NPF, ACN and UDF.

<sup>173</sup> She studied medicine and graduated in Poland, and became the first Namibian female physician. During the Liberation Struggle she worked in refugee camps. She was also the SWAPO representative at the WHO between 1974 and 1989. Since independence, she has been a member of the National Council. In 1990 she became Regional Minister and in 1996 Minister of Health and Social Services. She was Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia from 2005 to 2010, and she is active in international health associations. (WEB Libertina Amadhila)

<sup>174</sup> The Western Contact Group consisted of Canada, France, West Germany, the United Kingdom, and the US.

to strive for equality between all people but also the right to own property. This linked the idea of human equality with the white inhabitants' ownership of colonial property together in one package. Therefore, some African leaders were very sceptical about including bills of human rights in the constitutions of newly independent African states. Horn states they thought...

(...) that the outgoing colonial powers had a hidden agenda by insisting on the inclusion of an entrenched bill of human rights in the constitutions of newly independent African states. In the latter's view, the colonial masters wanted to protect the property of settlers and companies owned by the 'motherland'. Bills of human rights – especially if entrenched in new African constitutions – are seen as a tool for keeping post-colonial Africa enslaved. (Horn 2010:71)<sup>175</sup>

At this early point in the independence process, a conflict arose between the idea of equality which some associated with western powers, and that which some of the African leaders regarded as important for their new states, which has contributed to tensions and ambiguities that have lasted until the present day (see Section 5.1).

Nevertheless, the *Constitutional Principles* were accepted and this created trust between the different parties. The white settlers were content because they did not have to fear the dispossession of their land by SWAPO which was perceived as a socialist party (Horn 2010, Geingob 2010). Furthermore, the key issue of equality was included in the Namibian constitution. However, up to the present day, this property right has made it difficult for the Namibian Government to work towards a fair distribution of land, and in this respect, Namibia remains one of the most unequal countries in the world. Conversely, this process was seen as a precondition of successful negotiations between the white and black population. Hence, all parties were integrated within the constitution-making process.

The main parties all had different drafts of the constitution<sup>176</sup>, but the CA took SWAPO's draft as a basis.<sup>177</sup> Civil society was also included in the constitution-making process, for example, the Council of Churches of Namibia (CCN) organised a meeting, in which members of women's organisations discussed the draft with the female members of the CA (Becker 1995). Finally, the constitution was adopted by a consensus of all the members of the CA, who signed it on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1990. The UN Security Council also approved it.

### **Independence on 21st March 1990 and policy of National Reconciliation**

The independence of Namibia was declared and 75 years of South African colonial occupation was ended on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1990. The Constituent Assembly elected the leader of SWAPO, Sam Nujoma, as the first president of independent Namibia and he formed the first government. The Namibian Parliament consists of the National Assembly and the National

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<sup>175</sup> Horn points to the irony in the fact that, for example Great Britain, which pressured its former colonies to include the bill of rights in their new constitutions, lacks a written constitution itself (Horn 2010:71).

<sup>176</sup> The constitutional drafts were as follows: SWAPO's Discussion Paper dated 1975, the DTA's Hiemstra Constitution, dated mid-1980s (see Horn 2010).

<sup>177</sup> This happened on the one hand because it was very similar to the DTA's Hiemstra Constitution and because the DTA stressed that SWAPO represented the majority of the people in Namibia (Geingob 2010).

Council.<sup>178</sup> The new government massively increased expenditure on health (doubled), education (trebled) and housing. In addition, they ended “racially inclusive schools” (Wallace 2013:307) and introduced free primary schooling (Wallace 2013:307). After independence the new army, the Namibian Defence Force (NDF), was created out of PLAN, SWATF and parts of Koevoet (du Pisani 2003:11). However, on the sensitive but important issue of land distribution they remained hesitant, and measures were limited until the present day. They introduced the principle of the *Willing-buyer, willing-seller Policy* as well as a land resettlement programme.<sup>179</sup> Women were also disadvantaged in this respect, as less than thirty percent of the new farmers were female (Jauch et al. 2011).

National unity was given priority over party-political or ethnic divisions intensified by long years of violence under colonialism and apartheid. The new policy of National Reconciliation has its origins in this context, “focusing on unity, respect, and progress” (Britton/Shook 2014:157). In this regard, Namibia chose a different path to South Africa which worked through past wrongdoing and suffering via the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and in fact, the Namibian Government refused to collaborate with the South African regime (J. Hunter 2010). As Britton and Shook (2014) put it:

(...) the new Namibian Government chose to move forward from the nation’s war-torn past without a formal national truth commission or criminal tribunals (...) leaders opted to forego institutionalised, public processes of transformational justice and pursued amnesty for past abuses. (Britton/Shook 2014:157)

The policy of National Reconciliation was politically and economically necessary to overcome deep divisions within Namibian society (Tapscott/Hubbard 1992:2, van Wolputte/Friedman 2015). However, it was enacted at the expense of clarification, and thus led to the covering up of violations that had happened during the pre-independence era. This is problematic, as “silence masks national complicity” and, moreover, those “apartheid era atrocities (...) remain buried in the collective consciousness of the nation” (Britton/Shook 2014:171). The violence that occurred during the Liberation Struggle is not talked about publicly if it was within the forces fighting for independence (Wallace 2013); for example, the violence against suspected dissidents or SWAPO spies and also the violence of men against women that happened in the camps (see Section 2.2.2). Victims are seen as being disloyal to their own side. This is how Sandy, who endured terrible suffering in the dungeons and even lost her child, perceives it (Sandy, 2009). This hinders the achievement of a sustainable form of social healing (/Khaxas 1996:16f, Pauli 2009). Moreover, the postcolonial master-narrative of the SWAPO government idealises the violent Liberation Struggle of the combatants while silencing the agency of the local population: “(...) the ostensibly ‘new’ nation state imagines itself to be founded on the recent violent conflict” (Becker 2015:117). These themes of

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<sup>178</sup> The National Council consists of the 42 representatives of the Regional Councils. Each of the 14 Councils elects three representatives.

<sup>179</sup> Wolfgang Werner (2015) gives an overview of the “25 years of land reform”.

National Reconciliation versus identification with the violent Liberation Struggle are part of the ambiguous situation that currently exists in Namibia. Moreover, the different experiences of people in different regions or groups are not included in the master-narrative – Namibia is still trying to come to terms with a “fragmented past” (Kössler 2007). This is also evident regarding the biggest group that forms half of the population – women: their narratives of violence are not included in the current master-narrative.

### **The Namibian Constitution as a milestone for equality**

The Namibian Constitution, which demands equal rights for all, is an important precondition for the empowerment of women and the aim of gender equality:

The Namibian Constitution is regarded as one of the most modern and progressive basic laws worldwide, with constitutional principles, a bill of rights, the separation of powers, and democratic order. (Katjavivi 2010:iii)

The new constitution includes not only legal equality for all people, but also employs gender-neutral, non-sexist language throughout the text, which was an achievement of female SWAPO politicians (Becker 1995:237f). In Article 10, “Equality and Freedom from Discrimination”, it is proclaimed that: “No persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status” (GoN n.d., Article 10:11). This stance of non-discrimination is reflected throughout the whole document.

Hubbard points to the differentiation between formal and substantive gender equality (see also Vasiljevic et al. 2017). Formal equality means the removal of laws that discriminate between males and females. To achieve substantive gender equality it is necessary to analyse social reality to find out how laws may support “meaningful equality” (Hubbard 2010b:216). She concludes: “The constitutional context makes it clear that Article 10 is aimed at the achievement of substantive equality rather than formal equality, as a means to right past wrongs” (Hubbard 2010b:216). This involves affirmative action for women as a strategy for women’s empowerment. Therefore, point 3 of Article 23, “Apartheid and Affirmative Action”, addresses women specifically:

... it shall be permissible to have regard to the fact that women in Namibia have traditionally suffered special discrimination and that they need to be encouraged and enabled to play a full, equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation. (GoN n.d.:16)

However, this section was criticised by local women’s activists and by academics as reflecting a perception of women as helpless victims, while excluding the current ongoing discrimination against women in Namibian society (Becker 1995:262). The latter notwithstanding, it is important to recognise women’s status as underprivileged in colonial times, because it means not only striving for gender equality, but also acknowledging that women need to be given special support to enable them to become equal. Therefore, Article

95 is important, as it demands that the legislation should guarantee “equality of opportunity for women [in] all spheres of Namibian society”, especially in the realm of work (Hubbard 2010b:218, iiba by SGA). Furthermore, it is interesting that, although the constitution stresses equality, the categories of race, class, sex, etc., to which it refers, are not given equal weight. While experienced racism is seen as a criminal act that is legally enforceable, the fight against sexism has no such legal provisions (Becker 1995:262). In conclusion, the constitution demands the abolition of laws that discriminate, but also commits to actively supporting formerly underprivileged women.

Although some politicians wanted to abolish the old legal system of Roman Dutch Law that was perceived as a fundamental instrument of apartheid oppression (see Section 2.2), this was not done due to financial reasons and the fear of destabilising society (Horn 2010:22, footnote 22). Thus, the old legal system was retained and it was determined that the old laws should stay in place as long as they were replaced or revised by an Act of Parliament or through a competent court proclaiming them unconstitutional (GoN n.d., Article 140:60f).

Nevertheless, the new constitution is widely viewed as the foundation on which the new policy of gender equality was built. However, it was not only human rights but also economic reasons that provided the motivation for equality. The development of the country after colonialism was one important driving force: “Gender equity initiatives are thus part of the economic strategy” (/Khaxas 1996:25). Later, gender equality was included as part of the National Development Plans of the *Namibia Vision 2030* issued by the Office of the President (see below).

### **Women’s activism**

Although only a few women officially took part in drafting the new constitution, it can be regarded as a mark of success for women’s empowerment because, prior to independence, almost no women were active in formal politics. Since the end of the 1980s, women and their situation have become more visible. One reason for this was that women inside Namibia developed a growing political awareness. Many women were already involved in the Liberation Struggle, as supporters and organisers, and became involved in initiatives to improve social conditions at grassroots level. They organised themselves into women’s groups and worked on projects to address the immediate problems of rising rents and the needs of their households (Hubbard/Solomon 1995, see Section 2.2.3).

Further inspiration for the increasing female awareness of the situation of women in Namibia was the returning female exiles who had experienced other gender systems and become familiar with international women’s movements (Becker 1995:180). The repatriated exiles brought back norms and values from their former countries of exile (such as Russia, East Germany, Cuba, Zambia, Angola, Congo and others, see Wallace 2013). The end of

Namibia's international isolation also contributed to better awareness of women's situation. Some of the officials from UN agencies (e.g., UNTAG, UNDP) who came to Namibia were self-declared feminists (Becker 1995:228). All of these internal and external influences invigorated the women's movement. From the end of the 1980s onwards, "gender interests were now considered legitimate issues in politics and public discourse" (Becker 1995:229). Increased media coverage of women's issues contributed to and reinforced this process beginning in 1989.<sup>180</sup> The opening of a formerly very closed and restricted country has also been augmented by new and expanded communication technologies (computer, television, radio, later on cell phones and internet), enforcing processes of globalisation (Hailonga 2005).

The colonial legacy of the deep divisions within Namibian society (see Chapter 2) proved a challenge for the united struggle for the advancement of women's rights. It was difficult for some women who were affiliated to different groups (political parties, churches, classes, ethnic groups) to work together. Racism and its legacy, in particular, constituted a major obstacle to joint cooperation between white and black women, as a black women's activist explained in June 1990:

There have been no conversations between white and black women on the issue of racism. Before we work together to make independence fulfil its promise for the women of Namibia, we will have to deal with the issue of racism and the women's movement. (*The Namibian*, 18.06.1990, cited in Becker 1995:258)

The differences between the women were perceived as great and it was therefore difficult for women's organisations to work together across party-political limitations (Hubbard/Tapscott 1992:20). At independence, the effort to establish a nationwide women's group was unsuccessful, because it was seen as "only an affair of Windhoek middle-class women (...) [and] lacked 'grassroots support'" (Becker 1995:254 iiba by SGA, see also Hubbard/Tapscott 1992:20).

However, the fight against violence perpetrated against women (see Section 3.3) has created a strong motivation for women from different groups to work together, including across party-political divisions (Hubbard/Tapscott 1992:8). /Khaxas even speaks of a feminist movement working for the establishment of the first Woman and Child Abuse Centre in Namibia, which was opened in 1993 (/Khaxas 1996:34f). Despite this success, it took several years until a form of networking between the different groups evolved. At the time of independence, many women viewed their party as a priority and therefore did not strive to unite the various forces to fight for women's rights (Becker 1995, Hubbard/Solomon 1995). Britton and Shook conclude that this was similar to the subordination of women's rights under the primary goal of national liberation (see Section 2.2.3): after independence was won,

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<sup>180</sup> Before independence, not much attention was paid by the media to women's issues (for a more detailed analysis see Becker 1995).

many women felt that nation-building was more important at that time than the fight for women's rights (Britton/Shook 2014:154). Bauer points to the internal divisions that existed: "Women's activists and women's organisation have tended to be much divided along racial, class, party-political, geographic and other lines" (Bauer 2004:502). Existing divergences were also exploited by male opponents of gender equality: "Men have applied the divide and rule strategy of labelling women as lesbians (...) and as manhaters (...), and of dismissing the Sister Collective as being run by white feminists" (/Khaxas 1996:36).<sup>181</sup>

However, the fight against violence against women proved to be a uniting force and was the reason why many women's organisations evolved (see below).<sup>182</sup> Today, a diverse range of women's groups can be found all over Namibia, working to empower themselves and to improve women's situation. Most of the organisations are based in Windhoek and do outreach work in the different regions or have regional offices; others are based within the regions. Sister Namibia "has been amplifying women's voices since 1989" (WEB Sister Namibia). Since then, it has published the first women's magazine after independence, *Sister Namibia*, in the three main languages of English, Afrikaans, and Oshiwambo. As SWAPO politicians refused to give government funding (Currier 2012), the organisation is funded by various donors from abroad. One important ongoing donor is the German Heinrich Boell Foundation. Sister Namibia gives this message on its homepage: "(...) we know without any doubt that empowered women is not only the most urgent need of our country, but the most effective means of change for us all." (WEB Sister Namibia). A recent project has involved providing girls with sanitary pads to combat the exclusion of girls from education. Sister Namibia created the "SisterPADS", which are reusable pads that they distributed among school girls (see Chapter 7). They are supported by the NGO Power Pad Girls who organise charity events to finance this activity (LAC 2017:146).

The first women's organisation in Namibia to address the issue of violence against women was Women's Solidarity (Rimmer 2004). It was founded in 1989 as Women's Solidarity Rape Crisis, based in Katutura, by a group of women who were outraged by a rape case. It has links to the Church; their office was located in the building belonging to the Council of Churches of Namibia. The NGO was closed down because of financial problems, but it was revived again in January 2005 (Expert 14, 2009). They organise workshops and demonstrations nationwide (see Section 3.3 and Chapter 7).

The NGO Women's Action for Development (WAD) was founded in 1994 in the Omusati Region in north-western Namibia. Expert 50 (2006), working for WAD in Outjo, describes the NGO as a "male-friendly organisation". Its mission is to "advance the socio-economic

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<sup>181</sup> Sister Collective was the former name of the NGO Sister Namibia (see below).

<sup>182</sup> Only some of the numerous women's organisations are mentioned here. A recent overview is given by Marowa and Hishoono (2018).

empowerment of women and vulnerable communities in Namibia through training, advocacy and awareness raising programs” (WEB WAD). Today, their headquarters are in Windhoek and they also have offices in all 14 regions (as well as in Outjo). Many of their board members are high-ranking church officials. They support girls to improve their economic opportunities through training, for example in computers, needlework, and bread-baking, in Outjo. Thus, again stereotyped occupations are promoted. WAD is financially supported by the German conservative Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Swedish Development Agency, and the EU, among others.

Empowerment also takes place by encouraging women to write about their experiences and perceptions, as the Women’s Leadership Centre (WEB WLC) (/Khaxas 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010), founded in 2004 (Marowa/Hishoono 2018), does. They want to implement a change from within, through being active among different ethnic groups in Namibia (/Khaxas 2010). The NGO, Namibian Women’s Voices for Development, published *The “I” Stories. Healing through the power of the pen. Speaking out against gender based violence* (Paxton et al. 2008).

There is a Namibian branch of the South African based organisation Gender Links, which has focused, in particular, on gender in the media. They are members of the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance, who promoted the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which came into force in 2008 (see below), and who now support its implementation. Recently they were also involved in the “Cyber dialogue on menstrual health” (WEB FB GL, and see below).

There are prominent feminists, who most people know and who are seen in the media on a regular basis. These include the founder of Women’s Solidarity, Rosa Namises, the long-term director of Women’s Action for Development, Veronika de Klerk, and Women’s Leadership and Sister Namibia co-founder, Elisabeth /Khaxas, as well as Sarry Xoagus Eises, founder of the Namibian branch of Gender Links and finally, Dianne Hubbard of the Legal Assistance Centre’s Gender Research and Advocacy Project (GRAP).<sup>183</sup>

### **Creation of a ministry to include women’s perspectives and to address the underprivileged status of females**

One means of trying to enforce gender equality and women’s empowerment, has been the creation of a ministry. However, at independence, SWAPO women’s activists, especially those belonging to the SWAPO Women’s Council, were not united in their support for creating such an institution. Its critics believed that setting up a women’s ministry would lead

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<sup>183</sup> I had conversations with all of them, and interviewed Rosa Namises (Expert 14, 2009, see also footnote 347 in Chapter 7). Elisabeth /Khaxas’ publications (1996, 2010, and together with Wieringa 2007) were very useful for this thesis, as well as the writings of Namibian women edited by her (2005, 2007, 2008). Sarry Xoagus Eises died in 2017. Moreover, publications of Dianne Hubbard (2007a, b, 2010a, b) were also very valuable for this thesis. For information on my counterpart LAC see Sections 1.2 and 1.3.

to the marginalisation of women's issues, as happened in Zimbabwe (see Becker 1995:273). Instead, they wanted women to have prominent positions in all areas and use specific instruments, such as minimum quotas of women, to help achieve this. Instead of a ministry, the Cabinet decided to establish a Women's Desk within the Office of the President and a Women and Law Committee to "redraft laws which discriminate against women" (Khasas 1996:17). On the one hand, this shows the involvement and support of the president with regard to the advancement of gender equality and women's rights. On the other hand, it shows how, initially, there were no political majorities who supported the creation of an independent ministry.

Sam Nujoma, the first Namibian president, was supportive of the fight for women's rights and also wanted to involve men in this process. However, his involvement has been limited to heterosexual women. Currier points to homophobic remarks by the former president at the SWAPO Women's Council Congress in 1996, which can be interpreted as a masculinist divide and rule strategy to divide women in their struggle for equality (Currier 2012, see also Section 5.1).

The Women's Desk was founded in August 1990 and was renamed in January 1991 as the Department of Women Affairs in the Office of the President (DWA). The Women's Desk was not a ministry and was thus not included in the political decision-making of the cabinet. It was headed by an undersecretary. The Women's Desk did not have its own budget but was financially dependent on the Office of the President. Only in the next financial year, 1992/93, did it get its own budget. For the first six months, it was located in one room in the State House; it was restricted in its agency by a lack of staff and resources (Hubbard/Tapscott 1992:19): "In fact, DWA had a hard struggle to establish itself and win recognition within government structures" (Becker 1995:274). Thus, as early as April 1991, women demonstrated to create an independent ministry to improve the situation of women in Namibia (Akawa 2014:179). However, only six years later, in 1997, the DWA was promoted and incorporated into the Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare (MWACW). In 2006, it was renamed the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) and given a mandate "to ensure gender equality and equitable socio-economic development of women, men and children" (MGECW 2006:4). The name also reflects the different focal points of the time. First, in the 1990s, the empowerment of women was the main aim, and then later it became gender equality. Policies were developed by the new ministries aimed at achieving gender equality.

## 3.2 National Gender Policies and new legislation to eliminate discrimination against women and to enforce gender equality

### National Gender Policies

At the beginning of the 1990s, the policies regarding gender were not combined into one gender policy paper. Different policies existed and were analysed in a research paper focussing on documents that aimed at eradicating inequalities, especially in education, by Elizabeth /Khaxas (1996).<sup>184</sup> She came to the conclusion that ...

(...) discourses of equality and rights are not concerned with transforming gender; rather, they are like patchwork, reforming the most glaring discrepancies but ignoring the root of the problem, which is the discursive construction of gender. (/Khaxas 1996:19)

Since the end of the 1990s, Namibian policy on gender has been guided mainly by the following national documents: the National Gender Policy (NGP) (see DWA 1998a); and the National Gender Plan of Action (NGPA) (see DWA 1998b), designed to steer the implementation of the Gender Policy. The National Gender Mainstreaming Programme (NGMP) (MWACW 2003) followed the NGPA in 2003. In 2010, the NGP was adapted to become the National Gender Policy 2010-2020. Namibia has signed several international and regional conventions aimed at achieving gender equality.<sup>185</sup> Thus, international ideas on gender and gender equality entered Namibian policy, as was the case in other areas as well. This means the idea of gender equality is also attached to global discourses, which have been mediated by the government (Becker 2006, Thomas 2007), and also by global influences transported via new media and new communication technologies, such as the internet (Hailonga 2005). The funding for gender policies and activities often came from international donors, and so their views on gender might have also influenced the Namibian policies (see also Currier 2012).<sup>186</sup> Therefore, some people in Namibia perceive the current policy of gender equality as originating in ideas that come from the global north (see Section 5.1). However it was shown in Section 2.2.3 that there have also been long-term demands for women's empowerment and gender equality from *within* Namibia.

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<sup>184</sup> /Khaxas focused on the realm of education and gender. She analysed the following documents: the draft *National Gender Policy Framework: Gender and Development* of 1996, developed by the Department of Women's Affairs; *Toward education for all* of 1993 by the Ministry of Education and Culture; the *First National Development Plan* of 1996 by the National Planning Commission.

<sup>185</sup> The *Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) was ratified by Namibia in 1992 (UNDP 2016:256) together with its Optional Protocol; the *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development* (WEB SADC PGD) as well as the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) of the UN (WEB MDG). Goal 3 of the MDGs is especially important: Promote gender equality and empower women (MGECW 2010). The *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development* was ratified by the Namibian Government in 2015 and is legally binding. Namibia is also a member state of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG), delivering yearly voluntary reports. It is predicted that the 17 goals will be achieved in 2030. Goal 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, is especially important in this respect (WEB SDG).

<sup>186</sup> Of course, international funding was not limited to the gender realm. Namibia has received a huge amount of funding since independence, for investment in education, health, infrastructure and the economy. Most of the funding has come from Germany, the US and the European Commission, as well as UN agencies (Christiansen 2011).

Civil society, organised in women's groups and organisations, has always played a crucial role in Namibian gender politics. They partly worked together with the government, as the government and NGOs also conducted campaigns. On the other hand, pressure and demands from women's organisations have always influenced gender politics in Namibia and have provided important input. They are involved in awareness-raising of gender equality, women's empowerment and campaigns to end violence against women, as well as income-generating programmes.

The first National Gender Policy (NGP) was launched by the parliament in 1997. Due to women's previously disadvantaged position in society, their empowerment was central to the policy (DWA 1998a). The main aim of the NGP was to "end all forms of gender discrimination. It will make sure that the contribution of women to the nation is recognised and valued" (DWA 1998a:1). The NGPA was enacted in 1998 and comprises a five-year plan to implement the NGP; it links the abstract aims of the NGP to practical objectives, activities and concrete stakeholders (DWA 1998b).<sup>187</sup> In the NGPA document, the following is stated: "The National Goal is to promote gender equality by empowering women (...)" (DWA 1998b:4). This perspective leaves men out of the frame (see Section 6.1), excluding them from the transformation of gender relations, and additionally, it makes no reference to changing gender constructions (see Section 5.1).

Although men have not yet been integrated into the gender policy documents of the DWA, the insight must have already existed that it is important to address men too, in order to achieve gender equality. The MOHSS launched the *Male involvement in sexual and reproductive health project in Namibia* in 1997 (Mufune 2009). It was implemented in northwest Namibia where mainly Oshiwambo speaking people live. Via regular radio programmes directed at men, and the training of male nurses, clergy, police, soldiers, and sportsmen about sexual and reproductive health, the idea of including discussions on gender was promoted.<sup>188</sup> The aim was to reach 25,000 men via media and 65,000 men by providing information in printed form (Mufune 2009).

Ministries like MOHSS, MGECW and the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH), as well as non-governmental organisations like LAC, Gender Links, WAD, PEACE, the Namibian Red Cross and others have actively contributed to improving knowledge and awareness through various campaigns on television, radio, in newspapers and through regional outreach (LeBeau/Spence 2004). The women's rights NGO, Sister Namibia, ran the important feminist campaign "50:50" from 1999 to 2004, which became

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<sup>187</sup> In the Acknowledgement of the NGPA, firstly President Nujoma and First Lady Koyambo were thanked and then nine international donors listed. This document, as well as the whole process of policy-making, was financed by international donors. (DWA 1998b:1) This pattern continued in the following years.

<sup>188</sup> It was funded by the government of Luxembourg as well as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and managed by the US-based Margaret Sanger Centre International.

widely adopted as a term for gender equality (see Chapter 7, and also Lorway 2015). They cooperated with local stake holders from rural and urban areas, from different political parties, and other NGOs as well as from trade unions (/Khaxas (2010).<sup>189</sup> Moreover, they developed the Namibian Women's Manifesto, "an advocacy and training tool, which also included the rights of lesbian women" (/Khaxas 2010:2). This was not supported by the Minister for Women's Affairs but was actively opposed. She even spoke out against it, claiming that the leading NGO, Sister Namibia, "was confusing the Namibian women because lesbian rights were not a gender issue" (ibid:2f). Again, this serves to highlight the divisions between groups aiming to achieve gender equality (Jauch et al. 2011:230). Furthermore, it reveals widespread homophobic tendencies in Namibia (see Section 5.2).

In 2003, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare, with assistance from the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), developed in collaboration with a multi-stakeholder team <sup>190</sup>, a *National Gender Mainstreaming Programme* (NGMP). This programme is an instrument by "which gender equality concerns are taken into account in all policies, programmes and organizational procedures" (MWACW 2003:7). In its foreword by the minister, it is stated that, despite the provisions laid down in the constitution regarding gender equality, "women continue to occupy a disadvantaged position in society" (ibid:2). In particular, the problems of HIV/AIDS and violence against women and children have even been exacerbated (ibid). The whole process was financed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and they also sent two experts to assist. The document firstly presents the *Namibian Gender Mainstreaming Programme*. The programme's central objective is the empowerment of women, and to "promote women's positive image and human rights (...)" (MWACW 2003:5). It is possible that creating a positive image of women in this way might have been to the detriment of men. During the research I conducted in Outjo it was found that many people have a negative image of men (see Chapter 6, 7 and 8). However, people mainly refer to the widespread violence perpetrated by men and other irresponsible behaviour by males (see Chapter 6). Interestingly, in the NGMP document the authors wrote in some detail about the mainstreaming of gender relations and gender equality versus women's empowerment:

It is very important to note that the women's empowerment programme is *not necessarily inconsistent* with a gender mainstreaming strategy. Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing full participation and equal benefits. The implication of this is that, where there are gender inequalities, equal treatment of women and men may perpetuate gender disparities. (MWACW 2003:7, italics added by SGA)

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<sup>189</sup> Women's networks from 21 Namibian villages and towns were included. The campaign was funded by the Global Fund for Women which aims to increase the participation of women at all governmental levels (Lorway 2015).

<sup>190</sup> Members of the team were: representatives of line ministries, the Bank of Namibia, the Office of the Auditor General, UNAM, LAC, National Youth Council and Young Women Christian Association (MWACW 2003:6).

In the next part of the NGMP document, the UN's original idea of gender mainstreaming is described. It becomes clear that gender mainstreaming is addressed at men *and* women:

(...) the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action (...). It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension (...) so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (MWACW 2003:8)

However, the NGMP document does not take into account that there are areas in which men need to be empowered or encouraged, like raising children, taking responsibility for household tasks, etc.; areas which are traditionally female domains. Someone who realised at an early stage that it is important to involve men in the transformation of gender relations was the first president. As far back as 1992, the president called for the inclusion of men in the process of gender equality. In a speech made at the opening of a Women's Centre in Katutura he demanded:

(...) 'men have to change' and should partake in responsibilities of child-rearing and family subsistence while women should be allowed to participate in family decisions and control over household income. (Becker 1995:277)

Thus, he points to the importance of bringing about a transformation in men regarding the gendered division of labour (see Chapter 6). However, this is not reflected in the official gender policy of that time. One example of this tendency to exclude men is the section on Gender, Poverty and Rural Development in the NGMP document (see MWACW 2003:18). Of four key issues addressed in the NGMP, three are directed at the empowerment of women or girls. One is directed at a gendered perspective. None of them are directed at men. Although rural women in particular are affected by poverty, there are also rural men who have to endure difficult living conditions (see Chapter 6). If there are programmes which are aimed at transmitting knowledge and skills exclusively to women, but which men also need, the question arises of how men in similar situations can be expected to react.

In the *Namibia Vision 2030*, which was developed by the OoP during President Nujoma's term of office, men are addressed as well as women. It includes long-term National Development Plans (NDP) and stresses the need "to mainstream gender in development, to ensure that women and men are equally heard, and given equal opportunities to exercise their skills and abilities in all aspects of life" (OoP 2004:110). This document emphasises that women need special attention and support, but it mostly talks about women *and* men.

The Ministry of Women and Child Welfare, then called the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW), also recognised the importance of integrating men in order to achieve gender equality. The *Ministerial Profile* refers to "continued marginalisation and discriminatory practices against women" (MGECW 2006:5), and, for the first time, it is mentioned that both men and women should be empowered to achieve gender equality

(ibid). Regarding finances, it is stated that taxes have decreased since independence and that the ministry relies on donor aid.<sup>191</sup>

In 2010, the NGP was adapted to become the *National Gender Policy 2010-2020*. In the first paragraph of the new President Hifikepunye Pohamba's<sup>192</sup> foreword it is stated that:

It is of the utmost importance to the Namibian Government to improve the status of women in society and to eradicate injustices of the past. To this end, measures have been put in place to ensure equitable access to economic resources and opportunities, as well as social justice for both women and men. (MGECW 2010:3)

Thus, president Pohamba was also supportive of women's empowerment.<sup>193</sup> This was also referred to by Expert 12 from Outjo: "(...) our president is very serious about gender issues. And he supported it [gender equality]" (Expert 12, 2006, iiba by SGA), and in his foreword, he includes men *and* women as recipients of the policy of gender equality. There is also mention of enlisting the support of men in taking responsibility for raising children. Further on in the document the goal of the gender policy is stated: "(...) to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women in the socio-economic, cultural and political development of Namibia" (MGECW 2010:20). Remarkably, in the section explaining the purpose of the policy, the "empowerment of both female and male persons in Namibia" (ibid) is mentioned. Further explanation is provided in another sub-section of this paragraph:

While the policy aims to address gender equality, it is important to note that due to continuing inequality affecting women more than men in access to opportunities in decision-making, access to resources and unequal gender relations, the Policy will highlight women's needs in order to close the inequality gaps. (MGECW 2010:21)

In the preface, the Minister for Gender Equality and Child Welfare cites the topics of HIV/AIDS and violence against women, as well as "continued pervasive gender- and intra-household inequalities (...)" (MGECW 2010:4), as persistent problems that still need to be addressed. Moreover, there is also mention of a "high mortality rate and the sexual exploitation of women and girls (...)" (ibid). She also describes the achievements that have resulted from the policy of gender equality. For women these lie mainly in the areas of education<sup>194</sup> and legal reforms. The Namibian Government defines gender equality in this NGP document as follows:

(...) women and men have equal opportunities and enjoy the same status. This means that both can realise their full human rights, their potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and that both can benefit from such results. Gender equality, therefore, is the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and the differences between women and men, and the roles they play. (MGECW 2010:52)

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<sup>191</sup> It receives financial support from the CEDAW Fund, UNICEF Fund, UNFPA Fund, Street Children Fund and Namibia Children's Home School Fund (MGECW 2006:8).

<sup>192</sup> In 2005, Hifikepunye Pohamba succeeded the first president of independent Namibia, Sam Nujoma, who then held the office for 15 years. After two terms in office the next president, Hage Geingob, was elected in 2015. All the presidents were prominent SWAPO freedom fighters.

<sup>193</sup> In 2014, he won the Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership, which honours good leadership in Africa. At this occasion it was also stated that he had pushed forward gender equality (MG, AFP, 03.03.2015).

<sup>194</sup> In 2010 the enrolment figures for girls and boys in primary schools were equal (MGECW 2010:4).

In this document, for the first time it is stated that boys and men have to face gendered challenges in the educational sector. However, the section on the “Progress, Achievements and Challenges of gender equality” deals solely with the situation of women (MGEWCW 2010:12-19). Consequently, almost all of the policy objectives are directed towards females, and only one objective is directed towards achieving gender equality in family relationships (MGEWCW 2010:21f). There is not a single objective relating to improving or supporting the situation of men (see Section 6.1) despite the fact that women’s relationships to men mean that they are also affected by the changes in the gender system (see Section 1.1.1).<sup>195</sup> Only later were men and changes in male norms addressed (MGEWCW 2013).

Different instruments were applied to try to mainstream gender and achieve gender equality, for example the Gender Focal Points and the Parliamentary Gender Caucus (Jauch et al. 2011:229, MGEWCW 2010).<sup>196</sup> These efforts to promote women’s empowerment resulted in considerable success, as the representation of women in politics is very high compared to other countries and Namibia’s statistics on gender equality levels are quite positive (see Chapter 1, Introduction). As early as 2004, 29% of the Members of Parliament were women. This meant Namibia was ranked fourth in continental Africa and seventeenth worldwide in terms of women’s participation in the national legislature (Bauer 2004:1). Since 2014 the government party SWAPO has applied a Zebra List for its candidates, in order to reach a 50:50 gender balance. However, in the elections for the Regional Council only 19% of the candidates were women (Shejavali 2015).

The government under the next president Hage Geingob (see above) adopted a 50:50 policy for all managerial and ministerial positions. In 2015, 42% of the members of the Namibian Parliament were women. Thus, internationally, Namibia is ranked third in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and ninth worldwide (Shejavali 2015, and see LAC 2017). However, at the regional level women are not that well represented, nor among SWAPO candidates. In the Regional Council elections in November 2015, only 16% of the regional councillors were women (ibid). This figure has remained stagnant since 2004 (Shejavali 2015).

### **New laws to enforce gender equality**

The Namibian Constitution provides equal rights for men and women (see above). However, the old Roman Dutch Law system, which inscribed such differences in the law, was not abolished, so it has had to be adjusted in cases of discrimination and other unconstitutional

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<sup>195</sup> Clearly, women should not only be seen as part of the female-male gender relations system but also in relation to other women, especially when different kinds of femininities are involved (see Section 1.1.1 and 9.2).

<sup>196</sup> Gender Focal Points are units at each senior level of the government departments that are responsible for implementing the government’s Gender Policy (MGEWCW 2010:47). The Parliamentary Gender Caucus is tasked with supporting female parliamentarians and creating awareness of gender issues, among other things.

legislation. Therefore, new laws were enacted to recognise these provisions.<sup>197</sup> The goals of improving the situation of women and achieving gender equality have been acknowledged by several men, including Members of Parliament. However, in the best-case scenario, men have perceived this aim of gender equality as women's work (see Becker 1995:276f, Düringer 2014:22). In the worst-case scenario, men have explicitly opposed it. Moreover, many laws, which were changed to achieve formal gender equality, were approved but only after repeated and strong resistance from male lawmakers was overcome (Hubbard 2007b). This is also confirmed by the length of time that it took for structural changes to happen: seven years was required to set up a fully-equipped ministry aimed at integrating gender equality into Namibian society (see above).

Since colonial times there have been laws that discriminated between the genders (see Chapter 2). The regulation of marriages formed one example of the colonial laws which was not compatible with the new constitution (Hubbard/Tapscott 1992). Under the old law, the wife was seen as a de facto minor before the law. She was dependent on her husband's decisions and attitudes because he was legally granted "marital power" (see Section 2.2). The new law, which aims to balance the power relations in civil marriages, is the *Married Persons Equality Act*. Although it was very clear that the former legislation discriminated against women in this regard, many male parliamentarians opposed the new bill. Nationwide discussions about the bill took place via radio, newspapers and television. Namibian society hotly debated this fundamental change in civil law. Defenders of the old status quo drew on the bible and tradition to buttress their arguments (see below and Section 5.1) (Becker 2007). They also discredited women's activists (see above). However, the parliamentary opposition was unable to prevail against the new law. As Becker stated:

In the end, President Nujoma threw his personal weight behind the contested reform which meant that whether they supported it or not, all SWAPO parliamentarians had to vote in favour of the new law. (Becker 2007:22)

The law was enacted in 1996 and took away the legal notion of the man as head of the household. Both partners were given the same rights and access to property, land, and bank loans, while immovable property must be registered in both partners' names. Children are under equal guardianship. However, this law only refers to civil marriages, which account for just 20.1% of the population above the age of 15 (Namibia Population and Housing Census 2011:33). The law does not apply to customary marriages (7.6%, *ibid*).<sup>198</sup> 1.3% of the population was divorced (*ibid*), and a new legal framework needs to be created for divorce, both in customary and civil law (Hubbard 2010a). The Judge President publicly said that the current divorce law is "archaic" (*The Namibian*, Rudd et al., 08.11.2013). Divorce under civil

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<sup>197</sup> Not all of the new legal changes can be described here; for a detailed account see Hubbard 2010a.

<sup>198</sup> 3.6% of Namibians above the age of 15 were widowed, 0.7% were separated and 0.1% said they did not know (*ibid*).

law is dealt with by establishing fault by one partner for the failure of the marriage. This attempt to establish fault tends to cause more conflict in the process of ending marriages. Moreover, the divorce law is very complicated, and a divorce can only be obtained by engaging the services of a legal practitioner, thus making it more costly and difficult for people with limited access to resources. Consequently, there are many barriers to divorce.

Another aspect of colonial legislation, in which women had been discriminated against, was the realm of labour. Under *Labour Act 6* of 1992, maternity leave was introduced, which did not exist before then. The establishment of the right to maternity leave was then supplemented with financial benefits under the *Social Security Act 34* (Jauch et al 2011:204). In 2007, the labour law was further improved regarding the prevention of sexual harassment, compassionate leave for death or serious illness within families and the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of pregnancy, HIV and sex (Hubbard 2010a:3). An additional law which has a strong impact on women's lives is the *Maintenance Act* of 2003, which created a legal obligation for parents to maintain their children, independent of marriage status. Parents and other caregivers can apply for maintenance grants for each child (see Section 4.1). However, it is mostly women who apply for these, as many fathers are simply absent (see Section 6.1). The prosecutor decides the amount they will receive according to the respective parents' income.<sup>199</sup>

Further law reforms to regulate sex work, abortion, and divorce as well as marriage under customary law have also been discussed, but so far no law reforms on these topics have been implemented (LAC 2017), presumably due to strong opposition from the churches (Hubbard 2007b:122f) and traditional leaders. Churches in Namibia continue to have a strong conservative influence on politics, especially regarding sexuality and women's rights (/Khaxas 1996:16, Horn 2008) as well as gender constructions (see also Section 5.1).

Knowledge about the new laws was spread by multi-media campaigns, particularly via radio which is available in most households.<sup>200</sup> The NGO Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) has been campaigning and conducting workshops and seminars, producing leaflets in different languages to provide access to the law for everybody (LAC 2006a, 2009, 2012, see also Section 1.2). However, the implementation of the new laws has progressed only slowly. Although details of the laws supporting gender equality are not widely known, most people are aware of the spirit of the constitution which maintains that men and women should be equal (LeBeau/Spence 2004, Hubbard 2010a, Becker 2010, SIAPAC 2008).

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<sup>199</sup> There were many other structural changes regarding women's lives, e.g., improving opportunities for widows to inherit property, the introduction of political quotas, and in relation to tax. For more information on these changes, see Hubbard 2010a.

<sup>200</sup> The NBC has several regional stations and also broadcasts in different languages, such as Khoekhoegowab, Otjiherero and Oshiwambo.

Thus, with the abolition of discriminatory laws as the constitution demands, formal gender equality has been achieved in many regards, although there is still more to be done. The gender policy is grounded in liberal feminism<sup>201</sup>, which is intended to achieve formal gender equality, thereby abolishing formal discrimination (see Section 1.1.1). However, the other constitutional demand of substantive equality, which means supporting formerly underprivileged women through Affirmative Action and enabling them to join the workforce, has not yet been fulfilled. Although the *Affirmative Action Act* was enforced in 1998, and women were included in formerly disadvantaged groups regarding employment, Jauch et al. point out that it was mostly middle-class black men who benefitted from these provisions (Jauch et al. 2011:227). As will be seen in Chapter 7, the economic opportunities for many females remain very limited and they are still heavily dependent on a male provider and there is a lack of child care institutions.

The gender strategy of the government as well as of civil society in the first decade after independence paid little attention to gender constructions. Gender norms and their transformation are not explicitly mentioned, as /Khaxas pointed out as early as 1996, calling attention to the importance of “deconstructing hegemonic masculinities” (/Khaxas 1996:37). Tarkkonen, who more recently analysed information leaflets about HIV/AIDS, found that “the actual questioning of ‘traditional gender roles’ is quite vague and stereotyped” (Tarkkonen 2017:296).

Although there have been many improvements with regard to changes in the law and increasing women’s participation in politics, soon after independence, a significant challenge was revealed for the emerging state: the violence of men against women.

### 3.3 Violence against women: interventions and challenges

The Namibian Constitution opposes violence in any form. In Article 8, “Respect for Human Dignity”, it is stated: “No persons shall be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment” (GoN n.d., Article 8, 2b:10). There are no reliable statistics on violence against women for the years *before* independence. Several forms of violence against women were not seen as violence (see Chapter 2). However, shortly after independence, a significant increase in such violence was noted in many publications (Hubbard/Tapscott 1992:7, Hubbard 2010a:6, MWACW 2003:16, MGECW 2006:12). Workshops and conferences were held to discuss violence against women and how to combat it (NPC 1992:3).<sup>202</sup> Namibian politicians recognised violence against women as a

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<sup>201</sup> However, the term “feminism” is not even included in the gender policy documents, reflecting the persistent opposition of governmental agents who are striving for gender equality in accordance with feminism (see Section 1.1.1).

<sup>202</sup> For example, the NGO Namibia Peace Plan organised the *Women, power and violence in Namibia* conference in 1992 at Rössing Foundation (NPC 1992). In Durban, South Africa, the *SADC conference on prevention of violence against women – Rape in Namibia* took place in March 1998 (see Conference Papers).

serious societal problem. Therefore, new laws and policies were enacted and a new infrastructure created to improve the situation of victims and prosecution of perpetrators. Moreover, women in civil society have made a strong commitment to act against this violence, which often occurs in the intimate sphere.

### **Gender Policy regarding violence against women**

The Namibian Gender Policy of 1998 (see above) reflects the perception that there is a link between the power of men and their violence towards women: “The fact that men tend to have more power in society contributes to the problem of violence against women” (DWA 1998a:1). Thus, one activity envisaged in the Plan of Action aimed at achieving the fourth National Goal, “to ensure that all women, children and men, are free from violence in their homes, communities and society at large [is] to encourage self-esteem and self-worth, especially amongst women and children” (DWA 1998b:15, iiba by SGA). Another goal is to “educate women about their marital rights, especially on the issue of polygamy” (ibid). The idea behind these activities is to empower women with the ultimate aim of reducing or even eradicating violence against them. There is believed to be a link between culture, religion and violence against women: “Violence against women starts with cultural and religious attitudes that see women as having a lower status than men” (DWA 1998a:11). However, the focus regarding violence against women has been firmly on women and not on men. There is no mention of the idea of transforming male behaviour and perceptions.

In the next gender policy document it is stated that “gender based violence exacerbated by cultural definitions of manhood and masculinity [is one of the] root causes contributing to the high HIV prevalence rate in Namibia” (MGECW 2010:27, iiba by SGA). Culture is seen as an important factor regarding the societal reaction to such violence. It is also stated that “current cultural norms reinforce the acceptability of gender based violence, particularly in rural communities” (MGECW 2010:30). This policy reflects the widespread perception of many people in blaming culture for gender violence. Britton and Shook interpret this use of “culture” as an explanatory factor for gender violence as racist (Britton/Shook 2014:158). The difference between their account and mine lies in our differing understandings of the term “culture”. Britton and Shook simply equate “culture” with “race”, as many Namibians do. As I have shown in Section 1.1.1., it makes more sense to use a broad definition of Culture, and to “mobilise Culture as an asset” (Adelman et al. 2012), in order to understand and contain gender violence (and see Section 1.2).

In the MGECW document it also becomes clear that religion is seen as a contributory factor to discrimination against women: “Customary, cultural and religious practices should not discriminate against women” (MGECW 2010:22). This may be part of the widely-perceived general polarity between tradition and modernity (see also Friedman 2007/8:62, van

Wolputte 2016, see Sections 1.1.1 and 5.1) and is also reflected by people's perceptions in the research site of Outjo, who saw gender equality and tradition as being contradictory (see Section 5.1).

In Namibia, violence against women falls under the category of gender-based violence, and is further differentiated into domestic violence and rape (MGECW 2010:53) (see Section 1.1.2). In the Glossary of the recent *National Gender Policy* (2010-2020), gender-based violence is defined as:

(...) all acts perpetrated against women, men, girls and boys on the basis of their sex, which causes or could cause them physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or economic harm, including the threat to take such acts, or to undertake the imposition of arbitrary restrictions on or deprivation of fundamental freedoms in private or public life, in peace-time and during situations of armed or other forms of conflict, or in situations of natural disasters, that cause displacement of people. (MGECW 2010:53)

Furthermore, it is stated that:

Gender based violence refers to all forms of violence that happen to women, girls, men, and boys because of the unequal power relations between them. (MGECW 2010:29)

Thus, the hierarchical power relations between men and women are seen as constituting the core of the problem. It is stressed that it is mostly women who are affected by gender-based violence by male perpetrators.

### **(Female) activism against violence against women**

Women in civil society have previously played a crucial role in the fight against violence against women, but this has especially been the case after independence. Activists demanded longer sentences for perpetrators of violence, changes in legislation, and a change in the definition of rape through lobbying, marching, demonstrations, and law submissions (Hubbard 2007a, and see Section 8.1.1). The many women's organisations also work to support survivors of violence as well as to prevent violence against women. At the time when the *Combating of Domestic Violence Act* was passed, and awareness-raising campaigns were necessary to spread knowledge of the law among the people, the Namibian NGO Women's Solidarity, which had previously been involved in awareness-raising, had to close down due to financial problems (Rimmer 2004, Expert 14, 2006). Later on it was revived. Particularly horrific rape cases against children received a lot of public attention and fuelled activism. As mentioned above, the problem of violence against women had a unifying effect on women's activism. Women's organisations such as Sister Namibia, Gender Links, WAD, and Women's Solidarity Namibia have also been active in the struggle against violence perpetrated by men against women (Expert 14, 2006).<sup>203</sup>

In 2006, the *We are raped! – 1st National Conference for NGO's CBO's Activists* took place in Windhoek between 30<sup>th</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April, which I attended. One of the speakers claimed

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<sup>203</sup> The LAC *Namibia Gender Analysis* (2017:200) lists several organisations that are active in the field of gender violence. For more information about male activism, which occurred later, see below and Section 6.2.3.

there was an urgent need to establish an umbrella organisation to fight violence against women (Field Notes, 31.03.06). Women from different Namibian regions shared their points of view on violence against women in their communities. Some claimed that cultural practices would be a barrier to fighting violence against women.

For many years Namibia has participated in the international campaign known as *16 Days of activism against violence against women and children*, which is a broad campaign starting on the *International day against violence against women* on 25<sup>th</sup> November and continuing until the *International human rights day* on 10<sup>th</sup> December. It is led by the MGECW.

The developments in digital media offer new opportunities for activism against violence and for supporting women affected by violence. Several activities have been organised by civil society or individuals using social media, which also reflects how challenging violence against women is for Namibian society. For example, in September 2012 a campaign on Facebook was started called *Stop passion killing in Namibia*.<sup>204</sup> However, although there is considerable activism, many people are disillusioned with and frustrated by the developments. In 2013, an activist was cited in an article entitled “Rape tops crime in Namibia”, which appeared in the local newspaper *The Namibian*, as saying: “I have really given up hope. I don’t know what we should do anymore because every single day we hear of these crimes (...)” (*The Namibian*, Matsi, 13.05.2013). This demonstrates the helplessness and frustration that a lot of people feel. In addition, people perceive that there has been a brutalisation of sexual violence.

In 2013, a Facebook group, “Victims 2 Survivors”, was established. The following statement appears on their webpage: “Victim to survivor is a non-profit organization aimed at educating the Namibian youth and general society on the impact abuse has on our Nation. We also offer counselling for victims and use this platform to be a voice to the voiceless” (WEB FB V2S). Moreover, the *#BreakFreeFromViolence Campaign* was launched by the First Lady Monica Geingos in 2017, at which the president was also present (WEB TW #BreakFree). The aim is to re-frame attitudes towards violence in society. Because femicides are still happening on a regular basis, young people are desperate and, in October 2020, anti-femicide protesters demanded a state of emergency over gender violence (see WEB Shut it all down, see *CNN World*, McSweeney, 19.10.2020) to try to achieve peace and security for women in Namibia.

### **Improving legal opportunities to fight violence against women**

In June 2000, the *Combating of Rape Act*, which was seen as “one of the world’s most progressive rape laws” (Britton/Shook 2014:154), came into force. It also changed the

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<sup>204</sup> Many members of Namibia’s younger generation discuss, complain about and debate gender and violence issues on this forum. As of October 2017, 9,640 people had ‘liked’ the campaign. (WEB FB PK)

conceptualisation of violence against women and what can be classified as a criminal act. Under the former act, rape was defined as “intentional unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent” (LAC 2001:6). In this case, “unlawful” simply meant not married. Thus, before the new act was passed, it was not possible for a married woman to lay a charge of rape on her violent husband because their sexual relationship was considered “lawful”. The previous act focused much more on the female victims’ role rather than that of the male perpetrators. This meant that a woman had to prove that she did not consent to sexual intercourse. It was of no interest whether the man had used force or other violent acts. One consequence was that the woman felt as if *she* was being put on trial by the court. Moreover, no boy or man could bring a charge of rape; only women and girls could do so. However, the new rape act was created as gender-neutral, and the age of consent for boys and girls was raised to 14. Under the old law, it was 12 for girls and 7 for boys.

The new law defined rape as “intentional commission of a sexual act under coercive circumstances” (LAC 2001:7), and it explained the coercive circumstances of the rape in detail. Important for minors here is that one form of coercive circumstances is linked to the age of the complainant: If the complainant is under the age of 14 and the perpetrator is three years older and more than the sexual partner, then coercive circumstances are involved (LAC 2001:9f).<sup>205</sup> The law provides for stiff minimum sentences which start at five years imprisonment for a first offence, depending on the circumstances of the rape. Additionally, the needs of rape survivors were taken into consideration, for example protecting their privacy and making it easier for a traumatised survivor to give information to the court. Questions about the victim’s sexual history were prohibited. The new law has been described as victim-centred (Britton/Shook 2014:162).

The statement that “no marriage or other relationship shall constitute a defence to a charge of rape” (Hubbard 2007b:105) was – as in other countries, including my own country, Germany – quite controversial. One male parliamentarian commented: “by nature the man feels that he has the right to have sexual intercourse with her [his wife]” (ibid, iiba by SGA). This is not an unrepresentative opinion but reflects the views of many Namibians (Hubbard 2007b, see also footnote 6 in LAC 2006). I learnt of another disturbing idea about men’s rights during a hearing about the *Children’s Status Bill* in 2006: a human rights activist was demanding the consideration of rights for rapists who became fathers through the act of rape (Field Notes, 15.02. 06, see also Hubbard 2007b:106). For many years there was a loophole in the law which involved not including age requirements in customary marriages. Thus, the marriage of minors still existed, as Edwards-Jauch (2016) mentioned. However, the *Child Care and Protection Act 3* of 2015 set a minimum age for all marriages at 18 (LAC 2016).

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<sup>205</sup> There was an amendment by the *Combating of Immoral Practices Act* that aims to protect children under the age of 16, often referred to as “Statutory rape” (LAC 2001:13).

In 2004, another gender-sensitive act, the *Combating of Domestic Violence Act*, was passed. It includes different forms of domestic violence such as sexual violence, harassment, intimidation, economic and psychological violence. It is directed at different domestic relationships: marriage partners, parents and their children, boyfriend-girlfriend relationships and close family members. The special quality of the act is shown by the fact that it gives the victim an alternative option to lay a charge, and to have their privacy protected. The victim can apply for a Protection Order (PO), which is aimed at ending the violence. The provisions of the Protection Order can prevent an abusive husband from staying with his wife, or can forbid the abuser from having any contact with the victim. The victim is permitted to have some input into the provisions for bail and sentencing (LAC 2004). A study on the implementation of this act found that between 2006 and 2008 there were more than 900 applications for POs per year (Lac 2012:49).<sup>206</sup> In the town of Outjo there were 11 applications in the same time frame (ibid:50).<sup>207</sup> In the study as a whole, 88% of the complainants were female and 12% were male (ibid:52).<sup>208</sup> In 2015, in a follow-up survey of 27 of the 31 magistrates, the LAC counted “at least 1,679 protection order applications” (LAC 2017:207).

Similarly to other acts that consider the perspective of women, such as the *Combating of Rape Act*, the law on domestic violence also caused a heated debate in parliament. Some of the male parliamentarians were concerned about the protection of husbands’ rights, including their sexual rights. A male opposition party member suggested amendments that would define three other modes of domestic violence, reflecting male resistance:

Deliberate denial of sexual intercourse in domestic relations, (...) deliberate economic or financial exploitation (...) and causing impotency or accusing the other partner of causing impotency. (Hubbard 2007b:108)

However, these amendments were rejected. The Deputy Minister of Justice described them as “a stone age amendment in the 21st century” (cited in Hubbard 2007b:108). The fierce debates reflect a deep polarity within the country between those who want to maintain the status quo of hierarchical gender relations and those who want to make gender equality a living reality.

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<sup>206</sup> They analysed 1,122 protection order applications made between 2004 and 2006 from 19 of the 31 magistrate’s courts in 12 regions of Namibia (LAC 2012). Moreover, they held 46 interviews with magistrates and clerks in 19 locations in 2006/7 and a focus group discussion with traditional authorities in 2006, as well as informal discussions at training sessions for police and magistrates in 2011 and 14 follow-up interviews in 2011 (LAC 2012:48).

<sup>207</sup> In Section 8.2 it is shown that also magistrate’s attitudes might lead to a low quote of Protection Orders.

<sup>208</sup> Less than 1% of the complainants were children under the age of 18. However, the report stresses that this only indicates that children do not or are not able to use the protection orders. 6.1% of the complainants were above the age of 55. The majority of the complainants were in the age bracket 33 to 44 (ibid:53).

## Research on male violence against women: prevalence, withdrawing of rape cases, and other difficulties

Although the topic of violence against women in Namibia has been strongly and consistently present in the Namibian media since independence, and has attracted international concern<sup>209</sup>, there was a lack of valid qualitative and quantitative data. The then Health Minister, Dr. Libertina Amathila, highlighted this problem in the foreword to the Namibian part of the *WHO Multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women* (MOHSS 2004).<sup>210</sup> The WHO study was conducted across ten countries, and involved 24,000 women sharing their personal experiences worldwide (WHO 2005). The Namibian part focussed on the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of women in intimate relationships and was undertaken in the capital, Windhoek, from October to December 2001.<sup>211</sup> Data was also obtained on the characteristics of perpetrators, contributory factors, convictions regarding gender and coping strategies that were used by affected women. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised.<sup>212</sup> Some years later, the MGECW commissioned the Social Impact Assessment and Policy Analysis Corporation Ltd. (SIAPAC) to conduct a Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey on gender-based violence in eight different Namibian regions.<sup>213</sup> This study was conducted in 2007 and 2008, and included equal numbers of men and women.<sup>214</sup> Both studies had different outcomes. In general, in the SIAPAC study more women admitted to being affected by intimate partner violence (LAC 2012:20).<sup>215</sup>

Regarding prevalence, one outcome of the WHO study was that 36% of ever-partnered women had experienced physical, sexual or both kinds of abuse by their partners during their lifetime. In the SIAPAC study, this figure was even higher at 41%. Of the 1,500 women interviewed, one in five had been living in an abusive relationship within the last twelve months preceding the study (MOHSS 2004:xii). One key finding of the WHO study was that more than half of the women interviewed had experienced forced first sexual intercourse. 4% of the respondents had had sex under the age of 15, and only 30% of them had wanted to

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<sup>209</sup> The 2000/1 Human Development Report on Namibia even had *Gender and Violence* as its title (UNDP 2000).

<sup>210</sup> The study was conducted in ten countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Peru, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and Tanzania. Countries were chosen where previously not much data was available on violence against women.

<sup>211</sup> The limitation of Windhoek is certainly important to consider, because there are variations within the different regions and between rural and urban populations. However, Windhoek can also be seen as a melting pot of different Namibian Cultures and lifestyles.

<sup>212</sup> 19 key interviewees and 4 women who had survived violence by an intimate partner were interviewed and 1,500 women aged 15 to 49 were randomly selected for the structured interviews (MOHSS 2004).

<sup>213</sup> The study was conducted in the following Namibian regions: Kunene, Ohangwena, Otjozondjupa, Caprivi, Erongo, Karas, Kavango, and Omaheke (SIAPAC 2008).

<sup>214</sup> In this study qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The quantitative survey comprised 1,680 participants aged between 18 and 49. 32 focus group discussions and 49 key interviews took place (SIAPAC 2008).

<sup>215</sup> In the LAC report on the implementation of the *Domestic Violence Act* the two studies are contrasted (LAC 2012:20).

have sex, while 36.7% had not wanted sex and 33.3% had been forced to have sex.<sup>216</sup> Women who said they had first had sex between the age of 15 and 21 revealed a different pattern: more than 40% of them had wanted to have sex, 50% responded that they had been coerced into having sex, but less than 5% reported that physical force was used. Among those aged over 21, more than one-third had experienced unwanted sex (MOHSS 2004:26). In the SIAPAC study, in which age was not differentiated, the following results were found: 20% of the women stated that they had been “physically forced to have sex” (LAC 2012:20), 15% said that they “had sex because they were afraid of what partner might do” (ibid) and 14% were “forced to perform humiliating or degrading sex acts” (ibid). Another finding shows that many women stayed in abusive relationships or returned after leaving, usually because of economic factors, emotional attachment or social pressure regarding children, religion and culture (MOHSS 2004:xii). In relation to the ten countries that participated in the WHO study, Namibia was ranked somewhere in the middle in terms of physical and emotional abuse, and at the lower end regarding sexual violence. However, in Namibia, the injuries that women sustained were worse than those of women in other countries (LAC 2012:17).

The Legal Assistance Centre did research on rape in Namibia by analysing national police dockets and a sample of rape cases for the years 2000 to 2005 (LAC 2006a).<sup>217</sup> It found that, overall, 1,100 to 1,200 rape cases are reported each year. This works out as sixty rape and attempted rape cases per 100,000 people in Namibia, compared to 117 cases in South Africa and nine reported cases in Kenya (LAC 2006a). The new *Combating of Rape Act* uses a definition of rape which is gender-neutral. Thus, both women and men can lay charges. However, the overwhelming majority of complainants were female (95%). Most of the male complainants were under the age of 18 and only a few were adult men. In general, one third of the complainants were under the age of 18 (LAC 2006a:ix). Focusing on the perpetrators, the overwhelming majority were male (more than 99%) (LAC 2006a:176). Most of them (40%) were men between the ages of 21 and 29 (LAC 2006a:177).

Furthermore, the results show that the reported cases of rape and attempted rape increased by 38.64% from 2000 to 2005 while the population grew by only around 8% during the same time (LAC 2006a:5). This does not simply mean that there was an increase in actual, but of *reported*, rape cases, according to statistics from the Namibian police (NAMPOL). There are a number of factors that influenced the reporting behaviour. This increase in statistics might have been made possible by a greater number of police stations making it easier for people

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<sup>216</sup> The report differentiates between three different behaviours of women reacting to a sexual claim: “being physically forced to have sexual intercourse against her will; having sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner might do; being forced to do something sexual she found degrading or humiliating” (WHO 2005:5). However, in my definition all these behaviours reflect women experiencing sexual violence.

<sup>217</sup> Only since 1999 have the Namibian Police (NAMPOL) recorded statistics on rape cases and since 2003 these statistics have included the age and sex of complainants. Before 1999, there were different sources, none of which could be clearly traced (LAC 2006a:4). The LAC used NAMPOL statistics from 2000 to 2005 to analyse the situation regarding rape in Namibia. 409 police dockets were analysed (ibid).

to access them and report rape cases. Before independence, there were only 75 police stations in Namibia, but in 2006, there were 146<sup>218</sup> (LAC 2006:5f). The increase in rape statistics may also reflect an increased awareness about violence against women. Reporting may also be encouraged by prominent media coverage via television, radio, and newspapers' open discussions on the subject. Moreover, the empowerment of women by the government and NGOs has probably helped to increase women's self-confidence (LAC 2006a). As some of my interviews with survivors of violence indicate, some women only became aware of what can be classified as rape after independence (see Section 8.1.1).

Many women who initially reported a rape, subsequently withdrew the charges. An examination of police dockets showed that one third of all reported cases were withdrawn (LAC 2017:203f). During my research, I was often told the same thing by service providers in Outjo, and many of them were puzzled by this behaviour (see Section 8.2). The police dockets only contained brief information about why complainants withdrew the charges. Thus, the LAC conducted further research to follow up on this topic and published a report called *Withdrawn* (LAC 2009).<sup>219</sup> The perception of community members and officials who participated provided evidence that the most important reason why women withdraw a rape case was the payment of compensation.<sup>220</sup> This relates back to a traditional way of dealing with rape in communities by paying money or animals to the wronged party. However, today the context of poverty must be taken into consideration in order to understand why women withdraw charges (see Chapter 4). Moreover, the LAC report observed that:

(...) the way that compensation is arranged in many communities today amounts to bribery and coercion, and converts a woman's right to sexual autonomy into a property right which is controlled by male members of her family. (LAC 2009:ii)

Thus, the LAC concludes that this practice is rooted in a form of gender inequality, which still prevails in Namibia. Consequently, it leads to the further dependency of violated females on their families. The majority of other perceived reasons that the research participants gave for withdrawals also reflect the prevailing gender inequality. Among them were the following:

The woman was pressured by her family to withdraw the case.  
The woman feels ashamed that she was raped.  
The rapist physically threatened the woman to withdraw her case.  
The woman feels that she has insufficient evidence to win her case.  
The woman lacks the necessary information.  
The rapist occupies a position of status in the community.  
The woman was bribed to withdraw her case.  
The woman is in a position of financial distress. (LAC 2009:iii)

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<sup>218</sup> These are 106 police stations, 26 police substations, and 15 specialised Woman and Child Protection Units (WCPUs). See below for information about WCPUs.

<sup>219</sup> The methods of obtaining data for the report included focus group discussions, interviews with community members, and interviews with key informants in six regions of Namibia. In the focus group discussions the participants discussed "30 perceived causes" of withdrawals (LAC 2009:ii).

<sup>220</sup> This practice is not limited to rape cases. A newspaper article about alcohol-related injuries of people admitted to the hospital in Outjo points to the problem of criminals paying compensation to their victims. The victims would then refrain from reporting the case to the police (The Namibian, Smith, 14.10.2011).

Thomas (2007) mentioned that, in the Caprivi, where she conducted her research, civil institutions such as magistrate's courts can only be found in urban centres, and are thus not easily accessible. Moreover, they would only give advice instead of the material support which women really need. Thus women would choose customary or familial institutions because they offer "a more realistic and rewarding outcome" (Thomas 2007:611) for rural women, even though under the patrilineal system, where the woman lives with her husband's family, she is still expected to stay with her husband and be subordinate to him. The material support is only given under this pre-condition.

However, rape cases are not only withdrawn by the complainants. In reality, even more cases are withdrawn by prosecutors due to a lack of evidence (LAC 2006a:363f). One result of the LAC analysis of the rape situation was that most often the perpetrator of the rape and the victim knew each other (LAC 2006a:184). The perpetrators were partners, family members or acquaintances of the victim and only 12% of the cases involved strangers.<sup>221</sup> The report comments ironically: "This means the police should have no difficulty in solving most rape cases, since the majority of culprits can be identified with certainty." (LAC 2006a:181) However, only 16% of all accused perpetrators of rape and attempted rape were sentenced (LAC 2006a:364). This fact was not mentioned by any of my interviewees. Many research participants blamed the women for protecting their partners (see Section 8.2).

However, many rapes still go unreported and therefore never show up in police statistics. It is estimated that in Namibia only one in 20 rapes is reported (LAC 2006:29, UNDP 2000).<sup>222</sup> The frequency of filed rape charges or their omission – meaning whether the rape is reported or not – depends on the relationship between victim and perpetrator, the age of the victim and that of the perpetrator, prevailing perceptions about gender norms in decision-making regarding sex and the context of the rape incident: "Most women will only try to report incidents which fall within popular notions of 'rape' to the police" (LAC 2006:31). This is especially the case if the rapist was a stranger or if the rape was very horrific. This type of violence was already perceived as violence during colonial times (see Chapter 2). The authors of the LAC rape report used a picture of an iceberg, in which just the tip of the iceberg represents reported rape cases. Most other common forms go unreported, perhaps due to the notion of "shame or blame" (LAC 2006:31) and because of the unclear and changing perceptions of rape (see Section 8.1.1). The Office of the President concluded that "high incidents of rapes occur in Namibia each year" (OoP 2004:110), and, in 2010, the

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<sup>221</sup> However, in 21% of the cases reported to police, the relationship with the complainant was unknown (ibid). Thus, the figures can only give a rough guide.

<sup>222</sup> This was also found to be the case in Germany. Many rapes go unreported. A campaign entitled *Ich habe nicht angezeigt* (German for "I did not report") was designed to give a voice to those women who did not report a rape that they had experienced (WEB NR).

MGECW came to the following conclusion: “Despite stronger laws, the prevalence of gender-based violence has increased in Namibia over the last decade” (MGECW 2010:14).

### **Support for women and children affected by violence: Woman and Child Protection Units (WCPUs) and challenges**

One structural intervention that was implemented at an early stage to support victims and react to violence against women, by the Namibian Government, academics and civil society was the establishment of the Woman and Child Abuse Centre at Katutura State Hospital in Windhoek in 1993 (MCECW 2013).<sup>223</sup> This was also a result of the efforts of various women’s groups (see above). It was later renamed the Woman and Child Protection Unit (WCPU).<sup>224</sup> Today it has 15 units nationwide (LAC 2017), which were described as...

(...) specialised police centres that were set up to provide a coordinated multi-sectoral approach to detecting, investigating and preventing gender-based violence (...) in Namibia. (LAC 2013a<sup>225</sup>:1)

The Namibian Police (NAMPOL), under the Ministry of Safety and Security, play a leading role in controlling these special units which are currently funded mainly by UNICEF (MGECW 2013:1). There are police officers in each unit and some have social workers too. Furthermore, they provide a place where medical examination is arranged, rape victims are given HIV prophylaxis (PEP = post exposure prophylaxis), forensic evidence is collected, and victims can report the case. They handle all types of rape cases (LAC 2006a:ix) and also offer support to victims of domestic violence (MGECW 2013). However, an LAC text on how to improve the service provided by WCPUs states that only victims of domestic violence who have suffered “very serious physical assaults (where the person is hospitalised)” (LAC 2013a:5) are dealt with by the WCPUs, while others still have to go to ordinary police stations. If victims are in acute danger, they can be referred to one of Namibia’s rare shelters.

Today, Namibia has the WCPUs and a few shelters, but as it is a large country and WCPUs are mostly located in urban areas, transport is needed, but there is almost no public transport available (LAC 2006a:ix, LAC 2013a). There is one functioning non-governmental shelter in Windhoek, to which the Windhoek WCPU is connected. There are seven governmental shelters which are meant to be linked to the WCPUs, but as the LAC report for the EU mentioned, they are not yet operational due to a shortage of staff (LAC 2017). If there is no referral to a shelter, victims only can go back home or to people they trust. However, as there are not enough shelters or other safe places, it is reported that victims of violence are

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<sup>223</sup> A multi-stakeholder steering committee comprised of NGOs, ministries, and UNAM was involved (LAC 2013a).

<sup>224</sup> Today, these units are termed “Gender Based Violence Units”, but as most documents use the term “Woman and Child Protection Units” I also use it, including the abbreviation WCPU.

<sup>225</sup> This text is a compilation of study findings regarding WCPUs in Namibia (LAC 2013a).

sometimes even put in prison cells (Mogotsi 2015), which sends a very questionable message to the victims.

Many improvements have been made but more needs to be done to protect victims of violence from the perpetrator. Safety is an important precondition for victims to rebuild trust and for them to recover from the trauma (see Section 1.1.2), but many women are left in a state of uncertainty and at risk of becoming a victim again. For example, in Outjo in 2006, women who lived in Etosha Poort were not very well supported by the police as, in some cases, the police did not even have a car in which to come and see them. Thus, they had to walk to the police station in town, and risk being stopped by the perpetrator on the way there. This situation was also true for other crimes (see Section 1.4).

Moreover, at the Women and Child Protection Units, many women were confronted with unsympathetic behaviour from the staff, especially if the perpetrator was a partner or husband (LAC 2006, 2017). Bribery was also cited as a problem. According to Expert 9, who formerly worked for MOHSS, there are many good social workers employed in the units, but a lot of them suffer from burn-out (Expert 9, 2006). Despite holding a position of responsibility, they have to put up with poor working conditions and low pay. Working with traumatised victims of violence is very demanding and exposes them to dangerous situations involving perpetrators who threaten or harass them and their families. There is also the risk of vicarious traumatisation (see Section 1.1.2). Hence, some employees cannot cope with the situation and become demotivated. Therefore, the MOHSS has started to rotate the staff: “We don’t take good care of them”, commented Expert 9, and “we have to force people to work there” (Expert 9, 2006). The WCPU staff complained that they “receive inadequate training and support for what can be a difficult and emotionally-draining job” (LAC 2017:217). Previously, the WCPUs had their own budgets, but these were abolished because of corruption. In the following, Expert 9 describes the situation of the staff: “So, if you want to make a coffee for a victim in the night, you pay it out of your own pocket. It is not that the social workers are not willing, they are overworked!” (Expert 9, 2006)

Another problem in responding to a rape case is the closing times of the WCPUs and magistrate’s courts, where the Protection Orders are issued. Many incidents of violence against women occur during evenings or weekends, when WCPUs and magistrates’ courts are closed. According to information produced by the LAC, there is poor communication between the police and WCPU staff, who are on call after-hours (LAC 2013a and 2017). Here again, victims of violence are left alone, which ignores their need for safety and reliability (see also Hildi’s narrative in Section 8.1).

The LAC Research Brief *How to improve the services of the Women and Child Protection Units (WCPUs) in Namibia*, produced in October 2013, concludes:

There is an urgent need to re-evaluate and improve the operation of WCPUs to turn them into the comprehensive inter-agency service providers that they aim to be, ensuring that they offer efficient and effective help to survivors of sexual and domestic violence. (LAC 2013a:3)

Many of the problems involved in combating violence against women in Namibia effectively, originate from a lack of financial resources, and insufficient numbers of qualified and sensitive personnel, as well as a lack of transport facilities. Thus, although the law is very progressive and victim-friendly, there are low prosecution and conviction rates for violence against women. Moreover, although there are good structures, such as specialised units, the provision of appropriate support of victims is limited.

### **Involving men and male activism**

For a long time, efforts by the government and NGOs to address gender equality and to combat gender violence were directed at women as well as society as a whole, but not explicitly at men and boys (DWA 1998b, MWACW 2003). Masculinity and violence were not explicitly linked. Neither did this happen in civil society. /Khaxas, who has been involved with the feminist organisation Sister Namibia, which edits the magazine Sister Namibia, admitted that:

Although *Sister* exposes and critiques the workings of patriarchy in the form of rape, pornography and violence, it does not problematize masculinities. (...) this implies that women are the problem: we analyse and categorise them as victims, as the oppressed, and place the burden of change entirely on their shoulders. (/Khaxas 1996:36, italics in original)

Not only is the burden placed on the women's backs instead of addressing the perpetrators themselves, for example their attitudes that see women as having to subordinate to men. Moreover, the role of society, how women and men construct and spread notions of violent masculinities is not paid attention to.

In civil society the importance of involving men in combating violence against women by men was realised at the end of the 1990s. Because of violent incidents in Namibian society, men started to organise themselves against violence against women. According to Willem Odendaal (2001), these groups existed throughout Namibia but were not united. In 1999, Odendaal and other employees of the Legal Assistance Centre began to organise the national *Men Against Violence Against Women Conference*, which took place in Windhoek in February 2000 (Odendaal 2001, Expert 14, 2009 and see LAC 2000 at Conference Papers). During the preparation phase, 25 consultative workshops were held involving men from nearly all regions of Namibia (except Caprivi, because at that time the political situation made it too insecure) (LAC 2000). At the workshops, men discussed the problem of violence against women perpetrated by men, and elected men to represent them at the national conference. Moreover, men were invited to discuss the subject in schools and public spaces. The issues brought up by men for discussion were mainly: "personal fear of failure, jealousy, alcohol abuse and rape" (Odendaal 2001:91). In addition, "some men openly admitted that they do not know how to deal with and control anger" (ibid). Before the conference, a group

of men in Windhoek prepared the Namibian society for the conference. They involved the broadcast and print media, by holding press conferences, radio events, and open discussions. Questions such as: “What does it mean to be a real man?” and “What can men do to stop violence against women?” were discussed (ibid). Two television panel discussions took place on the topics of religion and violence and on “men’s movements against violence” in a format known as “Talk of the Nation” (ibid). Moreover, Odendaal and some speakers of the conference went to the Windhoek Central Prison to talk to 100 inmates “on the pressing need to end men’s violence against women” (LAC 2000:2). A total of 400 men from different regions, representing different groups (urban and rural, different professions, grassroots men, religion, tradition, different ages), were invited to the national conference (Odendaal 2001). In addition, men from other countries who were engaged in the fight against violence against women were invited, including Michael Kaufman, who had co-established the Canadian NGO, the White Ribbon Campaign. At the conference, the focus was on discussions, which were translated into Afrikaans, English, and Oshiwambo. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia, Peter Katjavivi, declared: “The time has come for men to change and see women as equal partners in developing Namibia” (Odendaal 2001:92). After the conference, a working committee established the NGO Namibian Men for Change (NAMEC) in Windhoek in 2000, co-funded by the LAC (Expert 10, 2009), with affiliated groups in different Namibian regions. Willem Odendaal stated: “The name was chosen by the men as an expression of a positive approach to what they seek to accomplish – to be for change instead of just against violence” (Odendaal 2001:92f).

Initially, the LAC and several women’s groups supported the work of NAMEC. The chairperson of NAMEC, Reverend Nakamhela, described the aim of NAMEC as: “to sensitise men and to redefine their manhood” (Expert 10, 2006) and explained what manhood means to him: “a sense of responsibility, caring, be sensitive” (ibid). The former executive director of NAMEC added: “we try to redefine manhood that excludes violence and other forms of abuse” (Expert 45, 2006).

One reaction to NAMEC was the claim that NAMEC would promote homosexuality (Expert 10, 2006). Expert 14 told me that the men of NAMEC were referred to by the term “*moffies*” (Afrikaans derogatory term for gay) (see Chapter 6). Therefore, some men felt ashamed and did not want to continue with the work (Expert 14, 2009). Reverend Nakamhela said that these types of claims made it “difficult to find acceptance by men in society” until 2002. Men’s reactions were largely critical and they distanced themselves from the organisation (Expert 10, 2006). This shows that widespread homophobic attitudes have the effect of preventing a real shift towards gender equality (see Section 5.1). The resentment towards NAMEC could also partially be explained by the fact that the director of NAMEC had been accused of rape by a 13-year-old girl in 2001. He was pronounced not guilty by a court in May 2002 (*The*

*Namibian*, Menges, 22.05.2002). NAMEC's public reputation only changed in 2003, when the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare recognised and worked together with the organisation. Societal acceptance subsequently increased and they got financial support from the Finnish Embassy. NAMEC spread the policy of gender equality and held meetings with traditional leaders in the north; they also talked about HIV/AIDS. Moreover, they visited male inmates of prisons in Mariental, Walfishbay, Oluno, and Windhoek who had been convicted due to gender-related problems. Furthermore, they worked with men of influence (traditional and religious leaders, teachers). The Chairperson, Reverend Nakamhela, added: "but not all pastors are enthusiastic [about gender equality]" (Expert 10, 2009, iiba by SGA), although the Council of Churches, which he headed in the 1990s, supported their work. However, some years later, they encountered further problems. As Nakamhela explained, the director of NAMEC "messed up with their main donor" (Expert 10, 2009), but "we tried to keep up" (ibid), meaning that they tried to keep the organisation going. Notwithstanding, women's organisations withdrew their support (Expert 14, 2009) and Expert 14 voiced the opinion that NAMEC would have finished in 2006 anyway (Expert 14, personal communication, 2009) and that only the chairperson "would dominate the scene" (Expert 14, 2009).

In 2004, another men's organisation was established in Namibia: the White Ribbon Campaign. A former member of NAMEC, Charles Simakumba, was involved (Expert 46, 2006). White Ribbon is associated with the Canadian White Ribbon Campaign (see above). Two hundred men were trained by the organisation, funded by UNICEF, UNAIDS, and Women in Law and Development in Southern Africa (WIDAA) (ibid). Since 2013, they have also set up a Facebook group, which is still active (WEB FB White Ribbon), and have trained religious leaders (ibid).

Another example of action aimed at preventing violence against women is the MenEngage Namibia network, which consists of civil society organisations, ministries and development agencies. It is coordinated by the NGO LifeLine/ChildLine Namibia and is part of an African and a global alliance called MenEngage. It is aimed at involving men in achieving gender equality, preventing gender violence, increasing awareness of sexual and reproductive rights and HIV/AIDS. It was established in Namibia in 2012 and is supported by the South African NGO Sonke Gender Justice (Marowa/Hishoono 2018, WEB MEN).

### **Multi-stakeholder cooperation and conferences on gender violence**

In 2004, a National Committee on Gender-Based Violence, Legal Affairs and Sexual Harassment was set up. The MGECW formed the Secretariat General. Its main partners were the Ministry of Justice, WCPU, LAC, UNICEF, NAMEC, MOHSS and others. They had two key aims: first, to educate the community about the *Domestic Violence Act*; and second,

to do something about the problem of ineffective service providers (Expert 31, 2006). The strategy of fighting gender-based violence was partly to support the achievement of the *Third National Development Plan* (NDP3), which includes the goal of Gender Equality (MGECW 2010).

In 2007, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare organised a *National Conference on Gender-Based Violence*, at which 350 participants from NGOs working in all 14 regions of the country discussed the problem and developed recommendations and strategies for how to combat gender-based violence, “which is regarded as a national scourge” (MGECW 2013:1). One recommendation was the *Zero Tolerance Campaign*. Moreover, the contributions made by the conference were used to inform the government’s *National Plan of Action on Gender-Based Violence 2012-2016* (MGECW 2013<sup>226</sup>). In the Plan of Action it is stressed for the first time that men and boys must be involved in efforts to combat gender-based violence, and that dominant and violent masculinities should also be addressed, as well as supporting men who oppose gender-based violence (MGECW 2013:24,26). Furthermore, the “development of men’s networks and men’s centres to support men to challenge masculine domination and violence” (ibid:26) was also stated as a key objective. Part of the Plan of Action involved a commitment to conduct “campaigns by and for men who are opposed to violence against women, in collaboration with women’s groups, explicitly targeting male notions of entitlement that perpetuate gender-based violence” (ibid). Thus, the government realised the importance of involving men and boys in combating violence against women. However, the LAC *Namibia Gender Analysis* written for the European Union in 2017 concludes that the outcomes were very limited.

In July 2014 a second national conference on gender-based violence took place. Stakeholders representing various sectors of society discussed three main issues: causes of gender violence; national responses to combat and prevent gender violence; and related societal problems. Recommendations were made to provide better support for survivors, including improvements in reporting cases of gender violence and the reduction of withdrawals; raising tax on alcohol; including the topic of preventing gender violence in the curriculum of tertiary institutions; and “calling upon the Council of Traditional Leaders to redefine cultural beliefs that could help to combat gender-based violence, and encouraging them to reinforce traditional systems of governance and conflict resolutions within their communities” (LAC 2017:198, footnote 3). This would involve transforming and making use of Culture (Adelman et al. 2012, and see Section 1.2). However, the LAC *Namibia Gender Analysis* made the following comment on the two national conferences: “but follow-up on implementing conference outcomes was lacking” (LAC 2017:198). As early as February 2014

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<sup>226</sup> This Plan of Action was undated. After investigation of the UNDP’s webpage (the UNDP formulated the plan together with UNICEF and the Spanish Millennium Development Achievement Fund), I found that it was dated October 2013. Thus, I used that year for bibliographic information.

the Namibian Cabinet issued key recommendations on gender violence, but, as the LAC report mentions, with one exception – a “National Day of Prayer against Gender-Based Violence” which was held in March 2017 – these were not implemented.

Although the appropriate legislation is in place, the political will exists and great efforts have been made to combat violence against women – better than those in many countries in Africa or Europe – the implementation of the laws has proved more challenging (see also Britton/Shook 2014, Mogotsi 2015, LAC 2017). Expert 9, who was working for MOHSS in Windhoek in 2006, commented: “The law is great in Namibia, but the implementation of the law is poor!” (Expert 9, 2006) Moreover, if laws are only partially implemented, or not implemented at all, “they lose their credibility” (Chikuhwa 2011:72). The overall goal to decrease violence against women has not yet been achieved. Therefore, it is important to look for causes of this discrepancy.

### 3.4 Summary

Aspirations, hopes and expectations at the time independence was granted were high and diverse. As a result, the new government was established, important laws were introduced and some old discriminatory laws removed. The new constitution guaranteed women and men equal rights. During the first decade since independence, the Namibian Government worked to achieve this aim, primarily by the empowerment of women. Important laws were enacted to improve the situation of women, including the *Married Persons Equality Act*, which took away the notion of the man as the head of the household (see Chapter 2) but only applies to civil marriages. This means that the majority of intimate relationships have no legal framework (see Section 5.2). In the second decade since independence, very progressive laws regarding rape and domestic violence were introduced. However, as was shown above, the passing of these laws was accompanied by heated debates, and the implementation of these laws is poor due to a lack of resources, internal divisions, and other factors. Since the turn of the century, the government was influenced by the international trend of addressing gender instead of women, but men were only included very hesitantly. Only in the third decade after independence did men start to play a more prominent role in the government’s gender equality interventions, but even then only regarding the prevention of violence against women rather than in a more general sense (MGECW 2013).

This chapter has shown that the origins of the aim of gender equality and women’s empowerment were, on the one hand, influenced by the women of SWAPO and their president’s supportive attitude towards gender equality as well as their experiences in exile and the Liberation Struggle. On the other hand, it grew out of women’s resistance to and organisation against poor living conditions before independence (see Section 2.2.3). After independence, women’s activism was strongly influenced by and constituted a reaction to the

widespread violence of males against females. Because of the restricted resources available, the women's activism received support from international donors from the global north who also had their own gender perceptions which may have influenced the women's struggles. This means the fight for gender equality and women's empowerment originated from within Namibia and was supported from outside the country. Thus, by no means is gender equality just a global north intervention as some opponents of gender equality claim.

The new rights of women have challenged Namibian society, which is still polarised between supporters and opponents of gender equality. Moreover, even the proponents of gender equality are divided. Since independence, violence against women has actually increased (UNDP 2000, LAC 2006, MGECW 2010). The government has established very progressive legislation to tackle violence against women and has created the special Women and Child Protection Units to support victims of violence and to gain evidence against perpetrators of violence. However, the discrepancy between the legislation and its implementation was stressed by several research participants and other studies. Civil society is very active in awareness raising, influencing legislation and building support structures at local levels for victims of violence, as well as trying to prevent violence. However, despite the progressive legislation, high and increasing levels of violence against women perpetrated by men persist. Lipinge and LeBeau assume that there might be a link between formal gender equality and growing gender violence (Lipinge/LeBeau 2005).

Before I describe and analyse the gendered realities for males and females separately (see Chapter 6 and 7), in the next chapter light is shed on the uncertainties, ambiguities and challenges people face today regardless of gender. These form a framework of agency in Namibia, and it is important to try to get a holistic picture to understand how gender and violence is connected.

## Chapter 4 Uncertainties of life, ambiguous perceptions of violence and inter-generational relations in times of change<sup>227</sup>

Namibia is burdened by the legacies of deep internal divisions, violence, inequalities, and hierarchical human relations, as remnants of the violent German and South African colonial systems (see Chapter 2). Namibia's new constitution, which came into force at independence, was designed to change this, and thus demands democracy and equality (see Chapter 3). The question is how people handle these major transitions, and which other challenges inform their everyday realities, independent of gender. In this chapter the

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<sup>227</sup> The changes mentioned here are not necessarily post-independence developments; it is not easy to draw clear distinctions in this respect because societies are changing continuously (see also Melber 2007).

economic restraints and inequalities people are confronted with in Outjo, as well as general perceptions of violence, are focussed on. In addition, inter-generational relations that reflect change are explored.

#### 4.1 Poverty, economic inequality and their ramifications

The Independence of Namibia was a great success for the people of Namibia and was thus accompanied with high hopes and expectations. However, today many people feel disappointed due to the fact that their life opportunities have not improved as much as they had hoped for since independence (Pauli 2009:74, Hailonga-van Dijk/Mulunga 2015, van Wolputte/Friedman 2015). There are still many people living in poverty without any real expectations of a positive change:

People feel completely disempowered (...). Their biggest hope after independence was disappointed. Now people don't have this hope, dream anymore. (Expert 23, personal communication, 2006)

Much of the old economic system is still in place, a minority of people live in affluence while a majority remain in poverty, and only a small middle class has evolved. This means that only a small proportion of the population has so far economically benefitted from the political changes (Pauli 2009, Jauch et al. 2011).

The constitutional promise of equality for all has not yet materialised. In the *Human Development Index* (HDI), Namibia is classified as an upper middle-income country<sup>228</sup> with an annual average middle income of 10,000 US\$ (Melber 2018b), although only a tiny minority of people actually earn that much. Many people live with permanent under- or unemployment and thus remain in poverty. Households headed by women with children in rural areas are particularly affected by poverty (NSA 2015/16). Human development has progressed significantly since independence. However, the HDI measures are based on averages, and thus do not capture the inequalities within the population. Therefore, the UNDP established the *Inequality-adjusted HDI* (IHDI) which is then deducted from the original HDI and expressed as a percentage. It then becomes clear that the inequalities in Namibia have decreased human development by 34.8% (UNDP 2018a). One element of the IHDI is the GINI coefficient.<sup>229</sup> Between 2010 and 2018, the GINI coefficient was 0.591, thus making Namibia one of the most unequal countries worldwide (UNDP 2020:353, see also Melber 2015:94).

Moreover, the new economic crises and the recession since 2016 have exacerbated the situation (Melber 2018b), as well as a severe drought and the current Covid-19 pandemic

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<sup>228</sup> Namibia is ranked within the medium human development group, at 129 out of the 189 countries of investigation, with a score of 0.647 (UNDP 2018a).

<sup>229</sup> The GINI index is an international scale used to measure and compare inequalities in income distribution. The scale used by the World Bank ranges from 0 to 1, whereby 0 indicates complete equality and 1 complete inequality.

(WEB Worldbank). The inequalities, which had been decreasing slowly but steadily since independence, have once again increased, while poverty, after reductions until 2015, has risen substantially (WEB Worldbank). The inequalities are, on the one hand, a legacy of colonialism, manifested, for example, in the unequal distribution of land (see Chapter 2). On the other hand, the inequalities persist, even though the key agent of liberation, the ruling SWAPO party, promised otherwise during the Liberation Struggle. Melber speaks of “breeding fat cats” in his article analysing Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment. Only a specific group of black men can use the legal provisions (Melber 2006, and see Jauch et al. 2011), while the majority still live in poverty, and hence this is a source of considerable disappointment (Melber 2014). Moreover, redistribution of land has been slow due to the political principle of *Willing-buyer, willing-seller* (see Section 3.1).<sup>230</sup> After the second conference on land since independence, President Geingob installed the *Commission of inquiry into claims of ancestral land rights and restitution* in February 2019 (*The Namibian*, likela, 08.10.18).

During his election campaign, the current president, Geingob, demanded “Prosperity for All” and he has continued to do so since his inauguration. The establishment of a Ministry for Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare and the nomination of the ELCRN bishop, Zephania Kameeta, as minister, an advocate of the Basic Income Grant (BIG), have increased hopes for change (Hailonga-van Dijk/Mulunga 2015). The idea of BIG, which is espoused by churches, trade unions and other actors fighting for social justice and greater economic equality in the country, is to give every Namibian an independent basic income. There has even been a pilot project in the little town of Otjivero whereby each inhabitant was given N\$100 per month (Jauch et al. 2011:232f). It was scientifically evaluated and was found that, “Economic activities increased, school results and residents’ health status improved while the crime rate and women’s economic dependency on men were reduced” (Jauch 2015:1). However, although the president and his poverty reduction minister publicly declared themselves in favour of the BIG before their inauguration, it was not implemented (Melber 2018b). Moreover, droughts in 2015/16 and 2019 led to a deterioration in the economic situation, emergency relief was necessary, and many people fled from rural to urban areas, further increasing urbanisation. The government introduced the *Harambee Prosperity Plan* in April 2016 to fight economic inequalities and poverty. It was criticised for its lack of gender-sensitivity (LAC 2017).

Melber questions the success of government policies, pointing to a further artificial inflation of government posts including more ministerial offices, exorbitant salaries for the management staff of state-owned enterprises, and overcharging for building investments, among other

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<sup>230</sup> Only at the land conference in 2018 was this policy abandoned because it requires the government to buy farms at market prices and curbed resettlement (*The Namibian*, likela, 08.10.18).

things. Several other internal and external factors have also played a part, such as the fact that rating agencies downgraded Namibia's creditworthiness leading to a price increase in international credits. This situation of economic downturn and adversity has led to even more unemployment and thus poverty (Melber 2018b).<sup>231</sup>

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) states that one million people out of the total population were suffering from hunger in 2017, one quarter of the population is regarded as undernourished, and the development of almost 50% of Namibian children is hampered as a result (FAO et al. 2018). Poverty and inequality present a major challenge for the Namibian Government. The Namibian Government spends 50% of its budget on social welfare. There are monthly grants: the pensioner's grant of N\$1,250 for everyone over the age of 60<sup>232</sup>; the disability grant of N\$1,100; the veterans' grant which gives N\$2,200 to people who fought in the Liberation War; the foster grant of N\$250; and the maintenance grant of N\$250, among others (UNICEF 2017/18).<sup>233</sup>

The widespread poverty in Namibia contributes to substantial uncertainties within daily life and social relationships, restricting access to material and symbolic resources, and leading to frustration. This phenomenon of "living with uncertainty" (Dieckmann 2007:240) is a daily reality for many inhabitants of Etosha Poort in Outjo in terms of income, housing and safety issues and is connected to unemployment or underemployment. The national unemployment rate stood at 34% in 2016 (NSA 2017b).<sup>234</sup> Tvedten, referring to Mary Douglas, sees poverty as limiting choices (Tvedten 2011).<sup>235</sup> The overwhelming poverty has significant implications: poor living conditions characterised by poor housing, hunger, high infant<sup>236</sup> and maternal<sup>237</sup> mortality rates, a high teenage pregnancy rate<sup>238</sup>, poor hygiene, alcohol abuse, limited access to healthcare and clean water. In the informal settlement in Etosha Poort people live in corrugated iron shacks, where nothing is safe, hygiene and health conditions are appalling, there is no private sphere, people struggle to survive on a daily basis, and some

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<sup>231</sup> Regarding the underlying reasons for the lack of improvement in reducing poverty, there are various different approaches. As this is not the focus of this work, I only provide a rough overview.

<sup>232</sup> At the time of the UNICEF report (2017/18) it stood at N\$1,200, but it was increased in 2019 and now stands at N\$1,250.

<sup>233</sup> The exchange rate of the Euro and Namibian Dollar stands at 1 N\$ = 0.0628 EUR, while that of the American Dollar and Namibian Dollar stands at 1N\$ = 0.0694 US\$ (12.09.19, WEB WO).

<sup>234</sup> The unemployment rate in Outjo Constituency was 35% (NSA 2014:viii) (see Section 1.4). The 2016 Namibian Labour Force Survey defines the unemployment rate as "the proportion of the economically active population in a given working age population" who are not employed (NSA 2017b:33). This is different from the "economically inactive population" (ibid), defined as those who are not able to do paid labour as they are too old, too young or have to care for sick, young, old, disabled and other vulnerable people, often women (see Chapter 7).

<sup>235</sup> For a detailed and long-term study on poverty and life under conditions of destitution, see Tvedten's ethnographic study of Oshakati's shantytowns (2011, see Section 1.2).

<sup>236</sup> In Namibia the infant mortality rate stood at 32.3 per 1,000 live births in 2016 (UNDP 2018b:52).

<sup>237</sup> In Namibia 265 women per 100,000 live births die; this is much higher than in South Africa where the figure stands at 138, or Botswana at 129 (UNDP 2018a:5).

<sup>238</sup> There are 73.8 births per 1,000 adolescent women aged 15-19. In South Africa this figure is 42.8, and in Botswana 30.0 and in Germany 6.7 (UNDP 2018a:5).

children are given the home-brewed beer *tombo* instead of food, as the social worker from Outjo told me (Expert 8, 2009, see also Gierse-Arsten 2005, and see Section 1.4).

A remnant of the colonial era, the former Single Quarters in Etosha Poort, experienced various problems due to poor living conditions, including inadequate housing, lack of hygiene, alcohol abuse, neglect of children, prostitution and multiple and severe forms of violence. This is also reflected in the Mayor's Annual Report of 2006: "The old single quarters is an area where knife stabbing has become the order of the day" (MunO 2006:5). It was seen as burdensome and as an eyesore. Therefore, in 2007, the entire former Single Quarters were demolished and new houses were built for the inhabitants through the Single Quarters Transformation Sub-Programme, as part of the government's Build Together Program (see Sections 1.4 and 7.1). However, the new houses were not always well received by the beneficiaries. A Mayor's Report mentions vandalism and lack of interest among the beneficiaries. However, it added that the beneficiaries were unable to cope with the monthly financial burden of the leasing and purchasing costs (MunO 2008) and therefore would have preferred to live in the informal settlement area in the same location (MunO 2007). Thus, the municipality publicly invited tenders for the newly built houses. As the mayor explains in the same report:

Honourable Councillors, it is my distinct honour to report that most of the remaining occupants of the single quarters were relocated to the informal settlement area and that the structures have been successfully demolished. (MunO 2007:8)

It is interesting to note that the original beneficiaries of the programme eventually ended up in the informal settlement area where they again had to endure highly problematic and unhygienic living conditions. A lot of money was spent on trying to change the situation. However, this shows that the problems cannot necessarily be resolved by demolishing poor housing in one place and just shifting the inhabitants to a similar situation elsewhere.

The profound poverty faced by many people stands in stark contrast to the small elite group of people living in affluence and the small but growing middle class.<sup>239</sup> This inequality in the form of the presence of wealth in a context of widespread poverty also leads to frustration. Being constantly confronted with people who have better access to resources, or by images of rich people displayed in the media, for example on huge posters or television advertisements, leads to frustration and envy (Tvedten 2011). People feel deprived of goods or amenities that are easily accessible to others (as the advertisements imply). In this highly unequal society, envy, jealousy, and possessiveness play important roles, merging together

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<sup>239</sup> Pauli gives the example of Fransfontein, where she classified 16% of the population as belonging to the elite. However, comparing this local privileged group to a more influential and wealthy elite in Windhoek, the former is better described as a "localised middle class" (Pauli 2012:431), consisting of teachers, nurses, and government employees (ibid). The situation is similar in Outjo, as ordinary teachers, nurses and some government employees form a localised middle class; but there are also high ranking black and white officials who may be classified as elite. Moreover, there is also a white elite formed by some commercial farmers and businessmen which can be seen as comparable to the elite in Windhoek (for definition of elite see footnote 51).

and also taking on gendered connotations (see Section 5.2). On the other hand, the existence of widespread poverty also affects those who are employed and even those living in affluence, as poverty intensifies fears of social decline and exclusion (Wilkinson/Pickett 2009).

Low marriage rates provide one example of the socio-economic inequalities and changing norms. Since the 1970s, marriage rates have substantially decreased in Southern Africa generally, and Namibia is no exception to this trend (Pauli 2009, see Section 2.2). In general, far fewer people marry than in the past (MOHSS/Macro 2008, Pauli 2012, 2014, Tersbøl 2002, Tvedten 2011), when marriage was an important rite of passage into adulthood (see Section 2.1). Nowadays, only a few people can afford to marry (see Section 5.2). One ramification of the widespread poverty and decreasing marriage rates is the instability of household composition in the case of poor households, which can change rapidly even over short time periods (Tvedten 2011:137). As Tvedten explains:

Cohabitation then is a basis for a type of household unit that shows the clearest signs of instability. It is usually established on an ad hoc basis as a result of a combination of sexual courtship and difficult economic circumstances; and it easily yields to pressure when relationships cool down (...). (Tvedten 2011:141)

One connected factor behind the instability of households is the widespread internal migration within Namibia, which the research site of Outjo is also strongly characterised by (see Section 1.4). Employment opportunities are concentrated in the capital Windhoek and some other cities, but the majority of the population lives in the north or in other rural areas (Winterfeld 2002). Greiner even speaks of a “Culture of migration” in Namibia (Greiner 2011). Pauli also found a “high level of mobility” (Pauli 2007a). There are huge geographical distances between rural areas and cities due to the size of the country and its small population density of two people per square kilometre (MOHSS/Macro 2008:2). It is difficult to travel these distances on a regular basis because public transport is very basic: the railway system is under-developed and expensive long-distance coaches are only an option for financially well-off people. The vast majority of people are forced to travel by sometimes overcrowded, untimetabled, and sometimes dangerous taxis (accidents, unroadworthy cars, and sexual harassment are rife). Thus, a high rate of mobility due to widespread migration affects many households. Jauch et al. therefore refer to “split households” which means that “co-residence only occurs for limited periods during the year” (Jauch et al. 2011:193). Tvedten concludes that ‘household’ may not be appropriate to use as a stable unit of analysis (Tvedten 2011). Nowadays adolescents tend to view relationships in a critical way because they perceive them as unstable (Hailonga-van Dijk 2005).

For people this high degree of mobility implies uncertainty in their social relationships. The tendency to change sexual partners is linked frequently to it and is one factor behind the spread of HIV/AIDS in Namibia (Callaghan 2015). HIV/AIDS further exacerbates poverty and

affects people's overall living situation, as well as their social relationships. In Namibia almost a quarter of the adult population was HIV infected in 2001 (see Gierse-Arsten 2005). Although rates are now decreasing, there is still a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and high rates of tuberculosis (TB) (Jauch et al. 2011, see for Outjo and Kunene Section 1.4). A population-based survey conducted by MOHSS in 2017 found that the HIV prevalence among the adult population (aged 15-64) stood at 12.6% (MOHSS 2019:52). There are also gendered differences among adults (aged 15-49): 8% of adult men are infected and 14.8% of adult women (MOHSS 2019:52, for more detail see Chapters 6 and 7).<sup>240</sup> Although HIV medicine (Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy, HAART) is now available for most infected people<sup>241</sup>, the disease has led to high numbers of orphans (34,000 AIDS orphans according to WEB UNAIDS 2017). The Namibian Demographic and Health Survey of 2013 found that 35% of all households care for orphans or foster children, imposing additional burdens on poor households (MOHSS/NSA 2014:20). Moreover, there are 695 households headed by orphans in Namibia, and 45 of those households are in Kunene (NSA 2015/16:39). Currently, 77.4% of HIV-infected people in Namibia are classified as virally suppressed (MOHSS 2019:71) and Namibia's fight against the HIV epidemic is described as a "success story" (S. Edwards 2018 and see WEB UNAIDS 2017). Nonetheless, Namibia is ranked fifth worldwide in the list of countries hardest hit by HIV/AIDS (S. Edwards 2018). Moreover, there are gendered differences in the outcome of the treatments (see Chapters 6 and 7), while people living with HIV/AIDS still face social stigmatisation (Callaghan 2015, see also Gierse-Arsten 2005). In Namibia, where access to medication also depends on where an individual lives (see above), it has an effect on intimate relationships and families too.

Poverty and instability have serious implications for children. Many teachers brought up the topic of poverty among their learners, for example Expert 41, a teacher at the primary school in town, stated: "They come to school without breakfast, rain comes into their homes" (Expert 41, 2009). Another teacher at the primary school in Etosha Poort said that some learners did not receive enough food because their parents spent what little money they had on other things, and thus "learners even collapse in school because of hunger" (Expert 43, 2006). There is also the phenomenon of female teenagers living in poverty and competing with peers, who see finding an older man with whom to have a transactional relationship – locally called a "sugar daddy" – as a solution. This implies having sexual relations in exchange for money or goods, comprising a criminal act (Hailonga 2005, Kaundjua et al. 2014; see Sections 5.2, 6.1 and 8.1.1).

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<sup>240</sup> For more information about HIV/AIDS see Callaghan 2015. He conducted anthropological field research in the Namibian coastal town of Walvis Bay (see Section 1.2).

<sup>241</sup> Although the government pays for HIV medicine, they also set eligibility criteria, and those who may not qualify to get it for free include people addicted to alcohol or drugs, or those who do not have regular access to the clinics, or who have had no fixed residence for at least 3 months, among others (Callaghan 2015:54).

Furthermore, a teacher at a primary school in the location who was also an active politician in Outjo in 2009, made the following statement: “Learners are so aggressive, most of the time the parents are jobless, maybe they don’t get enough food at home. People drink too much” (Expert 34, 2006). Alcohol abuse is widespread in Namibia, which is also reflected by the proliferation of drinking places, such as *shebeens*<sup>242</sup> (Tvedten 2011, van Wolputte 2010, Becker 2000, see WEB WHO Alcohol). Most interviewees, both male and female, and in both the personal and the expert interviews, stressed alcohol abuse as a major problem in Outjo. Alcohol abuse contributes to exacerbating poverty, unemployment, neglect by caregivers,<sup>243</sup> health problems, unwanted pregnancies, a loss of control within human interactions, and a diminishing threshold for using violence. Obviously, alcohol abuse is not just a post-independence phenomenon, or a symptom of the uncertainties present during times of transition, or a sign for frustrations, but is also linked to colonial legacies, as alcohol abuse was fuelled by some employers’ practices of paying wages in alcohol during the apartheid era (Siiskonen 1994) (see Section 2.2).

Many people’s reality is influenced by this pervasive alcohol use. Lucy made the following observation about the effects of alcohol abuse: “The effect is unprotected sex which leads to HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancies, other STDs, they are only fighting, killing each other.” (Lucy, 2006) Moreover, the aforementioned lack of prospects is also a problem for many people (Lucy, Expert 12, both 2006) because of the high unemployment rates. Some people earn an income by selling alcohol (Expert 12). A legal expert and later a politician, Expert 26, gave the following reasons for alcohol abuse in his community: “Unemployment! It’s boring. Some don’t see their future, lost trust in themselves, give up their whole life; drinking is only way or one solution in life.” (Expert 26, 2006)

Moreover, as is stressed by many research participants, alcohol is a major contributory factor to violence (see also Becker 2000:7). In the Namibian section of the WHO’s multi-country study, alcohol was observed to be the most important factor behind violence (MOHSS 2004:37). There is a co-occurrence of alcohol and violence; however, Jewkes et al. argue that it is a complex issue and reject a direct connection:

Alcohol removed layers of inhibition which otherwise may have been in place, making it more likely that acts such as rape would occur. Alcohol also created opportunities for rape and in some instances reduced the likelihood of being caught; some of the male and female youths who were raped had had their alcoholic drinks spiked with drugs and did not know who raped them. (Jewkes et al. 2007:174)

Almost all the research participants cited alcohol as a contributory factor to violence, connected to frustration and a lack of opportunities. Unfortunately, at the time when the research was conducted, there was no Alcoholics Anonymous group in Outjo. Only in

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<sup>242</sup> *Shebeens* are small, bars, of which there are many in the location. Some are illegal while others are registered.

<sup>243</sup> See footnote 35 on the use of “caregiver”.

Windhoek did such a group exist, which I visited and conducted interviews with some of the participants (see Sections 1.3 and 9.2).

Poverty is paralysing and damages the entire population of Outjo even though not everyone is poor. One example which illustrates the pervasive poverty in Outjo is payday, when employees receive their income, or orphans and senior citizens their grants. Then, life in Outjo is different: the usually quiet town becomes vibrant. Many people visit supermarkets, off licences, other shops and *shebeens*, and the consumption of alcohol is high. Payday was often mentioned by interviewees as a critical time likely to provoke violence in families (e.g., Alicia, 2009; see Chapters 7 and 8). Dieckmann even speaks of a “pay day phenomenon” (Dieckmann 2007:265). Moreover, she relates that people spend too much money and “the habit of buying expensive goods, in particular furniture (and also clothes), on credit” (ibid) is common; if they are then unable to settle their bills, they not only lose the item itself but also the money they have already paid for it (ibid).

The fact that many people do not have enough resources to live on is also illustrated by the practice of sharing. People who receive any source of income are expected to share it with their family or other relatives, even if it is only a small amount, as the translated German title of an anthropological work refers to: *If you have, you must give!* (Klocke-Daffa 2001) This is also the case within extended families as well as within Pentecostal churches, which is reflected in the remittances sent by employees in towns to relatives in the countryside (ibid, Gierse-Arsten 2005, Tvedten 2011, Greiner 2011). On the one hand, sharing is a good mechanism for diversifying risks (see Chapter 7), but it also leads to obligations. Tvedten finds a “commodification of social relationships across rural, urban and shanty space, with money and material means” (Tvedten 2011: 170). The commodification of intimate relationships plays a vital role in gender relations and is examined in more detail in Section 5.2.

Although my study does not specifically focus on very poor people (see Section 1.3), the presence of such inequalities presents challenges for the whole of society. Wilkinson and Pickett see inequality as a form of structural violence (Wilkinson/Pickett 2009:159, see below) and discovered that unequal societies are confronted with more social problems such as teenage pregnancies, alcohol abuse, and violence. Interestingly, the research participants are also mainly concerned with those topics.<sup>244</sup> Melber describes people in Namibia as having a “struggle mentality” (Melber 2014), which he traces back to the Liberation Struggle. Edwards (2016) stresses the link between inequalities in income and violence. There is unequal access to resources, and life opportunities, and thus to permanent uncertainty, struggle, and frustration for many people in the face of a few privileged people displaying

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<sup>244</sup> Some themes recurred during my research in 2006 and 2009, such as violence, poverty, alcohol abuse, problems with the youth, corruption, and respect.

their wealth. This whole situation produces a climate conducive to conflict, aggression and violence.

#### 4.2 Feeling unsafe: fears, mistrust, rumours and palliating a difficult past

The reality of living with uncertainties and fears is also infused by the general security situation. Namibia has one of the highest crime rates in Southern Africa (UNDP 2000). The homicide rate stands at 16.9 per 100,000 people (UNDP 2016:244). Globally, there is a correlation between homicide rates and levels of income inequality (Wilkinson/Pickett 2009:159). Only 44% of people claimed to feel safe in Namibia, the same percentage as in Ukraine where there is a civil war going on (UNDP 2016:251f). The existence of the Facebook group “Crime in Namibia” highlights the worrying security situation and reflects people’s feelings of insecurity. The rationale behind the group is explained as follows: “The idea of this website is to report any crime that happens around your neighbourhood that you are aware of, but don’t know how to warn fellow Namibians or create awareness (...)” (WEB FB CiN). The Namibian Police contributes information to this page, which even publishes photographs of offenders.

Many people I talked to – both black and white – feel surrounded by crime and violence, as Expert 43, a female middle aged teacher, demonstrated in her narrative. She felt a general lack of trust within Namibian society, explaining it using several examples of violence, which she was shocked by:

- Expert 43 Now, you cannot trust anyone in Namibia... People come to your house and kill you. Even your family... They can also kill you, if they know you have money.
- SGA That’s sad, isn’t it?
- Expert 43 (...) It’s Namibia. Maybe I got a cell phone and somebody wants it, they just grab it, and you know that person. Like yesterday, a child in my class, he is 7 years, and a girl, her mother gave her 5 N\$ to buy sugar and the boy took it. I asked him why. [He said:] ‘I was hungry’. Adults also do this. During the weekend a man had hit a child [in an accident] and he escaped and the child is dead. But they got him, he is in jail. Or they rape the baby, the father or brother. How can you trust? I am so afraid. One man [around 20 years old] in Ovamboland raped his own grandmother [around 70 years old] and killed her afterwards. It was in the newspaper and in the radio (...). (Expert 43, 2006, iiba by SGA)

It is remarkable that she gives such a wide range of incidents, and cites the example of a seven year-old boy stealing money because he was hungry alongside male family members raping a baby. Such comments reflect the profound fears and mistrust within Namibian society as a whole, but also reveal a normalisation of poverty and a lack of empathy, as a teacher, towards a little school boy who is neglected. Wilkinson and Pickett point to the following: “People only feel empathy for those who they consider as equal.” (Wilkinson/Pickett 2009:68, translated by SGA) Furthermore, mistrust hinders cooperation and fears limit options for action. Inequalities within society produce mistrust. Trust cannot grow in a situation where inequality is rife (ibid:72). However, trust and cooperation are important

preconditions for developing a functioning civil society (ibid:73). Mistrust is not only present within wider society, but can also be found in intimate relationships (see Section 5.2, and also Hailonga 2005:204f). I conclude that the huge inequalities which result in extreme poverty for many people are an important component of the context in which violence takes place.

Several research participants also complained about poor police enforcement (Experts 4, 7, all 2006, Peter, 2006:13, Expert 8, 2009), reflecting a lack of trust in the police. A social worker complained that some incidents of gender violence that she viewed as serious would not be taken seriously by the police (Expert 8, 2009). A pastor said that sometimes the police would side with the perpetrator, thus leaving the victim of violence helpless (Expert 4, 2009). A member of Outjo Municipality, Expert 17 (2009), mentioned that he is satisfied with the work that the police do, but he knew that there was widespread dissatisfaction regarding the police. On one occasion I observed a lack of confidentiality at the police station. A woman, who was in the process of making a complaint against her ex-boyfriend who had threatened her, was directly referred to me. The police officer explained her situation to me without asking her consent in advance (Field Notes, 15.06.09).

The aforementioned lack of trust is reflected in the rumours and accusations regarding corruption<sup>245</sup> occurring in Outjo. In the interviews this topic was often talked about and regarded as a serious issue (Experts 37, 26, 50, Peter, all 2006 interviewees, and Luthrecia, 2009). Often, in cases of maintenance and violence that did not have the expected outcome, people assume that there must have been corruption. Moreover, the unfair acquisition of jobs is often cited: many people complain that those affiliated to office holders, who were mainly members of SWAPO due to the political situation, receive certain benefits and find it easier to get jobs than other people (Luthrecia 2009). This is similar to the Hoachanas case described by Becker (2006). It constitutes an agglomeration of corruption, patronage (see Pauli 2009), envy, and gossip, which is not easy to unravel. Dieckmann also mentioned the widespread use of gossip in Etosha Poort (Dieckmann 2007:209). This climate of mistrust, fear, suspected and real corruption, as well as widespread gossiping, were reasons why some of the development projects proved unsustainable in Outjo, for example the Outjo Development Trust (Isak, 2009). Another example of this is an interviewee who told me that she was accused of taking money from a charity project, which she herself had developed and which was monitored by different people. In general, it struck me that, no matter what the issue, it polarised people. There seemed to be more dissent than consensus among people. Wilkinson and Pickett state: "Inequality divides people so much, that even small differences appear as major differences." (Wilkinson/Pickett 2009:68, translated by SGA)

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<sup>245</sup> Corruption is a problem in the country, which can be seen in the establishment of a national Anti-Corruption Commission.

Among the white community there revealed widespread fears about becoming victimised by the black majority during interviews and informal conversations. Maybe some fear revenge for past or present offences. The redistribution of land and property is progressing only slowly and many black people are very indignant about the ongoing inequalities and injustices.<sup>246</sup> Several attacks on white farms have taken place, and these are extensively discussed in the white media and communities.<sup>247</sup> The white people's feeling of uncertainty and lack of safety is reflected in how they live: they often live in well-secured houses with alarm systems and most of them have dogs, which run around freely at night-time.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, many white people perceive a general deterioration in society, and feel unsettled about the changes in the system. Nowadays, the white farmers do not get the same subsidies and benefits as they got before independence, when they were in a privileged position (Dieckmann 2013). Although, objectively, their living conditions are far better than those of the majority of black people, the fact that they have lost their power and status and in some cases also their economic stability, makes them feel insecure and they fear social relegation. Among the white communities there is a strong feeling of nostalgia for the past, a lack of trust, and a widespread feeling of uncertainty (see Dieckmann 2013). Thus, black and white people share these feelings of insecurity, although they have different causes and are managed in different ways. However, at the time of research mostly blacks and whites keep to themselves and do not much cooperate.

In Outjo the black citizens' concerns about feeling unsafe in the location led to the establishment of the Crime Prevention Project (CPP) in 2004. The inhabitants of Etosha Poort had to walk long distances to the police station because of a lack of public transport (see Section 1.4). In 2006 there was not even enough transport for the police officers themselves; therefore, it took a long time for them to come out to places where crimes had been committed. In 2009 they were given several new cars, but people complained that the officers used the cars for private purposes (Expert 5, 2009), which I also observed sometimes. Several research participants even mentioned cases of people who were stopped by criminals when they were on their way to report a crime at the police station in town, beaten up and thus sometimes even victimised a second time. Hence, crime detection was hindered (Expert 5, 2009). Members of the Crime Prevention Committee comprised a teacher as a Chairperson (Expert 5, 2009), a community para-legal, a women's activist, and nurses. They worked together with partners from the municipality, the Regional Council, business people and church leaders. In a funding proposal they described the "unfortunate situation" (CPP, n.d.) of Outjo as follows: "High rate of violence, crime, 'petty crime', higher

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<sup>246</sup> This is a sensitive and complex topic and goes beyond the scope of this work.

<sup>247</sup> In a newspaper article, it was reported that the Namibia Agricultural Union claimed that "more than 50 people have been murdered in at least 69 attacks on commercial farms countrywide since 1991" (The Namibian, Jo-Mara Duddy, 03.04.2012).

<sup>248</sup> One evening in 2006 I was attacked in town by several dogs while cycling home.

rate of alcohol abuse, drug abuse, indecent behaviour and immorality, rape and attempted rape, theft, stock theft, little respect for law and order, little cooperation with police” (CPP, n.d.). Thus, their main objective was to build a satellite police station in Etosha Poort to bring the police closer to the people and to reduce crime. They wanted to enable vulnerable people like women, children, older people, and disabled people to report violent incidents like anyone else in the location (ibid). The CPP tried to convince the government to build a new police station in Etosha Poort, which was initially denied, due to a lack of resources. However, the group persisted and convinced the Ministry of Safety and Security to finance the building of a police station in Etosha Poort. The negotiation resulted in the assurance that, if they built it, the ministry would provide and maintain staff (Expert 5, 2009). As far as I know, they were unsuccessful, as people were still complaining about travelling the long distances to the police station some time later (*The Namibian*, Miyanicwe, 13.12.2012). A different group is the more recent Outjo Crime Prevention Forum (OCPF), although its focus is very different. This “community-based crime watchdog” (*The Namibian*, Smith, 14.01.2011) was established in 2010. Some members act as police reservists, supporting and cooperating with the police in Outjo, and even forming part of a road block during the holiday season: “the forum has played a critical role in hampering stock thieves, illegal hunters and other small-time crooks in the Outjo district” (*The Namibian*, Smith, 14.01.2011). In the article the use of fierce terms by the vice-chairperson of the OCPF towards petty criminals is noticeable and reflects strong polarisations among the community. Here too, a lack of empathy is evident, of a well-of man towards petty criminals.

It is in this context of profound uncertainties and challenges, that the assertions made by some of the black interviewees that life in the past was better and more secure, should be seen, which surprised me at the beginning of my research (Magda, 2009; Peter and Expert 43, both 2006, Gertrud 2006/2009).<sup>249</sup> Of course, there are differences in perceptions according to people’s former positions in the South African colonial system: whether they were a former supporter, collaborator or spy; or whether they were fighting against the system. However, even people who did not support the South African colonial system conclude that, in former times, things were better. I frequently encountered this perception in Outjo but less so in Windhoek (see Section 2.2.2). Thomas also found “an expressed ‘nostalgia’ for past” during her research in Caprivi (Thomas 2007:603), while Hailonga stated: “Most adult informants attempted to paint their past history (...) in rosy colours of faultless purity” (Hailonga 2005:233). It may be a common phenomenon, particularly among older people, to glorify the past and conclude that, in former times all was better. However, many people in Outjo, including middle-aged people, compare the eras before and after independence and maintain that life was easier prior to independence. Attempts to palliate a

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<sup>249</sup> This also could be found regarding gender relations (see Section 5.2).

difficult past can also be seen regarding living conditions. Magda talked quite positively about life on farms as they had enough food, but her husband also told me that if there were problems, they left the farm and went to another farm with a better owner, which happened often (Section 2.2, see also Dieckmann 2007). Luig discovered similar attitudes among Zambian workers who spoke very positively about the good food and accommodation they were given during colonial times but remained silent on colonial violence, which has been evidenced by other sources (Luig 2010).

This habit of viewing the past through rose-tinted glasses even extended to the topic of violence. Many interviewees who participated in my research in Outjo were convinced that the severe and sometimes horrific violence that occurs in present day Namibia, such as the rape of babies or killing of an intimate partner, did not exist prior to independence. As the founder of *The Namibian* explains in her article in the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), entitled *Namibia's war on women*: "Shocking headlines spelling out the latest horrific attack are an almost weekly occurrence" (Lister, OSISA, 19.02.2014), and she discerns a "moral breakdown in Namibian society" (ibid), which has led to societal demands for higher penalties, including the death penalty, as well as the inclusion of religion in the school curriculum (ibid). This perception may also be influenced by media reporting. People read every day about these terrible events in the newspapers (e.g., *The Namibian*, *New Era* or the *Observer*) or hear about them on the radio, or see them on television. Crime is described in detail, and often not even anonymised. In this regard, Tvedten describes the sensationalist media reporting, especially that of the *Observer*, as "exceedingly speculative" (Tvedten 2011:58). People feel overwhelmed by gender violence (see also Section 8.3). In the public perception, gender violence is viewed as increasing and becoming worse, and even getting totally out of hand (see also SIAPAC 2008). Emma even compared the time prior to independence favourably with the present: "No, everything was ok, the rape was not there and the life was not so dangerous, it was good" (Emma, 2006). This statement is especially surprising, as she herself had experienced a rape during South African occupation when she was young (see Section 2.2). She contrasted the rape situation today with that of the past and concludes:

That time it was not so serious like now, there was no sickness. And now somebody is sick and has AIDS, you will also be sick [after that person raped you]. And that time it [the rape] did happen, but he didn't kill you. (Emma, 2006, iiba by SGA)

This invisibilisation of past suffering could be a result of her own traumatisation, or part of a societal process of normalising violence, and/or connected to a present perceived as difficult. Traumatisation prevents an integrative form of coping; negative elements are dissociated (Herman 1997, Luig 2010, see Section 1.1.2). Namibia is a society that contains many traumatised and victimised people (see Wallace 1998, 2013, du Pisani et al. 2010, PEACE 2005). The direct and structural violence people had to live with during the South African

occupation and while fighting in the Liberation Struggle, being forced to live in exile and/or living in refugee camps, led to anger, traumatising, guilt and other ramifications. In this regard, it is important not to accept the Namibian postcolonial two-sided master-narrative espoused by SWAPO of the “silent victimhood of the local population versus heroic agency of the liberators” (Becker 2015:134). While the former combatants who were constructed as heroic may also be traumatised, the local population was not only paralysed by trauma but in several cases actively supported the Liberation Struggle. Many people have to cope with a difficult or challenging present and thus, it may help to construct a positive past. In this regard, Becker points to the following: “Historical narratives of silence, trauma and victimhood blend into current economic and social marginalisation” (Becker 2015:134).

Expert 23 thinks there is an acceptance of violence, and Expert 4 concludes: “People don’t know what crime is, or what violence is. Violence is seen as usual” (Expert 4 2009). The policy of National Reconciliation (Chapter 3) was connected to an amnesty for certain perpetrators (Britton/Shook, 2014). Thus, certain types of violence were met with no sanctions. This is seen as one reason why people normalise violence (Jewkes et al. 2015).

I often observed a phenomenon which may be a sign of normalisation: while some interviewees talked about violence, they were laughing or smiling. This happens in both types of narratives: those of people who had used violence themselves against others, and those who had experienced violence (Johan 2009, Jane 2006, Magda 2009, Luthrecia 2009, Carl 2009). During the Men’s Debate in particular, there was laughter when talking about violence: when the men were talking about situations involving men experiencing violence and how these were not taken seriously by the police, or when a man said aloud that he had thought about killing his wife, this was also accompanied by laughter from the male audience (see Section 6.2.1). During the interviews too, people talked about severe violence and laughed about it, sometimes in an ashamed manner (both black and white research participants). I interpret this as part of the normalisation of violence (see Section 1.2).<sup>250</sup>

#### 4.3 “Problems with the youth” – inter-generational relations in transition and normalisation of violence

The existing violence and the detailed and intensive media coverage of violent incidents have led to an intensification of fears among the older and middle-aged generations about losing young people. On the other hand, many people of the older generation complain about the youth doing what they want, consuming alcohol and drugs (see also Hailonga-van Dijk/Mulunga 2015), and having no respect anymore. These fears are greatly amplified by the pervasive presence of HIV/AIDS. Many families have lost someone due to AIDS (see

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<sup>250</sup> However, this phenomenon of laughing at violence narratives needs more attention and analysis if it is to be understood, which is beyond the scope of this thesis (see Section 9.2).

Sections 1.4 and 4.1). Several middle-aged and older people worried and complained about “problems with the youth” (e.g., Experts 6, 2006 and 2009 and 22, 2006). However, what exactly do they mean by ‘youth’?

Namibia has a very young population, with an average age of 21, and in the Kunene Region, just 19 (NSA 2011). According to the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) nearly 37% of the population is below the age of 15 (ibid). The African Union categorises as ‘youth’ all young people aged 15 to 35, which is also reflected in statistics on Namibia (e.g., NSA 2017b). However, what is seen as youth also depends on Culture. Alcina Honwana states: “The boundaries between what constitutes youth and what constitutes adulthood are continuously being redefined” (Honwana 2012:12), pointing to the fact that youth is often used as a derogatory term, especially by the older generations. Inter-generational relations are profoundly challenging. This situation further leads to uncertainty, mistrust and violence, creating a vicious circle.

In Namibia, as in other countries worldwide, the process of the lifecycle has been delayed due to poverty and unemployment, and thus the reduction of opportunities for young people. In Namibia, 34.5% of the youth (age 15 to 34) are unemployed and neither in education nor in other training (NSA 2017b:65), while there are also gendered differences (see Chapters 6 and 7). The specially created, youth unemployment NEET<sup>251</sup> figure is even higher, based on statistics for the 20 to 24 age group: it currently stands at 46.5% (ibid, see also Lorway 2015).

Marriage is seen as a rite of passage into adulthood. However, most people cannot afford to get married when they are young, so it has become something only available to those who can afford it. However, as described in Section 5.2, marriage remains the ideal. Therefore, many young people live in a permanent state of “waitthood” (Honwana 2012). This is defined as follows:

Waitthood, a portmanteau term of ‘wait’ and ‘-hood’, is the best way to describe this period of suspension between childhood and adulthood. It represents a prolonged adolescence or an involuntary delay in reaching adulthood, in which young people are unable to find employment, get married, and establish their own families. (Honwana 2012:4)

People marry later and thus are only perceived as adults later in their lives. Pauli links the continuing prevalence of the ideal of marriage to the desire and aspiration to join the middle classes (Pauli 2014).

### **Alcohol, drugs and violence**

The then Regional Councillor, Expert 6, mentioned that, in the previous year when we met, he had decided to invite older men from the community to discuss possible solutions

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<sup>251</sup> The NSA introduced this category especially for the youth, meaning those *Not in Employment, Education or Training* (NEET) (NSA 2017b:65).

regarding these problems with the youth (Expert 6, 2009). He stated: “if you sit and don’t care the youth will die because of alcohol and HIV/AIDS” (ibid). Regarding the problems with the youth, Expert 22, a former high-ranking police officer, and Expert 12, an important politician, pointed to the existing problem of school leavers or school drop-outs. If learners fail grade 10, they cannot go back to school. They can only go to the Namibian College of Open Learning (NamCol) to upgrade their marks, but this is only possible if their caregivers can afford it<sup>252</sup>. Without a proper graduation from school, it is difficult to find stable or well-paid jobs. Moreover, there are not enough jobs available. Other young people had passed grade 12, but could not go to university due to other reasons (Hailonga-van Dijk 2007).

Consequently, many young people end up hanging around on the streets, going to nightclubs and/or abusing alcohol and drugs. Various interviewees elaborated on this problem (Expert 19, 2009, Expert 12, Lucy and Emma, all 2006). Expert 33, an HIV counsellor, thinks that the youth drink alcohol because they have nothing to do (Expert 33, 2006). Emma stated that the use of alcohol and *dagga*<sup>253</sup> causes violence in the community: “even small children are smoking *dagga* and drink” (Emma, 2006). Emma gave another example drawn from her own family. Her 20 year-old daughter abused alcohol and *dagga*. As a result, she collapsed and had heart problems. Moreover, she claimed that her daughter has “another boyfriend everyday”, and presumed that she used condoms (Emma, 2006). She took her to a psychiatric institution but this did not appear to help. She felt really desperate and helpless about the situation: “It makes me mad!” (ibid) Expert 19, a women’s activist, also highlighted the problem of young people abusing alcohol and drugs:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| SGA       | What are the main problems in Outjo?  |
| Expert 19 | Drunk abuse and drug abuse. Young people are drinking too much in Outjo.  |
| SGA       | Why?  |
| Expert 19 | There is no job for them. And also, people here in Outjo, there are also more people, people are coming from farms to Outjo and the place is small. (Expert 19, 2009) |

It is not only school drop-outs who abuse alcohol but some of the learners who participated in the School Survey also gave examples of occasions when they got drunk and became involved in fights with friends:

I was drunk with one of my friends and we went into a fight and my friend was steep [presumably he means “stabbed”], but I was lucky cause people come just in time to safe us. [What would have helped?] If I was not drunk that could have not happen at all. (19 year old boy, 122 C 10, information and question of the questionnaire added in brackets by SGA)

Another learner was stabbed by a friend and explained that his friend “(...) came and asked forgiveness and said he never meant it to happen and that he was drunk” (17 year-old boy,

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<sup>252</sup> Horn (2008) mentions that 40% of learners failed grade 10 in 2008. Hailonga-van Dijk cites the drop-out rate of grade 10 pupils as 32% and of grade 12 pupils as 10%. She refers to a public lecture at which Victor Kaulunge, policy adviser at the National Planning Commission, quoted these statistics. He also said that out of 33,000 learners who took grade 10 exams in 2012, 10,000 of them had left school (Hailonga-van Dijk/Mulunga 2015).

<sup>253</sup> *Dagga* is marijuana. Emma said in 2006 that one can buy it in the location and one piece would cost 5N\$.

School Survey, 056 A 11). These are examples that show how the abuse of alcohol leads to violence, even among friends (see 6.2.2).

It became clear from the School Survey that young people are very much affected by violence in Outjo. Many learners at all three schools had been confronted with violence (39.8%): 40.9% of the boys and 38.8% of the girls who answered the question gave at least one instance of experiencing violence, while many reported experiencing it on several occasions or as a regular occurrence. One noteworthy finding from the School Survey is that learners at PSM, living in the Afrikaner community, and learners at EJSS, living in the location of Etosha Poort, indicated that they experienced violence more often than learners in the OSS context. When I conceptualised the study, I presumed there would be most violence in the EJSS context because learners here are often living in a very precarious economic situation as well as poor housing conditions. In 2006, when I first asked people about violence, they located it primarily in Etosha Poort: especially at the *shebeens*, or the former Single Quarter. Many research participants and others saw the former Single Quarter as the epicentre of violence in Outjo. As described above, the Single Quarter itself was removed in 2007 but the problems of poverty remained. The results of the School Survey regarding the EJSS learners' experience of violence (46.7% of the girls and 36.4% of the boys reported having experienced violence) are shocking.

However, the results are even topped by those of the white learner group. At the PSM, 47.4% of the girls and 54.5% of the boys who answered the questionnaire stated that they had experienced violence. These learners from the white community mostly belong to a privileged group and thus live in decent conditions. Alcohol abuse is also a problem within the white communities.<sup>254</sup> The high prevalence of violence, on the one hand, is certainly one consequence of this alcohol abuse. The ever-present tension and violence in white communities can also be seen as result of the social changes and aforementioned fears and anxieties about deterioration. On the other hand, it may be a legacy of the past, when white males used violence to dominate the majority of the population (see Chapter 2).

As I show in Chapter 6 in detail, aggression and violence is part of the construction of a dominant masculinity – this is the case across all groups but particularly in the case of young men (see Chapter 6). A certain level of violence is perceived as a normal ingredient of life for males. One boy at PSM commented on the violence in his life as follows: “My father hit my brother through the face. I have been in fights myself and you see people fighting all the time” (18 year-old boy, 102 B 11). He views himself as living in a very violent context and describes places where he witnesses violence: at home, in bars, at school (for more detail see Section 6.2). However, a violent reality is the case for many boys and for girls as well.

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<sup>254</sup> I have no separate statistics for this, but I observed an excessive use of alcohol on several occasions at the different research stays (see Section 1.3).

## Youth being violated by caregivers

Many people think there is currently a lack of control over children. The former magistrate, Expert 35 (2006), offered his interpretation that children no longer have respect for authorities and parents, as they did in former times, and consequently there are fears about things getting out of hand. During the Men's Debate, Man 14, an older man, described what life was like in pre-independence times, comparing it to the freedom children have now:

Those days, you didn't see children hanging around (...). Those days, if it's 5 o'clock the streets were clean, no children running around, all of them were in their houses.<sup>255</sup> Nowadays you find them after 5, after sunset in the clubs and everywhere (...). (Man 14, 69 years old)

From this, it is evident that older people were socialised in a restrictive colonial system which enforced law and order over many social spaces. This supposed loss of social control is also perceived as "threats to social norms that resulted in increased violence overall" (SIAPAC 2008:89). The aforementioned loss of control was complained about during the Men's Debate, in particular (see Section 6.2.1). Man 14 elaborated on it in more detail:

If you did wrong in old times, every older person has to hit you, discipline you, in those years. But today you cannot do that. If you touch a child, it goes to the police station and lay charges on you. Olden days, we used to sleep 10 o'clock, nowadays you find people hanging around 2 o'clock in morning. (Man 14, 69 years old)

A black teacher and important politician in Outjo compared the school system before and after independence and came to the conclusion that the old Bantu Education system (see Chapter 2) was good, that pupils were obedient, and that corporal punishment could be used if needed (Expert 34, 2006). During my research stays, I frequently encountered adults who defended the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary method for children (see Section 1.1.2, and see Jewkes et al. 2005).

The idea of human rights, which has been integrated into the Namibian constitution since independence, not only includes the ideal of gender equality, but also of children's rights. Shortly after independence, the Namibian Supreme Court declared that corporal punishment in schools violated the dignity of learners and was thus unconstitutional. Consequently, the *Education Act* of 2001 prohibits the use of corporal punishment in state or private schools. However, some of the interviewees said that, in schools or hostels, corporal punishment was still being used at the time of research (Alicia, 2009). According to one teacher, some children come to school carrying large knives. The principal of the school sometimes beats those children (Expert 43, 2006).

During the time when the research was conducted, corporal punishment at home was not yet prohibited; this happened only in 2015 (see below). Nonetheless, the message about a violence-free childhood was already being transmitted and discussed in the media. During my research, people were concerned about this topic, especially the middle and older

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<sup>255</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, there was a curfew in Outjo during the apartheid era.

generation. Hailonga highlighted the fact that, nowadays, “adults feel powerless and helpless with regard to the changes occurring around them” (Hailonga 2005:141). Before these legislative changes, older people were allowed to discipline young people physically; it was also permitted in institutions like schools, hostels, etc. Windhoek-based Expert 10 commented: “it was acceptable to beat children (...)” (Expert 10, 2006; see Section 2.2.1). As a result of the new constitution granting equality for all, there has not only been empowerment of women but also of children, as Expert 10 observed: “now the child is empowered” (Expert 10, 2006). Expert 10, who represents one of the rare voices speaking in favour of the new legal status of children, added that “parents don’t know how to handle it” (ibid). Many teachers and caregivers do not know what to do as an alternative to using corporal punishment, how to react to the unacceptable behaviour of children or teenagers, or how to set limits on children without using violence. This is also confirmed by Thomas’ research:

When asked why they did not try to regulate their children’s behaviour or to discipline them, parents explained that they feared that if they did, their children would report them to the civil authorities where they would be charged for violating their human rights. (Thomas 2007:604f)

In this example, Thomas’ elderly interviewee sees beating the child in order to set boundaries as the only option, and acknowledges his fear of being reported to the police. This “very real concern amongst the older generation” (ibid:605) was shared by several people in Outjo. One example given by a man during the Men’s Debate demonstrates this perception:

Now I am 69 years old. I was beaten by my mother last time in 1980, when I did wrong. If I beat my child to discipline him, then my child has got the right to go to the police station! To lay charges on me! And that’s where this respect started. We don’t respect each other. If you did wrong in old times, every older person has to hit you, discipline you. (Man 14, Men’s Debate)

His fear of being reported by his own child also shows a deep uncertainty and lack of trust in families and in inter-generational relationships. Kandirikirira (2002) interprets the situation as follows: “Adults who had grown up in an environment of rights infringement felt disempowered and perceived children’s rights as a threat to their control over family life” (Kandirikirira 2002:127). One participant in the Men’s Debate claimed to have been to court for corporally punishing his children. He emphatically believed that the state should never intervene in raising his kids, as he explains in the following excerpt:

I don’t believe that parents beat their child to death. I was also beaten to bring me on right track... if I discipline, beating my child, the government should leave me alone (...). They cannot rectify that; they cannot get my child away from streets. (Man 23, Men’s Debate)

Although this man’s tendency to boast about corporal punishment is rather extreme (see Section 6.2.1), in the School Survey it was shown that many caregivers still punish their children corporally (see below). Thus, on the one hand, both examples show that the violence a person experiences is perpetuated from childhood to adulthood (see Section

1.1.2), and on the other hand, this can also be seen as a continuation of the violent colonial past (see Chapter 2).

The perception of corporal punishment as a useful disciplinary method for dependants has not changed. People think that they are doing the right thing by using corporal punishment on their children. It is conceptualised as “disciplining” (see also Section 2.2.1 and 6.2.1). People do make a distinction between “disciplining”, which is seen as legitimate, and “violence”, as for example David and an older ELCIN Pastor did (David, 2009, and Expert 40, 2006, and see Sections 6.2.1 and 8.1.2). For the violence to be perceived as legitimate, it must not be too intense, meaning that it should be controlled and not excessive, and that there has to be a good reason for it. Another statement from a female learner at the Private School Morea (PSM) shows her making a distinction between discipline and violence in the School Survey: “(...) Violence is wrong. It should only be used for discipline but in a very non-abusive way. Hitting a child with a baseball [bat], that is too much.” (18 year-old girl, 110-B-11, iiba by SGA) This perception reveals that violence is only seen as violence if it is severe. The example she gives of violating a child with a baseball bat also shows that this female learner takes into account very serious forms of violence against children. The adult interviewees did not talk about the current violence being experienced by children, presumably because they do not see corporal punishment as violence. Some adults who spoke about corporal punishment stressed that they themselves were punished as children when they did wrong and they still think it is right. The idea of “disciplining” reflects power asymmetries and also a kind of helplessness at the lack of viable alternatives for enforcing rules. Jewkes et al. see corporal punishment as part of a whole set of sanctions used to try to ensure that children respect adults:

(...) being ignored, not being played with, denied food, locked in a room, confined to the home or yard, threatened that the ancestors will punish them or a *tokolosh* (magical evil creature) get them, not allowed to go to school, being scolded and given a ‘good’ beating. (Jewkes et al. 2007:172, explanation in brackets in the original)

I obtained the critical information about current experiences of corporal punishment almost exclusively from the young research participants. In all three groups of the School Survey, many of the learners had experienced violence by caregivers or other people close to them and on whom they were dependent. More girls than boys cited violence by caregivers, reflecting their subordinate position within the power hierarchy in terms of age and gender. Of the 53 learners in the School Survey who indicated that they had experienced violence, 50.9% describe violence by close relatives, often their parents or step-parents or other caregivers (see also LAC 2011). Of those 26 girls who claimed to have experienced violence, 17 stated they experienced violence by caregivers (compared to 10 out of 27 boys who stated they had experienced violence). Other kinds of violence can be bound into a whole set

of violent family relationships, for example that their parents are fighting with each other or that there is one aggressor who is behaving violently (see above).

Sometimes the violence that was inflicted by caregivers was apparently intended to set boundaries for the child, by “disciplining” him/her when s/he did not follow their rules:

I was been beaten by my father after going to a concert against his wish (20 year-old girl, School Survey, 048 A 11)

I was beaten by mom for having sex at young age. (18 year-old boy, 025 A 12)

I was punished as a child when I did something wrong and I knew it was wrong (...). My parents always comforted me after such a punishment. (18 year-old girl, 084 B 12)

In the last quotation, a strange mix of disciplining and compassion is evident. For this 18 year-old girl, love and violence are intrinsically connected and this could increase the risk of her having a violent intimate partner later on. I assumed that the child learns to see such punishments as normal and is likely to reproduce them with her own children in the future. The fact that the learners gave these examples in the violence section of the questionnaire of the School Survey, but sometimes presented violence as just a normal part of being raised, including a kind of justification for why it happened, also highlights their own ambiguous situation, as well as showing the origins of their acceptance of violence. Hailonga-van Dijk also points to “conflicting or hybridised values” (2007:135) which leave young people in a moral predicament.

Many learners in the School Survey mentioned alcohol as causing problems, including violence in their homes, because their caregivers abuse alcohol:

My mother is drinking and she beat me the time she came back. (19 year-old girl, School Survey, 044 A 11)

When my parents were fighting I was helping my mother, because my father was drunk and after I ran in between them he pushes me and punch me in the face and later he burnt the house. [Explanation given] The two were fighting over financial problems although both of them are working. The problem was the debt was outstanding. (17 year-old boy, School Survey, 118 C 10, iiba by SGA)

The last example shows a whole agglomeration of violence in the family. Children are growing up in the context of a daily struggle with alcohol abuse and violence; it is easy for children to get caught in the crossfire between their parents. Although it is set out in the provisions for when a mother applies for a Protection Order that the court should alert the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare so that they can investigate the children’s safety, these are not applied (LAC 2017:208). Some children are neglected. Hailonga-van Dijk also stresses that the abuse of alcohol has an adverse effect on inter-generational relations. One of her research participants admitted: “We have never spent time with our children, as we are spending time at the *shebeen*. It brought disrespect” (Hailonga-van Dijk 2007:142). Sometimes caregivers do not even need a reason for behaving violently: “my mother even beat me for no reason because we hardly get along” (20 year old girl, 048 A 11).

I found in my research that this is especially the case if the children biologically belong to only one parent in a family and there is a step-parent involved. This was a more noticeable feature among the OSS and EJSS learners:

When I was younger I was living with my stepmother who always was so mean and cruel and would always beat me and my little sister. (19 year-old girl, 004 A 12)

I really can't remember till now what I did to my stepfather that he started shouting at me and beat me. (17 year-old girl, 043 A 11)

As a result, she explained: "I did not go to school for one week. I could not work." (Ibid) Another learner also described her violent experiences: "Once my stepfather was throwing stones at me" (girl, 057 A 11). These learners are exposed to serious violence and, worse still, they have very limited options to escape from it because they are dependants of those who are behaving violently.

Moreover, it caused people to become desensitised to violence, which can be seen in individuals today. In the case of the 26 girls and 27 boys in the School Survey who claimed to have experienced violence (all kinds of violence: in intimate relationships, by caregivers, in gangs), no single incident was prosecuted as most were not reported. One violent incident was reported to the police by the learner but was not taken seriously and the victim was sent home by the police officers.

### **Foster children living with challenges and discrimination**

It is common for families to take in the children of relatives.<sup>256</sup> This may just be for a limited time or permanently. It may cause conflicts and violence within intimate relationships, as Luthrecia's example below shows. In a study on foster children in Namibia, Brown found that even if violence or other problems occur and are communicated to the biological parent, there will be no consequences. Brown gives the example of a woman who talks about the violence she experienced by a caregiver when she was a child and then escaped to her mother, who replied to the desperate child: "Hush, that is your home. Live with it. Here [her mother's home] you are just a visitor" (quoted in Brown 2013:70, iiba by SGA). A lack of opportunities may partly account for this, but Brown also observed the belief that "suffering makes you stronger", which was widespread among women who were fostered as children (Brown 2013:75), and could also be a result of a society that has become accustomed to violence. People think that, if they grow up with caregivers other than their mother, children must learn to stand up for themselves.

In general, having children is valued highly in Namibian society (Brown 2013, Pauli 2012, Gockel-Frank 2007). As Expert 46, a male activist from White Ribbon (see Section 3.3), articulated, for both men and women, children are seen as status symbols and it is regarded as taboo not to have children (Expert 46, 2006, and see Chapters 6 and 7). Pauli points to

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<sup>256</sup> The *Child Care and Protection Act* of 2015 gives a legal framework for this practice and calls this form kinship care (LAC 2016).

the importance of children for identity construction (Pauli 2012). Despite this, children are not taken seriously as persons, and they are not included in decisions that affect them (Brown 2013:70). This can also be interpreted as children being valued per se, but not respected as having equal rights (Expert 41, 2009, Brown 2013, Jewkes et al. 2007). This is probably a legacy of the colonial as well as the pre-colonial time when a gerontocratic system prevailed (see Chapter 2). However, in the *Child Care and Protection Act* of 2015, the participation of the child is stressed (LAC 2016:7).

During colonial era, many people in Namibia grew up with other caregivers, such as relatives, mostly grandmothers or aunts. One reason for this was that, during the Liberation Struggle, parents who went into exile left their children with caregivers; another one was that parents or fathers were separated from their families because of their contract labour (See Chapter 2). It has become quite normal for children not to grow up with their biological parents on a permanent basis.

Nowadays, children from urban areas are often sent to rural relatives when they are still very small because of the limited childcare options (e.g. Allison, Sam 2009). In case of the single mother Allison who worked in Outjo, her children came back to Outjo when they started schooling. In Outjo it is quite usual for parents to send small children to relatives on a farm and only live with them again when they start school or, conversely, to let the children of rural relatives live with them in order to get proper schooling (see also Greiner 2011). Those children might also stay in school hostels, for example at OSS and at PSM there are hostels (see also Kandirikirira 2002). Another reason is that there is not enough money to provide for the children (Frayne 2010). Moreover, young people also migrate to cities in the expectation of a better education and jobs (Hailonga-van Dijk/Mulunga 2015). In general, migration is an important aspect of life in Namibia, and has an influence on human relations.<sup>257</sup>

Child fosterage is quite usual in Namibia (Greiner 2011). North Namibia has the highest child fosterage rates in the whole of Africa, even excluding orphans (Brown 2013:62). Brown concludes that children in foster families are disadvantaged in many ways: these children are at higher risk of death and illness compared to biological siblings, which is ascribed to “discrimination and deprivation in times of food shortages” (Brown 2013:62). One learner at the EJSS who completed the School Survey also grew up with her grandmother, where she experienced multiple episodes of violence by several people close to her. She described the consequences as:

Very bad because it harms a person's life and I eventually drop in my school because of personal problems, but I hope it will not be so long before I get away from this. (16 year-old girl, 141 C 10)

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<sup>257</sup> In the (non-representative) School Survey, 25% of the OSS learners and 28.6% of the EPJSS learners mentioned not growing up with their parents. PSM learners grew up mostly with both parents (82%) or at least one parent (18%). See Section 7.1 for the situation of single mothers.

Another example is given by Luthrecia (2009). When she was a child, she and her younger brother were sent to live with her brother and his wife. There they suffered violence at the hands of the brother's wife who did not want them there (see Sections 5.2 and 8.1). However, people generally believe that all children are treated equally, regardless of whether they are their biological children or not (ibid:63). I consistently got this same answer when I asked about the differences between stepchildren and biological children.

Child fosterage is undertaken for many reasons: on the one hand it is culturally acceptable and honourable to foster children. Brown found that women gain status in their communities as well as in their families by fostering children (ibid:64). Moreover, "the practice of child fosterage binds and strengthens families through socially distributed care and resource sharing" (Brown 2013:74). This practice is one example of rural-urban relations, which are important for most Namibians (Pauli 2009, Greiner 2011, Frayne 2010) with regard to exchanging goods and providing mutual support, and also in terms of caring for sick, young and elderly dependants. In present day Namibia, where society is confronted with many orphans as a result of HIV/AIDS,<sup>258</sup> this practice is also a way of coping with the death of the child's parents. Another factor that encourages child fosterage may be a desire to use the child for labour:

[Experienced violence] since I live with my grandparents. My grandfather used to go and work at camps, so it was only my grandma and her children, oh! I suffer[ed]! A small mistake, I was beaten by my grandmother and was not even eating any food, till the time she gives me although I was doing things for them like cooking and cleaning every day. (16 year old girl, 141 C 10, iiba by SGA)

The Outjo District Social Worker also mentioned cases of child exploitation and maltreatment by people who are supposed to be caring for them (Expert 8, 2009). In Outjo several people told me that caregivers used child fosterage in order to get the orphan's grant of N\$200 as a source of income (Expert 29, 2009), but did not really care about the child (Expert 8, 2009). Children in the care of people other than their parents are particularly vulnerable (Expert 41, 2009). They live in difficult situations, and are exposed to violence, fears, discrimination and many other uncertainties.

### **People who opposed corporal punishment**

There were also research participants who opposed corporal punishment. This can lead to conflict within families. In the Men's Debate, some men expressed anger and dissatisfaction about their wives intervening in the punishment of their children (see Section 6.2.1). This shows how changes in inter-generational relations are interlinked with changes in gender

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<sup>258</sup> In 2014 there were 100,000 orphans in Namibia (UNDP 2016:244). According to the Population and Housing Census Regional Profile of the Kunene Region, 3% of the households in Kunene are headed by a child (NSA 2014:36).

relations.<sup>259</sup> Moreover, there were also teachers who preferred the new education system. One teacher at Outjo Primary School complained about children's tendency to try to resolve any problem with a fight. He added that, because adults punish children with violence, they think that violence is acceptable (Expert 41, 2009). He also viewed it as problematic that not all teachers who beat children do so for disciplinary reasons but...

(...) just physical assault, [they] beat children with bare hands, even with a stick at the head or neck (...). For me it was totally violent! Even those teachers had grown up with violence. They let loose their own frustration. (Expert 41, 2009, iiba)

It gets clear from this interview that violence has been perpetuated from the past into the present, from one generation to the next generation. And if today, it is not seen as violence and sanctioned, it will continue to reproduce in the future (see Section 1.1.2). Moreover, the violence is being passed on from one context to another, if a learner is corporally punished at home and subsequently uses violence to dominate others. Tvedten also found that "(...) many children are brought up in contexts where violence is commonplace" (Tvedten 2011:155). Teachers and caregivers were violently socialised and they are now transferring that to the younger generation. Thus, violence is perpetuated.

On the other hand, violence implies a power hierarchy: the violent teacher calls it a "disciplinary method" but may actually use the learner as an outlet for his own aggression. Thus, the teacher perpetuates hierarchical inter-generational relations. Expert 41 suggests what the result will be: "You are creating hate within the kids" (Expert 41, 2009). Another teacher opposed corporal punishment as a disciplinary method because, "you can't force someone to respect you" (Expert 12, 2006). However, the voices in favour of corporal punishment outweigh the more liberal ones. Notwithstanding, the new *Child Care and Protection Bill* was passed in 2015. Now all forms of corporal punishment are prohibited, including those used by caregivers at home (LAC 2016). Regardless of whether children grew up with parents or other caregivers, the legal abolishment of corporal punishment presents a challenge for many caregivers, as they do not feel they have any real alternatives.

### **Generational divide and the question of respect**

Several older and middle-aged men and women complained about young people not respecting their elders anymore, as they were used to in the past. In this regard, Thomas mentions that people criticised that: "education and increasing exposure to outside influences had led to a decline in respect and reluctance for young people, particularly girls to listen to the advice of their elders" (Thomas 2007:604). Her interviewees explained this development with reference to the new equal rights for women and school education mediating those rights (Thomas 2007). The level of education differs greatly between young and old people

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<sup>259</sup> However, this does not imply that women do not corporally punish children; it just means that sometimes parents disagree about this contentious issue, as the men complained about it. In the School Survey learners also mentioned their mothers beating them.

as this was very much restricted during colonial times (see Section 2.21). They also use different languages: most of the older generation uses Afrikaans as their lingua franca as remnant of the colonial past, while the youth often speak English. Hailonga points to the ramifications of the double change in the official language: “The language of government and power” (Hailonga 2005:220) was first altered to Afrikaans, then to English, and this contributed to “increased miscommunication and strife between generations, lessening social cohesion” (Hailonga 2005:220). It is clear from Hailonga’s study that people feel there are major differences between the generations, and that both feel contempt towards the other:

The way the kids look at us, they look down at us. We seem to be below them because we do not have education. (55 year-old woman, cited in Hailonga 2005:136)  
Our parents are primitive. They follow the way they used to be (...). (17 year-old boy, cited in Hailonga 2005:136)

Young people see themselves as modern and enlightened. In addition, Winterfeldt identifies a “commodified Culture” (2010:156) which is spread by the media, and which the youth, regardless of whether they are unemployed or employed, share:

Their musical taste, their compulsive use of electronic technologies of communication, especially cell phones, their inclination towards fashion, and their leisure time habits become elements of generational distinction and social closure. (Winterfeldt 2010:157)

A profound change in inter-generational relations has happened, especially since independence (Boden 2008) and it is contributing to mutual uncertainties (see also Becker 2000:9) and a “generational divide” (Winterfeldt 2010:156, see also Hailonga-van Dijk 2006, 2007). In the past there was a societal system of gerontocracy (see Section 2.1 and Boden 2008) in which older men were in positions of influence and power, and the young as well as women had to obey them. This was also reflected in the *baasskap* system in which respect in the form of fear for authority was important (see Chapter 2). Jewkes et al. point to the importance of respect for social relations in Namibia, reflecting a hierarchy based on age and gender, and thus “dictat[ing] appropriate speech and action” (Jewkes et al. 2007:171, iiba by SGA). This reflects how closely the changes in generational relations and transitions in gender relations are interconnected (see also van Wolputte 2010). Therefore, this behavioural change is challenging for many people.

The theme of respect occurs repeatedly in interviews and discussions, especially during the Men’s Debate (see Chapter 6), and is revealed as an important concern of many people. A former member of Outjo Municipality encapsulated this view: “nobody has no respect towards anybody” (Expert 37, 2006). Interestingly, it is not only older people who detect a lack of respect, but also the young people. In the Group Discussion, too, a general lack of respect in human relations was cited as causing problems for present day society, as Rob stated:

Today that respect is not there. Because it's my right, but I don't know where my right ends and where other people's right ends, you don't know even the right of my own body. (Rob, Group Discussion 2006:5)

This view discloses the perception that the lack of respect is caused by uncertainty regarding the new equal rights. Adolescents are now drawing on the children's rights discourse, which they are learning about in schools as it is part of the school curriculum (Hailonga 2005). The idea of children having a violence-free upbringing has led to changes, tensions and uncertainties in inter-generational relations (Boden 2008, and see Chapter 8).

The generational divide has led to a lack of guidance from caregivers, when young people are at a vulnerable age and can be easily influenced (Hailonga 2005, Hailonga-van Dijk 2007:137). This was also a topic of discussion among young participants in the Group Discussion in 2006 (see Section 1.3). One participant claimed that there are few role models for young people to learn from or aspire to (Rob, Group Discussion 2006). The reality for young people is very confusing. In her research on youth sexuality, Hailonga also found that, in Namibia, "multiple and contradictory discourses operate through various structures" (Hailonga 2005:241). Rob describes the challenges this poses in the following way:

(...) in the new generations we lost our identity because we are not western and we are not in the culture and we are ... [looking for the right word, SGA] ...in between [interposed by participant Jane, then Rob continued]. We are in between ... especially we the youth, we don't have a balance, we don't have a direction. We follow what comes (...). (Rob and Jane, Group Discussion 2006:5, iiba by SGA)

This is confirmed by other young participants in the Group Discussion, as Paul explains in the following excerpt:

Some of us, young generations, we don't know must we follow the new whatever government, marrying... or must we go back and take the old rules? That's now the problem for us; we don't know what to do. (Paul, Group Discussion 2006)

These citations reveal that young people lack guidance that takes into account their needs and present day challenges, such as a lack of perspectives and prospects (see also LaFont 2010:5, Hailonga-van Dijk 2006, Boden 2008).

The researcher Hailonga-van Dijk and youth activist Mulunga assert: "It is time for the nation to take collective responsibility for the unfortunate position in which young people find themselves" (Hailonga-van Dijk/Mulunga 2015:158). Young people have recently started to fight for their rights. Since November 2014, a new movement, Affirmative Repositioning, has developed. They are demanding land and improved living conditions for the urban youth from the government, which has been described as "the biggest mass action since Namibia's independence" (Becker 2016).<sup>260</sup> There is a new initiative designed to overcome the disadvantaged position of the youth by the "New Equitable Economic Empowerment

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<sup>260</sup> See for example their Facebook group "Affirmative Repositioning – We want land" (WEB FB AR) and also Becker 2016.

Framework” (NEEEF), which was discussed as a bill in the Namibian parliament (*The Namibian*, Mathias, 09.03.2018).

#### 4.4 Summary

The general daily realities of many people in times of change are characterised by challenges and uncertainties of various kinds. Widespread poverty reduces the life opportunities and agency of many people. People fight everyday for their own and their family’s economic survival, or they fight because of their fear of social relegation. They have developed a struggle mentality not only caused by being part of the Liberation Struggle (Melber 2014) but because of their daily struggles. Young people are especially affected by the poverty as they lack perspectives and options for their futures. Society does not give them sufficient opportunities to fulfil their potential. Many young people are having to remain in a state of waithood (Honwana 2012) caused by high unemployment rates. Thus, they do not have much to do, they do not know where to go, and they do not get (enough) guidance.

Even many years after independence, economic and social inequalities still prevail and have even been amplified by the country’s economic crisis. The presence of a few wealthy people creates envy and frustration, and causes even more tensions and pressure for economically underprivileged people. Moreover, even marriage is linked to high expenditure and is thus impossible for most people, which prevents them from growing into adulthood. Moreover, where resources are scarce and access to them is only given to a few, social relations become commodified (see Sections 2.2 and 5.2).

The population in Outjo is still divided into groups (according to skin colour, generation, class, gender) and, even within groups, social cohesion is limited. The lack of local employment opportunities and proper educational prospects also in rural areas of Namibia has caused internal migration to become common while public transport is very much limited and risky. Moreover, many children do not grow up with their parents. The fostering of children by relatives is common. There is a lack of childcare institutions which could enable employment of single mothers as well. This limits social cohesion in families. The widespread inequalities, mistrust, rumours about corruption and envy prevent social cooperation and thus the development and cohesion of the whole community. Moreover, as differences in language use and education as well as new technologies have created a generational divide, young and middle/old-aged people live in different worlds. This makes it challenging for caregivers to provide proper guidance. The changes within inter-generational relations are regarded as a major source of concern for people, regardless of gender, although violence manifests in different ways based on the former position of women and children in the hierarchical colonial order. Inter-generational and gender relations are interconnected (see

Section 1.1.1; see also Jewkes et al. 2015) and thus, changes in gender constructions also affect inter-generational relations and vice versa.

This overall situation, characterised by poverty and inequalities, implies frustrations, fears and possibly carelessness. People abuse alcohol because they are addicted to it and/or to cope with difficult living situations. However, this attempt to escape from problems is in fact causing new ones: unprotected sexual intercourse leads to teenage pregnancies, unwanted pregnancies, STDs, and the perpetration and experience of violence. The widespread misuse of alcohol is cited as the main cause of violence and can be understood as a symptom of a formerly colonised society, and of a society in transition, as well as reflecting frustration and a lack of healthy options. Moreover, the abuse of alcohol by caregivers might also lead to a lack of guidance towards the younger generation followed by a lack of respect.

Middle aged and older people were socialised in the colonial context in which a certain degree of violence was normal and where they might have had experienced or perpetrated violence. The common use of corporal punishment by caregivers clearly shows how they have normalised violence. Many caregivers fear losing their children in these difficult times, and they feel helpless. Thus, they see their violence as a means of disciplining children. However, the young victims perceive violence as violence and suffer as a result of this violence by the people they are close to and depend on. Thus, young people grow up in a violent context including corporal punishments in which they learn that violence is a normal response to conflict, to set boundaries or even as a sign of love, leading to the perpetuation of violence in the future or in other social environments.

Research participants revealed an ambiguous view on violence. On the one hand people feel unsafe and that they are surrounded by a violent community. On the other hand, violence against children is not seen as violence, or at least only if it is “too much”. Moreover, several middle and older aged people show a palliating view of the colonial past which might be influenced by their collaboration during the colonial era. However, this might also reflect their high normalisation of colonial violence as well as their own traumatisation.

Another point that became clear in this chapter is that social relations are in flux but are still very much influenced by hierarchical notions. This was revealed by the quest for respect, and the fact that middle aged and older people perceive respect in a one-sided way: they believe that the youth should respect middle aged and older people. They also want to enforce respect by violence, as that was how they learnt it. However, the young people have a two-way concept of respect: they believe in mutual respect, and are influenced by post-independence ideas of freedom and equality in this regard.

The daily realities that people having to cope with, contribute to create a space that is conducive to frustration, tensions, conflicts and violence in Namibia. This is the case for

inter-generational relations but for gender relations as well, as both are inter-connected. During my research in the small town of Outjo it became very clear that gender relations are a minefield of ambivalence and tension. The following chapter will shed light on general factors involved in gender construction, as well as how males and females relate to each other in intimate relationships in Namibia.

## Chapter 5 Changing and ambiguous gender constructions<sup>261</sup>

### 5.1 Changes in static gender perceptions

#### **Factors involved in gender construction: Christianity, Culture/tradition and gender equality**

Namibian gender systems<sup>262</sup>, are influenced by several key factors and have recently undergone fundamental transitions. The present construction of gender in Southern Africa has largely been shaped by Christianity, colonialism, urbanisation and migration (M. Hunter 2002:105, Morrell, 2001, Becker 2007, Pauli 2012). Tradition or culture (see Section 1.1.1) is a topic addressed by most of the research participants, and is thus seen as an important factor for Namibian people. At the time of independence, yet another factor came into play: the human rights based concept of gender equality, which is important for present day gender constructions in Namibia. It was enshrined in the new constitution that men and women are equal. The government developed Gender Policies to guide this process of reaching gender equality (DWA 1998a, MGEWCW 2010, see Section 3.2). Formal gender equality was enforced by new laws and introduced to people by NGO and governmental campaigns (see Section 3.2). Globalised images of gender transmitted via the media (television, radio, magazines, internet, and social media) also play their part in gender constructions (van Wolputte 2016, Edwards-Jauch 2016, and see Section 1.2). These various factors do not operate in isolation but are inter-connected – sometimes in a contradictory way, or involving tensions between them. Interestingly, most research participants in Outjo directly referred to the following three factors as influencing gender: 1) tradition/culture, 2) religion, and 3) gender equality.<sup>263</sup> This mixture is not easily disentangled and I only attempt to do so here for analytical reasons.

#### **Culture and Tradition**

Tradition and Culture are perceived by the Namibian people as something unchangeable over time (Becker 2007), and as originally created by indigenous people themselves.

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<sup>261</sup> How masculinities and femininities are constructed is described in Chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>262</sup> See Section 1.1.1 on the conceptualisation of gender.

<sup>263</sup> The numbering used here does not imply a hierarchy.

Although in the Namibian context many people are of mixed descent and are multilingual, they often identify with one specific group, but, despite this, many people perceive culture as pure and static (Hailonga-van Dijk 2007:136).<sup>264</sup> The research participants mostly perceive culture or tradition as the way in which people lived in the past. They identify traditional gender constructions as something separate and distinct from European ideas, even though these constructions are a conglomerate of different pre-colonial and colonial and Christian influences. As was shown in Section 2.2, traditions in the past were not only formed by indigenous people, but also by colonial administrations masquerading as customary law (Gordon 1991), and enacted by traditional leaders:

(...) what is today presented as tradition, in fact, reflects more the impact of the Christian missions and the complex and often contradictory interaction of the colonial administration's ideas about 'proper' gender relations with those of a conservative male elite among the indigenous communities. (Becker 2007:30)

In the interviews, middle aged and old people often referred to "culture" or "tradition". This mostly can be traced back to the place and the people they grew up with which often was not in static nuclear families. Often a human being grows up under different cultural influences (see Sections 1.4 and 4.3), and decides to identify with one culture (Pauli 2009). The boundaries between ethnic groups are blurred (Greiner 2011). However, there are areas in Namibia which are more ethnically homogenous than others, and where traditions play a more important role than in heterogeneous areas. In Outjo, a more heterogeneous town, only a few participants in the School Survey referred to "culture" or "tradition". This was the case regarding topics such as male dominance, or the requirements of marriage. There seems to be a difference between the older and younger generation regarding the importance of tradition as in those interviews several people referred to culture. This is in contrast to religion, which many research participants of all ages related to (see below).

Interestingly, culture plays an important role in discursive demarcation, known as "othering" or "ethnic prejudice" (Becker 2000:5).<sup>265</sup> People view entire ethnic groups as more or less patriarchal than themselves and then blame them for using more violence against women than their own group, for instance Damara interviewees pointing to Herero people as more patriarchal than their own group, or vice versa. This attitude could also be found regarding other issues including violence (see Section 1.1.2). It can be seen as part of the colonial legacy as ethnic stereotyping and segregation was profoundly strengthened and racism was prevalent during German and South African colonialism (see Chapter 2).

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<sup>264</sup> In this thesis I use the emic terms culture, tradition and ethnic groups interchangeably, like people in the research site did, as described in more detail in Section 1.1.1. Moreover, I distinguish these terms from my broad definition of Culture, written with a capital 'C' (see Section 1.1.1), which emphasises the fluid character of the aforementioned terms, but is an etic construct.

<sup>265</sup> Becker only describes this othering in one way (Ovambo students having ethnic prejudice towards Damara). Contrary to this, I found that othering was used by all groups and with similar and exchangeable content.

Traditional institutions such as traditional authorities or courts are less important in Outjo, presumably because of the ethnic mixture of people and because civil institutions are in place. This may be different in more remote areas, such as in Caprivi (Thomas 2007), Kaoko (van Wolputte 2016, Friedmann 2007/8) or northern Kunene (Shirungu 2015). Moreover, this may change in the future. A Namibian project known as The Customary Law Ascertainment<sup>266</sup> Project aims to “assist in giving meaning and effect to the principle of specificity as it relates to the customary laws applicable in Namibia” (Hinz et al. 2013:IX), but not to codify such law, which is the task of the executive. In Namibia the customary laws of the different ethnic groups are classified as subordinate to statutory law and the constitution, and should not conflict with them. The Customary Law Ascertainment project<sup>267</sup> was funded by the Finnish Embassy and was discussed at a conference that took place in the Namibian parliament in February 2016.<sup>268</sup> In the preface to volume 3 the project’s commitment to the human rights framework is stressed (Hinz et al. 2016). However, when looking through it on a random basis, for example, at the section on the ≠Aodaman customary law,<sup>269</sup> many ambiguities can be found. For example, it is stated in this section that a man is head of a household, but also that women should be perceived as partners (see Section 5.2). From a distance, I cannot assess what effect this neo-traditional book has had on inhabitants of Outjo; whether it is just a book that some people have on their bookshelves or whether it will become a lived reality. Nonetheless, it is full of ambiguities and also shows signs of a backlash against women’s rights while simultaneously declaring the importance of human rights. However, in this context women’s rights seem not to be perceived as human rights.

Cultural differences may play a significant role in more homogenous areas; however, in heterogeneous areas such as “multicultural Outjo” (MunO 2008:8), existing cultural differences only play a minor role in understanding gender and violence. In Outjo people have adapted to an urban cultural mix and many people are descendants of several cultural groups (see also Pauli 2009:122-24). Contrary to the perception of pure cultures existing in parallel to each other, one can instead speak of a “hybrid Culture” in Namibia (Hailonga 2005:8, referring to Bhaba 1994, capitalised by SGA). One example of this is the wedding rituals people use; they choose symbols from different origins: “Contemporary weddings are a blend of various ethnic traditions that mingle western (German and Afrikaans) traditions with Damara and Nama practices, but also with Herero traditions” (Pauli/Dawids 2017:18).

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<sup>266</sup> “Ascertainment can be defined as any kind of authoritative transfer of orally transmitted customary law into a written form” (Hinz 2012:90).

<sup>267</sup> There have been three volumes published, covering most of Namibia’s ethnic groups: Volume 1 (2010) Ovambo, Kavongo, Caprivi), Volume 2 (2013) Bakgalagari, Batswana, Damara, and Volume 3 (2016) Nama, Ovaherero, Ovambanderu, and San.

<sup>268</sup> Also involved in this project were the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and the Human Rights and Documentation Centre of the Faculty of Law of the University of Namibia.

<sup>269</sup> The ≠Aodaman group is a subgroup of the Khoekhoegowab speakers, and one group of the Damara, which many people in Outjo identify with. The ≠ click is the (impossible) palatal click (Pauli 2009:40, footnote 26).

Thus, a Culture has developed which can be seen as a mix of Christian religion, Namibian cultures, and global north neoliberal patterns of consumption.

If people refer to culture or tradition in their gender constructions, they usually mean hierarchical gender relations with the man as head of the household and the woman as subordinate (no matter which cultural group they belong to). This is also confirmed by the answers given by participants in the School Survey, which reflected an “emerging Namibian youth Culture” (Nghiulikwa 2008:79). Moreover, Expert 15 refers to a “Namibian women Culture: Damara, Nama, Herero, Owambos, Hai//om” (Expert 15, 2009), which also confirms the aforementioned cultural mix. Thus, it makes sense to use the etic term, the broad definition of Culture (see Section 1.1.1).

In this urban Culture, current perceptions of gender constructions and relationships are also influenced by the media, for example magazines, social media, television, and the internet, which are used to disseminate globalised images of gender (van Wolputte 2016, and see Section 1.1.1). Foreign telenovelas constitute another example of these influences. During my stay in Namibia in 2006 the Mexican telenovela *When you are Mine* was very popular, across all social strata and ages, and was especially appealing to women (see Section 7.1 and see Section 6.1).<sup>270</sup> People tried not to miss a single episode. In impoverished areas people met at shops or gathered in front of the rare televisions (see also Pauli 2009). Even people in elite positions regularly watched this telenovela. On one occasion, the lead actresses from Brazil came to Windhoek and people had the opportunity to meet the celebrities and get their autographs. In *When you are Mine*, a love story about a woman from the underclass, Paloma, who works on a Hacienda, and Diego, the son of the Hacienda owner, fall in love. It is a classic Cinderella story of social promotion, but also portrays the lifestyle of the upper classes, including their consumption of luxury goods and intrigues between various characters (see also Pauli 2009:230, A. Becker 2009, van Wolputte 2016, for South Africa M. Hunter 2002:115). Van Wolputte elaborates on these telenovelas as follows:

These shows visualise globalised models of love and sexuality and cater primarily for an urban audience, for the new elite and the aspiring middle classes. They also portray imagined futures of urbanity and prosperity that line up with Namibia’s ambition to become an industrial society by 2030. (van Wolputte 2016:10)

This kind of utopia that it presents could explain people’s fascination with it. Furthermore, in this telenovela images of commodified gender relations are displayed (see Chapters 6 and 7). Moreover, foreign and local NGOs also spread ideas about global northern lifestyles. In addition, repatriated exiles also brought back norms and ideas about gender constructions

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<sup>270</sup> Anja Becker conducted anthropological research on love in Otjozondjupa Region. She found that 79.5% of her female interviewees watched the soap opera several times per week (A. Becker 2009:50, footnote 61). She interviewed 46 women in the 20 to 29 age group (ibid:23). I observed that some men were also interested in watching this telenovela.

from their countries of exile when they returned to Namibia, including both western and eastern gender constructions.

### **Christian religion**

The other important factor often mentioned regarding the construction of gender is religion, which in Namibia is predominantly Christianity. Today, 90% of all Namibians are Christians. The majority of them belong to the Lutheran Churches, ELCRN and ELCIN, but there is also the Roman Catholic Church, and various Pentecostal and Charismatic churches (Horn 2008). Several of them are organised under the Namibian umbrella organisation, the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN, see also Section 2.2.2). Up to the present day, the Christian religion has been brought to Namibia by missionaries of diverse origin (Finland, Germany, US, Brazil, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Zambia), starting in the colonial era, and with a renewed impact after independence (ibid). Moreover, there are people of the Jewish, Muslim and Baha'i Faiths. Pentecostal missionaries, especially from South Africa, Brazil and Botswana, have also been successful in disseminating their religious views in Namibia (see Gierse-Arsten 2005). I agree with Horn (2008) who stresses that the importance and influence of these and other evangelical churches is often underestimated. Particularly in Africa and other areas of the global south, these churches account for the majority of members worldwide (Gierse-Arsten 2005). Horn points to similarities with the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which is important for white people in Outjo, and to Pentecostalism.<sup>271</sup> These churches which demand a full integration of religion within normal daily life, have also affected the religious practices of mainstream churches. Pauli describes a ritual called *ores* (Khoekhoegowab for redemption) that has started to be included in Sunday services in the ELCRN church in Fransfontein, and among other congregations throughout Namibia (Pauli 2012). It involves publically confessing 'sins'. This ritual has its roots in the Pentecostal churches, where it is called confessions. I witnessed the ritual of publically confessing sins in Pentecostal services during my previous research stays in 2001 and 2002. Pauli recalls an ELCRN elder admitting that the Lutheran churches are also coming under pressure to use these types of rituals and practices used in Pentecostal churches (ibid, footnote 13).

Although the constitution guarantees a secular state and freedom of religion, the churches have considerable influence on the country, including on lawmakers and media. Christian morality is important to many people. The churches have the power to prevent a new

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<sup>271</sup> Horn gives the example of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) providing national radio and TV programmes. After independence, the religious department of NBC was headed by a DRC reverend who liked to broadcast prayers by the "controversial Pentecostal televangelist Jimmy Swaggart on national television" (Horn 2008:415). Moreover, Horn points to the fact that, shortly after independence, most members of the religious board of NBC were of evangelical, Pentecostal and Charismatic religious affiliation (Horn 2008). Thus, it is questionable if controversial topics such as abortion, homosexuality or divorce are reported on at all or neutrally.

abortion bill and most churches support the government and Supreme Court<sup>272</sup> in opposing practices that do not conform to heteronormativity, preventing the legalisation of LGBTTIQ relationships, and are not in favour of protecting those relationships (Horn 2008, see also /Khaxas 1996).<sup>273</sup> The churches' influence is not surprising as many of the people who organised the fight against apartheid were church leaders and they have strong links with politics. Thus, "Christian ideology and the state have become inexorably linked in Namibia" (Lorway 2009:153). Interestingly, although the Christian religion was an external, colonial influence, it is not perceived as such but is seen as something intrinsic to Namibia.

Religion plays an important role in people's lives: in legitimating behaviour and attitudes and as a moral guide (see also Pauli 2012). My various pieces of research showed that it was not unusual for people to make specific references to scriptures of the bible regarding certain topics. Pauli adds that, "similar to other church services, especially Sunday mass, wedding services are among the most important public arenas to display and discuss relations and distinctions" (Pauli 2012:414), pointing to the relevance that Christian belief and practice has in Namibia. Pauli also mentions that the new elite<sup>274</sup>, a small minority of the population in Fransfontein, uses Christianity "as a sign of their modernity and a marker of distinction" (Pauli 2012:410).<sup>275</sup> I observed this phenomenon in Outjo too. People who see themselves as modern and educated, in particular, also refer to religion. Pauli points to the unifying effect of the churches, where divisions between people in terms of ethnic groups, class, and age are minimised. However, there is still a separation between white and black. During my earlier stays in Outjo this division was still very strongly upheld. There has since been a very gradual rapprochement between the church leaders. In some respects I witnessed collaboration to try to resolve social problems. Moreover, there were some projects, such as the Di-Tsa group, through which some white women from the DRC had invited black disadvantaged women from Etosha Poort to do some handicrafts (see Section 1.3), and business people from the DRC also gave donations to projects or events aimed at black people in Etosha Poort. However, these black-white relations are still influenced by the white paternalism (see Section 1.4) and not by dialogue at eye level. Some years later, some white farmers shared their knowledge and provided training to some emerging black farmers in cooperation with the DRC and Kunene for Christ (*The Namibian*, Hartman, 27.08.2014). During my last stay in Outjo in 2009, only a few black people attended white churches and almost no white people attended black churches (see Section 1.4). This is a colonial legacy,

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<sup>272</sup> In a court case on discrimination against sexual orientation it was concluded that the constitution says there should not be discrimination on grounds of sex, which would not include sexual orientation (Horn 2008).

<sup>273</sup> Some traditions in the newly written customary laws also prohibit and punish abortion, and prohibit homosexuality, although they claim to be linked to human rights (see Hinz et al. 2013).

<sup>274</sup> See footnote 51 for the definition of "elite" and also footnote 239 in Section 4.1.

<sup>275</sup> For more information about the use of "modernity" see Section 1.1.1.

as there were separate churches for white and for black people. Botha refers to the remaining “core ethnic constituencies” of the DRC (2016).

The church institutions of choirs and the council of elders play an important role in social life (see also Pauli 2012:415). Many young people I met were actively involved in one or more youth choirs. The overwhelming majority of the interviewees in my research stressed the importance of religion, church or the bible in their lives, regardless of age (see also Pauli 2012). In the School Survey, 138 of the 144 participants stated that they had a religious affiliation.<sup>276</sup> Often participants in the School Survey referred to religion or the bible, in contrast to tradition or culture, which very few learners used to explain an opinion or behaviour. Participants in the School Survey referred to the bible or God’s will in relation to topics such as: gender equality, opposing homosexual relations, having sex and producing children only within marriage, getting married as a command; providing support or consolation in difficult times, as well as after experiences of violence, and as a means of regular support, which made them feel loved by God. One female learner used the bible to support her opinion that men and women should not be equal: “In the bible it says that the man must be the head in the household. But with this I don't say that women may not get the opportunities” (School Survey, girl, 97 B 11). However, God is also referred to when asserting the opposite: “Because women and men are equally human in the eyes of God and so must it also be” (School Survey, girl, 30 A 12). One boy mentioned that he approves of gender equality, giving the following explanation: “Because God created man and woman to love, live together. Although the male is the natural head, women play an important role in the household” (School Survey, boy, 88 B 12). Another girl referred to God to support her views about not having children outside marriage: “Because marriage is the first union that God made and it won't be good for me to have children outside the wedlock! Besides, I love my boyfriend!” (School Survey, girl, 22 A 12). The Christian religion is very important to people in Outjo, especially as a form of moral guidance, but also regarding gender constructions (see also Isaak 1997, Horn 2008).

## **Gender equality**

The new constitution, new laws and the policies of gender equality are all aimed at creating a state of equality between men and women (see Sections 3.1 and 3.2). Gender equality is an important topic of discussions in Namibia, both in rural and in urban areas (Becker 2010). The idea of gender equality within gender relations has spread throughout Namibia and is associated with the constitution and several new laws (see Chapter 3), although the detail of the laws is not common knowledge (Becker 2010). This discourse is informed by global concepts of gender equality (see Section 1.1.1) but is also connected to long years of women

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<sup>276</sup> The majority filled in this section about religion. Most of the learners were affiliated to ELCRN (41), followed by DRC (33), then Roman Catholic (28), ELCIN (10), Charismatic/Pentecostal (9) and others (17).

fighting for their rights and improvement of daily living during the Liberation Struggle (Section 2.2.3) and after independence (Chapter 3). Thomas emphasises the importance of differentiating between global ideas on gender equality and the local reception and reaction to them (Thomas 2007) (see Section 1.2). In Outjo, people perceive gender equality as associated with the government (Men's Debate) or with western ideals (Group Discussion 2006, Expert 45, 2006, and Becker 2010). Many see it as a "foreign concept" (Expert 45, 2006) introduced by the government. The fact that gender equality is strongly associated with the government points to the importance of looking at how the government itself is seen by the local population.

The extent to which the government is generally accepted varies between different regions, due to regional history and historicity, as well as pre-independence alliances (Becker 2006, and see Chapter 2). Fissures among the population regarding political affiliations – divisions between former supporters and former opponents of the Liberation Struggle – SWAPO and the DTA, are also important. For example, in the northern areas, where the majority of people from the Ovambo groups live, the government policies of SWAPO, the former liberation force dominated by the Ovambo, are much more widely accepted than among other groups. Becker found that, in this region, ideas about gender equality are much more widespread than among other groups such as the Kavango, Herero, or Nama (Becker 2006). However, there may be differences between rural and urban areas. In rural areas traditions may be more important than political affiliations; correspondingly, Kaundjua et al. found in their research in northern Namibian rural areas that young male research participants were strongly convinced of the superiority of men, and referred to tradition to back up their beliefs (Kaundjua et al. 2014). Moreover, in the northwestern Owambo group dominated regions, a male involvement programme had been implemented, directed specifically at men, and publicised via radio (Mufune 2009, see Chapter 3). This may also have had an influence on perceptions and behaviour regarding gender equality. To the best of my knowledge, the programme was only introduced in this particular area and not in the rest of Namibia.

Outjo, being part of the former Police Zone, was politically led for some time by the DTA and, as such, was more characterised by opposition to the Liberation Struggle and SWAPO. Besides the politicians in Outjo, only a small group of people in the town openly supported SWAPO towards me. Interestingly, this small group clearly and unambiguously supports the idea of gender equality. Among a number of other people, especially those who still see advantages in the old system, a kind of reluctance or open opposition to the SWAPO government can be observed. On the one hand this may be linked to the ethnic affiliations which are also intertwined with apartheid polarisations; for instance, there are not many Oshiwambo speaking people in Outjo (see Section 1.4). On the other hand, it could be linked to their reluctance to accept gender equality. The political affiliation in Outjo may differ from

that of other Namibian towns, especially Windhoek and the densely populated northern areas, which are clearly dominated by SWAPO. Also, in present day Outjo, SWAPO has the majority of votes, as in most of Namibia (e.g., SWAPO won the Local Authorities Election in 2015 with 53.2% of the votes). However, parties such as the Damara-dominated UDF got almost a third of the votes and the old colonial white-dominated party DTA won 15.5%, while the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP) only got 2.6% of the votes (ECN 2015 and WEB WIK Outjo). However, one cannot assume that everyone who voted for SWAPO in Outjo clearly supports their policy of gender equality. Political affiliation is only one factor that influences people's attitudes towards gender equality.

Many members of the younger generation support the idea of gender equality (as was also reflected in the School Survey). The overwhelming majority of the learners in the School Survey (87.5%) declared their approval of gender equality. Both girls and boys stated this in almost equal numbers. This may also be due to the fact that "equality for all" has been part of the school curriculum since independence (Thomas 2007, footnote 6).

### **Ambiguities and confusion around gender equality**

However, this support by the learners in the School Survey for gender equality is not as clear cut as it appears at first glance. Looking more closely at the responses given by the learners in the School Survey, they reveal a lot of ambiguities and confusion regarding equality in gender relations. There are many examples of a learner declaring his/her approval of gender equality, and even providing a convincing explanation. However, in other sections of the School Survey, often when asked about his/her own past behaviour, for example regarding his/her first experience of sexual intercourse, it is revealed that it was usually males who took the decision to have sex. For example, one male learner clearly supports gender equality, based on the following explanation: "because we are all humans, and we should be treated equally" (18 year-old boy, 033 A 12). However, in the section asking about who should make the decision to have sex in an intimate relationship he answered that the man should decide, providing the following explanation: "(...) a man should always decide when to have sex, just to tighten the bond between them" (ibid), and in the section on who took the decision when he had sex for the first time, he answered that he decided (see Section 5.2). This example is no exception, but reflects the ambiguities I often noticed when people were talking about gender equality; it sometimes clashed with other attitudes (see also Helman/Ratele 2016). Becker also found this ambiguity in young men: "They insist on male control in their personal relationships, but appear ready to accept gender equality in society" (Becker 2000:8, and also Brown et al. 2005). Meanwhile, in their South African study, Helman and Ratele also found that "problematic constructions of gender were both (re)produced and challenged

simultaneously” (Helman/Ratele 2016:11).<sup>277</sup> However, I did not find this confusion or uncertainty surrounding gender constructions and relations among the white community in Outjo. I got the impression that the old hierarchical status quo remains in place here.

The widespread confusion around gender relations could give the impression that people do not understand the concept of gender equality. This is confirmed by the young research participant Alicia in the following interview extract:

SGA Do you think that the people here understand what gender equality is?  
Alicia No, they don't.  
SGA How do you come to that conclusion?  
Alicia Because at most of the jobs it's like, there are only men, men are the main ones. And the women, they are mostly domestic workers, even in the offices; the women are just the cleaners, only a few have a high post. But most are qualified but don't have a job. (Alicia, 2009)

Many stakeholders in Outjo are convinced that people simply do not understand gender equality (Experts 26, 2006, Experts 5 and 6, all 2009; see also LeBeau/Spence 2004:50). As Expert 6 states: “Nobody understands the thing” (Expert 6, Men’s Debate). A MGECW gender officer in Windhoek said that those who first brought the topic of gender equality to the people did a lot of damage. As a result, she states that currently there is a huge misunderstanding of gender equality: “The people don’t know that it is about development” (Expert 31, 2006).<sup>278</sup>

### **Gender equality and religion**

To understand the confusion and ambiguities that people feel, one has to look at how the three main factors involved in gender construction are related to each other. Regarding gender equality and religious belief, I found many ambiguities and internal contradictions. Christian belief is often used as legitimation for maintaining the status quo of power asymmetry within gender relations, and determining difference (/Khaxas 1996, Becker 2007) and male dominance. This belief system is legitimated by several ideas from the bible: that man was created first and was created physically stronger (Expert 45, 2006, see also Section 6.1). The progressive Namibian theologian Isaak highlights the subordination of women in Christian doctrine. However, he criticises that “men are the ones who have been providing the interpretation of Christ’s message for too long.” (Isaak 1997:69) He points to feminist theologians who found “a great deal that is in fact conducive to the promotion of women’s equality” (ibid). However, this is not a voice of mainstream. Though, there are variations and ambiguities in the perceptions of the believers (see Section 6.1).

Pastors usually refer to the book of Paul in the bible where it is written that a man should be the head of the family as Christ is the head of the church. The ideas of the subordinate wife and the dominant position of the husband or man as head of the family are reflected in

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<sup>277</sup> See also Section 1.1.1 on their account on problematic constructions of gender.

<sup>278</sup> For more detail on the (mis-)interpretations around gender equality by men see Section 6.1.

current Christian belief in Outjo. On the other hand, when directly asked about gender equality, all religious leaders from different churches in Outjo who participated in the research voiced their approval of gender equality.

The Pentecostal churches predominantly subscribe to a gender construction which places women in a subordinate position to men. Notwithstanding, the Pentecostal pastors I talked to position themselves as supporting gender equality. They also stress that men and women should be treated differently because God created them differently, in particular the man as head of the family. In 2002, in the Laodecia Pentecostal Church it was formulated as follows: “the men must love their wives and the wife must subordinate under the man” (Expert 39, 2002:3). On the other hand, unlike the Catholic Church, in the Pentecostal Churches women can become pastors and preach, much to the annoyance of a male pastor from another church: “I don’t know how they bring it together, the women should be submitting but now they are pastors. If my wife is a pastor, I have to submit to her (...)” (Expert 2, 2006). As van Klinken concluded, the Pentecostal Churches promote alternative, responsible masculinities, but they stick to the notion of the man as head of the household or family (van Klinken 2011).

The subordination of wives to husbands is promoted not only in very conservative Pentecostal Churches but also in one of the biggest churches of the Afrikaner minority, the Dutch Reformed Church, which is closely connected with the Private School Morea.<sup>279</sup> During Christian counselling for marriage, men and women are advised differently, which is also in accordance with bible scriptures. Wives should *respect* their husbands and husbands should *love* their wives. This idea is justified by the notion that the two genders have differing special needs: men need to feel respected and women need to feel loved, as Expert 2, a DRC Pastor explained to me (Expert 2, 2006). One could get the impression that it is not as important for a wife to be shown respect. The same holds true for love in the husband’s case: why is it not equally important for the wife to show love for her husband? However, many research participants spoke of this norm regarding gender relations (Allison, Misheke, Expert 3, all 2009 and Expert 2, 2006). During Christian marriage counselling the idea of hierarchical gender relations is repeated and thus perpetuated. Reading between the lines of the religious leaders’ statements, I conclude that they actually want to keep the man as head of the household and the woman as subordinate, even though, when they were asked directly about it, the pastors denied it. The pastor of the DRC in Outjo explains the idea of submission as follows:

I believe that there is a sort of submission between a husband and a wife, about the positions, not that one is lower than the other one. But each has his own role to play (...). Paul told the women ‘you have to submit to your husbands’. Just the next verse said you should submit to one another, because he knows that a husband is not like God and he can have faults. He can

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<sup>279</sup> This, however, is indicative of the closeness of DRC and Pentecostal Churches (see above, and Horn 2008).

have even more faults than the wife. But in a household there should be someone who is going to lead. (Expert 2, 2006)

The Windhoek based ELCRN Reverend, Expert 10,<sup>280</sup> thinks that many people misinterpret the idea that wives have to submit to their husbands. Christ is also characterised in the bible as a servant of the church – helping, offering himself and sacrificing himself (Expert 10, 2009). The suspicion that people misinterpret this message was also confirmed by Expert 3, another DRC Pastor:

Expert 3 But I think in a lot of the white people as well as the black people they've got the perspective that the wife is the lesser one, the one that should submit [herself] in every way. But I don't think that's the meaning of marriage (...). Both should be equal – that's the ideal.

SGA And the reality?

Expert 3 The husbands treat the wives badly, they should be quiet, they should be in the background, they [the husbands] take the money for themselves (...). (Expert 3, 2009:1, iiba by SGA)

I conclude that the subtle differentiation with regard to subordination has not been fully grasped by the believers. Many people cannot integrate the ambiguous and complex theological concepts about gender relations in a reasonable way. None of the research participants understood gender relations in this way and many of them are very religious. Thus, most people who refer to religion as a legitimation for keeping gender relations unchanged, state that women need to submit to their husbands and not vice versa. I asked the aforementioned Pastor, Expert 2, if he thought that people sometimes misunderstand what the “submission of the wife” means. He answered, “Ja! Because if you just tell your wife, ‘you should do everything I told you, then you don't have a problem!’” (Expert 2, 2006) He is critical towards this attitude because with this hierarchical relationship there is no real exchange possible, “because then it's [only] for your own benefit, but you will never grow, you will never experience the relationship.” (ibid, iiba by SGA) In the following he compares this hierarchical relationship with the one towards slaves:

(...) all the years ago people said that we can have slaves! It's only 150 years ago (...). Yes, it's very nice to have a slave, who does what you want. But again, you don't have a relationship with him. You use him, you abuse him. With relationships, husband-wife and what ever relationship it's the same. (Expert 2, 2006, iiba by SGA)

He further commented on how people make use of the bible:

Well, in the bible you can find anything what you want, if you want to oppress her [the woman], you can find it. You can even kill her and find a verse that helps you (...). People use the bible for their own benefit (...). You see, Christianity is about relationships, it's not about laws and religious rules. (Expert 2, 2006, iiba by SGA)

Expert 4, a pastor from the largest church in Outjo, the Lutheran ELCRN, and a member of the Committee on Changing Gender Relations (CCGR), in Outjo also conveyed ambiguous messages. On the one hand he supported the idea of gender equality, giving the example of jointly negotiating budgeting between intimate partners. On the other hand, in the committee

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<sup>280</sup> He is also the Chairman of NAMEC (see Section 3.3).

meetings he wanted to establish the idea of men who lead in a responsible way, instead of being irresponsible and not taking a lead (see Sections 1.3 and 6.2.3). He believes that women were created as helpers. He expressed his view when talking about the pre-marriage counselling that he gives to couples:

I counsel them the following: I take them to the biblical background about why the woman is there. The woman was created as a helper. (...) she should assist and help. In most understandings of the men women must work hard, even if she comes home after work, then she has to do the homework. But she is not a donkey, I tell them. (Expert 4, 2009)

He continues by expanding on the norms that the man has to conform to, according to his understanding of the bible:

Man is put to responsibility to watch over women, kids, environment, not with power, but with love, care and responsibility. It must be in a good way. Not that the kids and the woman are crying or natural resources are spoilt. (Expert 4, 2009)

Although he stresses non-violent behaviour and even a slightly different, more caring, form of masculinity, it becomes clear that he has the norm of hierarchical gender relations in mind (Expert 4, 2006 and 2009).

People are thus left with these ambiguous messages. Consequently, the institution of the church, which normally provides orientation for people, does not give clear messages to them but rather causes additional confusion and dilemmas. One participant in the Men's Debate describes the confusion that people feel. On the one hand, people hear in church that men are leaders and, on the other hand, the government demands gender equality from them:

I will have to get to the debate from two sides: from the bible's side and from the Namibian Government. In the Namibian constitution it is stipulated that the men and women are all equal. But when we get back to the bible it's said that the MAN is head of the house (...). The question is, from which side should the woman be equal to a man and vice versa. And I would say that the woman also needs to be respected in the sense that whenever she has a point to say, then man has to respect that. (...) she also has the right to make a decision, also on the side of equal opportunities (Expert 1, Men's Debate)

Both institutions – church and government – give out differing messages (see also Mogotsi 2015). For Expert 5 (2009), however, it is also clear that in the bible the man is seen as occupying a leading position.

### **Gender equality in tension with tradition and religion**

Expert 5 elaborates on the different positions of the church and government and adds the third component – tradition:

Where the problem has come up is when we talk from the bible side. It is clearly stated that the man is the head of the house. Traditionally, we also say that the man has the last say and he is the head of the house. But come up to the government, to constitution (...) it says you all have got equal rights. *Dit is waar die probleme is.* (Afrikaans for This is where the problems are, translated by SGA) (Expert 5, Men's Debate)

Thus, he views tradition and religion as promoting gender inequality and in contrast to the gender equality of the government. A female participant in the School Survey sees a contrast between culture and legislation, and stated the following:

Specifically I would say that the gender of man is more than that of a woman. Men are regarded as superior in my culture. But nationally we are all equal before the law. (17 year-old girl, 003 A 12).

Tradition and religion take a similar position towards gender relations. This provides an element of continuity with the past. Although in the past there were tensions between religion and tradition, there were also similarities in how they dealt with the status of women: both institutions upheld a belief in the subordinate position of women linked to their control of female reproductive potential (see Chapter 2, and McKittrick 1999, Becker 1995).

Gender equality is often seen as oppositional to traditional or religious gender constructions (Becker 2010). Many well-educated people from NGOs, the government, the media, young people, and community activists view behaviour that refers to culture or tradition as backwards. That means something old-fashioned, which stands in contradiction to modern behaviour and hinders development. Thus, numerous people in Outjo, including governmental representatives, who are involved in aiming gender equality, see culture, tradition, and sometimes religion as obstacles to gender equality (see MGEWCW 2006:12, OoP 2004:102, Düringer 2014, Becker 2010, 2015). During the Men's Debate, an employee of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGEWCW) voiced his opinion that, "it [gender equality] is versus tradition and culture" (Man 25, Men's Debate, iiba by SGA). During the Liberation Struggle the SWAPO Women's Council linked women's rights to modernism, which they constructed in opposition to tradition (see Section 2.2.3). This approach was continued in the National Gender Mainstreaming Programme of 2003 (see Section 3.2). Within this policy, culture or tradition is blamed as constituting an obstacle to development (MWACW 2003).

Van Wolputte criticised the fact that the Namibian Government and also NGOs "organise workshops and meetings to discuss family life or gender equality, but their point of departure and model is that of a western-styled, cosmopolitan nuclear family (...)" (van Wolputte 2016:10). Moreover, he was critical that "rights-based approaches present emancipation rather one-sidedly as delivery from 'harmful' practices, and leave little or no room for female agents" (ibid), other than as victims and, moreover, that there is no space for integrating ideas about equality within culture (see also Section 1.2 on using Culture).

Becker calls into question the dichotomy of modern versus traditional (Becker 2006). She argues that traditional authorities can also take on board modern notions such as gender equality and thus should not be seen as antagonistic per se. However, this difference can be attributed to the differing focus of Becker's research. Her main example refers to the

Owambo groups who identify with the SWAPO-dominated government as the old liberation force. She attests to an “intense identification of Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians with ‘our new Namibia’” (Becker 2006:37, inverted commas in the original).

The deterministic polarising perspective of culture and religion versus gender equality puts people in a difficult predicament. On the one hand, many people view culture and religion as something fundamental to identity. On the other hand, those people who strive for gender equality – including the government and NGOs – condemn this perspective as being wholly backwards. Thus, there is a risk that a source of orientation will be taken away from the people in times of change and uncertainty (see Chapter 4). Moreover, tradition is also seen in some other areas as giving more support, for example, in the form of material compensation after a rape, than civil institutions (Thomas 2007:611, see Section 3.3). In the Gender Policy document of 2010 the guiding character of tradition is taken into consideration (see Section 3.2) however, according to principles of gender equality it is pointed to the following: “such practices should not contradict the interpretation, promotion and protection of women’s rights and gender equality.” (MGECW 2010:22) However, little consideration has been given to how those polarisations may be reconciled and integrated into a Namibian society characterised by democratic gender relations.

The three most important factors for gender construction – tradition, Christian belief and gender equality – are fraught with tensions and ambiguities. Tradition and culture as well as Christian norms are seen as something determining and determined. They are perceived in essentialising, static ways (van Wolputte 2016). In contrast to this, the new factor involved in gender construction – gender equality – is perceived as something new; as something introduced by and associated with the government and based on western norms, and thus perceived as alien and confusing (see also Section 6.1). In conclusion, gender equality has not yet taken on the character of a determined norm, and thus it is much more open to opposition, negotiation, and conflict. On the other hand, those who work for the implementation of gender equality blame religion and culture/tradition for creating barriers to its implementation, and moreover, think that people do not understand gender equality. Although local people can integrate global ideas on human rights into tradition (Becker 2006), as can be seen in the customary law attainments published by Hinz et al. (2013), they may only choose to apply some of the rights, such as prohibiting violence but not constructing equal, democratic intimate or generational relationships. Tradition and religion have much more power over people’s behaviour than government norms about gender equality as they are much older and more deeply ingrained, and are perceived as natural and normal. It is not recognised by people that actually *all* factors involved in gender construction are negotiable. Moreover, although all the different factors that influence present day gender constructions such as tradition, religion and gender equality clearly illustrate the fluidity of

gender, and thus show its constructive character (Section 1.1.1), people still do not perceive them as negotiable.

### **“Something within them” – static gender constructions, homophobia, and gendered admonishments**

The gender system I found in the research town of Outjo is based on a dichotomous perception of masculinities and femininities embedded in heterosexuality, which is perceived as God’s will. Many people view gender and gender relations as something natural (see also Becker 2006) or as a product of culture, which is seen as patriarchal and static (Expert 45, 2006). This perspective is reflected in the following interview excerpt with a community activist, Expert 15:

- Expert 15 (... ) even the decision making, in most cases only men make decisions  
SGA Because women don't want to or because men don't let them?  
Expert 15 From historical background, that's how they were raised, that's their belief.  
SGA Both, man and woman?  
Expert 15 Ja. That's their culture. They don't have many words against men's words. If men say, then they need to obey it. That's something that anybody else can't just erase from their hearts and from their belief. That's something that is within them, they see it from their family, they see it from their mother and parents and forefathers. And they believe it must be like that. Men have a say and women will never ever question his authority. (Expert 15, 2009)

Thus, Expert 15 refers to culture, history and tradition in forming the gender construction of women in Namibia that he does not believe could ever change.

The gender systems in Outjo are based on differences between and complementarities of men and women. This complementary system implies dependencies between males and females. Moreover, the relations between males and females are also hierarchical. As in neighbouring South Africa, the hierarchy that operates in gender relations has come to be perceived as normal (see Helman/Ratele 2016). I understand this gender hierarchy as structural violence (see Section 1.1.2), as women are discriminated against in every aspect of their living realities and do not have the same access to resources and decision-making power. This hierarchy operates to disadvantage women and is connected to misogyny: women’s experiences and perspectives are not seen as equally valuable to those of men. Therefore, I define this as symbolic violence (see Section 1.1.2). However, this gender system also disadvantages men in certain respects, such as with regard to their limited access to childcare (Helman/Ratele 2016 for South Africa and see Section 6.2.2).

Moreover, the Namibian gender system is a heteronormative system (see Kaundjua et al. 2014:287). There are clear expectations towards males and females to perform according to the dichotomous gender norms and establish heterosexual relationships (see Butler 2009, and Sections 1.1.1, 6.1 and 7.1). Therefore, friendships between men and women are not seen as common (David, 2009). The interviewee Misheke (2009), for example did not want to answer questions on women because he did not think he knew much about them. He does

not spend time with women as friends. Relations between men and women are primarily seen as sexual (Kandirikirira 2002:120, Kauundjua et al. 2014). This is especially the case in some Pentecostal Churches, where unmarried believers are even prohibited from spending time with another single person of the opposite sex to prevent so called unlawful sexual relationships (Gierse-Arsten 2005).

The deterministic view of gender is reflected in separate norms and spheres for females and males, which are bound together complementarily and maintained by the admonishing of alternative behaviour by caregivers or peers (for more detail see Section 6.1 and 7.1). Today, there is not much space and flexibility in people's perceptions of alternative gender conceptions. The few people living alternative gender norms quickly come under suspicion of homosexuality (Experts 45 and 46, both 2006). As it was mentioned in Section 3.3 when Namibian Men for Change (NAMEC) was founded, there were accusations that they would promote homosexuality. Therefore, it was difficult for them to gain acceptance (Expert 10, 2006) and they lost members. The Chairman of White Ribbon also reported that he was asked, "are you gay?", during workshops with men (Expert 46, 2006). This is because in Namibia homosexuality is primarily seen as non-conformist gender behaviour (Lorway 2015:xviii). This was also revealed in the personal interviews: notably, homosexuality was not perceived as primarily a sexual orientation or linked to sexual practices, but as alternative behaviour that deviated from prevalent gender norms (e.g., David and Alicia, both 2009),<sup>281</sup> and thus as alternative gender performance. The merging of homosexuality and alternative non-conformist gender norms in people's perceptions is also clear from the following statement by the interviewee David: "men try to be women and women try to be men" (David, 2009). Another young interviewee used almost the same words in describing gay men "as trying to be a woman" (Alicia, 2009) (see also in Kaundjua et al. 2014:286). In Namibia homosexuality is widely seen as unnatural, un-African, and as sinful towards God (Horn 2008), as well as against customary law (Hinz et al. 2013). Moreover, homosexuality is associated with external influences from the global north (Currier 2012), although terms used in local Namibian languages point to a pre-colonial existence (/Khaxas/Wieringa 2007, Lorway 2015). People draw on religion, tradition and government in their efforts to disparage homosexuality (Currier 2012).<sup>282</sup> Consequently, even those non-governmental organisations like Sister Namibia which, since their inception, have promoted women's rights and gender equality, and are fighting against gender violence, do not get funding from the government but from outside donors, because they also promote the rights of LGBTTIQ people (Currier 2012).

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<sup>281</sup> This is the case even though, in reality, people of homosexual orientation do not automatically live alternative masculinities and femininities. Thanks to Tamar Klein for this remark.

<sup>282</sup> Ironically, this was the only rare point of unity among almost all the different groups (religion, tradition, government) who oppose homosexuality.

Prominent politicians publicly condemned homosexuality<sup>283</sup> and strongly discriminated against people of homosexual orientation. Homophobia is a form of symbolic violence (see Section 1.1.2). For example, one politician even said that equality, which is laid down in the constitution, was not meant to include homosexual people (LaFont 2007). This behaviour is referred to by the International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) as “state-sponsored homophobia” (ILGA 2013, /Khaxas 2010). Among those who supported homophobia is former president Nujoma who, in 2001, during his time in office, said: “The Police must arrest, imprison and deport homosexuals found in Namibia” (WEB AFROL 2001). In 2005, the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration, Mushelenga, blamed people of homosexual orientation for the HIV/AIDS pandemic (see WEB WIK LGBTTIQ). Many local leaders also exhibit homophobic attitudes (Kaundjua et al. 2014). Hate speeches have also been directed against people of homosexual orientation. Lorway cites a 21 year-old man whose own mother affirmed the homophobic speeches of the president: “He’s doing the right thing. When they start to arrest or deport people I will personally bring you to the police (...)!” (Lorway 2009:152) Additionally, gay people experience discrimination in institutions and communities as a whole. Moreover, the majority of the churches support the government’s position (Horn 2008:427), and even pastors, deacons and other elders were involved in hate speeches themselves, stressing that “homosexuality was a sin”, as one 20 year-old man witnessed (cited in Lorway 2009:154). When I did research on Pentecostal Churches in 2001 and 2002, I often encountered this attitude as well. In addition, Namibian legislation criminalises sexual activities between two males, which it calls sodomy, through the colonial Roman-Dutch law inherited at independence.<sup>284</sup> Interestingly, sex between two women is not seen as a criminal act, presumably because of the marginalised position of women during colonial times (Hubbard 2007b). Currier states: “By not reforming anti-sodomy laws, nationalist leaders reaffirmed the heterosexist and homophobic legacy of colonialism” (Currier 2012:447).

This public homophobia and linked denigration of alternative gendered behaviour is reflected in the negative attitudes prevalent among many ordinary people. The learners who participated in the School Survey revealed their opposition to homosexuality through their responses. The School Survey shows that the overwhelming majority of the learners think that men loving men is “bad” or “not good”: 83.5% of all learners who answered the question selected those options, and only 8.3% believed it to be “good” or “ok”, while a further 8.3% felt “neutral” towards it. A similarly negative attitude was demonstrated towards women loving women: 80.5% considered it “not so good” or “bad”, 7% perceived it as “good” or “ok”

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<sup>283</sup> For a short discussion on the use of the term “homophobia”, see Currier 2012.

<sup>284</sup> In 2009 there were few NGOs promoting human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTTIQ) people: The Rainbow Project (TRP), Out-Right Namibia.

and 12.5% were “neutral” towards it. The research participant Alicia shows her negative attitude towards homosexuality in the following excerpt:

It does not suit you, you just have to be yourself (...) [be]cause that's how God created [you]. Even if you wanted to be a girl, just be a man, and if you are alone, behave like a gay (Alicia, 2009, iiba by SGA).

People who live alternative gender norms either do so in secret or are openly laughed at, or they may even be attacked verbally or physically (Expert 45, 2006). /Khaxas concludes: “People who try to break out of the male/female dichotomy suffer derision” (/Khaxas 1996:22). Openly living alternative gender constructions is perceived as a nuisance by numerous people. Parents feared their children “becoming homosexual”, according to Alicia and David (both 2009). This is clear in the following interview extract of Alicia:

Alicia: (...) for boys it was like, they were not allowed to play with the girls because they believed that they will become gay.  
SGA ((Little giggle)) Really?  
Alicia Ja. Because sometimes there might be three daughters and a son, now because he doesn't have any other friends he might just play with his sisters, now he will start playing with dolls and all those things, and the way he now suddenly talks it's like that one of a girl. So that's also how he becomes gay.  
SGA Do you think like that?  
Alicia Ja. That's also what has almost happened to my little brother.  
SGA Do you think he is gay?  
Alicia No, he is not. (Alicia, 2009)

People believe that by making their children stick to distinct norms of masculinity and femininity they will not become homosexual. Caregivers try to achieve this end by using gendered admonishments (see the definition in Section 1.1.1). One teacher from Outjo Primary School describes the behaviour of caregivers: “You are monitored according to criteria put to gender behaviour” (Expert 41, 2009). He gives the example that “a girl doesn't do it” (ibid). He also pointed out the lasting effect it can have: “It is printed in your mind, you still have it in your mind even as adult” (ibid). Other adult interviewees also reported similar experiences in their childhood. This is confirmed by the School Survey, in which 57.8% of the learners who answered the question about their first experience of being admonished to behave like a girl/boy<sup>285</sup> attested to such an experience.<sup>286</sup> Additionally, a further 5.2% stated that they had never experienced this kind of reproach because they were already behaving in the “correct” gendered way and always have done.<sup>287</sup> Three citations illustrate this perception:

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<sup>285</sup> The question was: “Think about the first time you were told to ‘behave like a boy/girl’, what happened? Who said it? What were you told?” This question was inspired by a paper produced by Sister Namibia about a local workshop on women's rights, culture, HIV/AIDS, and sexual rights that I was shown by a women's activist (Expert 11, 2009).

<sup>286</sup> 116 learners understood the question in the intended way and this was therefore chosen as the main unit. 34 girls and 33 boys experienced gendered admonishments (for more detail see Section 6.1 and 7.1).

<sup>287</sup> 26.7% of the main unit referred to gendered admonishments in their answers, which were solely directed at growing up, bodily changes and preventing pregnancy or STDs. These are therefore taken out of this context. 10.3% of the main unit reported that they had not experienced such admonishments.

I was not told that because my behaviour of behaving like a girl is already inborn. When I grow up I just follow the way of my mother. (19 year-old girl, 031 A 12)

I was never told to behave like a boy. Boyhood came naturally. (18 year-old boy, 095 B 11)

I was never told that before 'cos I always behave like a boy. (17 year-old boy, 066 A 11)

The first two examples also reveal a view of gender as natural. According to this perception, gender is not something that is socialised but, as the girl put it, “inborn”. It is also clear from the excerpts that males and females are seen as “essentially different from one another” (Helman/Ratele 2016:5).

These gendered admonishments are applied in different areas of life. One such area, which shows that caregivers want to maintain distinct gendered spheres, is games. People perceive games as gendered (see also Friesen 2010). In the personal interviews, people of all ages indicated that there were different games for boys and girls in their childhood. This can be seen as a continuation of the past. Today and in the past, it was often the same-sex caregivers who admonished them to keep in line with either girls' or boys' games (see Section 6.1 and 7.1). In their answers to the question about gendered admonishments, many learners gave examples of situations when they played as children in non-gender-conforming games. Moreover, playing with children of the opposite gender is discouraged by caregivers, sometimes with the explicit addendum that if the child plays too much with children of the opposite gender then he/she will also become like them, that is, the “wrong gender”:

I was playing with the girls (...), playing girls' games and so on. I was told by my brother. He said that if I continue playing with girls I will become a girl. Then I stop playing with girls from that day onwards. (17 year-old boy, 144 C 10)

When I was first told to behave like a girl was when I was playing soccer with the boys and my aunt told me, saying 'stop playing with boys and act like a girl not a born boy'. (18 year-old girl, 050 A 11)

These statements and many others demonstrate that it is important for caregivers to channel children's behaviour along dichotomous gender lines, because they fear that otherwise the child could develop into “the wrong gender”. As well as games, division of labour is another important area of life in which caregivers guide their children's behaviour along gendered lines. In former times, as well as in present day Namibia, children were encouraged and corrected to undertake the “right” gendered chores (see Section 6.1 and 7.1). Moreover, caregivers carefully observe the gendered performance of their children, such as body language or voice. For girls it is perceived as especially important not to speak too loudly and not to sit with their legs open (for further details see Section 7.1) and for boys not to show any weakness (see Section 6.1). These examples show that, during the socialisation process of today's young adults, it is regarded as very important to create and maintain separate spheres for girls and boys, which Helman and Ratele describe as a means to “police the boundaries between the genders” (Helman/Ratele 2016:2).

This behaviour by caregivers is connected to a profound fear of children showing tendencies not to conform to the heteronormative gender systems and may also reflect more general

fears about changes in the gender systems. Because of these fears, and public homophobia, as well as the restrictive heteronormative dichotomous gender system, it is not surprising that people who display anything other than clearly dichotomous behaviour as male or female, become victims of hate crimes in Namibia. Unfortunately, as a result of Namibian law reforms, gay and lesbian relationships were completely excluded from essential legal reform. For example, in the *Combating of Domestic Violence Act*, the definition of an intimate relationship was limited to people of different sexes. The Deputy Minister justified this omission by referring to the notion that homosexual relationships “are not recognised by the Namibian customs and traditions or by the laws of our Republic” (Hubbard 2007b:121). However, research has shown, for example, that sexual relationships between women were accepted in precolonial times within Damara groups (/Khaxas/Wieringa 2007). Moreover, LGBTTIQ people need special protection, as they become victims of corrective rapes (see Sections 6.2.2 and 8.1.1). These violent acts are even committed by males from their own family (ibid).<sup>288</sup> The prevailing homophobic attitudes and existing hate crimes preclude an open societal climate, which is a precondition of experimenting with and developing alternative gender norms.<sup>289</sup> Thus, change in the gender system, including gender norms, is hindered by fears of and prejudice towards homosexuality (/Khaxas 1996:22). Nonetheless, “non-binary constructions of gender” would open up the way to alternative democratic gender constructions (Helman/Ratele 2016:5).

The policy of gender equality is aimed at achieving a change in gender relations. The old gender system is complementary and thus implies inter-dependencies. Moreover, the prevailing gender norms and relations are perceived as natural or God-given and these are challenged by the idea of gender equality. The progressive laws (see Chapter 3) stand in stark contrast with restrictive, static gender norms (see also Britton/Shook 2014). Moreover, ambiguous messages are conveyed by institutions such as churches and schools (and see Chapters 6 and 7), which people rely on for moral guidance. Change leads to uncertainties, mutual expectations are no longer clear, and both men and women are affected by this.

In conclusion, the (originally complementary) gender constructions, masculinities and femininities in Namibia are simultaneously changing slowly, but change is impeded. Firstly, change is impeded by essentialistic gender constructions; secondly, gender boundaries are determined by widespread homophobia. The society is polarised between old and new regarding gender relations as well as norms of masculinities (see Chapter 6) and femininities

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<sup>288</sup> Since the last 15 years research has been conducted into the lives of LGBTTIQ people and their intimate relationships in Namibia (e.g., /Khaxas/Wieringa 2007, Lorway 2015, 2009, 2008, 2007, Currier 2012, /Khaxas/Wieringa 2007, Isaacks/Morgan 2005). Moreover, I obtained information via conversations with activists from the NGO The Rainbow Project.

<sup>289</sup> There may have been some changes since then. One sign of this is the men’s march, “Walk a mile in her shoes”, which took place in the capital Windhoek on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Several hundred men walked through the centre of Windhoek in high heels, and some even wore pink wigs. However, in most parts of the country this would not be possible (WEB YT 2014).

(see Chapter 7). Both factors block the development of alternatives and of substantial gender equality. Thus, tensions operate within masculinities and femininities as well as in gender relations. How does this feed into intimate relationships, the point at which gender relations are closest?

## 5.2 Gender relations and challenges in heterosexual intimate relationships

Gendered norms are lived out in intimate relationships and families. Families are “(...) gendered spaces in which notions of gender are constructed and enacted (...)” (Helman/Ratele 2016:11). In families, children experience gendered socialisation including gendered admonishments (see Section 1.1.1). They also learn about gender equality or inequality within families. Jauch et al. point to considerable variation in terms of different family structures prevailing in Namibia (Jauch et al. 2011:191).<sup>290</sup>

Some people in Outjo perceive gender relations before independence as much better than today, because, they claim the mutual expectations of men and women had been clear then (e.g., Magda, Robert, both 2009; Men’s Debate). This can be read as reflecting deep uncertainties as a result of changing and ambiguous gender constructions, as well as changing power relations. On the other hand, it may be similar to the phenomenon discussed in Chapter 4: people are experiencing a present that is difficult to cope with and at the same time are palliating a difficult past. However, under the previous restrictive hierarchical system before independence, there was not much space in which to negotiate gender relations, unlike today. In present day Namibia, living in a democratic system which aims to secure equal rights for all, there are tensions and conflicts in intimate relationships, as people’s gendered socialisation may not fit with the current demands for gender equality. Other reasons are that there are different opinions for couples according to how they understand equal rights and how they decide to raise their children (see Chapters 6 and 7). In times of democratic change, it becomes necessary to negotiate and clarify certain issues that were not discussed in the past. There are no role models for the new generations in this regard. They have to find their own way of living in intimate relationships. Gendered responsibilities, division of labour and gendered decision-making all play important roles for everyday life and need to be negotiated by the intimate partners and in families.

Intimate relationships in Namibia are influenced by politics, media, religion, and Culture, as well as traditions and neo-traditions. Another factor that has a significant impact on intimate

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<sup>290</sup> Jauch et al. differentiate the following family types: conjugal, consaguine, affinalties, fictive, matrifocal/matricentric, polygamous (formal and informal), extended families, split households, child-headed households. I add families with homosexual parents to this list. In this chapter the focus is on heterosexual intimate relationships. Conflicts and violence that occur within families are discussed in Section 4.3 on inter-generational relations. For more details see Jauch et al. 2011:191-193.

relationships and families is the common and widespread phenomenon of migration due to the uneven distribution of job opportunities, education, social and medical services (see Chapter 4). Due to the spatial distances resulting from migration, many couples as well as families are separated and no longer share their daily routine. That can lead to emotional distance within those relationships and also to separation.

### **Low marriage rates in Southern Africa**

Low marriage rates may also help to account for the instability in intimate relationships, families and households. In the pre-colonial past, marriage was a normal rite of passage to adulthood, and it governed norms about gender relations, sexual relations, reproduction, inheritance, division of labour and social security for most Southern African people. This has profoundly changed since the last century (Pauli 2014). In southern Africa as a whole, marriage rates have declined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pauli and Van Dijk 2016 give an overview).<sup>291</sup> In Outjo Constituency, 55% of people aged 15 or over had never been married, 22% were married with a certificate, 5% were married traditionally, 15% were in a consensual union, 1% were separated or divorced, and 2% were widowed (NSA 2014). The Inter-Censal Demographic Survey shows an even higher rate of 63.5% of people who had never been married for the nation as a whole (NSA 2017a:52).

Childbearing and sexuality are perceived and practiced increasingly as separate from marriage (Pauli 2012); sexuality has become “informal” (Pauli 2007a:201f). Colonial influences such as the contract labour system, in which in the first instance only men were allowed to migrate and women were left behind, played a role in the disruption of families and intimate relationships (Winterfeldt 2002, see Chapter 2). Another important factor is class formation processes (Pauli 2009, 2011). The low marriage rates are influenced by the normalisation of lavish weddings among elite groups, while huge economic inequalities persist. They particularly reflect the commodification of social relationships (Tvedten 2011:170, see below). Since the 1970s, a small local elite has developed in Namibia who celebrate expensive weddings using marriage as a class marker.<sup>292</sup> Before the 1970s, expenditure on weddings was low (Pauli 2011).<sup>293</sup> In the case of the small town of Fransfontein, Pauli ascribes this to the establishment of homelands. Here, a local administration and infrastructure (hospitals, schools, hostels) were created, which led to an increase in job opportunities. The South African Administration’s approach of privileging a small group of older black men who made decisions about these new resources led to the

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<sup>291</sup> The scientific journal “Anthropology Southern Africa” published a special issue on “Change and continuity in Southern African marriages” which explored decreasing marriage rates in the whole of southern Africa (Pauli/Van Dijk 2016).

<sup>292</sup> Pauli (2011) mentions the high costs of the asking-ritual, engagement, and wedding, such as cow-slaughtering, expensive jewellery for the bride, wedding venues, catering for a large number of invited guests, and wedding attire for the groom and bride as well as bridesmaids, and groomsmen.

<sup>293</sup> Thomas points to the fact that, in Caprivi, prices for *lobola*, the bride price for traditional marriages, have also increased sharply since the 1970s (Thomas 2007). However, in Outjo traditional marriage is not common.

emergence of a small elite and a small middle class.<sup>294</sup> However, only 16% of the population of Fransfontein are classified as elite and able to afford a wedding (Pauli 2009, 2010, 2012:412). Pauli states that “(...) marriage has become more a marker of the financial stage a couple has attained than a passage in the life cycle” (Pauli 2011:163). This is also confirmed by the School Survey. While marriage rates are low for the majority of people in Outjo, in the more affluent white community as well as in the case of better off black couples, marriage is still common and expected<sup>295</sup>, as is having children within marriage. The learners at the Private School Morea (PSM) mostly grew up in families, where the norms of marriage and conservative gender constructions are prevalent, which may be linked to the Dutch Reformed Church. People from the Afrikaner community tend to formalise relationships with children or to do so before children are born. Moreover, the learners were attending a private school and thus most of them came from privileged families with relatively high, regular incomes. These more closed systems do have different implications. There is greater continuity in social relations, but also less flexibility and openness to changes in the gender system that can bring about gender equality. Additionally, it might be more difficult to break out from such a rigid system in the case of violence perpetrated by the husband. However, this is also linked to other factors (see Section 8.1.2).

### **Marriage as the prevailing ideal**

Although for the majority of people marriage is no longer a normal part of life, and is becoming more inaccessible, marriage has remained the entry point for being perceived as an adult (Pauli 2011). It is also included and regarded as important in the government's *Namibia Vision 2030* (OoP 2004). In addition, marriage is demanded by the #Aodaman<sup>296</sup> Customary law and those of other ethnic groups (Hinz et al. 2013). Pauli describes how, during public events (such as weddings or funerals), people in Fransfontein are divided into two groups: married and unmarried people, regarding where they sit and what they eat. Married people are given more respect, better seats and more food (Pauli 2011). I also observed this division as important in the Laodecia Pentecostal Church in Outjo and Windhoek. It was a structuring element dividing believers not only according to where they sit at wedding events but also regarding events which were addressed specifically to married or

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<sup>294</sup> See Section 4.1 footnote 239 for an explanation of the differentiation between the elite and middle class in Outjo referring to a research of Pauli (2012) in Fransfontein.

<sup>295</sup> In the Private School Morea, of the 44 participating learners, in 31 cases, their parents were married, 12 were divorced and in one case their parents had remarried, but there are no cases of parents living together but not being married. Regarding the learners from a poor economic background, such as those at Etosha Poort Junior Secondary School, of the 28 participants in the School Study, only six had parents who were married, 3 were divorced, 5 were not married but lived together, and 13 had parents who were neither married nor living together, and one learner did not fill in this section. As expected, the participants from the Outjo Secondary School came somewhere in between the other two, as did the school fees, pointing again to the link between financial capability and the ability to marry. Of the 72 participants, 31 had parents who were married, 8 were divorced, 5 were not married but lived together and 26 were neither married, nor living together. Two learners did not answer this question.

<sup>296</sup> See Section 5.1, footnote 269 on #Aodaman.

unmarried believers (Gierse-Arsten 2005:39). Pauli describes how unmarried people go to weddings and look in through the windows, feeling degraded as outsiders or mere onlookers (Pauli 2014). This shows that society differentiates between married and unmarried people. Married people speak of themselves proudly, and have a sense of belonging to a respected group of people, which they contrast with the problematic youth (see Section 4.3). Moreover, through the media, people are also confronted with “globalised ideas of romance, emotional intimacy and (...) wedding” (Boulton 2017:41). This is disseminated through the media, for example in soap operas. Many learners wish to find a life-long companion or, as one learner expressed it, a “soul mate” (19 years old boy, School Survey, 080 B 12). Some answers in the School Survey revealed a romantic ideal of love (see also M. Hunter 2010, 2015). Others viewed marriage as a protection against HIV or cheating. Many answers sounded more like a romantic dream than a reality, given the statistics on marriage.

Thus, marriage remains the prevailing ideal but has developed from a social reality into a “collective imagination” (Pauli 2014:81). It also represents an ideal for poor people (Tvedten 2011:146). Tvedten stresses ideals of romance, security, and a romantic view of tradition. Modern ideas of romance are transmitted via the media and the expensive wedding festivities of well-off local people and also of celebrities. This also applies to other parts of Africa (M. Hunter 2016). Marriage is an important ideal for adolescents as well (see also Kaundjua et al. 2014, Thomas 2007). In the School Survey it was revealed that 74.6% of the learners want to marry in the future.<sup>297</sup> The learners gave interesting rationales for this: their responses reflect the notion of marriage as synonymous with being lucky and supported in the future, and of being in good hands, while some added that this would be a situation that contrasted with how they felt currently. This was also found in Pauli’s and Dawid’s research: “to be married or not to be married is thus for many Namibians similar to having access to the essential ingredients of a decent adult life” (Pauli/Dawids 2017:25). Thus, marriage is desired as offering an entry point to the middle class. There are also so-called “struggle marriages” (Pauli/Dawids 2017:20), whereby people with few resources marry and are financially supported by kin (Pauli/Dawids 2017) or the couple gets into debt. They marry without the available means but are often pressured by kin to have similar lavish weddings to the elite. This causes much stress and conflict between the relatives of the groom and bride (ibid). When asked why they would not prefer a modest wedding, most people strongly opposed this idea as it would be like “stealing marriage” (Pauli/Dawids 2017:23).

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<sup>297</sup> In the School Survey, the question “In your future, would you like to marry?” was asked. 106 learners (74,6%) said they want to marry in the future, 14 learners (9,9%) said they do not want to marry, and 22 learners (15,5%) said they do not know yet. 2 responses were unusable. In this question there were clear differences between OSS and EJSS on the one hand and PSM on the other. Not a single learner at PSM said he or she did not want to marry.

The prevailing marriage ideal is also strongly connected to religion. Many learners referred to God in their accounts of marrying and having children (see Section 5.1). In Pentecostal Churches and in the Dutch Reformed Church, unmarried believers are encouraged to marry before becoming sexually involved with a partner (see Chapters 6 and 7). The DRC even developed a special programme, *Choose to wait*,<sup>298</sup> in relation to this (see also Sections 6.1). In the white community it is essential to be married before having children. For girls the ideal of entering into marriage as a virgin is of utmost importance (see Chapter 7), which has its basis in Christian belief and norms (in this case DRC). The example of the Laodecia Pentecostal Church in Outjo and Windhoek shows that, even in a context in which many believers are poor, they use their Pentecostal networks for redistribution of resources and to make marriage possible (see Gierse-Arsten 2005). Pauli also points to the higher marriage rates among Pentecostal believers (Pauli 2012).

Few participants in the School Survey mentioned tradition as a reason for wanting to marry. In pre-colonial times, especially before Christianisation, polygyny was a common traditional practice among many groups in Namibia (see Section 2.1). Today there are few traditional marriages. In the Namibia Demographic and Health Survey 2006-07 (MOHSS/Macro 2008:76f), 6% of the married women (age group 15-49) said they live in a polygamous unit while only 3% of the men said the same. In the NDHS of 2000 the figure for women in the same group was double (ibid). There is a lot of regional variation in this respect, and more rural than urban women live in formal polygynous unions (ibid). It may be difficult for urban men to find women who want to live in a polygamous union, because women tend to have more modern aspirations for relationships (van der Vliet 1991). On the other hand, traditions are also changing: the *Aodaman* customary law and several others forbid people from having multiple concurrent partners due to the high HIV risk (Hinz et al. 2013).

However, marriage in Pentecostal Churches or in the Afrikaner community, as well as traditional marriages, only applies to a small group of people. That means the majority of people do not wait until marriage to have sexual encounters and have children. Only at a later stage of the relationship does the couple decide together whether to marry, or the woman might wait for the man to approach her (see Chapter 7). Parents or extended families are now less involved in the intimate relationships of their adult children than in previous times (Thomas 2007, Boden 2008; see Section 4.3), despite their involvement in organising and funding 'struggle marriages' (see above).

As marriage is still the ideal, most young people are in a state of *waithood* for marriage (Honwana 2012, see Section 4.3) so that they can become adults in the eyes of society, which is described as a kind of limbo between childhood and adulthood. People often wait for

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<sup>298</sup> This programme was renamed in 2012 as "Genesis Design" (WEB KfC).

a very long time before getting married (Pauli 2014) or they do not marry at all. The unmarried people are excluded not only from the higher status ascribed to married people but are also confronted with the unattainability of their dreams due to their own poverty. This is especially difficult and increases the pressure on males as they are expected to provide for such weddings (see Chapter 6). The discrepancy between the ideal of marriage and the reality of economic inequalities leads to frustration, especially if people can see that in some groups people are able to afford marriage, such as within the local Afrikaner community or in the case of celebrities (for more on inequalities see Chapter 4).

### **Dating, sexuality, and proposing**

Boys and girls start to have intimate relationships in their teenage years. In the School Survey I asked: “What do you expect from a good relationship?” The most frequently mentioned keywords by learners were honesty, trust, respect, love, faithfulness, loyalty, support, care, communication, understanding, commitment, and responsibility. Regarding sexuality<sup>299</sup>, boys and girls are influenced by differing norms: while boys learn to gain experience by having girlfriends and having sex with different girls (see Chapter 6), girls are admonished not to engage in sexual activities at a young age and to prevent pregnancy (see Chapter 7). Hailonga-van Dijk (2005) points to a different “understanding of love” between the two genders: girls want romantic love not necessarily involving sex, and boys want to gain sexual experience (see also Kaundjua et al. 2014). Jane thinks that boys are just sex-oriented and do not really understand what an intimate relationship means (Jane, Group Discussion, 2006). However, this difference also depends on the methodology used to obtain data. On the one hand, I found a widespread perception of young men as only interested in themselves and gaining as much sexual experience as possible. However, on the other hand, in individual interviews and also in the School Survey questionnaire, there were adolescent boys who had similar perceptions to girls regarding love and intimate relationships, and were not just focussed on sex. Certainly, there is a lot of pressure among peer groups for boys to have sex. Moreover, a small group of adolescents, more girls than boys, want to abstain from sex until marriage (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Boys propose to girls in order to have an intimate relationship and propose to their girlfriends when they want to have sex. The act of proposing is reserved for males; if females initiate it, they are likely to be seen and designated as a “whore” (Allison, 2009) or “slut” (Estie, 2009) (Kaundjua et al. 2014; and see Chapter 7).<sup>300</sup> This means that, on the one hand, men actively choose their partner. On the other hand, the man enforces his own will to become sexually involved on his female partner. There were a number of narratives about violent

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<sup>299</sup> Sexuality is understood here as not only a biological act but bound into Culture and gender constructions as well as economic factors.

<sup>300</sup> This view is reflected by several research participants, although there might be also women who propose to have sex.

proposals (see Section 8.1), but it is difficult to deduce much about their prevalence. In the School Survey, 81 learners of 137 (usable answers) said they had already had sex (32 girls and 49 boys).

The young white research participants said that adolescents who are sexually active are very cautious about not creating a pregnancy, but are not concerned about the risk of contracting HIV. One interviewee, Pieter, said that white adolescents would not think about the risk of getting HIV. This was confirmed by the School Survey: only 14 out of 44 participants from the PSM said the HIV status of their sexual partner plays an important part in their decision to have sex or not. Most white children think that AIDS is a problem exclusive to the blacks and they also get this impression from the school (Pieter, 2009). In response to my question about whether and how HIV was talked about in his school, Pieter said:

Not really. I have geography, there is a piece in the book, they talk about. (...) the picture you get from the book, (...) is that it's the blacks, and it's a problem for them but it's not talked about much. (Pieter, 2009)

Estie also confirmed that this was the case for the youth of the Afrikaner community. Wise too encountered the idea of "HIV/AIDS as a 'black disease'" (Wise 2007:338, quotation marks in the original) among elite Afrikaner men in Windhoek. However, among the other two groups who participated in the School Survey, only 26 participants said that HIV status is important in relation to their decision about whether to have sex. Nonetheless, of the 81 sexually active learners, 69 said they were able to protect against HIV (28 girls and 41 boys).

As described in Chapter 4, many adolescents lack guidance from their caregivers. Hailonga-van Dijk identifies the lack of communication as one problem that affects inter-generational relations (2005). Caregivers have certain expectations of adolescents, which the young people are aware of, such as for girls to stay virgins and not have a boyfriend, and not to go to pubs, locally called *shebeens*. However, adolescents break these rules, but hide their behaviour from their parents. If they are directly asked by their caregivers they deny it and simply lie (Hailonga-van Dijk 2005). This makes it difficult for them to ask their caregivers for support if they have problems with an intimate partner.

### **Living together: gendered division of labour, decision making, and head of household**

At a certain stage of an intimate relationship couples decide to live together and/or have children together. One consequence of the low marriage rates is that many couples cohabit without being married, a practice common in large parts of Southern Africa (M. Hunter 2016, van Pauli/van Dijk 2016, LAC 2010). Couples live in cohabitating unions (Pauli 2011:162, Tvedten 2011), which have hardly any normative regulation by law (see LAC 2010, 2017). One exception is that the *Combating of Domestic Violence Act* does include domestic relationships between men and women, which are similar to marriage. Since the *Children's*

*Status Act*<sup>301</sup> of 2006 discrimination towards children born outside marriage were abolished. Children born within and outside marriage have equal rights including inheriting from their fathers. Besides this, there are no regulations regarding property or inheritance for the intimate partners, as is the case in civil marriage.<sup>302</sup>

When couples live together, there are questions about who is responsible for which tasks. However, in most interviews it was revealed that the gendered division of labour is *not* a question for most people and, neither is it negotiated. Thus, the notion of separate spheres for men and women and the complementary character of gender relations (see above) are reflected in the gendered division of labour. This perception is shaped by the idea of the man as the provider and the woman is seen as the keeper of the household and caregiver. People learn about the gendered division of labour in childhood (see Chapters 6 and 7). Among younger couples, if one party is sick, the other may take on their responsibilities although this does not conform to common gender norms (Allison, 2009). However, in normal everyday activities the division of labour is gendered. Thus, dependencies are created within families and it is a common cause of conflict if one party does not fulfil the expected tasks that the other one thinks s/he should be doing (Chapter 6).

As was described in Chapter 2, decision-making in intimate relationships in colonial times was the sole preserve of men, and women had to go along with it. In statements about decision-making in present day Namibia, interviewees reported that the man has to consult his partner when making a decision but the final decision is still often made by him. This is confirmed by the older interviewee, Magda:

But now that people do have rights some men even consider to consult the wife before they make the final decision (...) but some men are still like that that they have the final say in everything. (Magda, 2009)

When I asked male research participants about decision-making, several ambiguities were revealed (see Chapter 6).

The *Namibian Population and Housing Census* of 2011 produced the following results for Outjo regarding the heads of households: 64.4% of households have a male head and 35.6% are headed by a female (NSA 2014:36). However, these data do not include the status or duration of the intimate relationship between the partners. In Pauli's study, heads of households were men in steady intimate relationships and unmarried women staying without a partner (Pauli 2007b). In the School Survey, 34 learners said they grew up with a female head of household, but in most cases that meant a household with a single mother, grandmother or an aunt, rather than a couple, while 53 learners said they grew up with a male head of household. 56 learners said that both their male and female caregivers are joint

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<sup>301</sup> This act was re-pealed and re-enacted by the *Childcare and Protection Act* in 2015.

<sup>302</sup> Unless a married couple decide otherwise, the rule is to marry "in community of property".

heads of the household. However, the item, 'joint or equally shared head of household', does not feature in the *Namibian Population and Housing Census*. However, I do not know if this is because it was not given as an option or if people just did not choose it. If it was not included as an option, this shows that Culture is reflected in research, by giving people an "either/or" choice implying already a hierarchical relations. Intimate relationships may be changing in this respect. As described above (and in Chapter 4), many households in Namibia are not very stable and their composition changes over different time frames. This also means that heads of households may vary according to gender and generation.

Regarding customary law, the example of the law of the #Aodaman Damara group has ambiguous and questionable implications. It is written down that a man is the head of the household and it is stressed that this male head should treat his subordinates with the "utmost respect" and not use physical violence towards women, children and elders. The female members of #Aodaman society may be "regarded as partners in charge of domestic affairs in their households, and shall serve as advisors to their spouses and/or partners, but shall not allow any form of physical and emotional abuse from their male partners" (Hinz et al. 2013:440). Thus, a clear hierarchy is prescribed. It also begs the question, how can a woman "allow" or "not allow" her partner to be violent? Moreover, a pre-existing victim blaming attitude is evident (see Section 8.2).

### **Commodification of intimate relationships**

In Southern Africa there is a strong link between sexual relations and material means in intimate relationships (M. Hunter 2015). This is true for marital as well as non-marital relationships. It is expected that the man should provide for the material needs of his female intimate partners and for the income of a family (see Chapters 6 and 7). This is also true to a certain extent for other regions of the world. However, Mark Hunter (2015) points to the difference between gifts given to economically independent women and the fundamental support of economically under-privileged women. Worldwide, then, there are interconnections between materiality and intimate relationships.<sup>303</sup> I therefore do not want to suggest that this commodification is unique to southern Africa but to see the local expression of this worldwide phenomenon as reflecting gender inequalities which are responsible for economic dependencies, thereby limiting the agency of females as well as males (see Sections 6.1, 7.1, 8.1).

Regarding non-marital relationships "(...) the exchange of gifts for sex is part of a broader set of obligations that might not involve a predetermined payment" (M. Hunter 2002:101). This does not mean prostitution, but that intimate relationships are characterised by material

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<sup>303</sup> In the global north for example, this link between materiality and dating can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century when "men's money was at the centre of the dating system", and was thus connected to "sexual access" to women (M. Hunter 2015:366).

support in the form of food, money and other household items, and also gifts – from men to women. Mark Hunter, who conducted research in South Africa over a long time period, calls the phenomenon “transactional sex” (M. Hunter 2002:100). His research participants called their partners “‘girlfriends’ and ‘boyfriends’ and not ‘prostitutes’ and ‘clients’” (ibid:100f). In contrast to prostitution, women select their intimate partner (ibid). People generally view their relationships as also involving love and affection. Love may have different meanings: love may involve a high degree of devotion without expecting anything in return, for example a woman who is in a relationship with a man who does not support her; but, on the other hand, gifts may also be seen as an expression of love (see also M. Hunter 2010).

The long-term director of the GRAP at LAC, Dianne Hubbard, speaks of a “kind of continuum between sex work, as we know it, and transactional relationships of all different sorts” (quoted by Chikuhwa 2011:59). The transactional nature of relationships can be observed both in short-term intimate encounters, and in long-term relationships. Thus, I call this phenomenon “transactional intimate relationships” or “commodified intimate relationships” because of their commodified character. These kinds of relationships involve two economically unequal partners; often a woman from a poor economic background with an economically successful and usually older man; however they can also be between partners of the same age.<sup>304</sup> Moreover, Schaumburg shows through her research on Bonyatsi in South Africa, a specific form of transactional relationships, that financially independent and educated women may also choose transactional relationships, often with concurrent partners, to diversify the risk but also to benefit from gifts, and to gain access to status symbols (Schaumburg 2013, see Chapter 7). In unequal societies, social status becomes more important, as well as securing an income (Wilkinson/Pickett 2009:59, see Chapter 4). The transfer of material goods is not gender-neutral but is usually directed from males to females. Often the other way around is strongly opposed to (see Section 7.1) and seen as a shameful for the man. It is a risk diversifying strategy by the women to get material support for themselves and their children.<sup>305</sup> In Namibia the term *kamboroto* means “small bread” and describes inter-generational intimate relationships between young (adult) women and older men. In this case the men do not need to support the women as their spouses but only with “small bread” (Edwards-Jauch 2012:112, endnote 1).

The commodification of intimate relationships is common in Outjo, and in Namibia (Ipinge/Lebeau 2005:35, Tvedten 2011, Pinho et al. 2016) and Southern Africa as a whole (M. Hunter 2010, Zembe et al. 2015). Materiality plays an important role in sexual encounters and intimate relationships in general. It is influenced by the fact that, due to the unequal access of the genders to resources, men still have better opportunities to earn an income.

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<sup>304</sup> See Kaufman/Stavrou 2004 on South Africa, Kaundjua et al. 2014 and Pinho et al. 2016 on northern Namibia.

<sup>305</sup> See for Namibia: Pauli 2007a, Tvedten 2011, MOHSS/Macro 2008, Ipinge/LeBeau 2005, and for South Africa: M. Hunter 2002; and see below and Chapter 7.

This can be seen as a colonial legacy influenced by contract labour which, initially, was only accessible to men (Edwards-Jauch 2016:56) but also to the sole responsibility of women for children (see Chapter 7). This implies strong dependencies, for example, if the woman has no income and is responsible for taking care of and feeding “her” children, how much agency is possible for her, and what happens if her partner loses his job?

The commodification of intimate relationships has a precedent in the traditional institution of *lobola*. All Namibian cultures practiced this custom of a brideprice given by the groom or his family to the bride’s family (see Section 2.1). Moreover, Mark Hunter sees a connection between the decrease in marriage rates and commodification: “The decline in marriage for poor people (...) helped to structure love as being more entangled with men’s support of women through individual gifts (...)” (M. Hunter 2015:369). Hunter links this connection between intimate relationships and material transactions to the widespread phenomenon of having multiple concurrent partners (M. Hunter 2002:100, see below): a few economically successful men are “shared” by several women being supported by their partners. Transactional intimate relationships also happen along generational lines, the prime example being older, well-off men using their position and status to get much younger sexual partners with few resources (see Chapters 4, 6, 7, 8). However, age difference is important in terms of power relations and economic power as well as social status. The phenomenon of older men in powerful or just well-off positions, such as teachers or politicians who give money or resources for sex, implies a strong power imbalance. In general, the widespread commodification of intimate relationships reflects deep inequalities in terms of socio-economic opportunities and within gender relations in Namibia.

### **Sexuality in long-term intimate relationships**

The widespread perception, supported by the legal framework, during colonial times that men had marital power also included the decision to have sex. If women did not want sex within an intimate relationship, they needed a good explanation. Nowadays sex is seen as a profound part of intimate relationships (Kaundjua et al. 2014). For some of the research participants, marriage also means a cementation of the sexual aspect of life. The partners are obliged to give sex to each other, as Lucy affirmed: “When couples are married, that women should always be available for the man (...)” (Lucy, 2006). On the question of whether one partner may refuse sex, she added: “They can say ‘no’ but it will break their relationship” (ibid). This is not limited to marriage but applies to intimate relationships in general. Thomas identified the attitude which is common among people that one should not refuse sex within marriage because it is “considered ‘unnatural’ and disrespectful” (Thomas 2007:610). However, although this seems quite gender-neutral, in practice it tends to mean that the female is expected to have sex with her partner. If we see it in the context of power asymmetric transactional relationships (see above), the material connotations of

relationships make it even more difficult for a woman to say 'no' to a partner who is materially supporting her and her children. On the other hand, men are expected to provide, which gives them access to a sexual relationship (see Chapter 6). Hunter describes this mutual dependency:

That sex creates a debt that men must pay can therefore be seen as a moral arrangement; indeed one that echoes marital love relationships whereby a man supports a wife to whom he has sexual access. (M. Hunter 2015:364)

This means that, if the woman refuses, the partner could: a) be angry, b) go to other women, or c) behave violently. Edwards (2007) also found that the refusal of sex within a relationship may also lead to violence (see also LAC 2006, and see Chapter 8).

Gockel-Frank (2009) describes a period of sexual abstinence after giving birth which was common during colonial times. Approximately one year until the baby could walk the woman stayed sexually abstinent and some also went back to their mother's house (Gockel-Frank 2009). During this time their steady partner had sexual relations with other women and sometimes the woman even had to raise the children born from these other relationships as well (Gockel-Frank 2009:16). Magda (2009) also mentioned that she had to raise an additional child of her husband. Maybe women and men are still influenced by this. It reveals an important point of conflict in intimate relationships, when men expect to have post natal sexual contact even if it might put the health of the women at risk. Giving birth to a child is a major turning point in women's lives and caring for a newborn entails many efforts. Moreover, if the women need to care for other children as well, life is exhausting for women during this time of establishing a family. Additionally, the body of a woman has changed during and after pregnancy as well as during breastfeeding and a new body feeling has developed. After birth many women might not want to have sex while they are focused on the newborn. However, because women fear their intimate partners might cheat on them they give in to sex with them (Gockel-Frank 2009). This is also evident from the widespread use of the hormonal injection (Depo Provera) to prevent a pregnancy, directly after birth, even though this carries risks for the breast-fed child (Gockel-Frank 2009).

During the interview with Lucy she revealed an ambiguous attitude towards who makes decisions about sex. On the one hand, when asked in the abstract if women can say 'no to sex', she said that it is possible for a woman to refuse sex, for example when she is not feeling well. On the other hand, she said that this would be seen as a reason why her partner would look for another girlfriend. When asked more specifically who decides to have sex in the place where she lives, the location Etosha Poort, she replied:

Lucy	It's the men, more the men.
SGA	And why?
Lucy	Because it's mostly only the men who are sexually active, they always want to have sex. And the women, the whole day she is busy working, and she gets tired

most of the time, she just wants to sleep but the man is demanding to have sex.  
(Lucy, 2006)

Condom use was not very popular in Namibia during the time of my research.<sup>306</sup> It depends on what kind of relationship the parties involved are in. If it is just casual sex, then the use of condoms is frequent. In long-term intimate relationships based on trust, the use of condoms is more unusual (Pauli/Schnegg 2007), as well as if partners fall in love (see Pinho et al. 2016) or are connected in transactional relationships (M. Hunter 2010). In a context where there is a lot of mistrust (see Chapter 4), it is important for people to create intimate relationships based on trust (Pauli/Schnegg 2007). However, even if one partner wants to use a condom, it is likely to be perceived as a source of suspicion that they may be being unfaithful to their partner.<sup>307</sup> Mufune found the perception among male research participants that women would not want their partners to use condoms as these are seen as a symbol of “lacking trust and love” (Mufune 2009:241). There is a general mistrust of condoms (Pauli/Schnegg 2007) influenced by a variety of factors, as Rigillo’s research (2009) suggests. On the one hand, during South African colonial times, birth control policies, including forced sterilisation as well as other abuses (see Chapter 2), led to suspicion of governmental approaches. That time, SWAPO took the opposite approach by adopting a pro-life policy (Rigillo 2009, see Section 2.2.3). The churches have traditionally opposed the promotion of condoms (Hailonga-van Dijk 2007), while, for a long time, the Namibian Government has pursued an HIV prevention policy of the “a,b,c” rules: abstain, be faithful, or use condoms, which implies a clear ranking.<sup>308</sup>

Moreover, adults want to have children, and therefore they do not use condoms. For example, Luthrecia recalled a married man approaching her who wanted to have sex without a condom, saying: “I will not sleep with you with a condom, I will give you a child” (Luthrecia, 2009), although they were not in a steady relationship. The intention of “giving you a child” was also mentioned by the research participant Emma (see Chapter 7). Gockel-Frank highlighted the common perception of a child as a “gift from God” in the title of her article (Gockel-Frank 2007). In the School Survey both girls and boys said the second most important characteristic of an ideal marriage partner was to be a good father or a good mother.

### **Commodification of intimate relationships as a hidden cause of conflict**

The phenomenon of widespread transactional relationships reflects unequal gender relations. Transactional relationships involve a complicated power system. Some women

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<sup>306</sup> It is difficult to assess condom use, because it can be assumed that people sometimes give “the politically correct” or “perceived expected” answer or simply lie. Moreover, attitudes towards condom use may have changed since my research.

<sup>307</sup> See Thomas 2007, Edwards 2007, Gockel-Frank 2007, Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011; and see the advice of an HIV counsellor (Expert 33, 2009) to female clients in Section 7.1.

<sup>308</sup> For more information on HIV/AIDS see Chapters 4, 6 and 7.

choose to have sexual relationships in exchange for gifts, and thus some men with little or no income have difficulty getting a partner (see Chapter 6). On the other hand, and especially if she has to care for children, a woman can be desperate to keep a relationship based on material transactions even if her partner behaves abusively (see Section 8.1). In this respect, the distinction that Hunter makes can aid our understanding: he distinguishes between “sex linked to subsistence” and “sex linked to consumption” (M. Hunter 2002:101, see also Pinho et al. 2016). I conclude that women whose main reason for being in a relationship is subsistence needs are in a much weaker and more vulnerable position than women who choose to be in such a relationship for the purpose of consumption. However, both partners can have power. The woman can pressurise the men and demand more resources. Expert 2, who had lived and worked as pastor of DRC in Outjo for many years, ascribed more power to women in this scenario:

Sex is maybe the strongest weapon the women have. To say ‘ok, you can have sex with me, but you have to pay, you have to do this for me, you have to keep quiet about this’. I think a woman is more authority in that case than men. She can tell him ‘we can stay together, but I need this, otherwise I will find another guy. Especially when she is young, it is much easier to find a willing man, because many men don’t like women with children, older women. They slightly use young girls. (Expert 2, 2006)

This statement suggests that older women are in a weaker position, as are women with children or teenage girls (see Section 8.1.2). It also reveals that men can sometimes be in a potentially weaker position too. Men can be insecure and therefore may want to control their partners (Expert 2, 2006). What the interviewee does not take into account is the problem of HIV and condom use: the man can use his financial power to refuse to wear condoms. Moreover, the age difference between the older man and the young woman implies a power asymmetry to the disadvantage of the female. Money and strong feelings create dependencies within relationships. The women use their attractiveness and sometimes their youth, while the men use their status and their economic potential. Either the wealthier partner has the power or the partner who is less emotionally involved (see also Kaundjua et al. 2014). When considering the different economic realities for males and females, as well as the differences within each gender (see Moore 1996), this common commodification of intimate relationships has some significant implications, as well as creating dependencies (see Chapters 6 and 7) as well as conflicts. Common cohabitation may work in many cases but in the context of severe poverty, when both partners live under poor conditions. Tvedten explains that tensions can often run high between the cohabitating partners:

It [cohabitation] is usually on an *ad hoc* basis as a result of a combination of sexual courtship and difficult economic circumstances; and it easily yields to pressure when relationships cool down and turn out not to resolve the economic problems people face. (Tvedten 2011:141, iiba by SGA)

This indicates a high potential for conflict in poor households. Linked to this commodification of intimate relationships is men’s tendency to see their female partner as part of their

property. This includes sexuality and decision-making regarding sex. As Hailonga-van Dijk puts it: “The social construction of femininity and masculinity has boys viewing the girls as sellers and the men as buyers” (Hailonga-van Dijk 2005:238). In focus group discussions with young men in Caprivi where the brideprice *lobola* is still important, Thomas also encountered the ideal of marriage but linked to a “level of ‘ownership’ over the wife” (Thomas 2007:607). A research participant in my study talked about his future girlfriend during the Group Discussion in a way that implies a degree of ownership:

- Rob: She is mine and I am hers.  
SGA: What do you mean when you said ‘when she is MINE’? Does it imply that she cannot say ‘no’ [regarding sex] to you?  
Rob: She can, any woman can say ‘no’ or ‘yes’, but the one who says ‘yes’ to me, it’s mine!” (Group Discussion 2006:6, iiba by SGA)

In this romantic dream this young research participant reveals a desire for his partner to belong solely to him. Although clearly this cannot be compared to the possessiveness of violent men, it could nonetheless be a starting point for such attitudes. A Windhoek-based male activist, Chairperson of White Ribbon, Expert 46, who originates from Caprivi, drew a link to *lobola* which is still important there. As part of the marriage negotiations, men give cows to the parents of the bride. He concludes that: “Men can demand from the woman whatever he wants, if she does not follow, her family will lose the cows. The woman is seen as property and the man can have sex whenever he wants. Men are the one holding the resources” (Expert 46, 2006). Male possessiveness may be one reason why well-off women choose not to marry and to retain their independence and make their own decisions. I met several women who showed some reluctance towards marriage, and these were not only financially independent women (e.g. Allison, 2009 and see Chapter 7).

In a society in which this commodification of relationships is prevalent, certain problems may result. Allison describes one situation that she experienced: She wanted to pay a taxi driver to deliver something for her; he did not want the N\$20 fee but instead wanted to have sex with her. She refused and just gave him the money. After that, she was always on the alert when she saw him in town (Allison, 2009). Potgieter et al. describe this as a frequent form of transactional relationships between young women and older taxi drivers in South Africa (Potgieter et al. 2012). Expert 47, a former member of NAMEC, described a situation in a bar whereby some women would “force themselves on the men” who would then pay for everything, in the expectation of getting sex afterwards, and if the woman did not want to have sex, they would rape her (Expert 47, informal communication 2006). This phenomenon was often talked about in interviews, with people blaming the woman for the rape (see Section 8.2). Moreover, in Kaundjua, Kauari and Mufune’s study (2014), female research participants talked about a strategy used by boys to convince girls to have sex with them by giving them gifts. Thus, even among partners of similar age, gift giving by males is a very common part of intimate relationships and is not questioned.

The connection between relationships and resources makes it difficult to understand the motives for intimate relationships and opens up space in people's minds for speculation and suspicion: does she love him or does she just want his resources? Does he love her or does he just want to "possess" her body or add a new sexual partner to his list? This idea is expressed by a boy who participated in the School Survey, explaining why he chose the option of not wanting to marry in future: "Because women only want to get married to get what belongs to a man" (16 year-old boy, 137 C 10). This underlines the importance of the socio-economic setting in understanding intimate relationships and conflicts within Namibia (see Chapter 4). I concluded that, in a context of widespread poverty and economic inequality, the commodification of sexual relationships has a very clear consequence: money decides. This is especially the case if the man is older than the woman. In this case an economic and an age disparity lead to a power imbalance. Often the man sets the framework within which sex happens: when and if prevention of HIV and other STDs is practiced, as well as perhaps risking a pregnancy (see also Pinho et al. 2016, and for South Africa Zembe et al. 2015). Mark Hunter points to the link between condom use and the material support of men: "Condoms are much more likely to be used in short-term prostitute relations than in longer-term relations underpinned by gifts" (M. Hunter 2015:372). This means, if women are receiving permanent material support from men, for example, if the man pays for her apprenticeship, it is difficult for the woman to negotiate about the use of condoms.

Linked to the common commodification of intimate relationships is the widespread behaviour of men having multiple sexual partners concurrently (M. Hunter 2002:100) causing further conflict.

### **Multiple concurrent sexual relations as a connected cause of conflict**

The proportion of men in steady relationships who have additional sexual partners<sup>309</sup> far exceeds the proportion of women in the same situation. As Pauli and Schnegg found during their anthropological research in small town Fransfontein, which is also situated in the north-western part of Namibia, 38 % of men of all ages, and 45% of men aged 15 to 24 admitted having cheated on a partner (Pauli/Schnegg 2007:427).<sup>310</sup> The women answered this question as follows: 16% of all women and 20% of the 15 to 24 year-olds said they have been unfaithful to a partner (ibid). In my research, among the younger generation, the figures for the genders are a lot closer: similar numbers of boys and girls admitted cheating on a partner (32.8%). Nonetheless, most School Survey participants – boys and girls alike –

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<sup>309</sup> The terms "cheating", "unfaithfulness" and "sleeping around" were mainly used locally to talk about this topic. To refer to this in a more neutral way, I use the terms multiple concurrent sexual relations or concurrent partners, which are etic terms. Sometimes the emic terms are used in the text to highlight the emotional distress of the faithful partner.

<sup>310</sup> Pauli and Schnegg (2007) discuss the difficulty in ascertaining the real number of partners. This implies that there could be under- as well as over-reporting regarding the number of partners people claimed to have in their survey.

believed that faithfulness was the most important characteristic of an ideal marriage partner (90% of the boys and 94.3% of the girls). Many people openly condemn people having multiple concurrent sexual partners.

The current tendency for men in steady relationships to have additional sexual relations can also be seen as a continuation of the past traditional practice of polygyny (see Chapter 2). Bledsoe and Pison speak of “de facto polygyny” (Bledsoe/Pison 1994:7), which still prevails in Africa today. However, this kind of polygyny is not formally regulated in any way, as has been the case in traditional marriages (see Section 6.1). The phenomenon of having multiple concurrent sexual relations reveals that different partners are viewed as having different ‘functions’ for the person concerned.<sup>311</sup> The male pays and only visits the female, whose function is to give sex. Migration also plays an important role in a man choosing to have multiple concurrent sexual relations in different places. On the one hand, the emotional distance between the couple can fuel fears about infidelity and jealousy. On the other hand, the distance leads to loneliness and may lead to infidelity, especially in combination with less social control in faraway cities (Hailonga-van Dijk 2007).

An example given by Luthrecia shows how intimate relationships may be threatened and challenged by migration, kinship care (see Section 4.3), and suspecting a partner of having additional sexual relations. She and her younger brother stayed in her elder brother’s house so that they could attend a nearby school. His wife did not want them there and did not want her husband spending money on their maintenance. Moreover, the wife suspected Luthrecia of procuring sexual partners for her older brother. Thus, she treated them badly. She beat them, and disturbed their sleep so that their school work was affected. When Luthrecia told her brother, he beat his wife up (Luthrecia 2009, see Section 4.3 and 8.1.2).

Moreover, in the context of widespread HIV and reluctance to use condoms, if one partner in an intimate relationship has concurrent additional sexual partners, the steady partner is put at risk (see M. Hunter 2015, and Section 8.1). This is shown by the following example given by Allison, whose partner had an intimate relationship with a woman in another town but concealed it from her for several months. Allison only found out because the other woman phoned her and told her to leave *her* boyfriend:

I asked him in a calm way and the he admitted. Then the main problem I was asking, how did you do sex? Because the lady was saying 'even she is pregnant' ... huuuu! Then he said 'first we were using condoms and after that we became used to each other and (...) [we did it] without condom!'" (Allison, 2009, iiba by SGA)

The widespread (real or suspected) “cheating” of men in steady relationships and simultaneous public moral condemnation splits society and leads to mistrust, conflict and violence in intimate relationships. It is also an important feature of the negative image of men

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<sup>311</sup> This can also be the case among women who have multiple partners, see Chapter 7 for details.

(see Chapter 6 and Section 8.3). Callaghan mentions another facet of mistrust in intimate relationships: partners who are HIV positive hide their status or the fact that they are on medication from each other (Callaghan 2015). They fear either social stigma or the break-up of the relationship, which would effectively end economic support in the case of females.

The decreasing marriage rates and the widespread behaviour of men having multiple concurrent sexual relations have led to high birth rates of children outside marriage (Pauli 2012). Often children suffer because of absent fathers; sometimes they do not even know their fathers or they do not receive maintenance from them (see Chapter 4). Moreover, the multiple sexual relations combined with the transactional nature of those relationships lead to conflict. Female partners often do not want to share their male partner with other girlfriends. This not only applies at a symbolic level, but a man who wants to distribute his income between different female partners causes a lot of economic conflict (Tersbøl 2006) which was confirmed by the narrations of Luthrecia (2009, see Section 8.1.2).

The ritual of marriage includes a set of norms, which are linked with sanctions if partners fail to comply with the expected behaviours. This was also reinforced by the *Married Persons Equality Act* of 1996 (see Section 3.2). However, in times of low marriage rates and increasing births outside marriage, as well as relatives not being included in the whole marriage process anymore, these sanctions are dying out. Consequently, there is a lot of space for negotiation and fewer pre-determined mutual expectations. This goes hand in hand with the political situation. The democratic system and the constitution also demand negotiations between men and women on equal terms. That means, on the one hand more freedom, but on the other hand less protection from the social environment, such as extended families, as well as decreased access to inheritance.

### 5.3 Summary

The gender constructions in Outjo are fraught with ambiguities and tensions, among which the main factors are Christianity, tradition and gender equality. There is much confusion, ambiguity and uncertainty within the gender system. Both males and females have to find a way to come to terms with the necessary changes in gender relations. Many people feel confused and insecure about the transitions and ambiguities in the gender system. *Firstly*, they are confused by the difference between their socialisation (man as a leader and woman as subordinate) in gender relations, and, in contrast, the new policy of gender equality which requires negotiation between men and women on equal terms. *Secondly*, people are caught between different types of gender construction, with the important institutions of religion and tradition/culture on one side, and the government policy of gender equality on the other. *Thirdly*, institutions such as churches, which play an important role in morally guiding people,

are sending out ambiguous messages (see also Sections 6.1 and 7.1 showing that this ambiguous messages can also be found in schools).

I conclude that many people are only superficially convinced of gender equality. They may think it is a good idea but in practice they do not want to change anything. The new ideas – if followed to their logical conclusions – would require them to change profoundly. Despite, or maybe because of, the confusion about gender constructions, a hegemonic and deterministic account of an unchanging dichotomous (heteronormative) gender system prevails: people perceive gender as naturalised, God given, and thus, as static. Any deviance is met with discomfort. People associate gender non-conformist behaviour with homosexuality. They fear that their children may become homosexual. Therefore, they use gendered admonishments to keep them within the ascribed notions of masculinity and femininity. Keeping in mind the hate and ‘corrective’ crimes that have been perpetrated on people who display non-conformist gender behaviour, it is too dangerous to explore alternative forms of gender constructions. The widespread homophobia that exists can be seen as a symbol of the unsettling transition within the gender system. However, it can also be used as a political instrument by religious or traditional conservative forces to maintain the old status quo of hierarchical gender constructions. Moreover, the positive potential for changing gender norms is not seen. In consequence, the retention of distinct spheres contributes strongly to maintaining the status quo of an asymmetric dichotomous gender system, preventing alternative femininities and masculinities that are more balanced, flexible, and equal from developing.

Another example of normative change that is significant for gender relations is the move away from marriage as an important part of the life cycle to an expensive institution only accessible to those few who can afford it, since the 1970s (Pauli 2014). Intimate relationships as well as sexuality and reproduction are no longer formalised; nor are they binding and under social control, as was the case before colonialism, when traditions guided social relationships. This situation brings new freedoms on the one hand, but on the other hand, the aforementioned ambiguities lead to confusion, uncertainty, and less commitment and obligation. Moreover, there is less social security for children and other people in vulnerable circumstances. Thus, these new and flexible situations demand democratic and fair negotiations. However, the commodification of intimate relationships in a context of widespread poverty and economic inequality leads to dependencies that hinder fair and equal negotiations. This affects poor women and poor men as well, and leads to frustration and violence. The prevalence of the phenomenon which links economic survival with intimate relationships or sex creates and perpetuates dependency and vulnerability.

People have been affected by the changes in the gender system. However, women and men have been socialised into different gender norms. Thus, they have different life opportunities.

Therefore, it is necessary to look at their differing living realities and perspectives to understand how they relate to each other and how violence plays a part in that. During research different key concerns of the genders were revealed: many women complained about the male behaviour of having multiple sexual partners; while many men were occupied with a perceived lack of respect. In the following, the male perspective is displayed.

## Chapter 6 Lack of respect? – Perspectives of males

“We men are not respected by the women nowadays” (Man 20, Men’s Debate). During the Men’s Debate in 2009, 31 participants of different backgrounds and ages discussed their views on the topic “What is a man?”<sup>312</sup> A major theme, mentioned and concurred with by many participants (Men 9, 11, 14, 17, 20, and 22), was “respect” and the perceived lack of respect they received. It is connected to their perception of gender relations in the past: “In olden days men used to be respected” (Man 9 and Man 11<sup>313</sup>). This perceived contrast between past and present preoccupies and troubles many men. A Gender Officer at the MGE CW in Windhoek also identified the issue of men getting respect: “for the male ego it is very important to be respected” (Expert 31, 2006). This was confirmed by a pastor from Outjo during an interview in 2006, who stressed that, *especially* for men, the issue of respect is imperative (Expert 2, 2006).

Becker sees the widespread idea that in the ‘olden days the man was the leader and the woman the powerless subordinate, as “invented tradition” (Becker 2000:6; see Chapter 2).<sup>314</sup> She points to the “presence of the present in any representations of the past” (ibid: footnote 4). In her research in northern Namibia she found examples of powerful female chiefs having been degraded during colonial times because colonial forces only wanted to negotiate with male leaders (see Chapter 2). She concludes that pre-colonial times were not as unequal as they are represented as being in present day people’s constructions of history. On the other hand, the recent past under the South African administration (as well as under German rule) was characterised by the enforcement of a hierarchical system of gender relations, which is reflected in contemporary perceptions, such as those expressed by the research participants. Only the link that they make between colonial eras of male hegemony and timeless patriarchal traditions or indigenous culture is skewed.<sup>315</sup> Nonetheless, although it might not

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<sup>312</sup> For information about the establishment of the Men’s Group, and the Men’s Debate, as well as the participants, see Section 1.3. I had interviewed some of the men who participated before (Robert, Carl, Expert 1, all 2009 and Experts 5 and 6, both 2006) or talked informally with them (Expert 21, both 2009).

<sup>313</sup> Both participants used the same words, while other men used different terms but with the same meaning: Men 14, 17, and 22.

<sup>314</sup> Becker only refers to Ovambo people. I also found this perception in Outjo, though it was not limited to perceptions of Ovambo people but also applied to people of different origin.

<sup>315</sup> It is important to differentiate between pre-colonial and colonial times, which, in the interviews relating to Culture or tradition, people did not necessarily do. Many people’s perception of the past does not correspond

be as simple as people think, this strong association with patriarchal cultures and longing for past times – especially by men – influences people’s current norms and behaviour.

During my first research stay, I understood the term respect to mean appreciating a person (see footnote 36 in Section 1.1.2). However, later on it became clear that, in Namibia, respect is widely equated with authority or even fear, as one of Weig’s Gabonese interviewees commented: “in the African hierarchical system, respect is often identical with fear” (Weig 2013:54f). When they spoke about ‘being respected’ in the Men’s Debate, what the men meant was being accepted as the head or leader in terms of gender and household relations by women and children. Jewkes et al. (2005) also stress the gendered symbolism of respect in Namibia. All the men in the Men’s Debate who expressed this view also believed that it is right for the man to be the head.<sup>316</sup> Lorway frames this attitude within “postcolonial nationalisms that essentialise the ‘natural’ and immutable right of ‘real men’” (Lorway 2015:101).

The men gave several examples to illustrate how the female lack of respect appears to them. Man 22 stated: “even if you come back home, you find that the woman is not at home, and if you ask then she tells you something different” (Man 22). The theme of the woman not being at home when the man comes back from work was often repeated (e.g., Men 7 and 17). Man 17 described what he thinks it was like in the past, before independence:

Those days, men had power. For example, if the woman who is not at home (yet) (...), and it's before 5, she would immediately recall 'please, my man is coming home. I must go back home, before he comes back.' That was there, that respect was there, those days. (Man 17)

Moreover, Man 7 interprets women not fulfilling their household chores, for example cooking dinner in time for when the husband arrives home after work, as showing a lack of respect towards men. This was also confirmed by the young interviewee David (2009). Other men perceive women “interfering” in the father’s authority while he is admonishing the couple’s children as especially disrespectful (see Section 6.2.1).

The demand for gender equality challenges the long-standing dominance of men. Therefore, it is not very popular among men. The idea that both men and women could work together as a team did not appear to enter their minds. Windhoek-based director of GRAP, Expert 23, said that people perceive power as being like a cake. Consequently, if women get more power, men must lose some of their power (Expert 23, personal communication 2006). In a similar vein, one of Düringer’s interviewees explained: “men will see this as a power struggle between women and men; that women want to take over” (Düringer 2014:22). Therefore,

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exactly with what is written in the history books but can be better assessed as “historicity” (see Section 1.1.1 and Chapter 2) and plays an important part in identity construction.

<sup>316</sup> Only two participants stated that there is no *mutual* respect anymore in intimate relationships (Men 7, and 14). Only Man 7 claimed that it is important to respect *each other*. Despite this, he still began his statement with the assertion that the man is the head of the household. Expert 1 (2009) demanded that women should be respected as well.

several men perceived the empowerment of women as the disempowerment of men (see also Tersbøl 2006, Silberschmidt 2003). LeBeau and Spence also found that men viewed increasing rights for women as being linked to diminishing rights for men (LeBeau/Spence 2004, and see Boulton 2017, Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011). Thus, some men feel helpless and frustrated, as is reflected in the following statement by a participant in the Men's Debate:

If you as a man you have got something to say to the woman, then she has got equal say to you. This equal thing makes men to have no powers. Men are nowadays powerless. (Man 17)

Are there other reasons why men feel powerless? The current feeling of powerlessness among many men stands in stark contrast to how they have been socialised.

## 6.1 Masculinity constructions and relations with women: dominance and emerging alternatives

### **Remaining construction of a dominant masculinity**

Often men mentioned that they grew up expecting to become future leaders, heads of households (see also Becker 2000:6), breadwinners and decision-makers: "We were raised in such a manner that men are superior to women", an employee of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare said during the Men's Debate (Man 25). Kaundjua et al. (2014) found the same views in their research. This perception is shared by Afrikaner and Ovambo men (see also Wise 2007) as well as others. The men were socialised to be strong, dominant and strong-willed (David, Expert 21, both 2009). In communications, men are perceived as more dominant and louder than women, as two of the young interviewees mentioned (Alicia, David, both 2009). These gender constructions promote a view of the man as active leader and authority figure who likes to compete with other men. As is shown hereinafter, although men currently seem to feel disempowered and vulnerable, the notion of a dominant masculinity has held sway for a long time and continues to be influential. The interviewees see men as dominant and strong in their movements and in their whole bearing, for example the young research participant David claimed: "Only few men are not like that: most of them, there is boldness within them, a man knows that power lies within him. There is nothing he is afraid of" (David, 2009). This perception of a dominant masculinity as characterising men was also reflected by some women (see Chapter 7) as well as during the Men's Debate. Some men ascribe the dominant position of men to the fact that men are physically stronger than women. One participant of the Men's Debate referred to the animal kingdom to illustrate his point:

Man has been created physically stronger than the woman. Man is a dominant factor. Man is a hunter. He can also be jealous. He is an animal. He can sometimes be a lonely leader in a group whenever you look at the person, there are things you can see, this is a MAN. At animals, in a group of lions, whenever he is in his group, you will find that he is more protective, he doesn't want penetration of other animals into his group. Even though we don't really want to

accept that, that's where you really can see that dominance of a man. Luckily man has a mind that the animal doesn't have. (Man 3)

Many other men legitimate the notion of the man as dominant by referring to Christian belief and the bible in particular. However, there are variations as well as ambiguities and confusion regarding gender relations from a Christian perspective (see Section 5.1). These were revealed in the Men's Debate, where the discussion included men of all ages. The statement of Man 4, for example, reflects a slightly more progressive perspective, as the woman is seen as a "partner for the man". He argues:

I will start from that side of bible: in the beginning God has created the world. After creating the world he has seen a need for a leader of the earth. Then he created the man, Adam. After he has created the man, he has seen (...) the man could not be alone; there should be somebody for the man (...). So he has created the woman from the rib of a man. She has been created not to be humbled, not to be beaten but as a partner for the man. (Man 4)

Others interpret the bible differently and see women as helpers and thus subordinate to the man.<sup>317</sup> Man 16 legitimated his more explicitly conservative perception by his Christian belief (see Section 5.1) and thought that women's subordination to men should be enforced:

In the bible it is said that the man is the head of house and we have to go along with that. We are talking about 90% of the population [in Namibia] are Christians but if 95% is Christian, why all the evil [gender equality]? ((People applauded, after he talked in Nama/Damara)) Why don't we use that version that says that the man should be head of house, he should be the top. Why don't we make use of that? If we are 95% Christians! (Man 16, iiba by SGA)

Politician, teacher and women's activist Expert 12 also saw religion as underpinning men's belief that women should be subordinate to men: "They normally refer to the bible (...) that the woman should be inferior to man" (Expert 12, 2006). The elected leader of the Men's Group, a conservative Afrikaner businessman, referred to the bible when stating his ambiguous position during the Men's Debate:

Man is the stronger sex, therefore in life he has to walk in front. His wife has to walk behind him, to support him, he must not drag her, she must not push him, he is strong, he walks, he takes all the punches from the front. He has to put down the rules but the rules must include her as well because if she is out, he cannot walk further (...). I think that's what the bible also wants us to do. *Nerens in bible se dit die man moet sy vrou domineren nie.* [Nowhere in the bible is said that the man has to dominate his wife] The bible says equal rights. (Expert 21, translated by SGA)

This perspective was often expressed by pastors of different churches (Expert 2 (DRC), Expert 28 (LPC), both 2006, Expert 4 (ELCRN), 2009) and particularly religious interviewees (Experts 1 and 13, David, Robert, all 2009). These two points – man as leader combined with equal rights for men and women – were often stated, both with emphasis.

The ambiguities can be explained as reflecting social change. People grew up with a hierarchical gender system. They are socialised to think that men and women are not equal but that women have to be subordinate to men who lead, provide and decide. Only after independence did people learn about gender equality. Thus, when talking directly about

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<sup>317</sup> For example, Expert 4 is quoted in Section 5.1 giving his view of woman as a helper. Man 8 also shared this view.

“gender equality”, many interviewees approved of it. Misheke illustrates this ambiguity. At one point in the interview, he stated that only men can do heavy jobs, which women cannot do, and therefore they are not equal. At a later point in the interview, he said that both men and women can do everything and thus should be equal (Misheke, 2009). This ambiguity was also reflected in other interviews. Several male interviewees showed a positive attitude towards gender equality, although after being questioned about who is the head of their households, most of those men claimed that they are the head of their own households. This is confirmed by statistics (MOHSS/NSA 2014) and male heads of households who live in long-term, intimate relationships (Pauli 2007b, and see Section 5.2). One example is given by middle-aged Isak:

SGA (...) and who, who is deciding? And who is the head of household? At your place.  
 Isak Ja, definitely me.  
 SGA What does that mean for you? To be the head of household?  
 Isak It does not mean you can decide as you want. But you two have to decide, when it comes to money, or ANY...thing in the house. But then you are just the head of the house.  
 SGA But what does it mean?  
 Isak If anything is coming in, you both can talk, but if someone comes in to ask for anything, but just, not just in the kitchen, kitchen belongs to the wife. She has to decide. But when it comes to the cattle you have [to decide] and these things you can decide as the head of the house. But when it comes to kitchen, she alone can decide, what to cook, what to buy, and everything. When it comes to the money side, then, you both have to decide what your budget should be. (Isak, 2009, iiba by SGA)

Like other participants in the Men’s Debate, Isak mentions the example of the incoming suppliant as a means of explaining his expectations of being the head of household (see below). Isak differentiates areas of responsibilities linked to decision-making, and perhaps surprisingly claimed that financial issues would be jointly decided by him and his wife.

David, a young Hai//om, gave an insight into how he thinks about being the head of the household and about decision making:

David Most decisions that are made are made by men.  
 SGA Why is it like that?  
 David Huh. If you are a head of anything, it's clear that you have more say in things.  
 SGA What would happen if your girlfriend said, 'no, we can be the head together', what would you say about that?  
 David But it's impossible. There must be only one head (...)  
 SGA What would happen if she says 'let me be the head'? What would you say?  
 David Definitely not! It's against my background, it's against my culture! And it won't even look good in the eyes of the community, in the eyes of the people out.  
 SGA Why?  
 David To be run by a woman.  
 SGA What does it mean to be run by a woman?  
 David To be led or to be headed.  
 SGA But is it then also the other way around, like 'the woman is run by a man'? Is that acceptable? Or is it not acceptable?  
 David Hm. Let's not say 'run' by a man/woman. (David, 2009)

This reveals gendered double standards, and shows how difficult people find it to accept a change in gender relations. Moreover, this statement gives an insight into the relevance

social environment has for him. David demonstrates a very conservative view of gender constructions, stressing that the man should be the head of the family. I then asked him what this would look like:

SGA	Like to dominate?
David	Sometimes, some dominate but that's not right.
SGA	What is the right way?
David	To share equal rights. (David, 2009)

I often found contradictory attitudes like these. Young research participant Pieter, from the Afrikaner community, expressed his view in the following way: on the one hand, he supported the idea of gender equality, which he said had been introduced by the government, and he also said that girls and boys should be equal at school. But he thinks that after marriage this changes: within marriage, he will be the one to take the final decisions and he will be the head of the household, because it is more important. He thinks he is more mature and hence will make better decisions than his future wife; therefore he should have the final say (Pieter, 2009).

On the one hand, this could simply reflect the ambiguity, uncertainty and confusion surrounding the topic. On the other hand, this could mean that there is a gap between theory and practice; between attitude and behaviour. Boulton found this among his male research participants in Swakopmund; however, in this case it was the other way round: they showed a male-centric attitude towards their male peers and the author but, with regard to their female partners, they were expected “to complete their fair share of child-rearing and domestic tasks” (Boulton 2017:35). This implies that there are alternative masculinities but it is still difficult to live these openly because of the fear that men may be regarded as not a real man or a man in control by the social environment which is linked to the prevalent homophobic climate (see Section 5.1). However, Adei suggests that some men who support gender equality openly want to be seen to be talking politically correctly, although this does not translate into their private relationships (Adei 2000). Sometimes I got the same impression, which could have been due to my affiliation to the LAC, as they promote gender equality (see Section 1.3).

Most men in the Men’s Debate stressed that men should be head of households, which was confirmed by Misheke: “Most of the men they are the head of the families” (Misheke, 2009). He expanded on what is required for this position “(...) as man you must have elbows” (ibid). One middle-aged and two young interviewees confirmed this assessment of what it means to be a man (Isak, David, Pieter, all 2009 interviewees). One participant in the Men’s Debate unambiguously explained what he sees a man as, claiming that a man is still the head of the household, even if he is not present at home if a suppliant comes in:

Man 12	Man is always the hunter, the planner, the protector, but when we come to the equal rights even if your wife is, she can be the president, the doctor (...) you name
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them. But, even if a man is working in service station (...) he remains the man of the house, the head of the house.

SGA What does it mean the head of the house? Can you explain it?

Man 12 Ja. For example, if man is not present at home, and somebody comes asking for something, no matter what, the wife and the children have to tell that person 'the head of the house is not around, please come back later and ask in his presence'. That he is the leader. (Man 12, Men's Debate)

This theme of how men expect women and children to behave towards an incoming suppliant during the absence of the male head of the household recurred throughout the research (see in Section 5.2 and above) and Man 15 spoke also about it in the Men's Debate. Expert 5, teacher and Chairman of the Crime Prevention Project in Outjo, and publicly supporting gender equality, tried to bring in the perspective of an educated, economically independent female partner:

There were some speakers who said that man is the head of house and he is there, he is on top. But, for example, if man is to tell his wife 'in my absence in this house, you don't have to let anybody come [to] do and say anything in my absence (...) that person has to wait until I am here, even if he has to come say or ask something, let him or let her wait, until I am back home.' But now if a qualified woman, your wife for example is qualified [educated] and I am less qualified. What if the woman gets violent and says 'listen, if you are to threaten me with that, if you want to tell me like that, I should keep quiet until you are here, then I can easily say: Listen, I am highly qualified, why should I be more inferior under you? I can easily get out of this house and be on my own, because I am qualified. I don't have anything to do with you – What then? (Expert 5, Men's Debate, iiba by SGA)

This Expert gives the perspective of the educated woman who does not want to be subordinate to a less qualified husband. Afterwards he pointed explicitly to the discrepancy between the partners in terms of education which often would lead to conflict (see also Van der Vliet 1991). However, even if a woman is not better educated than her husband but simply does not want to be patronised anymore, and would prefer to make her own decisions and communicate with an incoming suppliant herself, this attitude that sees the man as the head of the household inevitably leads to conflict.

The widespread conviction that men should be the head of the household is also shown in the following interview extract, in which young David connects being respected as a man and being the head of the household:

SGA What would you expect from your wife? How should she behave in the marriage?

David In the first: respect as a man and as a husband.

SGA What does it mean?

David In most cases, and from perspective of culture that I am coming from [Hai//om], men need to be respected in a certain way that he needs to feel like a real man.

SGA Can you explain that?

David In a house there is a certain seat that a man must occupy only. I always heard 'no, this is your father's chair, get up there' when I was a kid. 'This is your father's plate, don't eat from that plate!' There must be certain respect, that you can feel 'I am the man here in this house, I am the father and I am a husband'.

SGA In a leading position?

David Ja, leading. You are a leader of the house. You are the head of the house. (David, 2009, iiba by SGA)

While displaying his dominant masculinity he draws on his culture of belonging to the Hai//om group. This is interesting as Hai//om originally were hunters and gatherers and, as such, were characterised by equality in human relations. However, even during colonial times this had already changed fundamentally (Boden 2008, Sylvain 1999, Becker 2003, and see Chapter 2).

Another item closely connected to the conception of being the head of the household and decision-maker is the frequently mentioned connotation of the man as breadwinner and provider for the family.<sup>318</sup> Brown et al. (2005) emphasise the importance of material possessions for men. In the Men's Debate Man 1 expounded on the widespread idea of the man as breadwinner and on occurring changes in this construction:

A man is a breadwinner. In previous years it used to be like that. That man was the breadwinner but now those things are no more there. Now it's like that that the woman has to go to work and man has to lay down at home ((men laughing)). And especially when the woman is working for the government, then it's even worse. Then the man is just laying there at home waiting for the pension money when she is gonna retire ((men laughing)) just to buy a luxurious car. (Man 1, iiba by SGA)

This reflects feelings of uncertainty towards the changes in the gender system. If the woman has a job, the man has no role and task anymore (see also LeBeau/Spence 2004:40). It does not enter his mind to take over what were formerly seen as women's tasks, such as childcare or housekeeping. Expert 55 from the Afrikaner community gave the example of a father who loses his job and then the mother takes on the role of provider. As a result, the father's self-esteem decreases. If the woman earns more income than the man, this is a problem for the man (Expert 55, 2009). Although Man 1 stated that it is not like this anymore, that the man is the family breadwinner, many other men stressed this responsibility of men. Callaghan views masculinity constructions as quite inflexible compared to femininity constructions: "Most of the men – and women – I spoke to still considered 'breadwinning' (...) to be the irreplaceable cornerstone of masculine identity. Outside of this, the options for men were very few" (Callaghan 2015:219). The fact that women sometimes have better jobs makes some men think that women are "overtaking" them. "In every household, where woman earns more than man, you will find problems, that's what I have observed", one Pastor from ELCRN stated (Expert 4, 2009). This is confirmed by Expert 10 (2006), the Chairman of NAMEC, who thinks that men cannot accept it if their female partner has a better job than them, concurred with Expert 50 (2006). Boulton describes men in Swakopmund looking for female partners who are less educated than them, in order to prevent this situation (Boulton 2017).

Moreover, the fact that in the School Survey one theme frequently mentioned in relation to the gendered admonishments for boys was having to provide for their families, shows that

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<sup>318</sup> See also Edwards 2016, Wise 2007, Mufune 2009, Tarkkonen 2017, and Schaumburg 2013 for South Africa.

this ideal is not in decline, as would be expected if gender relations were equal. This is shown by the gendered admonishments school boys mentioned:

My father told me to behave like a boy. He told me to work hard and succeed my school and support the house/my family. (19 year-old boy, 061 A 11)  
My father, he told me that one day I would support my own family and grow up like a man should be. (Boy, 114 B 10)

Even at a young age, it is impressed upon boys that it will be their responsibility to earn an income to support their future family. Not only does it place a heavy burden on the shoulders of a child but also sows the seeds for the male attitude of female dependency. As will be shown later, some caregivers do not invest as much effort in girls' education as in boys' (see Section 7.1), because girls are expected to marry, although only a few people marry at all. In the OSS male learners' behaviour is restricted less than that of females as the then acting principal told me (Expert 32, 2009). Thus, males may develop their potentials better than females. The dominance of males in schools is confirmed by a teacher at Outjo Primary School (Expert 41, 2009). However, in rural areas there are also examples of boys not attending school because they have to look for cattle while the girls go to school (Tersbøl 2006). The expectation of being a future breadwinner is still part of the production of a dominant masculinity. This includes providing for a female partner and their children but might also mean supporting relatives (Tersbøl 2006). Tvedten concludes: "For young men, secure employment, a proper house, marriage and children is the fulfilment of deeply felt cultural expectations of tradition as well as modernity" (Tvedten 2011:146). Teacher, politician and women's activist Expert 12 also talks about this continuity with the past and, moreover, again refers to men's habit of recalling the patriarchal past:

Usually the men want to show off their power, they want to behave like their fathers. The way of their fathers is worse. Now, maybe you can talk about the cultural ways, how in olden days the men and women should behave. So in olden days, the man is the one who is the breadwinner, so he is the one with more power, the one who can dominate the whole situation (...). (Expert 12, 2006)

She mentions "cultural ways" and she means this statement to refer to different ethnic groups: Damara, Herero, and Ovambo. In general, men are ascribed an important role within the family, as is clear from the following contribution from Man 5 during the Men's Debate:

According to me, a man is a protector of the family, he has to make sure that his family has to be fed every day and he has to determine that there must be no penetration from outside to his family (Man 5)

Besides earning an income for the family, this man mentions another task that the head of the household has to do: to protect his family from outside influences. Thus, the function of a gate-keeper is also ascribed to the male head of the household in this and other examples. This domineering attitude can be found among many men in Namibia, and is the result of their socialisation which brought them up to expect to be the leader and the head of the family.

## **Dominant masculinity kept within limits: gendered admonishments and homophobia**

Men and boys are subject to the production of masculinity during their gendered socialisation. In the interviews and in the School Survey I asked boys and young men about how they were admonished in their childhood to behave “as boys”.

One boy was told by his father how to behave in the right way when he was a child: “I didn't refuse him, he used to say (...) 'be strong as a boy, so you could grow up like me and be strong like me'” (17 year-old boy, 140 C 10). Here, the main feature of being a “real” boy is the connotation with strength. Similarly, another boy reported on how he was admonished by his parents to actively defend himself, particularly against older boys:

My parents told me to be a boy when I was a small boy. They told me this because I had fights with guys who were not my age, who were older and I was coming back home crying. That's when they instructed me to be a boy and fight back. (19 year-old boy, 014 A 12)

In this example, the boy was told to fight back against older boys; fear was not acceptable. Fear is ascribed to girls and women (see Chapter 7). The young interviewee David also demonstrates this contrasting assessment of what it means to be a man and to be a woman. In the following statement he describes how men fight their own fears:

SGA            Is it ok for a man to be afraid?  
David         Ah. Afraid is, actually it's natural. But you must not be afraid ALWAYS. No. IF you are a man, you DON'T want to be afraid because you are a man. You are strong. (David, 2009, he pronounced the words in capitals)

He acknowledges that the situation is not unambiguous, admitting that boys do feel fear, but they fight it. He seems to be reaffirming himself. However, when boys are younger, the fighting of weaknesses is done by the caregivers. One boy from the OSS wrote in the section about gendered admonishments in the School Survey that he was admonished for crying: “I was crying because I was hungry, then my father and my brother told me to behave like a boy” (18 year-old boy, 033 A 12).<sup>319</sup> This example reveals that these males did not accept that boys could cry. Even when he was hungry – a very basic and painful feeling – it was still not acceptable, and so he needed to be reprimanded. Today the same learner is involved in many violent activities to the disadvantage of himself and of others (see Sections 6.2.1 and 9.1). Expert 46 from the White Ribbon Campaign also highlighted the issue that boys and men crying is seen as a sign of weakness in Namibian society (Expert 46, 2006). Boulton mentions that “emotional openness” among the men who took part in his research in the Namibian coastal town of Swakopmund is perceived as an indication of vulnerability (Boulton 2017:39). The aforementioned boy did not receive any empathy when he was a hungry child, so why should he give empathy to others? Thus, this suppressing of perceived weaknesses may also have violent consequences, as described in Section 6.2.1.

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<sup>319</sup> It is impossible to say whether he meant being hungry as a child who is suffering from malnutrition and poverty or if he was just hungry at that particular moment.

Sometimes the boys criticised the admonishments they received: "I got angry! It was elderly people that said it. I was told that boys don't cry easily" (18 year old boy, 081 B 12). Other boys also remembered being reprimanded for crying, as shown in the following example of a gendered admonishment: "We went hunting and I got tired, I started to cry and my father said that men don't cry. It was about 13 years ago" (19 year-old boy, 085 B 12). It is clear from this quotation that the then 6 year-old boy was treated "as a man". Another boy was admonished to behave like a boy after his father died: "I was told to behave like a boy when my father passed away. My grandmother told me. 'From now on you must study very hard and must finish your school to be like your father'" (17 year-old boy, 123 C 10). Even in a very distressing situation like this where grief would be a natural reaction, it was still deemed unacceptable for the boy to cry; instead he was admonished to be strong. This type of socialisation is also confirmed by the 31 year-old Misheke who remembers his grandmother's words: "You are a man, you must be strong, maybe somebody gave you a slap, do not just cry like a woman. You are a man. Be strong!" (Misheke, 2009)

Boys are expected to be tough even in very difficult situations like losing a close and beloved relative, experiencing violence or being hungry. Authentic feelings like fear or grief are deemed unacceptable, even in the case of very young boys. They are told that crying is for women, showing how the socialisation of boys is constrained within a system of related but opposite gender poles. If boys express themselves in such a way, it is perceived as a weakness, because it disturbs the production of a dominant masculinity, and as such is admonished and subdued by caregivers.

Particularly in the environment in which the Private School Moria learners live, the derogatory term "sissy" is used for boys who show any kind of weaknesses like those described above. These boys are perceived as "feminised" or "effeminate" boys, for showing such weaknesses, which are actually associated with the feminine (see also Lorway 2015). One boy was admonished by his parents "(...) to stand up for myself, to one day sustain myself and not be a sissy, to be strong and do not show any weakness" (17 year-old boy, 113 B 11). Another boy from the same school also mentioned the use of the word "sissy" by his father: "I played rugby when I was in the first grade. I got hurt and my father told me I'm not a sissy because rugby is not a sissy sport" (18 year-old boy, 082 B 12). Thus, according to this view, getting injured does not justify showing any weakness. Edwards-Jauch describes this form of "feminisation" of males as "the biggest insult to masculinity" (Edwards-Jauch 2016:53) as it is perceived by males. The young interviewee Pieter described how important it is for young men to show strength and pretend that something does not bother them, even though it does. He claimed that most guys try to be cool or at least sound cool (Pieter, 2009).

Most of the gendered admonishments reported by the boys carry implications about creating strong men who do not cry, who fight back if attacked, and suppress weaknesses and fears;

who are able to do hard demanding work and sustain their families – in summary, guys who are no “sissies”. Thus, they have learnt not to show their feelings or their authentic selves, if these involve emotions or behaviours that are not associated with men. Many people do not accept males being soft, insecure, vulnerable, or needy, *even* if they are just children and in need of support.

Thus, the creation of a dominant masculinity also works to eliminate perceived weaknesses and certain feelings (e.g., fears) which are ascribed to females. There must be a clear line to distinguish them from femininity. By this mechanism, strong boundaries between the male and female gender constructions are created (as mentioned in Section 5.1). Intermediate forms of gender are condemned using derogatory terms; boys do not want to be seen as sissies. If males behave in a way that is perceived as female, people see it as gender non-conformist and are quick to associate it with homosexuality. In the School Survey, one boy observed some softer behaviour in himself and then classified it as homosexual behaviour: “I was soft to the girl, my first girlfriend, I act like a homosexual” (17 year old boy, 056 A 11). The homophobia that is prevalent in Namibian society limits the softer, gentler aspects of men. David draws a distinction between men and homosexual men:

SGA            What do you think a homosexual man is like? How is he different to-  
David           From a man? The male organ is the same... body is also the same. But here [it] comes: in most cases the behaviour is playing a very big role. Behaviour is the one that can make you realise that this one is homosexual (...). They even use this make up now, hairstyles like girls or woman (...). They even dress in these female clothes. That's the difference between a homosexual and a man. (David, 2009, iiba by SGA)

This shows that a homosexual man is not viewed as a real man. One could argue that, in the Namibian context, it is not easy to talk about sexual practices and therefore the differing gendered performance is at the centre of people's perceptions. Lorway conducted detailed field research among homosexual young people in Namibia, and he confirms my conclusion:

(...) the Rainbow Youth<sup>320</sup> usually referred to their sexual desires using the words “lesbian” and “gay”. Frequently these terms also referred to gender nonconformity, with the idea that lesbians “normally” act in a masculine way and gays tend to be effeminate. (Lorway 2015:xviii)

Many people have negative attitudes towards gender nonconformity because they associate it with homosexuality. Thus, they want to “prevent” their boys from becoming gay. Becker, who taught classes in the Sociology of Gender at the University of Namibia (UNAM), mentions students who expressed their opposition to gay people and feminists. Although these young men were interested in researching women's issues, they thought that researching men's issues would not be good, as they claimed that only gay people and feminists would be interested in that, “because these groups were out to attack ‘real men’”

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<sup>320</sup> By “Rainbow Youth” Lorway means a group of homosexual young people who are attached to the NGO The Rainbow Project with headquarters in Windhoek. They were born between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s (Lorway 2015:xx).

(Becker 2000:2, inverted commas in the original). Thus, they felt challenged by gender transformation.

The notion of drawing a clear line between the genders is also perpetuated by the gendered division of labour that boys and girls were socialised in. A boy or man should perform the following tasks: cleaning and fencing of the yard, fixing and washing of a car (if available), cutting of the grass outside, and general upkeep and repairs.<sup>321</sup> If children did not conform to this gendered division of labour, it was seen as grounds for gendered admonishing. David gives the following example of what his father told him when he was a boy:

There is a garden at the farms. To weed was for girls. Sometimes I found myself lazy and I started helping the girls. And he [his father] said 'no, that's not yours. Go, take the pipe and you start there. You water the plants'. (David, 2009, iiba by SGA)

The former director of NAMEC mentions an example that involved him trying to do something which was perceived as female work: he made tea and breakfast for visitors while his wife was present. His wife's sisters commented that this behaviour was: "shameful to our family" (Expert 45, 2006). Moreover, he also said that he wanted to cook for his mother and she replied: "what are you doing in the kitchen, where is your wife, is she sick?" (ibid). It was clear that his own family and extended family disapproved of his behaviour. He added: "If people do not behave according to gender expectations, it is threatening because it [gender] is seen as natural (...). I challenge men" (ibid, iiba by SGA). Again, concerns about being associated with homosexuality are clear in the following statement: "Do I look like a gay, do I walk like a woman? I will still behave in a masculine way!" (ibid)

Boulton describes men who feel polarised between the "dualistic identity" (Boulton 2017:28) of the breadwinner and "a more metropolitan conception of equality between genders" (ibid:28). He found that many men are able to cook and do household chores to give their female partner some respite from these. However, he describes his research site, the coastal town of Swakopmund, as connected to international ideas which include "newer models of masculinity, femininity and love" (ibid:29) because of mining and tourism and therefore suggests that it is a "laboratory of sorts for experimentation" (ibid). This constitutes the strongest difference to Outjo, which is characterised by more conservative norms. The alternative masculinities that have begun to emerge here are strongly countered by essentialism and normalisations of God-given, natural or traditional gender constructions and relations and, moreover, by homophobia.

In Namibian society, homosexuality is sometimes perceived as a disease that can be cured (Lorway 2015). David immediately gave some suggestions about how to "cure"

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<sup>321</sup> There are some differences in relation to the division of labour between ethnic groups: e.g., while milking cows is seen as solely a male task among certain ethnic groups, others believe that only females should perform this task. Because these differences do not play a major role in power relations between the genders, I do not go into further detail here. Nonetheless, this shows the flexibility of gender norms.

homosexuality, for example by playing gender-appropriate games or simply being with other boys/men to teach him how to behave properly as a man (David, 2009). In the following excerpt he suggests how homosexual men could be “assisted” to get back on the “right” track, meaning the heteronormative way:

- SGA           What do you think of homosexual men?  
David         Ah, it's very it's a very tricky question. It's little bit sensitive. But I think, they need a very ... great help, somewhere somehow. Somebody needs to help them.
- SGA           Like how?  
David         Psychologically, maybe to ... have a big or long vacation, maybe to go out with that kind of person.
- SGA           To change what?  
David         To change to bring him back to the reality, to the real him. Go out with him maybe to a village or a place outside. You have a nice time with him, you talk to him. You know, about behaviour, about the way of dressing, about what it is to be a man and what a man can do, those psychological topics that you can discuss with him, that can even change, ja. (David, 2009)

This shows a belief in healing homosexuality by spending time and explaining the right behaviour for males and by psychological treatment. However, recent studies show that people cannot choose which gender they find attractive but there are next to other factors genetic factors influencing this process (Ganna et al. 2019). One of Lorway's interviewees reported that his family believed he had a mental illness and so he was sent to a psychiatric hospital to be cured by medicine, and a family member had even tried to “correct” him by means of rape (see also Lorway 2009:162). As well as demonstrating his family's brutality towards their own child, it also shows the perceived burden and fear that parents feel about having a homosexual child. Sadly, this also shows how intractably the lines are set and how powerful and influential are the restrictions which operate to maintain separate spheres for men and women (see Section 5.1). It is more important to conform to gender norms than to protect one's own child against violence.

Another field where gendered admonishments are used to maintain a distinct male sphere is games (see also Section 5.1, and games for girls, see Section 7.1). The games seen as appropriate for boys are, for example, football and rugby (David 2009). David describes a situation where he was admonished by his father for playing the “wrong” game:

My father said, 'no man, you are a boy playing that game; why are you playing that game?' And then you think: 'no, I don't want to be a girl'. Then you will leave the game. (David, 2009).

As a result, he stopped playing the game. Kaundjua, Kauari and Mufune discovered that boys think they should wear boys' clothes and spend time with other boys or their father (Kaundjua et al. 2014). Linked to gendered socialisation is the idea that boys should be able to refer to their father as a role model who will readily and immediately react to behaviour that is deemed not appropriate to traditional male roles. In this context, many people see it as problematic that lots of children, especially those who were born out-of-wedlock, grow up solely with their mothers while their fathers are absent (Expert 2, 2006, and see Tersbøl

2006, and Helman/Ratele 2016 for South Africa) (see below). Orphaned children mainly grow up with their grandparents, but spend their time primarily with the grandmother (Jauch et al. 2011): “Fathers are conspicuously absent from the role of primary caregivers” (Jauch et al. 2011:220). A teacher from Outjo Primary School supported the opinion that it is problematic when boys grow up just with their mothers, as they start misbehaving and trying to act like men:

If a boy grew up with his mother, at home he turns into a man. He even starts to behave like a man, even towards his mother. Then he brings it to school and the child is bossy, only his own things should be done. (Expert 41, 2009)

This example illustrates the attitude that, regardless of whether a boy grows up solely with his mother or with his father, both genders guide their male offspring towards a dominant masculinity.

The media plays an important role in transmitting and disseminating dominant masculinity constructions. South African magazines, radio and television, as well as Hollywood actors, serve as role models for gendered performance. David gives the following example: “Will Smith, the action of him when I see him on the television, I LIKE to do that style of him!” (David 2009, he emphasised the word in capitals). The roles played by the actor Will Smith also reflect a dominant masculinity in which no weaknesses or fears are shown. The soap opera *When you are Mine* (see Section 5.1 and 7.1) also presents a form of masculinity which portrays men as successful, powerful and rich. Moreover, the title reflects the attitude of possessing the intimate partner which was mentioned by several research participants (see in Section 6.2.1).

### **Emerging alternatives: caring masculinity**

The strong negative attitudes towards homosexual men and non-conformist gender behaviour in general block the development of a positively valued, caring masculinity, existing somewhere between the two poles of dichotomous gender construction (see Sections 1.1.1 and 5.1). I could only find a few examples of alternative masculinities as exceptions to the dominant masculinity in Outjo. During the Men’s Debate, one man stated that it is also important for a man to be a loving father (Man 7). And I found only few exceptions in the School Survey as well.

One effort to support the development of new alternative forms of masculinities was the photo project organised by the Ombetja Yehinga Organisation<sup>322</sup> in 2005. This project developed into a calendar entitled *The caring Namibian man* (OYO 2005). The aim of the project is described as follows:

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<sup>322</sup> The Ombetja Yehinga Organisation (OYO) works to raise social awareness regarding “HIV prevention, sexual health, alcohol and drug abuse, stigma and discrimination” (WEB OYO). It is also active in the Kunene Region, where Outjo is situated.

It attempts to break gender stereotypes that trap men and women in sexual roles that put them at risk of violence, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections and that trap fathers and children in social roles that put them at risk of abuse and violence. It gives a space for men, women and children to reflect notions of masculinity and femininity in the local Namibian context. (OYO 2005)

On the OYO's homepage, the photo project is introduced with these words: "to show that caring can also be masculine" (WEB OYO). However, men feel pressure from other men not to behave according to alternative masculinities (see above and see also Boulton 2017). Innocentia described how her partner's male friends teased him when he behaved as a caring and loving father who also took care of his baby: "They even call him gay, they make fun of him" (Innocentia, 2009, Field Notes). Thus, men are discouraged from caring for their own children (see also Helman/Ratele 2016). This shows how difficult and challenging it is to develop and live alternative masculinities in the face of a very strong and persistent dominant masculinity. Other NGOs like NAMEC, White Ribbon and the Namibian network, MenEngage, which started in 2012, are also involved in changing masculinities and encourages men to be active in achieving gender equality (see Section 3.3).

### **Inequalities between men – frustrations among underprivileged men**

The difficult and unequal economic situation in Namibia presents a serious challenge for many men. Men are expected to provide for a female partner, for children and for relatives as well. These expectations occur in the face of a difficult socio-economic situation for large sectors of the Namibian population (see Section 4.1; Tersbøl 2006, Jauch et al. 2011). Everyday realities differ according to varying living conditions and unequal opportunities.

There are privileged, successful, often older or middle-aged men, who are similar to successful and powerful men who previously acted as patrons (see Chapter 2, Pauli 2010, Wise 2007). Then there are ordinary employed men. Many other men are unemployed or underemployed, working as casual day labourers in informal sectors of the economy, usually only for a few days a week, leading to an irregular and often low income. In such a situation it is especially difficult for underprivileged men to fulfil this expectation of being a breadwinner, a fact which contributes to the uncertainty and frustration felt by many men as earning an income is connected to the role of being the head of the household (see above). The Gender Officer from the MGECW in Windhoek, Expert 31, pointed to this scenario in 2006 (and see Tersbøl 2006, Kandirikirira 2002). Moreover, the increase in female headed households shows that men are not simply heads of households anymore as they were socialised to be. In this context, Tvedten points to an increasing number of "marginalised single men in the shanties" (Tvedten 2011:141)

The unemployment rate for men differs according to rural and urban localities and also to age. The average unemployment rate of men stands at 29.8% (NSA 2017b:56). 29.6% of young men, classified under the term "youth" (between the ages of 15 and 34), are not

employed and not in education or training (NSA 2017b:65). The NEET rate in Kunene stands at 51.5% (see Chapter 4). Further differentiating youth into different age groups reveals that this figure is even higher among young people aged 20 to 24. For this group of young men, the rate stands at 39.3% across Namibia as a whole (ibid). Many men are economically marginalised by poverty, under- and unemployment and it is in this respect that divisions regarding class and age are particularly apparent.

Life for many young men is difficult, due to very high unemployment rates and a challenging situation characterised by uncertainty and a lack of prospects.<sup>323</sup> For example, many men work as casual labourers. On one occasion in Windhoek I was sitting in a car with the husband of a friend of mine, close to a site where men waited every morning for these kinds of casual jobs. When they saw our car, many of them ran over to us begging for employment. These men were so desperate. Every day is characterised by the search for and hope of a job, often in vain. Such underprivileged men have restricted access to resources but are still expected to provide for their families (Tersbøl 2002, 2006). There is a big gap between men's own and society's expectations and their ability to fulfil their role as providers (Thomas 2007, Tersbøl 2006). The context of severe inequality makes things worse for them (see Section 4.1). Tvedten describes men coming back after looking unsuccessfully for casual work:

Going back through the centre of town bustling with life and full of urban commodities they cannot afford is a constant reminder of their own poverty and inadequacy – affecting their self-esteem and personal dignity and making them feel marginalised in relation to the urban context of employment and modernity. (Tvedten 2011:124)

Particularly in a very unequal country such as Namibia, there are highly visible men who are successful and fulfil the expected role of the provider, as well as having access to several women. In this regard, Wise talks about the “male Powersexual” (Wise 2007:331). The elite Afrikaner and Ovambo men<sup>324</sup> in Wise's study comprised both married and unmarried men, between the ages of 35 and 54, all of whom were university educated. Among the Afrikaner group their household income averaged N\$ 2million (at that time US\$ 285,000) and among the Ovambo group N\$ 500,000 (US\$ 71,000). The small class of elite, successful men occupy powerful positions, for example, as politicians or businessmen (Pauli 2012:414). But a big gap exists between those few successful men and the many unsuccessful men. These successful men may also be role models for the younger or underprivileged men. However, the huge differences between them in terms of life opportunities and the ability to enforce their own will also leads to tensions and envy within the group of men and puts pressure on underprivileged men (see also Edwards-Jauch 2016).

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<sup>323</sup> See Becker 2006, Tersbøl 2002, 2006, Brown et al. 2005, Thomas 2007, Pauli 2009, Boulton 2017, see also Morrell 2001 and M. Hunter 2010 for South Africa.

<sup>324</sup> Both groups of men were actively or passively involved in working for or against the Namibian Liberation Struggle (Wise 2007).

In Section 5.2 marriage was described as an entry point into adulthood which has become very expensive and is even used as a class marker (Pauli 2009). This is especially problematic for men as they are the ones who are commonly expected to pay for wedding costs (Pauli/Dawids 2017, Boulton 2017, LaFont 2007), or in more traditional rural areas for *lobola* (see Section 2.1). For the elite men in Wise's study, marriage is an important marker of manhood too. As one interviewee put it: "(...) for us manhood starts when you get married" (Wise 2007:337). Many men are precluded from marriage. This means that the perceived entry point to becoming an adult is blocked; men are in a state of "waitthood" and are still seen as "youth" even at 30 years of age (Tersbøl 2006) (see Sections 4.3 and 5.2). Becker found the same to be true when she talked to university students who described themselves as boys, who would become an adult via marriage or earning an income (Becker 2000). Moreover, if marriage is seen as a way to join the middle class, and thus to gain status (see Section 5.2), then underprivileged men are excluded. Thus, unemployed men's lack of resources prevents them from becoming an adult, from getting married and, in the eyes of the elite men, from being a man (Wise 2007).

Several people in this study and in previous research (Gierse-Arsten 2005) point to another function of marriage: marriage as a turning point in the lives of men. They delineated a clear "before" and "after" in relation to this point, with the 'after' characterised by avoiding alcohol, not smoking, giving up multiple sexual relations, not going to parties, and not being violent. Magda and Robert stress that Robert has been faithful since they got married, and that his beatings also stopped at this point (see Section 2.2.1). Several other people also see a difference between a man's behaviour before marriage and their behaviour after marriage, when they take on responsibilities and stop leading an irresponsible lifestyle. This point of change in the life of men was connected with joining a church by some research participants (Isak, 2009 and Sam, 2006, see Gierse-Arsten 2005). Of course, this is not always happening: the case of Luthrecia shows that sometimes the man's behaviour does not change or only does so for a short time (see Sections 7.1 and 8.1.2). However, if the social institution of marriage is missing or much delayed, the symbolic turning point that marriage represents no longer exists if a wedding is unaffordable (see Section 5.2).

This social exclusion caused by the increase in wedding costs and high inequality results in a lot of frustration and puts men who are not economically successful under considerable stress. Pauli termed this situation a "(...) postcolonial disempowerment of large portions of the male population" (Pauli 2010:41f). From her description, it becomes clear how unstable and uncertain living conditions are if a man does not have regular employment. She describes an example of a man who had had an intimate partner for several years, both of whom wanted to marry, and they had a child. He saved money for the wedding and a family house, but then he lost his job. He was so upset that he left his family and went to a coastal

town. His partner tried to get him back but he had already started a new relationship (Pauli 2014).

However, no male interviewee directly referred to this problem of providing for a family in a difficult context. One reason for this could be a continuation of expectations and gendered roles associated with the past, as during the apartheid era the male breadwinner ideal existed, combined with restricted economic opportunities (see Chapter 2). Moreover, it would also mean admitting to a weakness which is taboo (see above). Only the female teacher, politician and women's activist Expert 12 (2006) pointed to this link between unemployment, the expectation to "bring something into the house", and male violence:

- Expert 12 Sometimes they also feel inferior to the women and to the successful men.  
Especially to the women, and also less to the men.
- SGA Because they don't earn enough?
- Expert 12 Ja (...). (Expert 12, 2006)

Thomas mentions several men who were rejected by women because they were not able to provide enough. They lost the women to wealthier men who were usually older than them (Thomas 2007:606). One boy made a statement in the School Survey that reflects this scenario too. He was left by his girlfriend and explains it as follows: "We were together but she got a man owning a shop because I was a schoolboy and could not support her financially" (18 year-old boy, School Survey, 068 A 11). Pauli and Dawids (2017) describe how some women even insist on expensive weddings, or pressure is exerted by the bride's kin group on the groom. Particularly in the case of struggle marriages (see Section 5.2) the groom is under a lot of pressure because he cannot provide enough by himself but needs to accept support from his kin group. Boulton (2017) mentions men who see women as "materialistic and greedy" (Boulton 2017:33). On the other hand, in elite marriages, it is the husband's wealth and success that is emphasised (Pauli and Dawids 2017). In the prevailing construction of a dominant masculinity, the most important social assets for males are the ownership of and access to resources, as well as a perceived strength and assertiveness. All of these expected assets are in question and, in the case of resources, are currently unavailable to many men. Thus, the difficult economic situation as well as the shift towards gender equality is challenging for men. One possible interpretation is that, therefore, many young men emphasise their dominant masculinity, as e.g. research participant David (2009) who lives under difficult economic conditions.

Men try to resolve many of the problems and frustration they experience with alcohol. Expert 46 (2006), Chairperson of White Ribbon in Windhoek, added that men try to use alcohol as an excuse. Statistics reveal that many more men than women misuse alcohol in Namibia (Seth 2015). One example is given by Lucy who sees a gendered difference in the prevalence of alcohol abuse, implying that men abuse alcohol much more than women. She gave the following explanation: "Mostly women are responsible for the house, the kids. And

men, they don't care, because they know that women are looking after everything" (Lucy, 2006:3). Several research participants mentioned payday, when salaries are paid (see Sections 1.4 and 7.2.1 and Chapter 4), as a time when some men misuse their power and behave irresponsibly. It leads to serious conflict and violence between partners, if the man receives his salary at the end of the month and spends it on alcohol, while his family goes hungry (see also Tvedten 2011). One participant in the School Survey illustrates strikingly how the notion of the male breadwinner and of the man as chief decision-maker can combine in a very unhealthy way, for example when alcohol is involved:

My father left me alone, lock[ed] up at home with my friend and brother, he did not return. When he left in the morning and there was no food, I took some money and bought rice (...). He arrived drunk and beat us up for stealing his money. (16 year-old boy, 127 C 10, iiba by SGA)

The boy's father abused his position as head of the household, and thus in control of the household income. He was even using violence to enforce his perception of how the money he brings home as breadwinner should be spent, using it solely for his own benefit while his children are hungry and neglected. Becker (2000), as well as Brown et al. (2005), points to alcohol being associated with the construction of masculinity. The pejorative term "*moffies*" (Afrikaans derogatory term for gay) was a common accusation among young men who refused their peers' demands to drink (Becker 2000:9, Lorway 2015). Moreover, alcohol may also be used to increase courage in situations where a man's self-esteem is low.

### **Sexual relations and commodification**

Much of the recent masculinity production I observed in Outjo is carried out in order to achieve a position of dominant masculinity; for example, by having sexual relations with women. Sexuality plays an important role in the construction of masculinity: to "Be a man' means to have sex" (rural man quoted in: Brown et al. 2005:591). In the School Survey, 70% of the responding boys had already have sex.<sup>325</sup> One respondent in the School Survey was admonished to behave like a boy, by his brother and his friends telling him to get a girlfriend: "(...) they told me that without a girl you are not a man at all (...)" (19 year old boy, 045 A 11).<sup>326</sup> Edwards writes about "societal and peer pressure to prove manhood by being sexually active" (Edwards 2007:239). The importance of sexuality for men was also revealed in the exploratory study by Kaundjua et al. (2014). Sexual activity is an important component of masculinity production, as Brown et al (2005) discovered, as well as Shepard Perry (2014). Wise terms the very economically successful men "male powersexuals" (Wise 2007:331) because of the relevance of them being sexually active. Wise found among both groups in her comparative study of elite Ovambo and Afrikaner men the expression that "men are hunters" (Wise 2007:337). This raises the question of how these "powersexual

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<sup>325</sup> 70 boys answered the question. 21 stated not to have had sex yet.

<sup>326</sup> Although this was stated only once in the gendered admonishments I included it here because, from the interviews and informal conversation, it became very clear that this point is important.

hunters” perceive women. If the metaphor is developed further, the female sexual partner could be seen as game to be bagged, which already implies (symbolic) violence (see Section 9.1). The combination of sexual violence linked to the idea of woman as property is symbolised by cases in which men slit the throats of their female partners. In several media reports on intimate partner femicides perpetrated in this way the image of slitting the throat of a goat was used (e.g. *CNN World*, McSweeney, 19.10.2020).

The importance of having a female partner was confirmed by the Group Discussion in 2006, whose participants criticised this mainstream expectation. Contrary to this expectation, Rob, a participant in the Group Discussion, who also worked as a Christian missionary volunteer for DRC’s Kunene for Christ, states that for a boy or man to say, “I stay virgin”, until marriage, without adding that he is a Christian, would be impossible because people would think that was stupid (Rob, Group Discussion 2006). He highlights the double standard for boys and girls, since it is seen as desirable for girls to abstain from sex (see also Section 7.1). Rob thinks a great deal of self-confidence, pride and motivation is needed for a boy to state that he wants to stay a virgin and wait for his future wife (Rob, Group Discussion 2006). This is a rare attitude among young men. In 2009, he followed the special programme *Choose to wait*, which promotes sexual abstinence until marriage (see Section 5.2). In Pentecostal Churches (Section 5.2) there is a binary division between one group of married and sexually active people, and another group of unmarried and sexually abstinent people. They held special workshops to help the second group to abstain from sex. In the Pentecostal Church having sex before marriage is seen as illegitimate, and is conceptualised as “backsliding”, i.e. falling back into bad habits before being born again<sup>327</sup> (Gierse-Arsten 2005).

However, beyond this Christian sphere, it is much more common for men of different ages to have sexual relations and moreover to have additional girlfriends (see below).<sup>328</sup> In a context where sexuality and relationships are commodified (see Section 5.2), implying that love and the provision of resources merge into each other (see also Pinho et al. 2016), it is important to look at differences according to economic opportunities and age within the group of males.

Hunter describes money as a “gatekeeper for their intimate encounters” for men in South Africa (M. Hunter 2010:186). It is useful to see money as a gatekeeper for steady relationships and for marriage, symbolising access to the middle class (Pauli 2009). Unemployed and young men have lower chances of forming steady intimate relationships or getting married. Even if men are in steady relationships or married and lose their job, they

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<sup>327</sup> In Pentecostal terminology “born again” means a Pentecostal believer after s/he underwent certain rituals such as publicly confessing sins and baptism. People repent from former life and sins and are therefore called born agains (Gierse-Arsten 2005:18).

<sup>328</sup> See Ipinge/Lebeau 2005:34, Kandirikirira 2002, Tersbøl 2002, Pauli 2009, Pauli/Schnegg 2007, Becker 2000.

could also lose their relationship because the female partner may break it off (see above).<sup>329</sup> This may be quite frustrating for the men, as Tvedten's example of Sakeus shows: "In 1992 my wife left me for someone else, after I became unemployed. She also took my son, who is now 18. They never visit me. I still love her, but I cannot afford her as I am unemployed" (quoted in Tvedten 2011:148).

Some of the economically successful often older men have transactional sexual relations with younger females and are locally termed "sugar daddies". These are older men who are employed, including teachers, or who have *shebeens*, or clubs (Expert 52, informal conversation 2006, Expert 19, 2009). In cases where their sexual partners are very young and below the age of consent, I term these men "child rapists", as what they are doing is illegal. According to Namibian law they commit a criminal act (see Section 8.1.1 and see Section 9.2).

Many of the young men who are still at school or unemployed are critical of these older men because they can get access to their female counterparts of the same age through their resources, which the young men do not have. It is important to question what impact this often unsanctioned behaviour of the economically successful men has on the boys and young men. Kaundjua et al. (2014) found that boys aged between 15 and 19 were particularly outraged by older well-off men demanding unprotected sex with the girls, then getting them pregnant and infecting them with HIV. According to Expert 42, a teacher at a secondary school in Outjo, they feel insecure about their gender, but often display a certain amount of violent – sometimes sexually violent – behaviour (Expert 42, 2009). Are they trying to take by force what they cannot get otherwise, due to their limited financial means? Kandirikirira (2002) describes a phenomenon among young men called "hunting", a ritual that takes place in the hostels at boarding schools, and was also mentioned by one interviewee in Outjo (Jeremy, 2009). It involves boys breaking into the girls' rooms and raping them. Kandirikirira draws the conclusion that the boys see themselves as being in competition with these older well-off men who have relationships with the girls in exchange for material goods: "The boys, denied access to the multiple relationships that would symbolise their manhood, cannot challenge older men so they blame and victimise the girls" (Kandirikirira 2002: 125). Moreover, they also use the same term for sexual activity as successful men "hunting" (see above) implying that they follow their "role models".

### **Man as the independent decision-maker**

An important factor in the construction of a dominant masculinity, which positions the man as leader, breadwinner, and head of the household, is the question of decision-making (Mufune 2009, see Helman/Ratele 2016 for South Africa). This is reflected in the quotations about the

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<sup>329</sup> For the female perspective on this situation see Chapter 7.

incoming suppliant (see above) as well as in financial matters, but it is also significant in relation to sexual issues. Often the man is the one who decides to have sex (see Chapter 5), as David's example illustrates:

David: Men (...) is the one ...that needs to get it [sex], whenever he need it.  
SGA Why?  
David: Because it's his!  
SGA What do you mean? It's his what?  
David: It's his woman. That's why he comes to her. It's one of the reasons that they are together. (David 2009, iiba by SGA)

On the one hand, it is clear from this statement that he does not see that women also have sexual needs and, on the other hand, the woman is objectified as a sexual object without personality. Boulton identifies two different positions of men: public and private. In the public realm, they show a tendency to "view women as objects to be dominated and controlled" (Boulton 2017:41). This stands in contrast with the private behaviour of a man that "also caters for the wishes of his spouse" (ibid). This ambiguous position can be seen as reflecting a slow change in gender relations. Pieter's narratives also reflect this public/private distinction. He claimed that most guys try to be cool or sound cool and thus bring sex into dating. They try to be cool when they are with other boys, but underneath that they have genuine feelings for their girlfriend and are caring. However, when they are with other boys they cannot show these feelings because it will damage their reputation. Moreover, he thinks there is a communication gap between boys and girls (Pieter, 2009).

In the School Survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents stated that both partners should make decisions about sex together, but there were also 12 boys and a few girls who voted in favour of the man deciding. In the following explanation for why a man should decide on sex, the construction of a dominant masculinity is apparent:

(...) because he is her husband. (boy, 064 A 11)  
(...) because the man is the one that have propose a woman and can decide whatever he wants. (17 year-old boy, 123 C 10)

In practice, those who were already sexually active (81 learners: 32 females and 49 males) stated that the first time they had sex was decided on by both partners (females: 19, males 35). However, 10 boys stated that they alone decided to have sex, no girls stated that they took this decision on their own, while 12 girls stated that their boyfriend decided and 10 of those regretted it later on (see Section 8.1.1). Expert 42, a teacher at OSS, also said that boys would manipulate girls into having sex.

The men who are socialised into a dominant masculinity are used to make independent decisions. It seems that this is a legacy of the past which persists: "mostly only the man is just doing what he wants to do" (Lucy, 2006:8). David shares his perception of it in the following excerpt:

There is that thing in a man, that strong belief within a man, that he is a man. And nothing or no one can stop him from that manship. And he believes that he is strong and he can do ANYTHING (...). Man usually is a person with great boldness and power. (David 2009)

This statement reveals a sense of great confidence among men, as well as the belief that they can act and make decisions freely and independently (see also Wise 2007). This was also mentioned by one participant in the School Survey when describing how life differs for men and women:

I think that men, ok let me say most men, like to be independent, doesn't want to be controlled, they like things their own way while the woman/mother always thinks about the home! (18 year-old boy, 038 A 11).

The idea of man as independent decision-maker is highlighted as important for dominant masculinity. Thus, many men believe they can do anything without being questioned by a partner (Lucy, 2006, Alicia, Robert, both 2009; see below). Becker also mentions the same idea: "Being 'the man' appears to entail having unquestioned authority and dominance" (Becker 2000:6, see also Helman/Ratele 2016 for South Africa). A female elder of the Catholic Church said resignedly: "men do what they want, there is no respect!" (Expert 43, 2009)

### **Multiple concurrent sexual relations**

Many males have multiple concurrent sexual partners. A learner in the School Survey stated that, for a boy, it would have the following effect: "The more girlfriends you have, the more famous you get especially at school" (boy, 028-A12). Kaundjua et al. also mentioned that it is "prestigious for boys to have multiple partners" (Kaundjua et al. 2014:290), and Becker stressed this issue, too: "Sexual prowess was clearly regarded as crucial for proper manliness" (Becker 2000:6), but there may be differences between urban and rural contexts, as well as regarding economic opportunities (see Boulton 2017). David, who as a community activist also conducted workshops for young people, suggests some reasons why young men have multiple concurrent partners:

SGA            So why is it good for a man to have several girlfriends. Why do men choose to have different girlfriends?

David           This question is very critical. When I am with my groups, my AIDS awareness clubs, the school kids, the youth groups, I always have these kinds of discussions. It's very helpful. So I have open debates with them. Why is it [having concurrent sexual relations] important for them? And some boys say, 'it's not enough to have one [girl]', or 'the girl's parents are very strict, I cannot meet her very often' or the ones who have steady relationships and stay together say 'that girlfriend of mine she does not give me things on time', maybe he wants to go to work and his clothes are not ironed or the food is not prepared on time and those things make him take another one. There are many reasons. There is also some sensitive stuff: in the bed the performance of the girlfriend is not good.

SGA            Why don't they just separate? And start a new one?

David           As a facilitator you also ask them. And then they say, 'no, but her manners are very good for me' or they say 'I get something from this one that I can't get from the other one'. Many reasons (...). (David, 2009, iiba by SGA)

Thus, young men have different sexual partners or girlfriends to meet different needs and desires: one for status, one for doing housework for him, etc. Moreover, David points to the low marriage rates being linked to multiple concurrent sexual relations in the case of young men in Etosha Poort (see Section 5.2): “there are only few married people. The unmarried, young men have two or three girlfriends” (David, 2009).

Many boys have learnt from their fathers that it is normal for a man to have several girlfriends at the same time (Carl, 2009). Polygyny was part of pre-colonial tradition among all ethnic groups in Namibia (see Section 2.1). Carl explains how it is considered normal for a man to have multiple concurrent sexual relations:

Carl	Because of [being a] man ... when I'm staying here [in Outjo], so sleepless. That's why ... and you know also, in our tradition (...) a man to be... is acceptable.
SGA	A man ... like having different girlfriends?
Carl	Ja, ja, to have ... it's acceptable. That's not a problem, because that is in my, in our, in men's believe also, ja. It also helps me ... because I know how it was [with] my father. (Carl, 2009, iiba by SGA)

He refers to his father who was married to two wives, as tradition allowed. Thus, some men openly defend and legitimise their behaviour of having multiple sexual partners with reference to the former traditional practice of polygyny.<sup>330</sup> Thus, recourse to the practices of their fathers and forefathers rewards them with a sense of certainty and identification. On the one hand, the behaviour of many men – across all cultural groups, classes and ages – in having additional sexual relations can be seen as a continuation of the past.

Symbolically, several men see themselves as hunters (see above), and this may explain why they have multiple sexual partners. Wise found this perception among her sample of elite Ovambo men (Wise 2007). Powerful, economically successful and often older or middle-aged married men use their resources to form intimate relationships including multiple transactional relationships. Misheke stated that some men are proud of having additional sexual relations. They say things like: "I am a man of the women, I have lots of girlfriends" (Misheke, 2009). Thus, in challenging times for men, having multiple concurrent sexual relations can be seen as a means of producing dominant masculinity (Ipinge/Lebeau 2005, Kandirikirira 2002, Kaundjua et al. et al. 2014, Tersbøl 2006). Having many female sexual partners is one way for a man to raise his status among other men (Brown et al. 2005:591, Tersbøl 2006, Morell 2001). The following statement by David underlines this, too:

SGA	Why do you think, it's like that, that there are more men unfaithful? Which reason is there?
David	If you take Etosha Poort location, you know, you want to be seen. In some cases men likes to be, need to be seen that he can do it. There is a thing, they call 'player', 'I am a man player in this game.' So they must be seen.
SGA	Why? What does it do to them?
David	It boosts them.

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<sup>330</sup> See also Edwards 2007:239, footnote 7, Shepard Perry 2014; see Hunter 2002:107, and Spiegel 1991 for South Africa.

SGA            Like, to be strong, or to feel like a man?  
 David        To feel like a man and to show other men also that he is a man. And they follow him and just do the same. (David, 2009)

This “game” can be understood as competition between men (Pieter, 2009). This competition among (un)equal men can be seen as constitutive of the construction of masculinity. This was confirmed by Misheke who stated that some men would even boast about their multiple sexual relations and would say “ME, it’s ME, I am a MAN” (Misheke, 2009, his emphasis capitalised). It becomes clear that men admire other men who have multiple sexual relations, which leads to an improvement in the self-esteem of those men. This was confirmed by Misheke. He explains that some of the men who have different girlfriends concurrently do not have enough self-confidence (Misheke, 2009) and thus need some reassurance from other men (see also Tersbøl 2006, Edwards 2007, Tvedten 2011, Morell 2001). Moreover, young men also want to experiment with their sexualities.

This social exclusion of men with regard to access to intimate relationships and marriage because of their lack of income is part of a structural violence that disadvantaged people in Namibia are confronted with (see Section 1.1.2 and Chapter 4). Insecure and challenged men use multiple sexual relations and aggressive sexual behaviour for the production of masculinity, because they want to feel powerful again (ibid and see Zembe et al. 2015 for South Africa). Some young men also become involved in transactional relations with women who have resources (LaFont 2007). Shepard Perry points to the “high risk sexual behaviours driven by men: multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships, transactional sex, and inter-generational sexual relationships” (Shepard Perry 2014:1). Tersbøl argues that the social exclusion of men “leads to increased sexual risk taking” (Tersbøl 2006:404), as well as “a crisis in their perception of what it means to be a man” (ibid:405). She points to an interesting connection: the “lack of respect and recognition that follows from material social exclusion” (Tersbøl 2006:406). Thus, the lack of respect that so many men were preoccupied with (see above) can also be traced back to more general societal sources and not only to women’s empowerment.

### **Reactions to multiple sexual relations of men**

Many women do not accept their male partners having additional sexual relations (Carl, Robert, Luthrecia, all 2009, Allison and Gertrud, 2006/2009). The topic of men having multiple sexual relations was among the most important mentioned by women regarding the factors that contributed to conflict and violence in my research (see Chapter 7). However, men are not used to being challenged by women whom they consider to be under their authority. Thus, conflicts arise (see Sections 7.2.1 and 8.1.2).

Public opinion views men having multiple concurrent sexual relations as backwards, linked to old patriarchal traditions, against God’s law and immoral. Christian missionaries were

responsible for the abolition of polygyny during colonial times (see Section 2.1). Today the churches strongly oppose this behaviour and pastors see it as against God's law:

Why men do not go to church, because (...) some of them have three wives, concubines. And then when he goes to church then he will hear that [having] these three women is not ok. (Expert 24, 2006, iiba by SGA)

During my previous research I learnt that, in a Pentecostal Church, having concurrent sexual relations is directly linked to HIV/AIDS: "AIDS comes from fornication" (Expert 28, 2001). Interestingly, churches and those striving for gender equality are united in their opposition to multiple sexual relations and polygyny. The older couple Magda and Robert – both of whom come from a Christian background – viewed the behaviour of men having multiple sexual relations as a sign of immaturity. They both said that, after their marriage, Robert stopped having multiple concurrent sexual partners, supported by his Christian faith (see above, marriage as a turning point).

The overwhelming majority of learners in the School Survey (74,8%) showed a negative attitude towards having multiple sexual relations, for men and women. Many female and male interviewees regard such male behaviour as unacceptable, for example Misheke (2009), who himself experienced a girlfriend cheating on him.<sup>331</sup> Notwithstanding, many men have different girlfriends in secret, "but some of us we see [it]" (Misheke, 2009, iiba by SGA). In the following excerpt, David describes a kind of hidden admiration among some men for other men who have multiple concurrent sexual relationships:

You need to see it from different perspectives: some men know that to have more girlfriends, it's not accepted. And on the other hand, the people are just talking about him with a smile, and he feels like he has been promoted. That is also kind of encouraging him. But on the other hand, he knows, 'no, what I am doing is unacceptable'. (David, 2009)

This points to a source of high tensions within men, but also and especially within gender relations, as well as regarding their Christian faith, which is important for many people (see Section 5.1).

Because of this ambivalence between public opinion opposing the idea of having multiple sexual relations, and the production of masculinity, as well as the opposition of female partners, polygyny is not very often lived openly but in a secret form. Many men hide their behaviour from their female steady partners (e.g. Allison, Luthrecia, 2009, see also Tvedten 2011:140). Nowadays, men who refer to this legitimation live a form of private polygyny *without* taking on all the responsibilities which were traditionally connected with the practice of polygyny: giving wives and their children access to resources like accommodation, land, livestock and protection (van der Vliet 1991:231f). Moreover, official polygynous unions are integrated within a set of rules including economic obligations for men. Even if men give

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<sup>331</sup> Of course one has to keep in mind that expressing an opinion in a certain context does not necessarily mean that the person's behaviour is congruent with it.

resources to their girlfriends nowadays, it is not regulated but depends on the goodwill of the man.

Many people, both women and men, believe men having multiple concurrent sexual relations to be widespread and to constitute a huge problem that causes substantial conflict and violence in intimate relationships. Misheke even claimed that, "most of the time the men are not faithful, they are not honest (...) only few men are faithful" (ibid), as did Lucy (2006). Misheke adds that some men *pretend* to be faithful, but actually are not. This may also hold true for Wise's elite Ovambo research participants who had a long-term relationship and additional concurrent sexual partners: "These men clearly stated that their sexual behaviour, in this regard, would not change" (Wise 2007:340). For them it was very important to hide these sexual encounters as otherwise their reputation would be at risk.

### **Consequences of males having multiple concurrent sexual relations**

The widespread male behaviour and concealment of additional sexual relations has led to a general climate of mistrust in intimate relationships, especially in light of the high HIV/AIDS rates. The HIV prevalence for males is highest between the ages of 40 and 54, peaking in the age group 50 to 54 at 26.4% (MOHSS 2019:55).<sup>332</sup> Another consequence of this hidden polygyny is the fathering of many children out of wedlock. This is important for the construction of masculinities (Brown et al. 2005: 594, Kaundjua et al. 2014, Shepard Perry 2014, Haufiku 2013). For example, the research participant Robert (2009) had 11 children with different girlfriends. There are cases when the steady partner and the girlfriend are both pregnant at the same time (for example Emma, 2006).

The interviewee Luthrecia described how she got pregnant by a married man. He had been proposing to her for a while without telling her that he was married. He then invited her to a hotel in Khorixas for a drink, took her to a room and said: "I propose you a long time, and I will not accept you to leave this room without having sex with me and got a child in you" (Luthrecia, 2009). She gave in and became pregnant. Although he intended to impregnate her, the man did not help her to support the child financially afterwards (see Chapter 7). A former magistrate also pointed to the significant problem of fathers who do not want to pay maintenance for their children (Expert 29, 2009). When asked why this was, he replied, "ignorance" (ibid). As the School Survey shows too, the reality for many children in Namibia is that they grow up without their fathers. There has even been a campaign to promote responsible fatherhood (Kandirikirira 2002). However, Kandirikirira found that men were generally presented negatively. Consequently, she writes, many men adopted a defensive attitude and withdrew (ibid:116). Tersbøl links the absence of fathers to their economic disempowerment: they are not able to provide for children as expected so they would rather

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<sup>332</sup> See more information on HIV in Outjo in Section 1.4, HIV in Namibia in Section 4.1, HIV in gender relations Section 5.2, and HIV and women in Section 7.1.

disappear completely (Tersbøl 2006). Nonetheless, there are also cases involving men in very different situations overtaking responsibility for their children. Some men stay in abusive intimate relationships because of fears about losing their children if a couple separate (e.g., Carl, 2009, see below). And there are also single fathers looking after children if the mother is absent (e.g. Misheke and Jeremy, both 2009).

### **Negativ image of men**

There is a negative attitude towards men, also revealed in many of the interviews. This is often linked to the common behaviour of men having multiple concurrent sexual relations, producing children out-of-wedlock whom they do not provide for, abusing alcohol, refusing HIV tests and contracting HIV. By behaving in this way, and trying to hide their additional sexual relations, they put their female partners at risk of getting HIV, as it was the case for Luthrecia and Allison (both 2009). This negative image is also connected with the violent behaviour of some men as well as their opposition to gender equality. Several women and some of the older interviewees showed this perception of younger men (Robert, Magda, Luthrecia, Isak, all 2009, Emma, 2006).

The only example I know of in which men are portrayed positively is “The caring Namibian man” calendar (see above). However, even in this case, the prevalent negative public image of Namibian men is reflected, and is connected to violence perpetrated by men. The project aimed to turn the negative image around. At the end of the calendar the following statement appears:

Over the past few months, the Namibian press has been fuelled with violent acts such as rape and domestic violence, always perpetrated by men. We all know that men neglect, rape and murder women and children – statistics can be battering. The press tends to depict violence as a criteria of masculinity, while portraying love and care as a weakness. It is time to reverse this image and present a positive, caring Namibian man to the public. (OYO 2005)

Although the aim is to show positive examples of caring men, it also shows very clearly the current negative view of men in Namibian society. One of LeBeau and Spence’s participants stated that women perceived men negatively and did not include them in their struggle for equality (LeBeau/Spence 2004:50). This negative image of men may also exacerbate boys’ and men’s feelings of disquiet and uncertainty.

### **Toxic masculinity**

Tersbøl also highlights the negative image of men in research and educational programmes. Men are portrayed as the holders of power and are blamed for the spread of HIV/AIDS, yet there is a lack of campaigns and programmes specifically addressing men (Tersbøl 2006). In his anthropological research on antiretroviral therapy (HAART) Callaghan (2015) found significant differences between men and women regarding how they deal with the possibility that they might be infected. Men got tested later and thus started the HAART treatment later. Moreover, they performed worse than women during treatment; they did not adhere very well

to treatment and only rarely returned for follow-up appointments. Fitzgerald-Husek et al. mention that men resist condom use, in the belief that condoms are “unnatural and unpleasant” (2011:4) and because they see them as a threat to their masculinity. Callaghan concluded that the kind of masculinity that many men live, can be termed “toxic masculinity”: “a way of being that demands risk-taking, disregard for health, drinking, materialism, and sexual conquest (...)” (Callaghan 2015:156). This exaggerated form of dominant masculinity prevents living a healthy, responsible life. Poor health or illness further exacerbates their situation, creating a vicious circle (see also Tersbøl 2006, Kandirikirira 2002). Callaghan’s statement applies to a certain group of men, underprivileged men.<sup>333</sup> However, this kind of masculinity highlights the difficult situation that many men are in: “a struggle for respect based on materialism and womanising, and the constant triangulation of status against the positions of other men” (Callaghan 2015:184).

During my research I also heard about several male partners who did not want to get tested. One man even preferred to end the relationship rather than take his only chance to keep it by having an HIV test (Allison, 2009). In this regard, Mufune spoke of a “reluctance of men to use available health facilities” (Mufune 2009:233). The fact that men’s behaviour also has negative consequences for their own health can be linked to the aforementioned factor of masculinity production: the suppression of weaknesses is required to achieve a dominant masculinity. To address the issue of men’s health, the Namibian Government launched the Campaign “Be Strong”. It addressed men in particular, and encouraged them to get tested, find out their HIV status and take responsibility for their own health and that of an intimate partner. However, as the title illustrates, again men are urged to show strength, associated with dominant masculinity (Tarkkonen 2017).

### **Discomfort of males with regard to gender relations and gender equality**

Many men feel that they are the losers as a result of the changes in gender relations and are preoccupied with feeling that they lack respect from women and children, or in other words, from their former subordinates. The idea of equality in intimate relationships contradicts their socialisation as an independent decision-maker who does what he wants (see above). On the other hand, they are still expected to be the provider and may even be rejected by women if unable to provide. Many of my male interviewees expressed an attitude of discomfort towards this development.

A leading officer from the WCPU in Otjiwarongo stated that the man’s perspective was left out in the quest to achieve gender equality (Expert 30, 2006). This was confirmed by analysing the government’s gender policies in Section 3.2. The empowerment campaigns to achieve gender equality were directed at women and children (DWA 1998b, MWACW 2003,

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<sup>333</sup> Callaghan’s research participants all took part in the HAART programme run by a clinic in Walvis Bay. They all lived in informal settlements, and thus in poverty (Callaghan 2015).

MGECW 2010) and most of the time did not include men. Women were the target group of awareness campaigns and development efforts (MWACW 2003:18 and see LeBeau/Spence 2004). This, and the equal rights for women and children, led to the perception among men that they have been neglected, which becomes clear from the following contribution from a man during the Men's Debate:

What I fail to understand is this: the constitution of this government has got the right for the children and the right for the women, but where are the rights for the men? Where are the men's rights? That's what we don't understand. Maybe that's what the conflict is all about. (Man 19)

The perception that there are only women's rights but not men's rights was also found in a study by LeBeau and Spence (2004:30). One of their interviewees even claimed that the *Married Persons Equality Act* was intended to place men as being inferior to women (LeBeau/Spence 2004:33). Many men perceive the adjustment necessary to achieve equal rights for women as taking rights away from them. The aforementioned WCPU officer criticised the fact that men were not involved in the process and stated that men still believe that they are the leaders (Expert 30, Field Notes, 24.05.06). He added that implementing gender equality in practice has proved problematic, and that it has happened too fast.

Consequently, gender equality is also misinterpreted by some people. In general, the term "gender equality" seemed to be quite alien to the men who took part in the Men's Debate, reflected by the use of the supplementary "thing". Several men, including Experts, used the following terms: "equality *thing*" (Expert 5, Men 16 and 18) or "equal right *thing*" (Robert and Expert 6), "equal *thing*" (Men 16, 17 and Expert 5). This also shows that gender equality has not yet become self-evident but entails uncertainty. This is reflected by a statement from Man 18:

The government, when it came up with this equal right thing, I want to know what was the purpose of it? (...) They should come up and tell, what is it what they wanted with that equal right thing because it has created lots of problems. (Man 18)

Uncertainty and lack of understanding is evident in this statement, but also a sceptical view. Moffet concluded that, in the case of South Africa, gender equality has not found its way into people's personal lives yet: "Gender equality in the political realm does not translate into the private sphere, which stays hierarchically structured and highly stratified" (Moffet 2006:143). In Namibia, gender equality has not been realised in the way it was intended either. Instead, gender equality has arrived in the intimate relationships between men and women in a form that is causing a lot of tension. Many men are confused and uncertain about the changes in the gender system and about the political aim of gender equality.

However, there is another group of men who are not only confused but who see only disadvantages for men in the idea of gender equality. Therefore, they react by opposing gender equality (Robert, 2009, Men 7, 12, 15, 16 and 18). LeBeau and Spence also found that many men rejected gender equality (LeBeau/Spence 2004:43:51). Those men who

reject gender equality feel uncomfortable about it intruding into their personal lives and intimate relationships. Men's reasons for opposing gender equality are often not taken into account when gender equality is discussed. Some political decision-makers in Outjo (Experts 5 and 6, both 2009) saw the main problem as the fact that gender equality is misunderstood by people in general. This may be a phrase used by politicians but, even in other contexts, I rarely heard about a specific need to address men's opposition. Instead, most people talked about "misunderstanding" and thought that it needed to be explained more clearly to people, and then they would come to accept it. Only a few people spoke about male opposition to gender equality. A male HIV counsellor from Outjo hospital was one exception. He thinks that the changes in gender relations may bring conflict, because men do not want to accept the changes: "It is very challenging for men nowadays" (Expert 38, 2006). Men's claims about feeling a lack of respect are surely linked to their mourning of the loss of their unquestioned authority. During the Men's Debate some men even demanded that the government reverse these changes in the law, referring to the widespread violence against women perpetrated by men.

## 6.2 Males and violence

### 6.2.1 Legitimisations and rationale regarding violent behaviour of males<sup>334</sup>

Even if there was a minister present here I could have told him straight, 'that what you have done, is wrong ... this equality thing you have created more problems and more killings' ((some men applauding)). (Man 16, Men's Debate, iiba by SGA)

Most men who participated and spoke in the Men's Debate blamed gender equality or the idea that people misunderstand it as a reason for conflicts and violence in intimate relationships. This raises the question of what exactly do they mean by "misunderstanding of gender equality"? I differentiated two groups of men in the Men's Debate: the first group had a positive or at least neutral attitude towards gender equality (Experts 1, 5, 6, Man 25<sup>335</sup> and Carl). A political decision-maker whom I classify as belonging to this group viewed misunderstandings about gender equality as being responsible for the current problems between men and women:

Something has to be done to get that message clear to the people of the grassroots. To make them understand something needs to be done, in order to make them understand what equal right is all about because that creates problems, because of this misunderstanding (...). Something has to be done that BOTH parties [male and female] need to be made understand, what it is all about. For the man it should also be made clear. (Expert 6, iiba by SGA)

He stresses that *both* partners, man and woman, do not understand gender equality, but he emphasises the male perspective in particular.

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<sup>334</sup> Here, both groups of males give their legitimations, those, who openly admitted to having used violence, as well as males who just think about the factors that lead to violence. Moreover, some few females are included confirming male statements. However, both men and women are members of a gendered hierarchical society, although men are more privileged and have more to gain from the "patriarchal dividend" (Connell 1995:79).

<sup>335</sup> Man 25 worked for the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW).

The second group of men simply opposed gender equality (explicitly stated by Robert, Men 7 and 16) and blamed it as a cause of conflict and violence in intimate relationships (Robert, Men 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18 and 22). Some men gave the reason that *women* do not understand it properly. They claim that women misunderstand gender equality and misuse their new rights; that they go too far and become “big headed” towards their male partners.

Many participants in the Men’s Debate not only complained about a lack of respect by their former subordinates, but also linked the current violence of men with the lack of respect men experience today, while comparing the present day unfavourably to “the olden times”, as described above (Men 7, 14, 16, 18 and 22). During the Men’s Debate, Man 7 clarified this view with an example of what he sees as the disrespectful behaviour of a woman:

I have to make one thing clear to you that nowadays there is no respect. This respect in the relationship, that’s where these killings and fightings start from. If I go to work, the woman goes to drink. When I come home there is nothing cooked, that’s where the killing starts. (Man 7)

He links the woman’s behaviour to the occurrence of violence. This statement also reveals the expectation of a complementary gender system: the man goes to work and the woman cooks. From this perspective his anger is understandable as the woman is not fulfilling her part of the gendered agreement. This perceived connection was also found in LeBeau/Spence’s study (2004:33). Man 22 linked the perceived lack of respect from women towards men to an escalation of conflict. For him, this lack of respect is also reflected in the woman not being at home and having his dinner ready when he comes home after work, and the man who keeps quiet although he feels angry. He describes what happens in this scenario:

(...) you accumulate it, you build it up. You don’t say anything by then, and then after a certain time you explode. And if she is to tell you the story of, ‘I am not home and I have been where...’. You don’t take these things really. You don’t understand it. You don’t know whether it is really true. (Man 22)

This reflects uncertainty, mistrust and a lack of communication within the intimate relationship. Research participant Luthrecia also describes her brother who behaved violently towards his steady partner as a quiet person who allows pressure to build up and then explodes and cannot control his behaviour:

(...) If he becomes angry, he doesn’t have behaviour. You cannot say, ‘please, [name] stop!’ ... He will fight until he is full [until the end?]. He could even kill a person.... Later on he just went away. (Luthrecia, 2009, iiba by SGA)

Expert 5 viewed the lack of communication as a problem for men. He tells men to talk to their female partners and not allow the anger to build up (Expert 5, Men’s Debate). Expert 45 voiced his opinion that men do not like to talk about their problems and thus keep them to themselves: “We men don’t want to talk”. He contrasted this to women who talk to their friends if they have a problem. Boulton describes men who do not open up emotionally and talk about their feelings as they do not want to make themselves vulnerable to their female

partner. Moreover, they feel under pressure as a result of this demand from their female partners (Boulton 2017).

On the other hand, it is possible that women may lie in cases like these, knowing that the man expects her to be at home, when *he* comes home. There is no space for her perspective. This raises the question of whether lying is an item of social change. At first lying increases the scope of action but may result in mistrust, conflict and violence. As mentioned in Chapter 4, research participants expressed a deep sense of mistrust. This mistrust, uncertainty, lack of communication, and changes in rights lead to conflict in intimate relationships. Expert 44 (2009), Chairman of the Committee of People with Disabilities and a community activist, sees a lack of trust influencing violence in intimate relationships.

One male learner advises girls on how to prevent violence: “to please boys” (17 year-old boy, 091 B 11). Here, again, the perception of women solely as objects of the men, to be possessed and ruled, is reflected (see also Britton/Shook 2014). In the next statement given, too, there is not much space for what the woman wants or for any negotiation:

The woman should always be at home on time because she is the mother to the house and I am the hunter. I am always on the hunt and I can die while I am on a hunting trip (...). But by so doing, the women to be at home and the men on the hunting trip, that to be understood. [This] will maybe reduce these violence and killings. (Man 22, Men’s Debate)

Moreover, he only sees it from the perspective of how women should behave when seeking contributory factors to male violence, putting the blame on the female side (see below).

### **Enforcing respect of women and children by using violence**

Males are socialised to get respect, which is linked to authority and fear. Moreover, violence has long been accepted as a means to counter a perceived lack of respect. However, it has been termed “disciplining” in this regard (see Sections 2.2.1 and 4.3). In the example given by the young research participant and youth activist David (2009), he sees the perceived lack of respect from the wife towards the husband as a reason for her to be “disciplined”. In this case, the theme of conflict as a result of the female not being at home when the male arrives home after work is again apparent:

SGA           What is the difference between violence and disciplining? What is disciplining?  
David         Sometimes you will find your wife, you are working from 8 to 5, she is just a housewife and she is not working [not employed]. So you will find her in most cases she is not at home when you knock off at home, so in most cases you will find her giving excuses, in that case you can discipline her.

SGA           How can you discipline her?  
David         From my perspective, I like to talk, I believe in talking, talking can solve many things. But some, they think they need to touch a little bit. They need to punish her... They need to beat her in some cases. (David, 2009, iiba by SGA)

The idea of disciplining a female partner is seen as normal by some men if she does not behave according to what he expects or if she makes him angry. This is supported by the findings of Duff et al.’s (2017) study of convicted perpetrators (see Section 1.2). In the above

excerpt, it is clear that the young research participant, David, thinks that he can expect the “housewife” to be there whenever he wants her to be. She is not allowed to do what she wants. He displays an ambiguous attitude in this respect: on the one hand he shows a perception of hierarchical gender relations. On the other hand, he explicitly stated convincingly during the interview that he supports gender equality.

Misheke thinks that, when a problem occurs in a relationship and the woman does something he does not like, he should advise her on how to improve:

I think beating somebody is not a good idea. I don't think it's how to solve a problem (...), beat the woman, you just increase the problem, not solving anything. You should talk to her, advise her if she does something wrong. (Misheke, 2009)

Both research participants, Misheke and David, oppose violence but display a patronising attitude that reflects hierarchical gender relations. This perception is also reflected by the statement made by an older ELCIN pastor. However, he thinks that beating can be done without causing harm, and used simply to discipline a woman:

Expert 40 (...) women can do something which is not really good. But that is no reason to beat her. Man can beat a woman, but not to harm, but only like an advice (...).  
SGA Has the husband the right to discipline the wife?  
Expert 40 No, but disciplining by slap[ping] her.  
SGA It is difficult to understand the difference.  
Expert 40 Disciplining can be done but not destroying. (Expert 40, 2006, iiab by SGA)

This statement shows how questionable it is to draw a clear line between beating and disciplining a wife. However, this pastor’s attitude differed from that of all the other pastors in Outjo whom I spoke to. A former magistrate explained that the idea of so-called disciplining of wives is widespread, apparently among men and women:

It is a common belief that if your wife does something wrong, she needs to be disciplined. In most cultures women accept that, they don't say that, but that's the lived reality, wives even expect violence. Here in Outjo they will report – in some cases. In Kavango they just accept the violence. There was no case, they don't regard it as violence. It is common and rampant. (Expert 35, 2006)

One older participant in the Men’s Debate expressed his view on the link between nowadays’ disrespectful behaviour of women, as well as children, and mortal violence. He attributes it to the fact that women and children – the former subordinates of men during the pre-independence era (see Chapter 2) – now can demand equal rights:

This thing of children shouldn't be beaten. This thing of men and women should be equal, when these things have started, problems became more and more. Things have changed and have increased more crimes and killings (...). Those days, [when] men were respected; those things like killings were not there. (Man 14, old man, Men’s Debate, iiba by SGA)

However, he does not talk about the perpetrators, the men. The legal right that children have to defend themselves against and report violence by caregivers has led to dissatisfaction, especially among men (e.g., Men 14 and 23). This legal right is perceived as a lack of respect and thus is something they are really struggling to come to terms with (see Section 4.3). Another participant in the Men’s Debate boasted of having been in court for corporally

punishing his child: “I was in court because of corporal punishment. The government has not a say about it!” (Man 23, Men’s Debate). This man demonstrated a more extreme view than the other participants, as he openly denigrated women during the Men’s Debate. In his opinion the perceived lack of respect comes from both women *and* children. During the Men’s Debate, Man 16 also showed considerable concern that his authority was being questioned by his child and his wife who supports the child:

This equality thing (...) because that has created more problems and more killings if a man tries to advise the child not to go out in the evening, then the woman interferes 'no, leave her, let her go hang out just for few hours'. THAT has created more problems. If the man has said something, which he has already seen, 'if I let this child go out, problems will arise'. But now the woman comes interfering. [He then says:] 'Why are you always interfering?' [She replies:] 'Just leave the children, let them go out!' Those are the things that have created more and more problems. (Man 16, Men’s Debate, iiba by SGA)

This participant in the Men’s Debate complained about women taking the children’s side. It shows how formerly hierarchical inter-generational and gender relations are interwoven, as well as their transitions, and connected to violence against women and children. Many women want to prevent their children from being beaten and disciplined by their partners. This was also mentioned by several participants in the School Survey. Violence between parents involves children, and women experience violence themselves while trying to prevent the corporal punishment of children by their fathers. Other participants in the Men’s Debate also complained about the mother interfering in the father’s admonishment of the child (Men 14 and 22). Man 14 explained:

For example, if a child comes home late today, and [the] man asks 'why are you late? Where have you been?' Then [the] woman interferes, 'leave the child. What do you have on my child?' That is what [is] happening now. In olden times, when the man asks the child where he has been, why he came late, then finished. And then somebody else shouldn't come interfere while the man is asking. Those things were not there. If the man says something, then it's finished. (Man 14, Men’s Debate, iiba by SGA)

Thus, currently not only are there conflicts between the genders, but also conflicts between generations, against a background of new children’s rights, including the right to physical integrity, and new risks such as HIV/AIDS (see Section 4.3). Moreover, this conflict plays a part in intensifying the conflict between the genders. The men who were particularly angered and challenged by the rights-based policy regarding women *and* children (Men 14, 16, 22 and 23) demonstrated a very negative attitude towards women. This anger reveals a subtle or, in some cases open, tendency towards misogyny. This symbolic violence is also reflected by the advice a male participant in the School Survey gave to girls to prevent violence: “stop being so stuck-up! Such bitches” (18 year-old boy, 112 B 11). The phenomenon of males reacting violently towards females for not doing what males expect of them, was also found by Zembe et al. (2015).

The men who oppose gender equality stated that women do not respect men anymore and have misunderstood gender equality. They used phrases such as “women overdo it with their

rights”, “women get big-headed” and complained that women do not fulfil their household duties anymore, or that women interfere when men are reprimanding children (Man 12, Men’s Debate and Expert 51, 2006, see also Kandirikirira 2002:126f). Similar attitudes were found in the research on male prison inmates convicted because of violence against women. Van Rooy and Mufune (2013) mention that the majority of the inmates referred to a notion of masculinity built on man as “provider, protector and procreator” (Van Rooy/Mufune 2013:7). Some of them openly opposed gender equality and assumed that women now have an advantage over men (see also Haufiku 2013). During the Men’s Debate, Man 12 stated:

This thing of equal rights, this thing of equal rights is sometimes misunderstood. You can tell me today, there is no man who will go to his house and tell the wife, that we are... everything is now equal. We all are equal, there is nothing like that. That will never happen. What I am trying to say is... that’s where these household problems start. The woman becomes big-headed to the man, that’s where the misunderstanding has started. This thing of equal rights is just misunderstood somehow. (Man 12)

It is clear from this statement that the participant opposes the idea of gender equality (see also LeBeau/Spence 2004:33). This perception of women going too far was also supported by some parliamentarians during the parliamentary debates, which took place while the new bills about gender and rights were being discussed, as mentioned in Section 3.2 (Hubbard 2007b). Moreover, in Duff et al.’s study, perpetrators of lethal violence towards their female partner revealed feelings of misunderstanding towards women, and accused women of “being a cause of problems, and their decisions being difficult to understand (...), how women are perceived to sometimes speak to men, disobey men (...)” (Duff et al. 2017:8).

Thus, a lot of men feel strongly challenged by gender equality. Britton and Shook describe this kind of reaction by men as a backlash against gender equality. They identify research participants seeing gender equality as one factor behind gender violence

Violence becomes symbolic: while not targeting any specific group of women, men who feel threatened and disenfranchised in the new dispensation are lashing out against the women in their own lives – violently putting women back in their place. (Britton/Shook 2014:154)

The participant who wanted the government to revoke gender equality or explain it more clearly (see above) reveals a great deal of indignation, unwillingness and incomprehension in relation to the idea of gender equality in the following continuation of his statement:<sup>336</sup>

He is gonna even kill his wife, if it’s gonna be like that... ((another man laughing)). ‘If it gonna happens like this, I’m gonna kill even... it might also end up like ... me also killing my wife.’ It’s not that the woman has done something but now the thing of ... the equality thing that makes him frustrated. ‘What is it? What was wrong? Before the independence and before that, things were normal, but with the independence the equal right thing has come up. What was wrong, that they had to come up with the equal rights? That me and the wife should be equal. I am gonna have a problem if the woman is the president! ... Let it be that the man is the head of the house, that’s it. (Man 18, Men’s Debate)

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<sup>336</sup> Man 18 speaks in Afrikaans and Nama/Damara. The translated version of what he said is quoted. In this citation the translator alternately uses indirect speech (then “he”) and direct speech (using the I-form), which is indicated with single quotation marks.

He is clearly so angered by and opposed to the government's gender policy that he theoretically takes it into consideration to kill his wife – even if she is not behaving badly in his eyes. This is problematic as violence starts in the mind (Orywal 1996, see Section 1.1.2). However, it is important to keep in mind that some men publicly display an attitude of dominant masculinity but may live a different, more compromising form of masculinity when they are with their partner (see above and Boulton 2017). Nonetheless, it shows that the idea of violence and even killing is already present in some men's minds.

The perception of a man as the head of the household, who holds and retains the power, is shared by Man 16 who believes that there is not and never should be equality between women and men:

I am the man ((other men laughing)). As I am standing right HERE, I am a man! The wrongs that [the] government has done, of this equal rights, that has to be changed. For example, if we are in the same class, me and women, and there is requirement, we all, me and the women, have to chop down 15 trees, me and my wife. That one will never happen because she won't do it, she cannot do it. Therefore, I am a man... I WILL NOT let her work because I am man enough! (Man 16, Men's Debate, iiba by SGA)

He constructs his strong masculine role as the head of the household out of the assumed physical inability of his wife. However, he feels the need to stress that even *if* she wanted to do it, *he* would not allow it, which also shows his conviction that he should be the one deciding for his wife, not only about questions that pertain to them both, but even decisions about her behaviour. This reveals a perception of his female partner as subordinate, as the object of his rule and, as such, open to possible "disciplining". However, this statement also demonstrates how the man is actually dependent on his wife, for his perception of his own masculinity. His dominant masculinity depends on the subordination of his wife. He feels that his own position is under threat by her having a job or not conforming to his view of gendered roles. This shows that he identifies with his male role which is complementary to the female role. Therefore, it is challenging and even threatening for him if his partner wants to change her role. He continues:

I am the man, and I don't allow my wife to go work because she has got already her bank account, she has her cards what she needs. She is equipped more than a woman who is working. If she is starting this thing of 'I have to go work', then she must get her way because I am man enough, I am looking after her, and I am doing everything. Why must she go work? (Man 16, Men's Debate)

This forced economic dependency can be seen as strategy by men to keep their female partners subordinate. The incomprehension of Man 16 is also apparent in this statement. He provides her with resources, and thus he sees no need for her to seek employment. He believes that, because he gives her money, he can make decisions. This example shows one consequence of the commodification of sexual relationships which is prevalent in Namibia (see Section 5.2): it produces power imbalances and dependencies. Furthermore, this man directly links his masculinity and the continuation of their intimate relationship to his

partner's possible will to earn her own income. The phrase "to be man enough" suggests that there is a potential for violence if his wife refuses to subordinate herself to him. It is obvious that he feels challenged and threatened in his masculinity by the concept of equality and also considers using violence to enforce respect.

I see several possible explanations for the men seeing women as big-headed, and going too far with their rights: *firstly*, men simply feel challenged in their socialised authority by the new self-confidence of women, backed-up by the government and the new laws. *Secondly*, it could just show that the female partners are no longer willing to keep quiet and remain subordinate as they had done prior to independence. *Thirdly*, the use of the term "misunderstanding" in relation to gender equality in this context signifies that the couple do not understand each other because the female half has changed and gained strength and self-confidence while the male half has lost self-confidence and power. Overall, there is a lack of mutual understanding. Moreover, men and women have never learnt to negotiate on equal terms.

In van Rooy and Mufune's (2013) study on sentenced male perpetrators of violence against women, "disobedience of partner" is also given as one important contributory factor to the violence (107 out of 200 research participants agreed with this). Other factors that are perceived as important in explaining their violence are "alcohol and drug abuse" (155 out of 200), "money problems" (105 out of 200), unemployment (100 out of 200) and "no food at home" (97 out of 200) (Van Rooy/Mufune 2013:7). They also found that many of the male convicted prisoners were either unemployed or were casual labourers who did not have a regular or sufficient income and a low level of education.<sup>337</sup> Van Rooy and Mufune also differentiated between various "Justifications of violent behaviour", whereby the prison inmates were asked to give justifications for their own use of violence (ibid:8): "Find out she was unfaithful" (43) and "suspects she is unfaithful" (25), "she disobeys you" (38), "household work not done" (20), "she asks about other girlfriends" (7) and "she refuses sex" (7).<sup>338</sup> All these legitimations can be summarised as connected to the demand for gender equality. As mentioned above, the research participants perceive power as being like a cake of which portions can be gained or lost but not shared. Thus, the challenge posed by gender equality may cause them to feel inferior. Another participant in the Men's Debate, Expert 5, the Chairperson of the CPP, also identified this problem: "That change of equality maybe makes the man more threatened to feel more inferior, that feeling of inferiority, that makes him more provoked, more violent" (Expert 5, Men's Debate). The link between the men's use of

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<sup>337</sup> See also Section 1.2 regarding criticism of their account. They only analysed cases of sentenced perpetrators most of whom were found to be underprivileged. Different conclusions might have been reached if privileged men had been included.

<sup>338</sup> However, I do not know if these answers were given after open questions were asked or if participants were given pre-determined variables to choose from.

violence and a feeling of inferiority was also highlighted by other males and females (Experts 12, 31 and 45, all 2006). Tvedten discusses poor men feeling inferior, and "(...) feeling outlets of it in their withdrawing from immediate family relationships, their use of violence and their excessive use of alcohol" (Tvedten 2011:150, and see Pauli 2014, Silberschmidt 2003, Tersbøl 2006). Some men try to improve their situational self-esteem by consuming alcohol. Rob points to the problem that some men do not have the courage to say things that are important to them when they are sober, but after drinking alcohol they do and then they go too far: "Then the boyfriend wants to shut up the girlfriend and beat her, also to show the other people" (Rob, Group Discussion 2006). The importance of the role played by alcohol in escalating conflicts and even leading to the death of the female partner was stressed by the convicted perpetrators (Duff et al. 2017, Van Rooy and Mufune 2013).

The attitude of trying to get respect by the use of violence is further clarified in the School Survey (see also Section 6.2.2 on violence between males). Several boys who admitted using violence stated that they did so to get respect. In the School Survey, 41 boys had witnessed violence, and of those, 19 cases were classified as violence by males against females (domestic, sexual, beatings, etc). These male witnesses assumed the following factors to be causes of violence (see also Kaundjua et al. 2014): The third most important factor for violence, after alcohol and jealousy, was being insecure.<sup>339</sup> Expert 5 (2009) gave an example of men feeling insecure, if they are illiterate<sup>340</sup>: "when you are illiterate then you sometimes don't know how to handle cases." Expert 10, Chairman of the NGO NAMEC (see Section 3.3), thinks that violence is connected to a feeling of powerlessness. He gave the example of men who cannot provide for their family. He believes that "women's emancipation has developed and means a threat to men" (Expert 10, 2006). Duff et al. found "a sense of powerlessness" (Duff et al. 2017:8) and "losing control of one's partner" (ibid:14) to be important factors behind male lethal violence against their female partners. This interpretation was also confirmed by Expert 46, Chairman of the NGO White Ribbon: "if man feels powerless, but he wants to show power, then he uses violence and drinking: 'by drinking I can get power'" (Expert 46, 2006). Pauli found the same phenomenon among her female interviewees who suffered as a result of domestic violence and alcohol abuse. She concludes: "Women with independent incomes and independent decision-making power can be a heavy challenge for men lacking these attributes" (Pauli 2007a:211). This is particularly contradictory for the idea of the man as independent decision-maker, which is important for masculinity production (see Section 6.1). Thomas (2007) also found that gender equality in a context of prevailing challenging socioeconomic difficulties could be perceived as a threat (Thomas 2007:606). The demand for gender equality seems to have only disadvantages for

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<sup>339</sup> The figures for the factors that the boys saw as most important in causing violence against females are as follows: 1) alcohol (13 boys), 2) jealousy (7 boys), 3) being insecure (6 boys), multiple answers were possible.

<sup>340</sup> For the literacy rate in Outjo see Section 1.4.

men. Men are told to share the decision-making with women and give away a portion of their “power cake”. Becker assumes that men who are challenged by the transitions that have taken place react in a way that is “resistant, and indeed at times violent” (Becker 2006:35). Linked to the factors of personal and societal insecurity and the feeling of being challenged in their dominant masculinity, some men want to keep or re-establish the old hierarchical status quo (see also LeBeau/Spence 2004:49, Becker 2007, /Khaxas 1996). They also consider using violence to achieve this end (Men’s Debate, Men 16 and 18). Men want to reassure themselves and others. This means that men feel emboldened to use violence to show themselves and others who is in charge.

Research participant Silas explained that he had hit his girlfriend because: “I wanted to show her that I am the man. I thought ‘if I beat her once, then she will be scared so that she will not beat me again” (Silas, 2009). Some men who had killed their intimate partner, also admitted to the same motivation: they wanted to show her who is in charge but did not want to kill her (Duff et al. 2017). These men used violence “to cause harm, but rather than with an intent to kill, an intent to ‘injure’, or an intent to teach a lesson” (ibid:13). However, often weapons, mostly knives, were used. According to the accounts of the perpetrators, these were sometimes used with and sometimes without the intent to kill. Uukunde points to weapons as “symbolis[ing] manhood” (Uukunde 2012:21, iiba by SGA) in a society in which hunting is still important for some groups and also for masculinity construction (see Section 6.1).

### **“It’s created by the lady”**

Several men saw different kinds of violence being used by males and females and even cited the verbal violence of women as a reason why men reacted with physical violence. When questioned about whether there are differences in the violent behaviour of women and men Expert 44, Chairman of the Committee of People with Disabilities and community activist, replied:

Expert 44 Yes. Men use more physical violence and women more verbal violence. The men are weak in talking and the women are strong in talking. For example, women use abusive language, insulting a man until he gets violent. The ladies are like that if she start something, then she will not stop. The man goes angry very quickly, he cannot stand abusive language. He would start fighting.

SGA How?

Expert 44 Kicking, even killing. It’s created by the lady. (Expert 44, 2009)

His conviction that the woman herself caused the physical violence perpetrated by the man, through her own verbal violence, is revealing. Similar perceptions are also apparent in the following advice that a male participant in the School Survey gave to girls about how to prevent violence: “to shut their mouths, they are a big reason for physical violence”, while he advised boys: “to stay calm” (18 year old boy, 102 B 11). This view is shared by many men, as the Chairman of The White Ribbon Campaign, Charles Simakumba, concurred: “Men say women start the violence with talking” (Expert 46, 2006). That men use violence to silence

women was confirmed by Expert 45, a former Chairman of a men's organisation, NAMEC (2006) and Expert 5 (2009), Chairperson of the Crime Prevention Project in Outjo (see also van Rooy/Mufune 2013, and Duff et al. 2017). Thus, this means that these men blame the women and legitimise their physical violence on the grounds of their partner's verbal violence. Duff et al. (2017) found a tendency among the sentenced perpetrators of lethal violence to blame others for the violence: their partner (for not obeying them, questioning their behaviour, having additional partners themselves); alcohol; friends of their female partner manipulating her; or the police for not getting involved in relationship problems; and even the use of witchcraft. The perpetrators' perspective reflects society's commonplace reaction to violence against women: the victims are blamed, not the perpetrators (see Section 8.2).

This attitude is also clear in the following statement from Silas: When his girlfriend shows that she does not like something that he has done, then: "(...) mostly she is more violent to me" (Silas, 2009). He further elaborated on this when I asked about how she behaves violently: "She does not cook food or she comes to him while he is with his friends and calls him out telling him that she will not cook for him" (ibid). I enquired further about her violence, to which he responded: "She uses a high voice and abusive words" (ibid).

SGA	How do you react to it?
Silas	If she talks to me like that, I tell her not to talk in a loud voice. I don't like it if others hear about what we argue.
SGA	And if it does not help?
Silas	Then I go out of the house. (Silas, 2009)

However, this does not always work. When I asked him whether he had experienced the escalation of a conflict, he described how he beat her with his fist. She tried to fight back, but someone intervened and stopped their fight. On the one hand it is clear that verbal violence (in this case by women) is also destructive, while physical violence can be a result of helplessness and a way to stop this verbal violence. On the other hand, if men are not used to women making their own views known, especially if they differ from the men's, it is also a battle for power which is superficially won by men using physical violence.

It is also clear from the excerpt that there is a link between shame and violence: the interviewee realised that neighbours could hear the argument between him and his wife, and then he felt shame and thus wanted to end the argument immediately. This was also the case in Luthrecia's violence narrative. Her husband became violent because he felt shame (see Section 8.1.2). Thus, violence offers a very quick solution. Expert 45 was the executive director of NAMEC and stated in the interview that he had been involved in fights with his ex-wife. He links the violence of men with the "sharp tongues" of women, claiming: "they can talk to make you feel as a nobody", and mentioned that he slapped his ex-wife after she swore at him and his mother, which made him angry (Expert 45, 2006). Sometimes women in intimate

relationships also become physically violent, and both partners fight with each other (see Section 6.2.2). In many cases women lose the fights because they are often physically weaker than men, and might even be killed (Duff et al. 2017). However, what is also reflected in Silas' attitude is that he does not like his partner to talk back to him and also the tendency to blame others for his own mistakes (ibid). This shows that men use violence to prevent equal negotiation with women. It is important to take different expressions of violence into consideration in order to understand the course of a violent escalation of a conflict. However, studies have revealed that violence in the intimate sphere is, in the majority of cases, not violence between equals. In consequence, women often experience more serious and more frequent violence (Merry 2009).

### **Referring to the colonial past: women agreeing to men as independent decision-maker?**

Another consequence of males' socialisation in a dominant masculinity is important here and is also mentioned by the older man, Robert: part of the old status quo – as it is perceived by many men today – was that they could do what they wanted. However, nowadays women are increasingly questioning male behaviour (see Chapter 7), which the men interpret as a lack of respect. Men expected and continue to expect women to accept them having additional sexual partners (Robert, Carl, both 2009, Men's Debate, and see Duff et al. 2017). In present day society, the general idea of men being independent and deciding upon their own behaviour as well as making decisions about family issues still exists. This is a legacy of the past. Robert mentioned that, when he was young, he thought that because he was a man he could do whatever he wanted and his female partner did not have a say in it (Robert, 2009). This also included having several female sexual partners (see Chapter 2). Today he thinks: "Those days it wasn't a problem to have more than three wives but now it became a problem. Women of the same man used to communicate nicely, they had no problem" (Robert, Men's Debate). However, in the interview with his wife, Magda, she elaborated on how she fought with him after he came back from visiting his girlfriend (see Section 2.2.1). She asked him to end his other relationship. When she refused to accept his behaviour they had serious arguments, which also involved him beating her. If she did not show her emotions, they did not fight. Magda (2009) said that she did not have any negative feelings towards her partner's girlfriend in the past, because she thought that it was her partner who caused the problem, not the other woman. Both he and the community in which they lived expected her to accept his behaviour. Thus, Robert's perception is contradicted by his wife Magda's perception. During the Men's Debate, Carl also pointed to the former acceptance by women of the male habit of having multiple sexual relations:

In olden days, those years, the way how they used to do things in our tradition is like, if a man goes get a woman, he brings her to the house, then you are married traditionally speaking, in Kavango. (...) if you go get the wife or the woman, to your mother's house, to your parents'

house, then automatically you are married (...) those years, one man, you bring them, three, four women, you alone as a man, they all are your wives, you are the husband to all these women. And they [the women] accepted it. Things worked perfectly ((laughter)). (Carl, Men's Debate, iiba by SGA)

This is also interesting, as during the interview, he talked about violence perpetrated by his father that occurred when his father demanded that his mother accept his second wife, and she refused. Eventually she had to give in because of her husband's violence, but by no means was she in agreement with it (Carl, 2009).

In the pre-independence era, women did not have many opportunities because of the legal dominance of males (see Section 2.2). They complied with what the man wanted, to protect themselves from being violated. However, as the examples of Magda and Carl's mother show, they did not simply accept what the men wanted; both opposed the men's behaviour but were then violently forced to accept it. That means that the male *perception* of women in the past being subordinate to their men, accepting their decisions, and letting the men do whatever they wanted, is important. However, this did not mean that the women were in agreement with it, but simply that they had no choice but to accept it. In the Group Discussion, Paul gave a further example of a male perspective about the male behaviour of having multiple concurrent sexual relations in the past compared to the present day:

Like my culture, when a man is married and after a time finds another woman attractive, he went to his wife and discuss[ed] it. The woman (...) [had to] accept it. I don't know. When she (...) accept[ed it], so [it was] no problem. Nowadays, if the wife finds out, there will be a big problem. They start fighting, and (...) killing... or divorcing and they become enemies forever. Nowadays it's more problematical than the olden days. So something must be done. (Paul, Group Discussion 2006, iiba by SGA).

This kind of male behaviour was already influencing violence before independence. In general, male violence and multiple concurrent sexual relations were normalised more in the era before independence because women were forcibly subordinated. What has changed now is the reaction of the women involved and their improved opportunities in terms legal rights, as in the past husbands' violent behaviour towards their wives was mostly not sanctioned. In this regard, present day women have a means of redress if their long-term partner has additional sexual relations. Moreover, society supports their moral fight against the behaviour of men. In this regard Robert also sees a difference with former times:

Nowadays you find it very strange that if man goes get a second wife. Then this young girls whenever they pass by that house... So for example, if you are married, you have got somebody next to your wife, then the one you have got, will on her way passing by your wife. Then she will at least say something that will hurt your wife in order to create problems (...) and that's where the killings have started. (Robert, Men's Debate)

However, Robert and Carl both focus on the women's role in male multiple concurrent sexual relations, not on the males' responsibilities for the conflict.

Both in the past and in the present, the construction of and socialisation in a dominant masculinity in which men see themselves as respected by women and children, which in

practice means the latter are subordinate, has been linked to the use or threat of violence. It is also connected to the enforcement or pursuit of men's own interests. This is made possible by society's acceptance of violence and that of the men themselves.

### **Male jealousy and possessiveness towards females who have or are suspected to have multiple sexual partners**

Other research participants saw the jealousy of men as a very important factor that contributes to violence (David, 2009). This includes the suspected and real multiple concurrent sexual relations of women. Both perspectives are confirmed by people in the study who had experienced or used violence (Magda, Robert, Hannah, all 2009 interviewees, see Section 7.2.1). The suspected and actual cheating of a female partner was given as an important justification for the prison inmates' violence towards a female partner (van Rooy/Mufune 2013:8). David is convinced that, "in most cases the thoughts are driving forces" (David, 2009). This may also be true in cases where men assume that their female partners have additional sexual partners. For example, Hildi's husband, who had additional girlfriends himself, was very jealous and possessive, and projected his own behaviour onto his female partner (Hildi 2009, see Section 8.1). In their study conducted in the Western Cape, Zembe et al. mention that men who have multiple sexual partners behave more violently towards a partner than those who only have one partner (2015:2). David thinks that jealousy contributes to most of the violence between men and women. In the triple murder that occurred in Outjo in May 2009, the perpetrator suspected his girlfriend of being unfaithful. He stabbed his girlfriend and her pregnant friend multiple times and burnt down the house, also killing his girlfriend's two little nephews (see Sections 1.3 and 8.1.2). He was quickly arrested and, when he first appeared in court some months after the incident, he pleaded "not-guilty". After some time in custody, at his main trial in 2011 he admitted all charges and pleaded "guilty". Moreover, this shows that, even months after the incident, he was not able to take responsibility for his own behaviour; he only became able to do so after spending years in custody.

There are women who have multiple concurrent partners too, although not to the same extent as men (Pauli/Schnegg 2007, for South Africa Schaumburg 2013, and Zembe et al. 2015, see Chapter 7). In the Men's Debate, Carl discussed contemporary women's claims of equality, including sexual equality, doing the same as men do, and having several sexual partners at the same time:

Things have changed. If you have got two wives, [the wife says] 'I go get for myself also two husbands, if you go to the third one, I also go for the third husband' ((laughing)). Equality! And that has made things worse. (Carl, Men's Debate, iiba by SGA)

In this situation, some men react violently and some even kill their female partner (see Duff et al. 2017:9). Another example was mentioned by one male participant in the School

Survey. He beat his ex-girlfriend because he found out that she had cheated on him (21 year-old learner, 027 A 12). Interestingly, in his answer to another question, he said that his ideal would be for both male and female partners to be faithful; however, he admitted that he too had already cheated on a partner. This shows a double standard for males and females with regard to being faithful or having other concurrent sexual partners.

Moreover, this reveals an attitude of possessiveness by males towards their female partners. A former magistrate from Outjo also pointed to men's possessiveness and related problems: "In most cultures, if you are my girlfriend, you are MINE!"<sup>341</sup> (Expert 35, 2006) The Station Commander of the WCPU also mentioned this type of attitude: "She [the girlfriend] is mine – not anyone else" (Expert 30, 2006, iiba by SGA). This type of attitude fits well with the concept of the common commodification of intimate relationships (see Section 5.2), whereby males provide for their female partners. In casual transactional relations in South Africa, this perception of men seeing "their younger, poorer female sexual partners as an investment that they owned" (Zembe et al. 2015) is common. This attitude includes the belief that, if your wife or female partner does something wrong, she needs to be disciplined. Thus, male possessiveness is connected to a high prevalence of violence and even murder if females do not behave as they are expected to by these men (ibid and Duff et al. 2017).

### **Violence of males against males**

The process of normalisation of male violence is evident (see Section 1.1.2), especially regarding violence between boys or young men and how it is judged by the research participants. Much of this violence is perceived as making boys and young men stronger (Johan, Pieter, David, all 2009) and, as such, forms part of the dominant masculinity. This can be seen in the explanations given by young males for using violence against other males. One learner at the Private School Morea gave the following answer to the question about what advice he would give boys to prevent violence: "they have to experience it [violence] as they grow up to gain wisdom" (18 year-old boy, 112 B 11, iiba by SGA). Of the 22 learners who stated on the questionnaire that they had used violence themselves, 20 were male. They used violence mostly against other boys, or against their ex-/girlfriend, or within gang fights or situations involving theft.

One of the interviewees, Alicia, also mentioned the existence of gangs in Etosha Poort, usually consisting of exclusively male members (Alicia, 2009). Some learners in the School Survey particularly stood out in this regard. One learner from the Private School Morea reported being involved in "bar fights, street fights, gang fights, used to sell drugs and if someone don't pay, the gun talks" (School Survey, 083 B 12). He gave the following explanation for his use of violence: "I defended myself, earn respect, tried to make a living"

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<sup>341</sup> This is very similar to the title of the Cinderella telenovela *When you are Mine* mentioned in Sections 5.1 and 7.1.

(ibid). Violence as a defence is acceptable, as Johan (2009), a middle-aged Afrikaner, also confirmed. One learner from Outjo Secondary School listed the occasions when he used violence: "I stabbed him in his back. I gun pointed a stranger. We tear-gassed a security. We broke bottles in the road" (18 year-old boy, School Survey, 033 A 12). The reasons he gave for doing so were as follows: "I was drunk and I am very naughty by nature" (ibid). This is the same boy who stated that he had been admonished by his father and brother when he was a child crying due to hunger (see Section 6.1). Thus, he learnt that his authentic feeling of despair should be suppressed and was seen as a weakness, which was not acceptable. In the same way he learnt not to accept weaknesses in others, nor to tolerate his own weaknesses. He had even been stabbed (see Section 6.2.2). Thus, he lost empathy with his own feelings and, unsurprisingly, was unable to understand the feelings of others.<sup>342</sup> He developed a toxic masculinity (see Section 6.1, Callaghan 2015). Another boy was involved in fighting and an attack on a shop: "I was fighting with one guy in the location and he threw me with the brick on my leg. Once I was also involved in stealing the money from the Tuck Shop" (17 year-old boy, 144 C 10). In response to the question, "what would have helped in that situation?", he wrote: "the advice of a person that cares for me" (ibid).

It is remarkable that white males of the Afrikaner community in Outjo in particular belittle the occurrence of violence, and their own use of violence as a defensive measure against someone they perceive as being aggressive. However, if they are talking about violence, they relate it to the black communities; in other words, an othering of violence takes place (see Section 1.1.2). However, within white communities, a readiness for violence is considered heroic and is reported on with pride (Johan, Pieter, both 2009). In the white Afrikaner community in Outjo, violence between males is normalised and trivialised, showing very clearly a prevalent dominant competitive masculinity, even between friends, as long as it is not too serious. Johan's many violence narratives were often accompanied by laughter (Johan, 2009). In the School Survey, of the 22 respondents who claimed to have used violence, 11 were from Private School Morea (10 boys and 1 girl).<sup>343</sup> Of these, 6 out of 10 violent incidents were directed against friends. One learner illustrated this by replying to the question about the reasons for using violence as follows: "just fighting with friends, (physically)", adding that he thought: "it's part of growing up, 'boys will be boys'" (School Survey, 114 B 11). Middle-aged Johan, in particular, reported several occasions when he had fought with friends or used the phrase, "afterwards we were friends again" (Johan, 2009). One learner in the School Survey said that violence is a part of life (18 year-old boy,

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<sup>342</sup> Of course, this is not representative; however, it struck me that the same boy who was not allowed to cry when he was hungry went on to show such unempathetic and violent behaviour towards others in his young life.

<sup>343</sup> This is a very high proportion, as the total number of PSM learners who took part in the School Survey was only 44 out of 144. It points to a high propensity towards violence among the PSM male learners.

School Survey, 112 B 11), a view echoed by the following statement from another PSM learner:

One friend hit me and I hit him back into the hospital. I was almost arrested.  
[Consequences] I felt bad because the person was almost dead and he was a friend. (17 year-old boy, School Survey, 106 B 11, iiba by SGA)

The next extract confirms that these kinds of violent behaviour between friends is not just some playful scuffle: “Me and my friend had a fight about a girl who we both liked but she liked me more and we went on fighting and hitting the hell out of each other” (Boy, School Survey, 114 B 11). One male learner stated that “violence is sometimes necessary because you have to show respect” (17 year-old boy, School Survey, 106 B 11).

However, the pattern of violence between young men who perceive each other as friends is not only significant within the Afrikaner community. This phenomenon was reported by learners from the other schools too. The aforementioned learner from OSS explained that his involvement in fights, including his own injuries, had a significant effect on the other people involved: “they started respecting me and fearing me” (18 year-old boy, School Survey, 033 A 12). Again, the link between gaining respect and using violence is clear, as confirmed by a 17 year-old boy (103 B 11 School Survey and see below). This may actually reflect a feeling of powerlessness; if young men need to resort to violence to earn respect, rather than it being achieved by communication or straightforward negotiation.

In the next section, this viewpoint is turned around by examining examples of male victims of violence and their thoughts and feelings about it.

### 6.2.2 Change in perspective: males experiencing violence by other males and by females

Although men are both victims and perpetrators, the victim aspect is suppressed and tabooed, as they are expected not to show any weaknesses.<sup>344</sup> Most men did not speak about violence perpetrated by women. It is still taboo for men in Namibian society to talk about that kind of violence, as Expert 56 (2009) told me. It is a generally under-researched problem (see Chapter 9). During my research stay I tried on several occasions to meet with a professional expert on research-related issues, but it never came to fruition. Subsequently I found out that he was a victim of violence himself by his female partner and he wanted to keep this secret. One explanation for this may lay in gender norms – men are socialised to be active and strong and, in some cases, also encouraged to use violence, while women are often still socialised not to behave in this way. It was easier for men to talk about violence they have experienced from other men, which was discussed in some of the interviews

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<sup>344</sup> In this section I explore some of the violence narratives included in the School Survey and in a few of the interviews where boys and men described their victimisation.

(Johan, 2009, Pieter, 2009) and which was sometimes characterised by proudness (see 6.2.1).

Violence happens to boys at home, at school, in the hostels, or in their leisure time, as was mentioned by them in the School Survey. For many boys it is a normal part of their lives. This is especially true for boys who are members of gangs (see above). In this context they also experience serious violence by other males, as the following examples from the School Survey show:

I was mugged, gang attacked. Beaten by strangers on one-on-one fist fights. [Coping] I sought revenge on them with my relatives. [Reactions by others] they were angry at the guys and were adamant that we should go and beat those guys up. [Consequences] I broke my nose bone. (18 year old boy, 026-A12, iiba by SGA)

I have been in a lot of fights. Gang fights. [I have] been in drugfights, even with a gun. Bar fights, street fights by other people. (20 year-old boy, 083 B 12, iiba by SGA)

Their lives are characterised by violence between rival gangs, with severe consequences. This is not a game between boys, but a situation in which lethal violence is implicated as guns are also involved (see also Uukunde 2012). This is also clear from the following statement:

When I was growing up I joined a gang. We had lots of fights with rival gangs about stupid stuff. Last year I was stabbed on my arm and I almost lost control of my index finger but thankfully I had an operation and it turn out well. [Coping] I guess I got used to it. (Boy, School Survey, 028-A12, iiba by SGA)

The last sentence shows the extent to which violence has become a normal ingredient in this boy's life. This was also the case for another boy in the School Survey, who saw positive aspects to the violence too: "But with the fighting I earned respect and still today it is shown to me" (20 year-old boy, School Survey, 083 B 12). Thus, he learnt that, by using violence, one can achieve something positive. Respect as an effect of violence was also described by the boy from Outjo Secondary School who was stabbed by his friends: "I was stabbed in my back. And we were fighting at the club" (18 year-old boy, School Survey, 033 A 12). He explained that they were drunk at the time. Later, his friends apologised because they had injured him. Moreover, Tersbøl (2006) points to differences between the men: economically successful men may be victimised by those who are unsuccessful and who feel challenged by them.

The aforementioned 20 year-old boy from Private School Morea (083 B 12) also wrote in the questionnaire about sexual violence committed "by a friend" using mind-altering substances: "Made me paraplegic drunk and tried to wank me and blowjob, by a friend". He described the following consequences: "Bad memories, crying at night" (20 year-old boy, 083 B 12). This reveals that he thinks it is not acceptable for a boy or man to cry during the daytime in front of other people. In response to the question, "What would have helped?" he answered: "Better friends, other influence at knowing what's wrong and right. Getting attention from people I wanted it most" (20 year-old boy, 083 B 12). The last example shows that men and

boys also experience sexual violence by other men. The women's rights activist from Windhoek, Expert 14, also pointed to rape in prisons. Rape against men is covered by the *Combating of Domestic Violence Act*, but it is referred to as "sodomy". The terminology shows that people differentiate between whether the rape victim is a man or a woman. Jewkes et al. point to the common occurrence of sexual violence perpetrated by men against men (Jewkes et al. 2015). Many interviewees of homosexual orientation in Lorway's research stated that they had experienced violence, and among these hate crimes were so-called corrective rapes (see Section 5.1). These men are perceived as gay and derisively called *moffies* (Afrikaans derogatory term for gay) (Lorway 2009, 2015). Alicia also reported that: "Sometimes they [gay people] get beaten up, just like that. They did nothing but they just get beaten up" (Alicia, 2009, iiba by SGA). Lorway describes how one interviewee had to suffer violence in a church while his boyfriend was confessing his homosexuality as a sin. The boyfriend's brother-in-law chased him out of the church and beat him with a chair. When he went to the police, the officer just told him that it had happened because he was gay and did not prosecute the perpetrator (Lorway 2009:162f). Alicia also stated that gay people would not be taken seriously by the police if they were beaten:

[As being] gay, it's like if they go report to the police, the police just laugh at them and tell them to go back and come another day. If they come another day, they are told 'there is nothing we can do. You are gay, that's why people beat you up. (Alicia, 2009, iiba by SGA)

This illustrates that LGBTTIQ people are deprived of their basic civil rights; they do not get any protection.

In the School Survey two boys stated that they had experienced sexual violence in childhood. It was perpetrated by the boy's father, a step-parent (not further explained) and a neighbour. I rarely came across this victimisation of boys in the research or literature about Namibia; the examples I know of mostly involved girls (Jewkes et al. 2005, 2007). The sexual violence perpetrated by women or men against boys is not mentioned at all in the literature in Namibia, which is astonishing, given the hierarchical gendered inter-generational relations that persist in Namibia which could be a context of violence (see Section 9.2).

The subject of males experiencing violence perpetrated by females is only very rarely talked about. However, men do experience violence in intimate relationships: physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal (see also Duff et al. 2017), and also in other contexts. Expert 44, Chairman of the Committee of People with Disabilities, mentioned a case which took place some years ago in Outjo: a man with a disability was raped by an HIV positive woman. She undressed and he did not understand the risk, they had sex and he was infected with HIV. He has since died (Expert 44, 2009). Another statement from a learner revealed sexual violence by a female partner, which could almost have been classified as criminal act (see Section 3.3). The age of consent is 14 if an individual is involved with a partner three or more

years older than them, and it is exactly this age difference which was considered important by the learner: “My girlfriend was 3 years older than me and wanted to have sex. I was 14 years old, but I loved her so I felt like I had to” (17 year-old boy, School Survey, 094 B 11). He defined “rape” in the questionnaire as: “to have sex with someone who tried not to and there was struggling” (ibid). This incidence of sexual violence happened in an intimate relationship, showing that men can also experience violence by a female partner. Some boys are involved in sexual relationships with older well-off women, who are female child rapists (LaFont 2007). Locally, these women are euphemistically called “sugar mommies”. They leave their younger male victims as vulnerable and dependent as young girls in the same situation (see Section 8.1.1).<sup>345</sup>

In most cases of violence that I was aware of, male victims did not go to the police (see Section 4.3). One exception was the research participant Carl who did, but was not taken seriously (see below). One stakeholder from the CCGR, Expert 6, identified the following problem: men who experience violence by a female partner could not report it or talk about it publicly because that would be regarded as weakness in a man (Protocol 1. meeting of CCGR) and such men would fear stigmatisation (Expert 46, 2006). This was confirmed by one man in the Men’s Debate who claimed that men as victims of violence in intimate relationships are *not* treated the same as female victims of violence:

You are powerless as a man. For example, if the wife is beaten, and lay charges at the police station, (...) they will do anything to get the man into jail. But if it happens other way round, if the woman hits the man, you go lay charges, the police men also laugh you out, 'man, you are a *swak man*' [Afrikaans weak man] ((people laughing)). They don't take it seriously ((much laughing of other participants)). (Man 17, Men’s Debate, iiba and translation by SGA)

Here, again, the laughter of the other men at his statement reveals a sense of uncertainty combined with shame. The leading officer from the WCPU in Otjiwarongo also stated that it is difficult for a man to report a violent incident perpetrated by his abusive wife, because he would be humiliated by friends and colleagues, and so these men feel ashamed (Expert 30, Field Notes, 24.05.06). This was confirmed by Expert 10, the Chairman of NAMEC: “it needs courage for a man to say ‘I am beaten up by my wife’” (Expert 10, 2006). Becker mentioned that some participants in her focus group discussions were “giggling with embarrassment” (Becker 2000:7) while talking about the violence that some men had experienced at the hands of their female partners. They cautioned that those men did not dare to talk about it with their friends because, “they will just make a fool of you. They will say, she is the boss although you are the man” (ibid:7).

Even more courage may be required for men to seek support if they experience sexual violence by women. Women’s rights activist Expert 14 said that organisations have mechanisms to support male rape victims, “but unfortunately men don’t report” and “there are

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<sup>345</sup> There is a lack of research on this topic (see Section 9.2).

no statistics” (Expert 14, 2009). She gave several reasons that she thinks lay behind men not reporting rape:

Sex is regarded as man thing, they are in charge, they have to want sex. By culture they also do not believe that they can be raped by women. If they do not erect it's shame. (...) Man is viewed as unmanly if he says 'I was raped by a woman'. Men have to keep the posture that they are in control of sex (...). (Expert 14, 2009).

If men admit to being a victim of a sexual assault perpetrated by a woman they may even be traumatised for a second time, or at the very least will be laughed at.

Sometimes mutual violence takes place within intimate relationships. Carl (2009), who lives with a woman who uses alcohol and neglects their children, provided an example of this. They have a long history of ups and downs in their relationship. One cause of conflict and physical violence is both partners having additional sexual relations. During the violent phases they both drank alcohol together, which led to an escalation in the violence. On one occasion, his partner even threatened him with a knife. Moreover, they are both infected with HIV. He is complying with the medical therapy but she is neglecting to do so. Carl sought help from a colleague but she did not keep it confidential and instead of the conflict being settled, it escalated. He felt very frustrated and could not see a way out. He has a long history of being exposed to violence. In his childhood he was beaten by his father and his uncle; his father took a stick and beat him all over his body. He said it made him feel like a slave. One of his uncles also beat him and stopped him from going to school; instead he had to look after the cattle. Moreover, he witnessed how his father beat his mother when she refused to accept a second wife and when she tried to protect her children from being beaten by their father (see above). Carl often wanted to separate from his violent partner but he is concerned about their children, because she has custody of them as usual as they are not married. According to the *Children's Status Act* 6 of 2006, if the couple are married, both parents have shared custody of their children (LAC 2013b). If the couple is not married the parents need to decide which party gets custody, even if they are cohabiting. They should agree on who gets custody of the child, but if this does not work out, it is decided by common law, which means the woman is automatically granted custody (ibid:100). The parent without custody does still have the right of access to the child. However, this can only take place under the “reasonable control” of the parent with custody (ibid). Thus, Carl's concern may be justified. Carl said with resignation: “the women, they °have a right... always°”. (Carl, 2009, symbol ° means he spoke very quietly). On the one hand, this is a situation where men might be disadvantaged. On the other hand, this situation is also connected to the many absent fathers who neglect their children, and these two factors may be interconnected.

In conclusion, these examples show that men experience violence by males as well as by females. However, it is regarded as very contradictory to dominant masculinity, which constitutes a major impediment that prevents men from seeking and receiving help and

society from giving appropriate support. Males violated by females are laughed at and are not taken seriously, by other people or by the police. Moreover, women's activist Expert 14 saw another dimension to it: "(...) if men would also report, they see that violence is unacceptable. That keeps violence upheld. If men would report, it would help" (Expert 14, personal communication, 2009). However, mainstream societal discussions do not include male's experiences of violence. Moreover, Jewkes et al. point to the fact that violence against women is perpetrated more frequently by men who have experienced violence themselves (Jewkes et al. 2015).

### 6.2.3 Male reactions to violence perpetrated by men against women

As described in Section 3.3, there are also men who oppose and react to the violence of men perpetrated against women and children. Around the year 2000, many men mobilised against gender violence in a conference that took place in Windhoek and established the NGO Namibian Men for Change (NAMEC), and later the NGO White Ribbon Campaign (see Section 3.3). Only one man mentioned a men's Group in Outjo (Expert 26, 2006). Apparently, a member of the Traditional Authority of the Damara had started up a men's group in Outjo; however, as Expert 13 concluded in 2006: "the men are not interested" (Expert 13, 2006). When I talked about the idea of working with men in conjunction with stakeholders from politics, churches and women's activists in 2009, no one pointed out the work with men that already been done in the course of the conference. Only two leaders in Outjo that I knew of had previously focussed on men: the then Regional Councillor had invited older men to a meeting to seek solutions for the problems with the youth in 2008 (see Section 4.3). The pastor from ELCRN had tried to involve men in the fight against violence. For most other stakeholders, it seemed to be a new idea to address men in their campaigns against violence. Many stakeholders were open to addressing men separately and thus the idea of a Men's Group was born. As described in Section 1.3, in April 2009 the Committee on Changing Gender Relations (CCGR) was established with the aim of improving gender relations and forming a men's group in Outjo. The aim of the men's group was to give men a forum to discuss and to question masculinities. Moreover, it should provide a forum for talking about the challenges they face and working towards gentler, non-violent kinds of masculinities.

In May 2009, the triple murder happened in Outjo (see Sections 1.3, 6.2.1, 8.1.2, 8.3), which led to a public outcry and to a wider interest in the topic. Some days later, Women support Women, the Outjo branch of the NGO Women's Solidarity, organised a demonstration. Because the majority of marchers were women, I termed it the "Women's March" (see Section 8.3). However, some weeks later, a stakeholder from the CCGR, a local ELCRN pastor, working in collaboration with other men, including a Pentecostal Pastor, organised a

“Men’s March”. During the march they handed over a petition to an official and the march became a means for them to show their sympathy with the grieving family, and their opposition to violence against women. The theme of the Men’s March was “the Men of Outjo have spoken” (Field Report by my research assistant, Expert 1, 2009), a quite different notion to that expounded by the women (see Section 8.3). The main speaker at a preparatory meeting for the Men’s March complained about the fact that men would usually remain silent when the topic of violence against women and children was addressed. The main argument for addressing men and trying to motivate them to get involved in combating the violence of males against females was that women are weaker than men and thus needed men’s help and support. Moreover, in the Men’s March Petition it is stated that:

(...) We want the women and children of Outjo as well as Namibia to be free everywhere. (...) The gender equality bill must be educated and informed through basic education as well as on the grassroots level of small towns such as Outjo. (Men’s March Petition, 06.06.09)

It is clear from this that the instigators view gender equality as an issue that needs to be worked on and that is linked to violence. However, the last point of the petition, which addresses men separately, is quite vague: “We are calling upon our brothers out there; we are here for you. In case you need advice; talk to us, if you need help talk to the police, if you need counselling, talk to the church or the police” (ibid). This is aimed at men who could potentially become perpetrators. Overall, they demanded greater efforts to prevent violence. They addressed the Ministry of Safety and Security, the government, the police, the town council, and Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) (ibid). What was not included in the petition is any reference to the construction of masculinities itself; the link between masculinity and violence within a dominant masculinity. By contrast, the men’s groups NAMEC and White Ribbon in Windhoek do have the clear aim of changing masculinities to minimise violence (see Section 3.3). This was also the original idea behind the Men’s Group in Outjo. However, such ideas about gender equality were not widely accepted among men in Outjo. In the research, there were only a handful of men who were open to such changes. One of them, a male HIV counsellor at Outjo hospital, saw a link between gender inequality and violence against women:

Rape is about power. And the young boy witnesses his violent father. Namibia is a very unbalanced and unequal society; this ends up with inequality between men and women. Violence is a sign of inequality. (Expert 38, 2006)

This is just one man’s opinion, and not a widespread one. More men felt disturbed by the idea of gender equality or were ambiguous towards it (see Section 6.2.1). For example, different opinions were expressed in the CCGR meetings. The Chairman of the CCGR voiced his opinion in the Men’s Debate: “*Ek voel jammer vir die vroumense in Namibia*”, (Afrikaans for “I feel sorry for the women in Namibia”) (Expert 6, Men’s Debate, translated by SGA), showing empathy for women. He clearly supported activism for gender equality. However, the other position that became clear in one CCGR meeting was that some

participants wanted to address men as leaders, which led to lengthy discussions. This also became apparent during the preparations for the Men's March (see above). Those participants who wanted to address men as leaders did not see the link between the construction of a dominant masculinity – reflected by the idea of men as leaders – and the use of violence to maintain or enforce this leading role. Jewkes et al. (2015) also view the notion of speaking to men as leaders as problematic because it could “reinforce the gender-inequitable masculine ideals that need to be changed to prevent violence” (Jewkes et al. 2015:1582).

The horrific incident of the triple murder and the actions that followed led to a broader interest in the issue among men. The CCGR organised the first men's meeting which took place in the Etosha Poort Community Hall in June 2009. It was here that the Outjo Men's Group was established (see Section 1.3). The aim of the group was to talk about problems that men face in relationships or in general, and to learn about how the prevailing norms for males are linked to violence. The next stage was to work on creating new norms for a peaceful, caring, responsible, sober and committed masculinity, which would reduce violence against women and children and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The first meeting of the Men's Group took place in the Etosha Poort Community Hall in July 2009. It involved the debate about “What is a man?”, which is referred to as the Men's Debate in this work (see Section 1.3). In this debate, many participants blamed gender equality for the sharp increase in violence, either because people misunderstood it or because they opposed the idea of gender equality (see Section 6.2.1).

Thus, the field of gender is very diffuse, and fraught with instability, ambiguity, insecurity and tension, as becomes clear from the following contribution from a participant in the Men's Debate. He began by stating that it would be better to reject gender equality and instead accept it as a pre-condition that the man is head of the household:

Man is the head of the house. Just to be short. There was also talk about equality, that man and woman are equal. Let's not take that of equality ((translator laughing)). (...) what the government says is that men and women should be equal, but we shouldn't take that seriously.  
(Man 7, Men's Debate)

Thus, one gets the impression that many men think they are the leaders, which implies women are subordinate, thus opposing the notion of gender equality. However, later on, he suggested that: “You as man should respect yourselves, that you are a man” (ibid). He offered the following male perspective on his relationship with his wife: “I have to live with her, take care of her, but not to suppress her, not to deny her the rights. I have to live with her, not to be too rough to her” (ibid). He also suggests that being a man should also mean the following:

To be a man should not mean that the woman should be scared or that the children should be afraid of [their] father. That shouldn't be like that! You should be more loving as father. (ibid, iiba by SGA).

He shows some empathy with women: "If you [the men] always want to be superior, how would she feel?", and goes on to elaborate on the reasons for marriage: "What is the reason you have married her? Having married her with a sign of love; that she must look after you, look after the children, and look after the house" (ibid, iiba by SGA). It is obvious from this statement that he has clear expectations of his wife: regarding feelings, the division of labour, and the roles that the two partners should play. However, he represented one of the rare voices who showed awareness that the woman should be seen as a subject not an object, unlike many other participants. The question remains regarding what happens if the woman in this case does not conform to his expectations. What stands out in his statement is the importance of men respecting themselves. Interestingly, he contributed the idea that the female partner should not be dominated. I therefore conclude that the idea of gender equality is reflected in the way he thinks, although he openly denies using the term. This ambiguous contribution reflects the diffuse situation of many men very well.

In this section it has become clear that, even in the face of horrific violence against women and children, the changes that men are undertaking voluntarily towards gender equality are only small in nature. Even in the fight against violence they want to address men as leaders, again reflecting the hierarchy that exists within gender relations.

### 6.3 Summary

It was shown that many men feel insecure and are challenged by the empowerment of women and the overall changes in society since independence. Moreover, many men oppose the idea of gender equality as, for them, being 'the head' in gender relations and in households is still very important and part of a dominant masculinity, a condition in which most of them have been socialised, the older and middle-aged men but also the younger ones. In this chapter, it was demonstrated that the production of a dominant masculinity has continued to take place, which includes the suppression of weaknesses (avoid crying, ignore health problems). This has led to a decrease in empathy among men towards themselves and others. Males have to be strong and able to enforce their own will. Although there have been slight developments in terms of alternative masculinities, these are often opposed by the use of gendered admonishments, or by mocking men and boys often with homophobic remarks. However, several statements made by research participants who showed themselves to be supportive of gender equality are ambiguous: on the one hand they support gender equality and on the other hand, they want to be the head of the household.

In relation to females, males expect respect. This does not mean mutual respect. They want to be the authority, the independent decision-maker, and the provider who has material

possessions. These enable them to have commodified relationships, and multiple and concurrent sexual relationships. Men link the providing of resources to women with a right to sexual access, as well as a possessive attitude, and tend to think that it gives them the right to be the one who makes decisions within relationships and families.

However, there are differences within the group of males. It is mostly older men who are employed and therefore have the ability to provide for a wife or girlfriends. Young men are under huge pressure to find employment opportunities as this is the only way to achieve economic success, provide for a family and have a long-term intimate relationship or even marriage. As only a few young men have access to regular employment, many others use alcohol and drugs to escape from reality. This reality of casual jobs, and under- or unemployment keeps them in a condition of waitness on the way to adulthood. They do not have access to the necessary resources to fulfil their aspirations of a middle-class lifestyle, including an intimate partner and children. Others find different ways to deal with the resultant tensions and challenges. They try to reassure themselves and do what is expected of them by showing strength. This is played out on a field that is characterised by a dominant masculinity: stressing their sexuality by using their minimal assets for short-term sexual relationships. This has the desired or approved effect of fathering many children (see Section 6.1). However, the fact that men often do not care about these children and leave the responsibility for them with the women has contributed to men being seen as irresponsible and getting a bad reputation. Moreover, much of their risky behaviour, such as the abuse of alcohol, and risking either contracting or transmitting STDs, reflects a toxic masculinity.

The uncertainties faced by males stand in contrast to the dominant masculinity of the traditionally and biblically influenced male ideal of being strong, active and competent that men have been socialised with. Males repeatedly hark back to former times in which they were the unquestioned head of the household, and women and children were subordinate to them. The picture they paint also includes having additional girlfriends as and when they want to, for which some referred to their forefathers living polygynously as a justification. However, their idea of the completely subordinate female consenting to their behaviour or decisions without resistance, was not in accordance with other historicities which claim that women who expressed their dissent were violently silenced in a context that legally privileged men. In contrast to this male idealised image of subordinate women, today many men – regardless of age or class – share the perception that they lack respect from women and children. Men perceive it as lack of respect that women question their behaviour or if they have other ideas about how to bring up children, or if they do not conform to what the men expect them to do; especially if this takes place in front of the child or other people. Some men react to this perceived lack of respect with the use of violence towards their partner and their children.

According to their male socialisation, and concept of a dominant masculinity, violence between males is a normal part of life which is intended to make males stronger. Violence is used to reinforce respect towards women, children and other men. In addition, gender equality is solely perceived as empowerment for women and as men losing rights. Some men see this as causing women to become big-headed and go 'too far', thereby abusing their rights. However, looking more specifically at which behaviour men see as disrespectful, such as questioning male behaviour or not being at home with food ready when the man arrives home from work, it is clear that disrespect can often be read as enforcing fixed ideas about appropriate female behaviour, if women are simply not doing what the man expects them to. A number of men still view it as their right to put their female partner back 'in her place' according to the old status quo, despite the fact that contemporary women have equal rights with men, under the law. In former times they had the constitutional right to act and to be followed and deferred to by their female partners; now they have to argue with, discuss, persuade, and negotiate with a partner who should have the same right to give her opinion. Some men find that challenge overwhelming. Some even feel threatened by the new rights of women and children. They feel they have lost their power and are trying desperately to get it back, so some resort to violence. With regard to male violence, men as well as society in general (see also Section 8.2) often put the blame on women's disrespectful behaviour or the fact that women will not stop arguing but they rarely look at the role of the male in the conflict. Moreover, some critical men pointed to male's feeling of inferiority and powerlessness when confronted with gender violence as contributing to violence. Especially when men are unemployed and they are not able to fulfil the expectation as provider while women have a qualified job men feel threatened.

Examining the victimisation of males has shown that males experience violence, by other males, but also by females including sexual violence and other kinds of violence in intimate relationships. However, this topic is tabooed in Namibian society and, even if male victims speak about their experiences or report the case, they are not taken seriously but instead mocked and laughed at and denied the support that they need.

In conclusion, male realities are characterised by ambiguous expectations, a struggle to keep hold of their power and claims of not being respected anymore. What is the women's perspective? Do they feel equal to men? Have they benefitted from the legal changes?

## Chapter 7 Women's empowerment? – Perspectives of females

Since independence, the government,<sup>346</sup> together with many civil rights groups, has aimed to achieve women's empowerment and the legal equality of men and women, supported by its gender policies (see Section 3.2). Women were the target group of the empowerment campaigns (Lorway 2015), while men were far less frequently addressed (see Chapter 6).

Women also have empowered themselves by establishing several women's organisations, which have engaged in the aims of improving living conditions, empowering women and fighting violence against women. The variety of women's organisations also highlights the daily lives of women, where gender equality and empowerment have only partly been implemented. Many of the women's organisations are based in Windhoek (see Section 3.1) and some have local branches. Sometimes workshops are held in other towns. At the time when the research was conducted, only the Women's Action for Development and Women support Women, an Outjo branch of Women's Solidarity, were active in Outjo (Experts 7, 14, 19, all 2009 interviewees). The founder of Women's Solidarity, Expert 14, said in 2009 that they have 25 members in Outjo: some committed members, some supporters and some who had experienced violence. She estimated that, up to 2009, around 250 women had attended meetings, training and counselling in Outjo, in which the subject of violence was also addressed. The women told her that men would think that the rights are only for women. Moreover, the women asserted that, they go up quite informed and if they go home, their men do not understand (see Chapter 6). Consequently, women were often stopped from attending these women's rights activities by their male intimate partners, on the grounds that they would 'learn the wrong things' (Expert 14, 2009). Fitzgerald-Husek et al. even found women who opposed certain empowerment programmes specifically directed at women, as the women knew the men would oppose them, because they saw them as a threat to their power (Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011). Women support Women also organises local demonstrations, for example the demonstration that took place shortly after the triple murder in Outjo, which I participated in (see "Women's March" in Sections 1.3 and 8.3). During the 16 days of activism in 2012, women in Outjo demonstrated under the theme of "Claim the night back", highlighting the high incidence of gender violence in Outjo as well as in other towns (*The Namibian*, Clemans Miyanicwe, 13.12.2012).

The women's rights' NGO Women's Action for Development (WAD, see also Section 3.1) was introduced to Outjo in 2005. Expert 12 explained more about the activities that WAD was

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<sup>346</sup> This does not mean that the government is one homogenous entity, as in Namibian society, the government is polarised. There are still many adherents to patriarchal values and opponents of gender equality. However, these people do not have a majority in government. It is important to add that the presidents of Namibia have been favourable towards women's empowerment and have also pushed through relevant issues, despite them being strongly debated in parliament.

doing to help women in Outjo: helping to improve the living standards of rural women by training them in different fields: computing, bread baking, and other small projects that they could make a living from. Moreover, WAD tried to motivate the women to come along, and to raise issues of concern to them, particularly if they were having problems, and to stand up for their rights, etc. Expert 12 added: “They tried to sensitise the women also. And to teach and train the women about the advocacy, this gender issues (...)” (Expert 12, 2006)

Additionally to local activities, because Namibia is a large country, radio provides a good medium with which to reach women and address them about empowerment or awareness-raising issues; or simply to provide information to women who may not have access to newspapers or television and cannot travel to the urban centres. Therefore, the radio is frequently used by activists in Namibia (see Section 1.4). At the time when the interviewee Luthrecia was experiencing marriage problems, she listened to Rosa Namises, a popular women’s activist<sup>347</sup> on the radio. Afterwards, she approached the police for support. They sent her to the Women and Child Protection Unit (WCPU) who supported the couple and helped them to find a solution (see Chapter 8). Since that time she has been actively involved in Women support Women. This example shows that the fight for women’s rights and women’s empowerment is often linked to the support of women who have experienced violence (see Sections 3.3 and 8.3)

Expert 12, a famous politician in Outjo who advocated for women’s rights, and is also involved in WAD activities, describes how WAD wants to make women aware “(...) how you as a woman can come out of that comfort zone which you are in because the women nowadays, they are feared for the unknown” (Expert 12, 2006). This statement reveals a trace of frustration. Women’s activists feel somewhat exasperated with the women they want to empower. This also became clear from Becker’s interviews (2006) when the female chief of Sambuyu in Kavango complained about the shyness of women hindering them from active participation in decision-making processes within communities. In another case, in Otjombinde, mainly Otjiherero speaking people had an expectation that “proper women were ‘shy’ and ‘quiet’” (Becker 2006:43) and Becker concludes that this “dominant local discourse about appropriate female behaviour (...) requires exceptional confidence in women who wish to participate actively in public forums” (ibid:42f). Women’s activists and others who are fighting for gender equality expect women to behave in a self-confident and self-determined manner, and some see “men as the norm” (/Khaxas 1996:21). If women do not behave according to that expectation, it is ascribed to nature or the powerful influence of culture or

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<sup>347</sup> Visolela Rosalinda Namises is a COD politician and was a Member of Parliament from 2000 to 2005. She is a well-known Women’s Activist from Windhoek and co/founder of the NGO, Women’s Solidarity Namibia. She was also involved in the *Men Against Violence Against Women Conference* in 2000 (see Section 3.3) and co-organised the conference *We are raped!* (see Sections 1.3, 3.3, 8.1.1 and 8.2).

tradition (David, 2009; see also Becker 2006). It therefore makes sense to first consider how females have been socialised.

## 7.1 Femininity constructions and relations with men: subordination and emerging alternatives

### **Remaining constructions of a subordinate femininity and enforcement by using gendered admonishments**

Most Namibian females have grown up with the aim of having children, getting a male partner, and living in a heteronormative relationship in which the male partner provides and decides. They have learnt to respect men's decisions, and accepted that they and their children had to be subordinate to men (Isaak 1997), and if they did not, they could be "disciplined" (see Chapter 2). Many of the interviewees valued and expected female performance which showed the characteristics of being quiet, passive, submissive and closed in their whole posture and expression (for example, David, Alicia, Misheke, all 2009). The following section describes elements of this female socialisation, which aims to produce and perpetuate the subordination of women.

There is a widespread societal idea that women need to find a 'provider'. Connected to this is the importance of their outward appearance and morality. The demand for morality is connected to the Christian religion. The Namibian theologian Paul John Isaak describes the societal expectations towards women in Namibia which he views critically:

Women should be passive and appreciative, and the most honoured are those who are virginally pure (...). Women who stray from this ideal [of Virgin Mary] are sinful, leading men into temptation. (Isaak 1997:68, iiba by SGA)

This is interesting, as, on the one hand, women are expected to be passive. On the other hand, if they do not conform to this ideal, women are blamed for leading men into bad behaviour. This means that, although men are normally seen as more active (see Chapter 6), many people do not hold males responsible for their undesirable behaviour, such as adultery.

The aim of finding a male partner is connected with women's outward appearance. The demand to look beautiful is even reflected in education. In the 1990s a gender differentiated system of education was taught in schools, which served to strengthen gendered stereotypes and oriented girls towards beauty and their outward appearance. /Khaxas (1996) mentions that, during that time, girls learnt how to attain an ideal body by reading well-known magazines in school subjects (like Life Skills, Natural Science and Health Education). Girls were told how to take care of themselves, and how to make themselves look beautiful, including the proper use of make-up (/Khaxas 1996:28). Interestingly, Alicia perceived one difference between men and women as being that life is cheaper for men, because men do not have to buy cosmetics or as much clothing compared to females (Alicia, 2009). She

concluded: “for girls it is more important to look nice” (Alicia, 2009). Expert 4 (2009), an ELCRN pastor, stated that there would be a lot of competition regarding styles of clothing, shoes, and even food. In the School Survey, in the section about gendered admonishments for girls, certain items emerged, which are predominantly associated with their gendered performance: wearing girls’ clothes, paying attention to their personal appearance and beauty, and sitting with legs closed.

One occasion on which the importance of beauty for girls and women became obvious to me was the “Miss Independence” competition at Outjo Primary School. It took place in March 2009, on the occasion of Independence Day, which is celebrated on 21st February. I had been invited by the teacher who had organised it. I was expecting the theme to revolve around the independence of girls – which was how I understood the title. However, I was wrong; the theme of independence just referred to the anniversary of Namibia achieving independence. It was actually a beauty contest for Primary School learners. During the event, girls of different ages<sup>348</sup> walked along a catwalk. There were three rounds. In the first round, the girls “performed” in bikinis. In the second round, they presented themselves in casual dresses. In the third round, they modelled evening dresses. To us European visitors<sup>349</sup> it seemed like an adult beauty competition. The girls performed and imitated fashion models, including their customary sexualised performance. One member of the jury even complained afterwards that the younger girls did not have a fair chance because they were not yet acquainted with the habits of models. The jury, which consisted of various stakeholders from Outjo, including the social worker, chose a ten year-old girl as the winner, the daughter of a participant of my research, who was very proud of her daughter. The next day, the winning girl was still walking around in her mother’s high-heeled shoes and wearing the evening dress that her mother had made her for the show – showing how important winning was to her (Field Notes, 18.03.09). Martina Gockel-Frank, who conducted research in Khorixas, another town in Southern Kunene, mentioned that she witnessed at least two beauty contests in schools during her research in 2006 (personal communication, 22.08.19).

The girl who won the “Miss Independence” contest enjoyed playing the female role ascribed to her. However, particularly at a younger age, this is not always the case. A statement from a learner in the School Survey about a gendered admonishment she experienced shows that sometimes girls are also pressured into this role:

It was the day I went to school. My mother wasn't there, just my father and grandmother. I hated to be a girl to wear dresses. I wanted to be like a boy but luckily things have changed since then. (17 year-old girl, 092 B 11)

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<sup>348</sup> The ages at which children go to Primary School range from 5 to 7 at the youngest, up to around 11 to 13 and sometimes older. Some learners start school later because of their living conditions, for example, living in remote areas or on farms. Learners in Namibia attend Primary School from grade 1 to grade 7.

<sup>349</sup> I went there with my intimate partner and our little daughter. We were accompanied by two of our German guests, a woman and her old-aged mother.

Now, she accepts what is expected of her, but it shows that it involves a process of adaptation, which is influenced by her social environment (friends, family), not something natural, as it is often perceived to be (see Section 5.1). From the interview with Alicia, a learner at Outjo Secondary School (OSS), it is clear that she has assimilated the importance of beauty for girls into her own perception, as well as specifying what she regards as other important criteria for girls:

SGA I would like to find out, what it MEANS to be a girl.  
Alicia The way you sit, (...) if a girl just sits with open legs it's like, disrespect or something. They can just beat you up, because you are not allowed to (...). You should be like sitting with closed legs and like that. And your hairstyles, you should not do whatever you like, you should make your hair to look beautiful and (...) nice.  
(Alicia 2009)

She also points to the societal expectation that girls must sit with closed legs. This theme recurs quite often in the section on gendered admonishments for girls in the School Survey. It is seen as disrespectful if girls sit with their legs open. Thus, society has to police this, and Alicia acknowledges that people may even use violence to achieve this end, underlining its societal importance. Other voices in the School Survey comprising girls from the Private School Morea (PSM) and the Etosha Poort Junior Secondary School (EJSS) also mentioned this issue in response to the question on gendered admonishments, showing that it is regarded as imperative for girls:

I sat with my legs apart, and my brother told me to close my legs, because I am a girl and it looks bad sitting like that. (19 year-old girl, 073 B 12)  
Yah, I think, I was just sitting with open legs, then my grandmother always used to tell me, but I didn't follow what she was saying. So, one day while the visitors were at the home she shouted [at] me very loud and tell me what she said. I was very nervous that day. (16 year-old girl, 141 C 10, iiba by SGA)<sup>350</sup>

It is noteworthy that the grandmother reprimanded the girl strongly in front of other people, which really made an impression on her. Another girl also referred to this same issue when describing how a girl should behave. She was also shouted at and admonished to behave like a girl, again highlighting its importance:

I was sitting at the fireplace with open legs and I just heard my grandmother [who] shouted, 'sit like a girl!' I was also told that girls had to sit properly, dress and live properly as we are going to have a family someday. (18 year-old girl, School Survey, 013 A 12, iiba by SGA)

Another issue that is significant for girls is the moral requirement to “live properly”. In addition, the theme of girls’ outward appearance recurs here, too. Thus, a key social asset for females, which is demanded of and forced upon them, is that they make themselves look beautiful and sit with closed legs.

Girls should not only be beautiful but also be soft (see below). If a girl behaves in a way that is perceived as rough, she is admonished. Particularly in the Private School Moria (PSM) girls are admonished not to be rough, although none of the learners from the other schools

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<sup>350</sup> See in Section 1.3 for the designation of the School Survey: A stands for OSS, B for PSM and C for EJSS.

mentioned this. The following statement from a girl at PSM illustrates this theme: “I was playing with the boys and tackling them. Then my mother and sister told me to behave like a girl. That I shouldn't be so rough, girls are supposed to be prim and proper” (18 year-old girl, School Survey, 084 B 12). Thus, outward appearance is seen as more important and it also implies that it is not feminine to be rough. This can also be seen in the following statement: “I was always very rough. So my parents told me to sit properly. But as I was getting older I was becoming more like a lady” (17 year-old girl, School Survey, 098 B 11). This also shows that the expected performance of girls is not “natural” as many people assume, but enforced via admonishments (see Section 5.2).

This approach of encouraging girls to behave in a subordinate way also extends to the girls' voices and the way they spoke. Girls at the PSM in particular mentioned these kinds of admonishments. The girl who made the following statement was reprimanded for talking too loudly. “I can't remember the first time, but I can recall one time I behaved a bit crazy, talking very loud. I was told that a girl's behaviour is more soft and sweet, not hard and loud” (18 year-old girl, 086 B 12). Thus, I got the impression that Afrikaner girls, in particular, are still raised to be subordinate to men. They are not encouraged to pursue their interests or enforce their will. This is also supported by the following statement on gendered admonishments by another PSM learner:

I was shocked because I never thought my mother would ever say that to me and because I thought I was behaving quite good. She said I had to sit up straight and lower my voice. (18 year-old girl, School Survey, 077 B 12)

Such clear gendered messages aimed at subordinating white girls by subduing their voices and their tempers did not occur explicitly in the gendered admonishments described by girls from the other schools in the School Survey. However, the statement made by Alicia, an OSS learner, in her interview led me to conclude that girls are actually disempowered in that school too. Alicia described how boys and girls who attend the OSS are not only educated in a gendered way, but that this is also linked to the unjust treatment of girls, in comparison with boys, which she is frustrated by:

Alicia            (...) girls might be told that if she is in a group of people (...) she should be a quiet person, not so talkative (...) and she should behave herself, she should know what she is saying, she should control her tongue.

SGA             But is it a difference to boys?

Alicia            Ja, because boys, they are allowed to talk too much ... than girls, ja.

SGA             Ok. And how do they justify that ... difference?

Alicia            It's like the boys are given more rights to talk too much, because, I don't know, maybe they are the head or what. So by that way they are allowed to talk too much if they are in a group of people. But the lady should minimise. That's how it is. °I don't know why°.

SGA             How do they tell you and teach you?

Alicia            I don't know, they tell you that a lady is a soft thing and you are not meant to be so hard. But for a man you do whatever you like as long it's in an orderly manner.

SGA             And what do you think about that?

Alicia            It's bad (...) because a woman should also get the right to talk too much. Because sometimes you cannot be just so quiet, you get bored!  
(Alicia, 2009, the symbols ° show that she spoke very quietly)

She gave the following example: at a presentation each learner was supposed to speak for 10 minutes, but in practice: “a girl never speaks for 10 minutes, just 5-6, but a boy speaks for 10 and he wants to speak more” (Alicia, 2009). These examples confirm that girls at the OSS school are also restricted in their development in order to keep them in line with the requirements of an ideal girl as soft, passive and beautiful. The unequal treatment of boys and girls was confirmed by the then acting principal of the OSS who told me that the school intentionally tries to give boys greater freedom to express themselves: “We are not so strict to them [the boys]” (Expert 32, 2009, iiba by SGA). He admitted that they treat girls more restrictively to prepare them for life. He said: “In culture we expect girls not to talk loudly or to laugh loudly. We are more strict with girls” (Expert 32, 2009). The attitude whereby caregivers are stricter towards girls than boys was also revealed in Kaundjua et al.'s (2014) study when a female participant stated that parents were more lenient towards boys. In the girls' perception this leads to feelings of superiority in the boys (Kaundjua et al. 2014:286). This also shows that boys are socialised with a greater space to develop their potentials (see Section 6.1). This influence does have a limiting effect on the girls' development and future prospects, which becomes more apparent as they get older. Expert 41 openly talked about the “submissiveness of girls”:

They [girls] grew up for them to be submissive for any man (...). They will not aim at good marks, because these are for boys. It affects their studies, they are just average. (Expert 41, 2009).

He even thinks that girls receive fewer resources from their families than boys. This production of a subordinate femininity hinders the real empowerment of women. Düringer observed at a university: “I could see a pattern where the male students made their voices heard more than the female students did” (Düringer 2014:1). This phenomenon may also continue into the women's professional life.

As is also the case for males, such gender constructions are perpetuated by maintaining distinct spheres for males and females by the use of gendered admonishments (see Section 6.1). More frequent or serious transgressions of the gendered spheres are punished by the use of derogatory terms linked to associations with homosexuality or even the use of violence (see Section 8.1). This means that girls who are seen as behaving more like a boy than like a girl are strongly admonished, using the derogatory term “tomboy”. One girl in the School Survey mentioned the following: “I was kind of a tomboy, so my mom told me that but still leave me to make my own decision” (19 year-old girl, School Survey, 087 B 12). This girl feels that her mother accepted her as she was, even though she admonished her. However, this was not the case for the girl who made the following statement:

I felt sad, because I am who I am and people should accept me for that. My friends told me that, because I'm acting / being too much of a boy. They feel insecure around me. (18 year-old girl, School Survey, 110 B 11)

This girl's non-conformist gender behaviour irritated people. Thus, girls are not encouraged to defend themselves, be active, strong, independent, and to do what *they* want. Not a single girl in the School Survey mentioned those kinds of values. On the contrary, such self-confident behaviour is thwarted by denouncing any girls who exhibit it as "tomboys". Thus, the same mechanism as described in relation to boys being called "sissy" (see Section 6.1), operates to block the development of alternative gender constructions.

Both examples are from girls at the Private School Moria (PSM), as was the case with the term "sissy" in Section 6.1. Thus, particularly in the school that serves the Afrikaner community, it is important to maintain distinct gendered spheres. However, Alicia, the interviewee from OSS, also pointed to the importance for people in general of being able to easily distinguish males and females by their outward appearance:

- Alicia        If you look at two [people], you should know, this is male, this is female. It's really bad if you don't know who is what.
- SGA         Why?
- Alicia        Because if they are starting to put on earrings and stuff and small kids are growing up, they might just think they are both female. They will also have that idea that if they grow up, they should also go pierce holes and put on earrings, because it's normal [for boys *and* girls], it's what they will think.
- SGA         What would you tell girls?
- Alicia        They should not wear these clothes of men – different types of trousers for men –, because some behave to be men and they like wearing. They should wear trousers for ladies. And that they should make themselves look nice and beautiful, so that people can distinguish whether she is male or female. (Alicia, 2009, iiba by SGA)

Thus, she views it as important for there to be clear gendered behaviour because children have gendered role models for girls and boys. Another girl who participated in the School Survey was admonished not to behave like a boy:

A lot of people told me that (including my friends and relatives). They told me that I'm like a boy because of the things I used to do, for example, playing football, hanging out with guys. (School Survey, 022 A 12)

This is a further example of how caregivers and peers associate certain games with one gender or the other, and how they try to correct gender-non-conformist behaviour by regulating the children's games. Netball and volleyball are seen as suitable games for girls (David, see also Friesen 2010). Similarly to the situation described in Section 6.1, if a girl plays a boys' game then she is admonished. At the time when the research was conducted, a 17 year-old girl from Outjo Secondary School reported the following experience of being corrected by her mother:

I was playing soccer with my boy friends and always used to hang out with them and because of that I began behaving like a boy, wearing only boys' clothes and shoes and my mother said that I should behave like a girl. (School Survey, 001 A 12)

Here also the belief reveals that girls need to be with girls to develop like a “real girl (see Section 6.1 for boys). The enforcement of gendered spaces can also be extended to toys. Boulton described a situation he encountered in his research in Swakopmund whereby a father admonished his daughter because she wanted to get a mechanic’s set, and stressed that he would prefer her to play with an ironing board (Boulton 2017:26). This points to a connected field that influences gender-appropriate behaviour for females: the division of labour. In Namibian society, as in many other countries worldwide, the ascribed female role is to be responsible for children and the household. The household chores include cleaning (the dishes, the house), cooking as well as washing and ironing clothes (see also Helman/Ratele 2016 in South Africa). Therefore, a daughter is assigned household chores to do.<sup>351</sup> In the School Survey, a female learner gives the example of her mother telling her not to play “boys’ games” but instead to stay inside the house and do “girls’ tasks”:

My mother told me, and she said girls don't climb trees and don't play with the wire cars I was used to play with. She said I must stay home and help with the cleaning, washing and cooking.  
(18 year-old girl, School Survey, 052 A 11)

This also shows that a girl is expected to work while her male counterparts may play. Additionally, these examples demonstrate that girls and boys cannot behave as they want to, which was complained about by adults with regard to the abolition of corporal punishment of children (see Section 4.3).

By using gendered admonishments, caregivers and peers try to keep those who behave differently in line within the dichotomous gender system. Being termed a tomboy – as someone not seen as feminine within a homophobic society – is used to prevent females from behaving like boys: self-confident and self-determining, and enforcing their own will. Thomas points to the situation in Namibia that women who behave in a confident way are seen as “trouble-makers” (Thomas 2007:609). Helman and Ratele also found this tendency in South Africa: “Women who adopt femininities based on resistance, or indeed engage in acts of resistance, can be marginalised and stigmatised” (Helman/Ratele 2016:3).

Thus, the active production of a subordinate femininity persists. At the same time, learners in schools are taught that men and women are equal before the law. Thus, they are confronted with contrary and confusing information: on the one hand they are taught gender equality in the abstract, and on the other hand they experience the reality of unequal treatment for boys and girls (see also Brown et al. 2005).<sup>352</sup> This may be changing slowly, as the School Curriculum of 2008 demands neutral access to education and asserts that, “boundaries of conventional gender role stereotypes” (see NIED/MoE 2008:27f) shall be transcended and learners’ and teachers’ own gendered stereotypes shall be actively reacted to and discussed.

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<sup>351</sup> Two research participants also encountered boys who learnt “girls’ tasks” to prepare them for times when they do not have a female partner to do it for them (Magda, Alicia, both 2009).

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At the time of research, examples of this could not be found in Outjo, but instead I encountered the situation described above, characterised by ambiguity and the disempowerment of girls. Moreover, even if the practice in schools has changed, generations of women before (during colonial era and after independence up to then) are socialised in this disempowering way.

In conclusion, that means that girls socialised in this way do not learn how to pursue and achieve their interests, especially in negotiations with boys/men who are still socialised to be dominant. Girls have not been empowered to live an equal life to boys, but in fact have been actively disempowered.

### **Frustration of females because of remaining gender inequalities**

This situation frustrates females who want to live life on equal terms to males (see also Kaundjua et al. 2014). In the Group Discussion in 2006 Jane expressed her frustration. She said that, after talking about her experiences of violence with a former boyfriend, “I really hated [it] to be a woman!” (Jane, Group Discussion 2006, iiba by SGA) She then not entirely jokingly mentioned the idea of changing her biological sex to become a male, to which another male participant replied, “so that you can abuse others” (Rob, Group Discussion 2006), which she agreed with. This also points to a negative self-image of males (see Section 6.1) and a deep polarity between the genders.

The young interviewee Alicia also showed her frustration. She remarked that things would be different if she was a boy... “(...) I could just talk too much then! I could be free to do whatever I want. I could behave like a big man” (Alicia, 2009:956f). The term “big man” is understood to mean older men having resources and power. Thus, Alicia feels frustrated towards those men who have a higher status and thus greater opportunities in society. Another quotation from a girl in the School Survey also shows the frustration felt by females about the state of gender relations. In response to the question: “What do you think, how does the life of a man differ from the life of a woman?” she said: “It differs very much, as man always thinks that he's the head of everything. Men are free while women have to suffer” (20 year-old girl, 048 A 11).

Although significant efforts are being made and campaigns fought to try to achieve the aim of women's empowerment, at the same time the active production of a subordinate femininity persists, as well as the perpetuation of the old status quo of hierarchical gender relations. This continuing disempowerment of females in their socialisation, while at the same time girls learn in schools about equal rights, is not only ambiguous but also frustrating for girls. Moreover, it undermines the self-esteem of females as well as the efforts of the government to put their gender equality policy into practice.

Not many females are growing up with a belief in themselves or the idea that they can make it on their own. They are socialised to believe that they need to find a male partner who will provide and decide, and to grow up to be a good wife and have children who they are responsible for. Girls are not socialised to do things their own way and provide independently for themselves. Consequently, they do what is expected of them: they look for a provider. This implies dependency and asymmetric power relations.

### **Female sexuality: governed, restrained and dependent on men**

Intimate relationships in Namibia are mainly seen as sexual (see Section 5.2), and males are socialised to be sexually active, to gain sexual experience and are used to taking decisions about sexual relations (see Chapter 6). By contrast, girls are socialised to keep their virginity as long as possible and are socialised to be subordinate and comply with male decisions. 47.8% of the female respondents in the School Survey reported to have had sex, compared to 70% of their male class mates.<sup>353</sup> Becker and Kaundjua et al. point to the double standard regarding the sexual norms for boys and girls (Becker 2000, Kaundjua et al. 2014). For girls, their families and society in general, female chastity is essential for their reputation and is linked to their morality (Isaak 1997, and see Section 5.1). Pauli also mentions the importance of chastity and monogamy for the bride in public negotiations about the wedding ritual that she describes for the Damara group in Fransfontein (Pauli 2012).

In Pentecostal Churches (Gierse-Arsten 2005) and the Dutch Reformed Church virginity before marriage is especially important. They have developed special programmes to help young people abstain from sex (see Section 5.1), directed at both young men and women. The Afrikaner community in Outjo is very attached to conservative Christian norms, and it is seen as especially important for young women of this community to keep their virginity. The young interviewee Estie had had sexual intercourse with a boy whom she had a crush on because *he* wanted to. Her motivation for sex was to maintain her relationship with him, although that did not work out either. Afterwards, she really struggled with the fact that she had “lost her virginity”, especially when she told her new boyfriend, and he seemed to be “disappointed not to get a pure girl” (Estie, 2009). She said she “(...) felt like everything of being a woman was taken away from me” and like an “incomplete woman” (ibid). Thus, a great deal of moral pressure is put on young women to remain virgins until marriage. It is important for young women to keep their virginity and, if they do not, they feel flawed and mourn the loss of it (e.g., Luthrecia, 2009). This is not only inequitable but also disempowering.

Very quickly, sexually active females become designated as “whores” (see also Hunter 2002), or “sluts” (Estie, 2009). Females are not supposed to propose males (Allison, Pieter,

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<sup>353</sup> 67 girls did respond to the question. There are differences between the three schools: OSS, EJSS and PSM. However, as the age range for OSS and EJSS is higher, the numbers are not comparable. It is noteworthy that only 4 girls from the PSM indicated they have had sex already.

Estie, all 2009, see also Chikuhwa 2011) and they should not behave too actively either. Expert 33, an HIV counsellor, observed how participants at a workshop talked about how the gendered behaviour within sexual practices symbolises power asymmetry: the woman must behave passively, and just lay down. If she is active, then the man thinks that she knows everything, and will conclude that she has been sleeping around, behaving like a prostitute, and she may be beaten up by him. Therefore, women should avoid giving that impression to the man. Moreover, the workshop participants thought that only men should decide when to have sex (Expert 33, 2006). According to this perception, women are only seen as objects and not as human beings with their own will, needs or sexuality. Isaak links the objectification of women with their subordination:

Women are placed in a position of submission. There is a great deal within the Bible about cherishing women, (...) about respecting women; but women are still placed in a position of being defined by the men around them. (Isaak 1997:68)

Thomas speaks about the “commoditisation of women” (Thomas 2007:611). This is also demonstrated by another example. A Lutheran pastor in Outjo perceived the consensual sexual activity between two young women as “sexual abuse”. This sexual activity was discovered by the mother of one of the young women who approached him for help. He commented: “Why I regard it as abuse, it’s because that’s not how it should be” (Expert 4, 2009). For him and for the girl’s mother it is not possible for women to decide on their own sexuality, as in this case, when the young women decided to practice same-sex sexuality. Generally, it is neither recognised that females also have own sexual desires or may sexually propose males who maybe do not want sex, nor that they could reject a male within an intimate relationship (see also Tarkkonen 2017). Only subjects can decide on their own sexuality.

### **Early pregnancies limiting income generating opportunities**

One important gendered admonishment that caregivers used towards female learners in the School Survey is not to get pregnant. However, the teenage pregnancy rate is very high in Namibia as previously mentioned in Section 4.1. It was already high shortly after independence in 1992 at 22% (GoN/UNDP 2004). In the Namibia Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2013, it was found that the national pregnancy rate for adolescents (aged 15 to 19) stood at 19%, and Kunene had the highest rate of 38.9%, although there are urban/rural variations (MOHSS/NSA 2014, see also Section 1.4).

The girls are impregnated by boyfriends of the same age or slightly older, and more seldom by much older men (and see Section 8.1). Alicia (2009) explained that: “some male teachers approach girls, but that is now stopped”. Alicia estimated that in 2008 3 or 4 girls were impregnated by teachers. In consequence, at school, girls were told: “if you are dating a teacher, you will be in trouble, you lose school, the teacher will lose his job” (Alicia, 2009).

Therefore, most girls became frightened and did not want to date teachers, but a few girls are still going out with teachers (ibid). When we visited a charcoal farm in the area surrounding Outjo we were confronted with this sad phenomenon of girls looking for older men who could provide for them (see footnote 102). Once we arrived, many children ran towards us. My intimate partner who was accompanying me, noticed a teenage girl who, upon seeing us arrive, went into a plastic tent where she changed out of her ordinary top into a partly translucent, sexy one and then swaggered around. This special top distinguished her from the other girls who were wearing very poor clothes, which might indicate that she regularly used it to try to attract men, who could provide resources for her and maybe also her family.

The NDHS Survey conducted in 2013 revealed that girls from the poorest households in particular are affected by teenage pregnancy: the pregnancy rate among these households is 21%, compared to a pregnancy rate of 6.8% among girls from the richest households (MOHSS/NSA 2014:64). 28.8% of all girls aged 15 to 19 in the Kunene region already have children (ibid). Thus, poverty is reproduced as an early pregnancy reduces opportunities to get qualified jobs (see below). Particularly in the EJSS, which is attended by learners from poor economic backgrounds, the principal acknowledged that teenage pregnancy is a “big problem” (Expert 25, 2009), while a teacher at the same school referred to it as “a common problem in Outjo” (Field Notes 16.07.09), which was confirmed by various experts (Experts 22, in 2006, and 32, 8, 4, in 2009). The acting principal of OSS stated that, every year, 5 to 10 girls would leave school as a result. Another OSS teacher termed it a “huge problem” (Expert 42, 2009). The District Social Worker also confirmed that it occurred often: she spoke of 4 to 6 cases per month (Expert 8, 2009). As Zembe et al. concluded in their research on young women (aged 15 to 24) engaging in multiple sexual transactional relationships in South Africa:

(...) economic disempowerment significantly affected and shaped their risk of engaging in transactional sex, how they were treated by their transactional sexual partners and ultimately their risk of experiencing IPV [Interpersonal violence] during these sexual encounters. (Zembe et al. 2015:14, iiba by SGA)

In addition to poverty, other factors also play important roles in teenage pregnancy. One such factor is migration: many learners stay in hostels, due to the fact that they originate from faraway rural areas, or they live with relatives such as grand parents and not with their parents (see Section 4.3). It is frequently emphasised by teachers that grandparents are not able to set proper boundaries for the children. However, even if adolescents grow up with their parents, contraception is rarely talked about and there is little information available.<sup>354</sup> Some caregivers stressed that the girls need to abstain from sex or stay away from boys

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<sup>354</sup> Katjua points to the fact that education on sexuality including contraception is only included in the school curriculum since 2009 (Katjua 2014:15).

completely. Some painted negative pictures of boys, like Luthrecia's mother who said, in the mid-1980s, before independence:

When I got menstruation (...), my mother said, now you are a lady. Now you must know, a man is a snake. You must not meet with a man/boy. Then you must not do the things with the boys, then you will become pregnant and you will be dead. (Luthrecia, 2009)

This may also be connected to the fear of HIV. However, this also gives an insight into the fact that males are the ones who make decisions about sexual intercourse (see Section 6.1). Not a single female learner among those who mentioned this gendered admonishment said that they were told about other ways to prevent pregnancy besides abstinence. Only one male learner mentioned that he was told to use condoms if he had a sexual relationship.<sup>355</sup> It was found that not many caregivers speak openly about sexuality and contraception, on the one hand because it is a taboo subject and, on the other hand, because they lack accurate knowledge about it themselves (Hailonga-van Dijk 2007, Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011). Thus, learners lack proper guidance in this regard (see also Section 4.3).

An important factor behind the high pregnancy rates among teenagers is that decision making is still often in the hands of men, although many young people declare themselves in favour of gender equality (see Chapter 5). In the School Survey, 12 out of the 32 sexually active girls stated that their boyfriends alone made the decision about their first sexual encounter and, later on, most of them regretted it. However, they did not include this in the section on their experiences of violence (see Section 8.1.1). As girls are growing up disempowered because of their gender, they are in a weak position to negotiate for what they want.

The high pregnancy rates go hand in hand with high HIV rates among young women. HIV prevalence rates for young women (aged 15-24) are more than double (5.4%, *ibid*) the percentage of their male counterparts (MOHSS 2019:55),<sup>356</sup> as was also found in South Africa (Zembe et al. 2015), as well as more generally for sub-Saharan Africa (Kharsany/Quarraisha 2016). Moreover, in almost all age groups the prevalence rates among females are higher than those among males. Because of the unequal socialisation and treatment of boys and girls, there are also power asymmetries in intimate relationships, even if both partners are the same age. However, this is amplified in age disparate sexual relations between young females and older males (Zembe et al. 2015, Pinho et al. 2016). In a situation of unequal power relations between a girl and an older man, the girl has little negotiating power regarding the practice of safe sex (on HIV/AIDS see also Chapter 4). Thus, factors that explain the unequal distribution of HIV are, on the one hand, biological

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<sup>355</sup> This was an open question; it did not mean that the other learners had not learned about contraception from their parents. However, only one learner stated explicitly that he had.

<sup>356</sup> In Namibia, for females in the age group 15 to 19 the HIV prevalence rate stands at 4.7% (MOHSS 2019:55). For males in the same age group it stands at 2.7%, and in the age group 20 to 24, for females it is 6% and for males 2.3% (*ibid*).

and, on the other hand, structural, economic and a result of hierarchical gender relations (see also Helman/Ratele 2016).

Teenage pregnancy is increasingly perceived as a problem by society (see MOHSS/Macro 2008:50f). In 2013, the then Regional Councillor of Outjo Constituency even launched a door to door initiative to reduce teenage pregnancy. The national newspaper *The Namibian* cites the Regional Councillor saying: “The visits were very crucial and community understands that teenage pregnancy must not be supported as these girls are still young” (*The Namibian*, Miyanicwe, 17.05.2013). On the other hand, Hailonga-van-Dijk points to a lack of understanding towards teenage girls who become pregnant by society. Instead of supporting the child, some adults prefer to adopt a “victim blaming approach” (Hailonga-van-Dijk 2006:8). However, this may be slowly changing because of a new school policy (see below).

### **Sole responsibility for children: challenges and opportunities**

When women are adults, fertility and motherhood is highly valued in Namibian society (Gockel-Frank 2009) and is not bound to marriage (see Section 5.2). To have a child is seen as a “gift from God”, as Gockel-Frank’s term in her article reflects (2007). Moreover, a child is seen as a necessary ingredient of a stable intimate relationship and is expected after a wedding. For some women getting pregnant may be seen as a stepping-stone to a wedding (Gockel-Frank 2009, Tersbøl 2006) or to a long-term relationship with a well-off man, which shows “that you’re his woman” (Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011:6). This also reflects the idea that some women wish to be possessed by a man. Luthrecia described in Chapter 6 how she became pregnant by a married man who proposed to her for a long time. She gave in and became pregnant. Although he did not support her afterwards, she talked about it fondly, and seemed proud of, and happy about it. Emma concluded more cynically: “Men give you a child and go” (2006). This phenomenon is also described by Tersbøl. A number of women complained about the following behaviour: at the beginning of a relationship the man is very caring, financially supportive and wants to convince the woman to get pregnant. After she has given birth, the support and care decreases, and sometimes men just disappear (Tersbøl 2006).

However, when females are young, they may not subscribe to the ideal of motherhood. In the School Survey one girl found her mother’s expectation that she should have children unpleasant:

I was not feeling good for it. My mother [admonished her]. She told me that I must think about my future that I must have children one day and I don't like it. (17 year-old girl, School Survey, 134 C 10, iiba by SGA)

Nonetheless, the prevailing ideal for a “real Namibian woman” implies bearing children (Edwards 2007:240 and see Tarkkonen 2017). In general, the child primarily belongs to the mother who is responsible for it and people identify most strongly with their mother (see also

Callaghan 2015). Callaghan found that motherhood is valued more than fatherhood, which also makes femininity more stable. While a man can lose his employment and thus his status, a woman remains a mother. This may give women a sense of identity but it also gives them the sole responsibility in a discourse whereby motherhood is naturalised. This excludes men as fathers (Helman/Ratele 2016) as well as those women who do not want or who can not have children. Most single parents are women (Expert 41, 2009), although I also met and interviewed single fathers such as research participants Jeremy and Misheke (both 2009). The School Survey also shows that, if children grow up with one parent, in most cases, it is the mother.<sup>357</sup> In the biographical interviews it also became obvious that children born out of wedlock usually grow up with their mothers or with her close relatives such as the child's grandmother or aunt. Sometimes they do not even know who their father is, as Expert 41 also highlighted (2009). However, if women are not able to care for their children or even neglect them, they are strongly criticised (Tvedten 2011), to a much greater extent than absent or neglectful fathers (see Chapter 6).

### **Lack of equal economic opportunities**

There have been many campaigns for female empowerment since independence (see Chapter 3). However, the economic opportunities for females to generate their own income are still very limited. One important reason why many women are economically disadvantaged today is that, in the past, they did not usually get proper qualifications because they became pregnant while still at school or shortly afterwards. Until 2013 it was school policy that when a pregnancy becomes visible, the pregnant teenager had to leave school for a year and was only allowed to come back if she could prove that the baby was being cared for.<sup>358</sup> In 2010, 1,493 female learners in Namibia left school early due to pregnancy (LAC 2017). This practise of expelling pregnant girls temporarily from school was meant as a punishment for the girls' bad behaviour, although the boys who impregnated them were not sanctioned, not to mention the older men who had done likewise. Teachers in Outjo confirmed that most girls did not return to school after pregnancy. These girls can only go to the Namibian College of Open Learning (NamCol) to obtain their matric via distance learning, but this is only possible if their care givers can afford it and, if they are willing to finance it. This is a further example of the unequal treatment of boys and girls in schools in Outjo, whereby boys are given more freedom and girls more restrictions, even in a very difficult situation. This may have changed since I conducted the research in 2009 as the new

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<sup>357</sup> All 144 learners answered the question about whom they grew up with. The majority of the learners grew up with their parents (52.8%). 24.3% grew up with their mother and sometimes other relatives, whereas only 6.3% grew up with their fathers and other relatives. 14.6% of the participants grew up without any parents at all. Northern Namibia has the highest rates in the whole of Africa for foster children, even though the children's parents are still alive: 36% of children lived with someone else (Brown 2013:62; see also Section 4.3).

<sup>358</sup> In the Namibia Gender Analysis produced by the LAC (2017) it is mentioned that the new Education Sector Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancy was approved in 2009 but only implemented in 2013.

policy on pregnancy is much more supportive and encouraging towards the pregnant girls, and aims to get them back to school after they have had their babies (LAC 2017). However, it has led to adverse consequences later in life for many women who did not have good qualifications. Several female research participants of different ages had experienced pregnancy as teenagers (e.g., Gisela, 2006, the mother of Allison 2009, and Lisa (Windhoek, 2009). They all have several children, are not married and have struggled their whole lives to provide for themselves and their children.

Another obstacle faced by girls to acquiring an education and qualifications, and thus gaining access to economic opportunities, is still very taboo: there is a lack of sanitation, as economically underprivileged females cannot afford sanitary pads. Girls still have to make use of “mattress and pillow stuffing, old clothes or newspaper as substitutes for pads, and crushed leaves as substitutes for tampons” (LAC 2017:146). This severely limits their scope of action each and every month. There are no statistics on how many girls do not attend school because of this form of gender discrimination. Some use transactional relationships with older men to fulfil these basic needs what then allows them to go to school.<sup>359</sup>

Unfortunately, this neglect of female potential and young people in general (see Section 4.3) is not only a problem of the past but remains the case today. In Namibia 39.3% of young women between the age of 15 and 34 are not in employment, education or training (NSA 2017b:65). These are young women who are actively looking for work and not those classified as “inactive” (see below). In Kunene the NEET rate (see in Section 4.3) stands at 65.8% (ibid).<sup>360</sup> Similarly to young men on a national level, the figure is even higher for the 20 to 24 age group. However, for young women the rate is almost 15% higher than for young men, at 54.2% (ibid). Thus, many young women have no independent opportunities to secure their income in formal ways, and they are also denied the opportunity to get qualifications to be able to provide for themselves and their children in the future. The national unemployment rate for women is generally higher than for men (see Chapter 6): the average unemployment rate for women stands at 38.3% (NSA 2017b:56). Many women work as domestic workers, but these jobs are often poorly paid and hence they can be termed underemployed. Between the ages of 25 and 29, the rate of young women who are unemployed and not in education or training stands at 44.2% (NSA 2017b:65). This figure refers to the proportion of the population who are actively looking for employment.

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<sup>359</sup> See Section 3.1 for more about Sister Namibia’s efforts to change this difficult situation for girls giving SisterPADS for free.

<sup>360</sup> I do not have actual data for the NEET rate in Outjo. It would not be as high as the Kunene rate because, in Kunene, there are many rural places that offer fewer opportunities for employment than Outjo (see Section 1.4).

Another group is classified as the “inactive population”.<sup>361</sup> Women are disproportionately over-represented among this group, and, “Given the absence of a social security net, this means that a large group of women are not employed on their own account, but depend on others for their livelihoods” (Jauch et al. 2011:210). Moreover, this points to the fact that the social burden of care work still falls mainly upon women (Edwards 2007, LaFont 2015, Jauch et al. 2011). They are not paid for the work they do and are even inaccurately defined as “inactive”. Much of the work done by females is “not recognised, enumerated or remunerated, and takes the form of unpaid family labour” (Edwards-Jauch 2016:58). In a context where there are many AIDS orphans, female relatives, such as grandmothers, sisters or aunts are expected to care for these children (LaFont 2015), or in some cases it is the children themselves who head the households – often female teenagers. They need to feed their younger siblings and are especially vulnerable to getting involved with and infected with HIV by older men, who exploit them sexually, instead of simply supporting them (Ruiz-Casares 2007). Women’s area of responsibility regarding care has been further widened by the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Edwards 2007).

If women with children or who are responsible for other dependents want to find employment, they need someone to take care of their children (or ill or older people who they care for); there are only a few institutions like kindergartens or other support facilities available. One common practice is to give their children to mothers, aunts or grandmothers to look after, who will often stay on farms or elsewhere (Emma, 2006, Allison and Gertrud, both 2006/2009)<sup>362</sup> (see Section 4.3). Emma, who has three children by three different men, gave her children away to her aunt very early on, “because there was no one the baby could stay with, when I went to work” (Emma, 2006). She related, about the father of one of her children: “sometimes he sends money for his child, but he never phones, he is always on his own. (...) The father promised but he is not a man of his word” (Emma, 2006). Another solution sometimes used by mothers who need to earn an income – if the children’s fathers are absent – is to leave their children to look after themselves, where they are vulnerable to violence and other bad influences (Jewkes et al. 2005).

The vicious circle that exists for many females who are struggling to survive economically and make themselves dependent on a male provider, which includes putting themselves in a vulnerable position and at risk of experiencing violence and HIV infection, is not seen by many people in Outjo. Shepard Perry remarks that the main risk for women lies not in their

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<sup>361</sup> The NSA defines “economically inactive persons” as follows: “persons who were not in employment and not available to take up any form of employment due to various reasons, such as age limitations (either both too young or too old); family or social commitments such as tending to the young, sick and otherwise vulnerable; study; health; or inability due to physical or mental challenges; and other guaranteed sources of income, for example, from investment, etc.” (NSA 2017b:36).

<sup>362</sup> This may be different in other regions, as van Wolputte described Himba groups organised along matrilineal lines where the children belong to the mother’s homestead regardless of whether she is married or not. In this case children are part of a larger group of matrilineal relatives (van Wolputte 2016).

own behaviour but in their choice of a partner. However, he stressed that prevention campaigns mainly addressed women and individual choice but neglected the extent to which the social context influences individual decision-making (Shepard Perry 2014:1) as well as the economic conditions. Females learn to look for a male provider, become pregnant and are then dependent on that man, who may regard himself as 'owning' the woman (see Chapter 6). Although they adapt to the norm of looking for a provider, they can easily get a bad reputation (see also Pinho et al. 2016). In her research in Caprivi, Thomas mentions that there is "a common belief that most young women were interested in a relationship primarily for the financial benefits it would accrue" (Thomas 2007:606). She points to the traditional rule that women can only get access to land via men. In Outjo this is not the case. However, here, like elsewhere in Namibia, more men than women have an independent, regular income as the unemployment figures show (see above). Moreover, women do much of the unpaid labour too, as they are much more involved in "precarious work" (Edwards-Jauch 2016:59) and even if they are doing the same jobs as men they get lower salaries.

Furthermore, I encountered the view that girls do not need a good education or vocational training or studies because they will marry and be provided for by their men. On one occasion this happened where I least expected it: a woman who was actively campaigning for women's rights told me that she had made provisions especially for her sons' future, but not for her daughters' because they would marry anyway:

My concentration is on my two boys... so, I have take the things<sup>363</sup> in MY name and their name (...) the girls ... maybe one day they (...) get married and go out with their husbands and so on. (Gertrud, 2009)

This was not only remarkable because she is very actively engaged in the struggle for women's rights but also because the financial reality of her daughters who had children at that point in time was already very unstable. And marriage rates are low (see Section 5.2). Her own plans to marry did not work out either. She had been living for a long time with a man who was married to another woman and had other girlfriends as well, which she was unhappy about. Most of the time she had her own jobs and her steady partner supported her and their children (Gertrud, 2006/2009).

### **Sexual relations and commodification**

Although it implies dependency and a power imbalance, many women of all ages ensure their survival and that of their children by engaging in transactional intimate relationships often characterised by asymmetric power relations (see Section 5.2), which Hunter calls "provider love" (M. Hunter 2010:178). Thomas also highlights the "difficulties facing women in accessing assets" as one factor behind such relationships (Thomas 2007:604). The common

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<sup>363</sup> She was talking about a plot of land on a farm, which she had registered in her name and those of her sons but not those of her daughters.

commodification of intimate relationships means that, for women, love and the need to generate income merge into each other and are interlinked with providing sex.

Schaumburg (2013) shows that financially independent women in South Africa also sometimes choose to engage in these types of relationships to increase their access to resources and status. In these *bonyatsi* relationships, financial independence is a precondition, and, moreover, makes it possible for them to negotiate the conditions of the relationship. However, the range of economic opportunities and status vary considerably among this group of women, and shapes the negotiation of relationships and the extent to which they have opportunities for agency.

Many women use their physical assets – their body and their beauty – as a means of getting access to resources. In the Cinderella telenovela *When you are Mine*, which was very popular in Namibia in 2009, the central character, Paloma, who comes from a poor background is shown to be struggling and longs to be “saved” by her “prince”, Diego (the son of the plantation owner). Paloma’s story is a success story; she escapes from poverty and the underclass and moves into high society. Thus, this story shows a romanticised version of upward mobility, which, for a beautiful woman, is made possible via a rich man. The women in the telenovela are portrayed primarily as beautiful, and very attached to luxury clothes and other consumer goods which are given as gifts by men. The relationships between males and females in this soap opera are characterised by a link between love and commodities, combined with social advancement. This looks like a Namibian dream: commodified intimate relationships at their best, which helps to explain why *When you are Mine* was so appealing to people from different backgrounds: rich and poor, young and middle-aged alike, very much enjoyed and watched this soap regularly.

Open prostitution or sex work is not very common as it is morally condemned and stigmatised in Namibia, especially for women. However, there are no exact figures on how many women and men engage in sex work, as this is a grey area. The common commodification of intimacy and relationships makes it difficult to differentiate (see Section 5.2), as does the stigmatisation and moralisation of the topic. The economic realities and the limited opportunities that females have for income generation, as well as their sole responsibility for children stand in stark contrast to the general expectations and ideals of maintaining a virtuous sexual reputation. In Outjo several people mentioned the scenario that some women go out to *shebeens*, and let men pay for drinks or cigarettes, but the latter will then expect sex with them. If a woman refuses, the man might use sexual violence (see Section 8.2 and see Zembe et al. 2015 for South Africa). Some women engage in sex work

only occasionally (LaFont 2015).<sup>364</sup> Moreover, women who were seen as sex workers by researchers clearly differentiated themselves from urban sex workers (Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011). The women LaFont identified as sex workers in her research in Katutura/Windhoek do their job to provide for themselves and their children or siblings (LaFont 2015:82f). Fitzgerald-Husek et al. did research on women involved in sex work in rural northern Namibia who participated in a behavioural change programme (see Section 1.2). The women received information about the health risks and gendered power relations, but their behaviour of engaging in highly risky sexual behaviour, such as only sometimes using condoms, did not change despite their improved knowledge. The women had only limited education, as they had all left school between grades four and eight. They had no regular income and were unemployed. Fitzgerald-Husek et al. found that, in some situations, the women put short-term financial priorities above long-term health considerations. Some did not use condoms as the men promised them love, or they hoped for an enduring intimate relationship or perhaps children with a man who could provide for them, or even marry them. Some women are influenced by a male partner who thinks that “women who insist on condoms must ‘be dirty or have HIV’” (Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011:5). The women were frustrated with their current method of income generation. They expressed more fear about getting pregnant than about becoming infected with HIV, as the former would be visible more quickly, showing how desperate they were (Fitzgerald-Husek et al. 2011). The women in LaFont’s study gave the following reasons why they became involved in sex work: 78 % of the women said it was because of “poverty or homelessness”, 34% said “death of parents”, 18 % gave “rape and/or sexual abuse” as a reason, 10% were “abused/raped by their uncles”, 11% “became pregnant” and 10% started doing sex work “to feed their siblings” (LaFont 2015:83). As the women are financially dependent on the sexual partner who pays for the sex, their ability to negotiate the conditions for sex, such as using condoms, is limited. Their socialisation as subordinate to men further limits their agency and thus their ability to negotiate the conditions for sex.

Because the commodification of intimate relationships and intimacy is common, its implications not only apply to a small limited group of commercial sex workers, but also put many people at risk of getting HIV or other STDs or, in the women’s case, of unwanted pregnancy. To understand the female perspective on the commodification of intimate relationships, it is important to take into account the following factors: *Firstly*, women have very limited economic opportunities (Pinho et al. 2016, and also in South Africa, see Zembe et al. 2015 Lorway, 2015, Jauch et al. 2011). *Secondly*, they are seen as being primarily responsible for children, whom they often have at a young age, sometimes even when they

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<sup>364</sup> I did not have access to women openly identified as doing sex work in Outjo. Thus, this short insight is solely based on research in other Namibian regions.

are still at school, and sometimes when they do not want to. *Thirdly*, they are still seen as the primary caregiver for other dependents such as elderly, ill or otherwise vulnerable relatives. That means girls sometimes have to give up their education to fulfil these roles. *Fourthly*, females' socialisation as subordinate, and the interconnected social expectations that they should have respect for men and their elders. *Fifthly*, they were socialised to look for a provider and put a stress on beauty and their body. In conclusion, if women need an income for themselves and the people who depend on them, and they cannot get a sufficiently well-paid job, they often draw on men to provide resources.

### **Women having multiple concurrent sexual partners**

Linked to the common commodification of intimate relationships and the limited economic opportunities, is the fact that some women engage in the practice of having multiple concurrent sexual partners. That it is less common than for men (see Section 6.1) can be explained by social expectations for females to protect their sexual reputation by being sexually monogamous and restrained (see above). In my research no woman talked about her own additional sexual relationships. Only two men spoke about this experience of being cheated on by their female partner (Misheke, Carl, both 2009, see Section 6.2.1). This led me to assume that the phenomenon of women having concurrent sexual partners is taboo. Because of the double moral standards regarding sexual activity for men and women, the phenomenon of women having several partners is condemned to a much greater extent than that of men (Carl, 2009). For women it is very important to link their sexual reputation to a certain amount of restraint. In combination with women being seen as property by their male partners, there is a high risk of women becoming victimised by a jealous violent steady intimate partner, and thus they are more likely to keep it secret (Section 6.2.1).

However, some studies found evidence of this phenomenon in Namibia (Tvedten 2011, Pinho et al. 2016). Some females use different partners to fulfil different material needs or desires. According to Pinho et al. (2016) the women living in border regions in northern Namibia or Southern Angola differentiated between regular partners, so called "boyfriends" or husbands, who also are expected to provide or give gifts as a sign of their love, and so-called "friends" who are older men with access to resources who provide goods and money in exchange for sex. Both kinds of partners are kept hidden by the females, as they are afraid of violence by the boyfriend and the withdrawal of financial support by the friends (ibid).

Decreasing marriage rates also mean that many men are not able to support a woman anymore, and thus women might choose to look for several men to support them economically (M. Hunter 2015). In his South African research, Mark Hunter points to the Zulu term *qoma*, which means "that women *qoma* (choose a man) 'one for rent, one for food, one for clothes'" (M. Hunter 2002:111), and stresses the agency of the women:

(...) women typically see multiple-boyfriends as a means to gaining control over their lives, rather than as simple acts of desperation – although the two of course are linked. (M. Hunter 2002:112)

Schaumburg explained that her research participants in South Africa gave their partners names according to their function, for example, the “Minister of Finance”, the “Minister of Transport” or the “Minister of Education” – depending on which aspect of their life is supported by the men (Schaumburg 2013:69). The women can also increase their own status by having sexual relationships with a high status man (Pauli 2010).

In Outjo, research participant Lucy explained that some women engage in additional sexual relationships for financial reasons: “They get some money and maybe feed their children” (Lucy, 2006). This is confirmed by the studies from other areas (Pinho et al. 2016, Zembe et al. 2015). Some women used transactional relationships to get money to set up their own business in another field or to increase their qualifications through further studies (Pinho et al. 2016). Lorway comments: “many women’s efforts to break free from economic oppression have been confined to forms of transactional sex (often to pay for educational advancement and to increase social mobility)” (Lorway 2015:65). Although this behaviour is often related to a lack of alternatives due to their limited economic opportunities, Lucy condemned it:

Lucy	It’s worse, because woman is the one which is mostly responsible. If she starts with boyfriends, things get worse, then she doesn’t care.
SGA	But then the man could care.
Lucy	But he won’t. Everything would just break down. That’s what is happening. That’s why mostly only the men is just doing what he wants to do, but the women, they just stay at home, that’s how it is and how it makes them feel hurt. (Lucy, 2006)

This shows that women feel a kind of powerlessness and that they are simply being subjected to whatever men choose to do (see Section 6.1), an attitude that I often encountered. It also reveals the prevailing inequality within gender relations. In reality, women do not have the same rights as men. They feel responsible for their children and thus cannot simply pursue their own needs and desires. Of course, as is the case for a lot of men, there are also women who do put their own needs first, meaning they have additional sexual relations for sexual satisfaction (Pinho et al. 2016), but this is morally condemned by many people.

### **Having respect for male providers**

The dependency of women on a male provider for themselves and their children makes them vulnerable, including in their ability to react to the widespread multiple sexual relations of male partners (see Pauli 2012), the males’ possible violence (Experts 7, 26, both 2006, Luthrecia, 2009) and the risk of contracting HIV (Luthrecia, 2009). The financial power that those men wield is linked to decision making (see Sections 5.2 and 6.1).

In addition to the aforementioned economic dependencies, females grow up with the idea that they must have respect for their elders and for men, which in practice means

subordinating themselves to their authority (see also Section 4.3). This concept of respect, which is characteristic of hierarchical social relations, Jewkes et al. (2005) see as important for gender relations and for understanding female responses to males in Namibia and South Africa more generally. These notions of respect were also enforced with corporal punishment in childhood (ibid). Later on, other mechanisms are used to enforce respect towards males. Pauli mentions that during the “wedding rituals the ‘housewife qualities’ of a bride are publically debated, illuminating the moral dimensions of the category” (Pauli 2012:423) and, moreover, the bride has to “publically prove her ‘housewifeness’” (ibid:424) when serving guests. The bride has to wear a scarf, bow her head and must not look the guests in the eyes, a clear symbol of her subordinate position. This gendered division of labour is connected to women’s unequal position. And this might be a reason for women not to marry.

Hannah described her mother’s marriage to her step-father. For a long time, her mother was a single mother and she was the sole decision-maker. This changed after she married Hannah’s step-father. Whenever Hannah or her siblings approached her, she always referred the children to her husband for him to make the decisions. When her step-father came into their lives, he became the head of the household, and her mother never decided things for herself anymore, she always deferred to him (Hannah, 2009).

In her research site of Fransfontein Pauli found an ambivalent situation regarding married women. On the one hand, women gain status if they marry, especially if they marry a wealthy man. On the other hand, they lose agency because they are expected to be subordinate and accept their husband’s decisions. Or, if the woman is not a housewife but goes out to work and earns her own income, it can cause conflict (Pauli 2009:228).

Often women let the men decide, or are expected to respect their decisions. However, this applies not only to decisions within families but also to decisions that affect the lives of the women themselves, such as sexual matters, contraception or employment. With regard to decision-making about sexual matters and the use of contraceptives, Expert 33 (2009) sees slight differences between the generations. Regarding the use of condoms, Expert 33, who does HIV counselling in Outjo Hospital, said that young women would ask their male partner to use condoms and if the man says, ‘there is no condom’, then they would ask him to ‘postpone sex or buy one’. However, in this situation older women would accept what the man said or not even dare to ask him to use a condom in the first place (Expert 33, 2009). The high numbers of teenage pregnancies show that girls and young women may not be as self-confident as Expert 33 assumes. It can therefore be concluded that, in some cases, young women are more self-confident than older women. However, economic dependencies limit their agency as well as their socialisation to be subordinate. As mentioned in Section 5.2, in an ordinary intimate relationship, it is simply not common practice to use condoms (see Pauli/Schnegg 2007, Edwards 2007). Moreover, Gockel-Frank mentions that even

younger women let their intimate partner make decisions about contraception (Gockel-Frank 2009). Expert 33 counsels women on how to avoid contracting HIV. She advises them to put condoms in their boyfriends' pockets. Thus, she is effectively advising them to expect men to cheat and to try to protect themselves (Expert 33, 2009). This shows how widespread it is for males to have multiple sexual partners, and how much HIV has changed intimate relationships (see below). Tvedten (2011) cites the fear of getting HIV as one reason why some women do not want to get into long-term intimate relationships or to marry. It is not easy for women to negotiate the use of condoms because condoms are associated with cheating and mistrust. And, although couples talk about using condoms, they might not reach mutual agreement about whether a condom should be used. Tersbøl describes how some men use their economic power in transactional intimate relationships to force sex without a condom on their female, economically dependent, partner (Tersbøl 2006). The highest rates of HIV among women were found in the 35 to 49 age groups, peaking at a prevalence rate of 30% among women aged 45 to 49 (MOHSS 2019:55). However, the outcomes of the HIV treatment are much better for women than for men (see Chapter 6), as more women go for testing and treatment. Callaghan (2015) found that women have a lower mortality rate after starting a treatment than men because they comply with the treatment better. In this respect, their attachment to their children and feeling responsible for them played an important role in their fight to stay fit and healthy (Callaghan 2015).

The behaviour of letting others make decisions about contraception can also be extended to medical professionals. Gockel-Frank (2009) found that women often opt to use hormonal injections of Depo Provera because these are recommended by medical personnel. However, in some countries this form of contraception is prohibited because of the health risk of breast cancer and serious side effects.<sup>365</sup> One reason could be because they can use this method without anyone knowing, as it is only necessary to have an injection every three months to prevent an unwanted pregnancy. Another reason might be that detailed knowledge about contraception, such as women's monthly cycles, side effects, risks, and the pros and cons of certain methods, is not widespread (see Gockel-Frank 2009).<sup>366</sup>

If we take into account the limited knowledge of girls and women about contraception, their limited agency regarding decision-making and the dominance of males, including sexual violence, it is no surprise that many pregnancies are unwanted. In Namibia abortion is illegal unless the life of the mother is at risk, the foetus has congenital malformations or if the pregnancy came into being as a result of sexual violence. Thus, there are still illegal

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<sup>365</sup> For example, in the United States it has been prohibited since 1978. Depo Provera was part of the euphemistically called family planning programme of the South African colonial administration to limit the population growth of the black people. Many black women were forced to use it and also had to suffer from the ordeal of forced sterilisations which they were uninformed about (see Section 2.2.3).

<sup>366</sup> For more information on the reproductive decisions of women in Namibia see Gockel-Frank 2009, who did field research in Khorixas, a small town in Kunene South (see Section 1.2).

abortions, which kill many women, leading to a high maternal mortality rate (LaFont 2007, Edwards-Jauch 2012, Mwatilifange/Edwards-Jauch 2017; see Sections 4.1, 7.1, 7.2.2). Moreover, there are cases of killing a newborn baby by mothers (see Section 7.2.2 and 8.3). Provisions of the *Child Care and Protection Act* expand options for desperate mothers, e.g. mothers are given the opportunity to hand the baby over at an anonymous place without legal sanctions (LAC 2016).

The practice of letting the male partner make decisions is illustrated by the example of Luthrecia. She described how her marriage came about: “then my husband decided he wants to marry me” (Luthrecia, 2009). Moreover, she explained that he decided that she would give up her job in a town some distance away. Her employers did not want to give her two weeks leave for the wedding because she was the only manager there. Thus, she resigned, explaining:

- Luthrecia (...) my husband decided, NO, you will not go back again.  
SGA He decided?  
Luthrecia Yes, °he decided° for me ((calm but amused)). What must I do? Because it’s my husband, the father of the kids ((laughing)). Then I decided to stay [in Outjo]. Because it was also very far from my home and I was suffering a lot there. I was not having a place to stay; I drive from Swakop[mund] to Walvis [Bay] every day. They did not give me accommodation. (Luthrecia, 2009, iiba by SGA, the symbol ° means she spoke very quietly)

Her reaction shows a kind of pride that she was chosen by her husband for marriage and amusement about the fact that he decided for her. She portrays it as a case of letting him decide the unpleasant matters in life. However, she also had some reasons to support his decision. Today, she is married with four children, does not have a job, her husband has cheated on her several times and, when she confronts him about this, he beats her. Now she fears that she might have been infected with HIV (see Section 8.1). She does not see many alternatives and suffers as a result of her dependent situation.

Some women had their own strategies for agency. I was aware of one case in which the husband often worked away and stayed outside of the town. The wife, a conservative, religious woman, knew how important it was to her husband to be head of the household and she herself also wanted “a strong man”. Nonetheless, in reality she acted as head of the household when he was not at home and made all the decisions, which had to be done. When her husband was present and made a decision she did not agree with, she had ways of convincing him, but presenting it as his decision. Nominally, however, she made a point of her husband being the head of the household, and having his own chair which nobody else was allowed to sit in if he was present (see also Section 6.1). Many women accepted how important the iconic idea of being head of the household is for the prevailing concept of dominant masculinity. Another interpretation may be that they were in agreement with their intimate partner occupying this leading position as they had never learnt to be the head of a

household despite the fact that many single mothers are in fact already fulfilling this role (see below).

Interestingly, some people attribute women's apparent shyness to natural female behaviour. This was also mentioned by David in Chapter 6. Becker observed this phenomenon in the Sambuyu area within the Kavango. Becker found that women are expected to respect men by showing restraint towards them and in the public arena generally. Thus, they do not behave as empowered and self-confident activists for gender equality would be expected to. The difficulty involved in bringing about change to increase women's self-confidence is apparent, while those who oppose gender equality welcome this women's "natural shyness". According to this perception, females are naturally condemned to be in a state of eternal subordination. However, this is not fair to females: if the half of the population is disempowered from a very young age and over the ensuing years embedded in a society that upholds and reproduces these hierarchical norms, this constitutes symbolic and structural violence (see Section 1.1.2) which is not easy to overcome.

There are slight differences in perceptions of respect between women of different ages. Allison, a woman in her thirties, was sometimes admonished by her great-grandmother<sup>367</sup> who demanded that she respect her boyfriend. This was linked to the former gendered division of labour. She described the following situation:

- Allison      I am cleaning the floor, then I tell him [her boyfriend] 'just quickly iron the shirt'. Then, if my great-grandmother sees, she will call me, 'what are you doing? It's the man. The man cannot iron his shirt or a trouser. Don't do that!'
- SGA            Which reason does she give? That he cannot do it?
- Allison        Because of ... he is a man; he cannot, because I must do [it] for him.
- SGA            That he is not able to do it? Or?
- Allison        No, he is able to do it, but because he is a man, I must respect. So it means I am not respecting him [if I ask him to iron]. So I must do like my great-grandmother was doing everything for her husband. (Allison, 2009, iiba by SGA)

Her great-grandmother was displeased by her behaviour. In the past, showing respect towards men meant that the woman did all the household tasks and also that she was silent when her partner spoke – even when he was wrong or she did not agree with what he said (Allison 2009). Even now, her great-grandmother wants Allison to do the same. However, Allison took a more critical view. She thinks that men had it easy in former times, as they would just sit there reading their newspaper, while the children were crying and the women were busy, prompting her to comment: "I don't believe in those old ways ((laughing))" (Allison, 2009). This shows how changes that have occurred within gender constructions may also lead to conflict between the generations. Allison said that she and her boyfriend helped each other with work, and that these things have changed. It was important for her to

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<sup>367</sup> Allison's mother had an intimate relationship with a teacher and became pregnant while she was still a learner. Therefore, she grew up with her great-grandmother while her mother worked at a different place (see Section 2.2.1 and 8.1.1).

demarcate herself as a young woman from the older women with their more traditional views. One reason for this behaviour was that younger women are better informed about their rights than older women, as LeBeau and Spence discovered (LeBeau/Spence 2004:32). Boulton also mentions women who expect men to participate in “child-rearing and domestic tasks” (Boulton 2017:34).

Allison stressed in one part of the interview that young women would not necessarily respect men, but older women would. This difference between older and younger females was also confirmed by the young interviewee Alicia: “girls mostly don't respect boys. It's just women [who] respect men” (Alicia, 2009, iiba by SGA). Another young interviewee, who was also a learner in the OSS, said that she wanted to be independent of men and further explained that her mother is dependent on her father, who has three other women and also beats her mother (Laurentia, 2009). As the interview with Allison progressed, she became silent and appeared to be deep in thought. Eventually she concluded: “°The problem is that we respect the men°” (Allison, 2009, symbols mean that she talked very quietly). By this she appeared to be suggesting that younger women also show the expected respect towards males, despite female empowerment policies. Thus, it is not only many men who experience social exclusion due to a lack of access to economic resources. Women also suffer from social exclusion from two sources: firstly, exclusion from economic resources; and secondly, they have been excluded from decision-making for a long time.

### **Increasing female autonomy linked to economic decisions and self-sufficiency**

The acceptance of the dominant masculinity of an intimate partner, which might include having additional partners, as well as violence, is bound to his income generating capacity. If a partner who is engaging in this kind of behaviour becomes unemployed and is not able to provide for her, the woman might leave him (Tvedten 2011:148). However, she may also choose to leave him if there is no misbehaviour because she thinks an unemployed man is no longer fulfilling his duties as a provider (see Section 6.1 for the male perspective). Neither men nor women seem to consider swapping roles, for example for the woman to be the breadwinner and the man to do the household tasks and look after the children. Gender relations seem to be quite static in this regard (see Section 5.1). However, as Tvedten concludes: “the ‘crisis of manhood’ has implied additional burdens [for women] but also possibilities for them to develop new roles and to challenge male authority” (Tvedten 2011:151, iiba by SGA).

However, the ideal for a male intimate partner is to be successful and well-off, as is also the case in the telenovela *When you are Mine* (see above). Pauli discovered that many women – regardless of their economic situation – dream of finding a rich man as a partner and concludes: “Wealth is what makes a husband” (Pauli 2009:230). They want a man who

provides and cares for them and their children (Tvedten 2011, Boulton 2017, Kandirikirira 2002). Many women would never choose to stay with an under- or unemployed man because they see it as unacceptable for him to be dependent on his female partner (Tersbøl 2006). Pauli described the view of these economically independent women as follows: “she does not want an unemployed male partner telling her what to do” (Pauli 2007b:189). This statement also shows that the construction of dominant masculinity in Namibia is clearly bound to males’ ability to provide resources and is connected to male decision-making too.

The proportion of households headed by a female in Namibia is 44% (MOHSS/NSA 2014:20). However, there are variations: in rural areas 48% of households, and in urban areas 40% of households, are headed by a female (ibid).<sup>368</sup> In Outjo Constituency 35.6% of all households are led by a woman (NSA 2014:36). Pauli gathered data on the heads of households in Fransfontein. The majority of women who were head of a household were unmarried (Pauli 2010:43), while most of the male heads of households were in long-term intimate relationships (Pauli 2007b). None of the housewives were heads of households (ibid). Similarly, among the people I interviewed, I too did not find a single example of a couple living together where the wife was head of the household. However, some participants in the School Survey also grew up with joint heads of households (see Section 5.2).

Thus, female heads of households, like male heads, make their own decisions, are independent, provide and make a life for themselves, which seems to be increasingly attractive to women (Pauli 2007a, Pauli 2009:228, and see also Schaumburg 2013 for South Africa), although their household income is much lower than that of a male head (Jauch et al. 2011:214). Therefore, it might not only be economic limitations (see Section 4.1) but also personal choice that motivates women’s decisions to stay single (see Pauli 2009). This may also be connected to the common male perception of the married partner as property and the male demand to be the sole head of a household and decision-maker (see Section 6.1), which many women may not want. A number of women with low but permanent incomes had decided to stay single and be in charge of their own households (Pauli 2007b, Tvedten 2011). Most of these women are widowed or are government employees (Pauli 2007b). I also met some women who were sceptical towards marriage (e.g. Allison 2009). Although marriage remains the ideal, women who lead a self-determining life with their own income may become positive role models for young women, instead of being viewed as single women whose lives are lacking something.

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<sup>368</sup> Moreover, there are differences between the north and the centre. The high numbers of households headed by females in the north has to be seen as a legacy of the colonial contract labour system, which for a long time allowed only men to migrate, leaving women, children and older people behind (see Chapter 2).

Tvedten (2011) notes that, in households headed by women, often female relatives or friends live together and share responsibilities and household or childcare tasks and are also involved in neighbourhood networks with other females. I also observed this phenomenon in Outjo in several cases. Pauli describes a similar support network called *Augu*, formed by female neighbours, as important (Pauli 2009). As well as sharing food and supporting each other with childcare they also “share stories” (Pauli 2007:189). Tvedten observed changes in the role of women living in townships...

(...) from being one of bringing up children (...) to one of social reproduction in a broad sense, including provisioning, socialisation and, in many cases, household and family headship. (Tvedten 2011:151).

Cowser and Barnes (2016) describe female self-organisation in the Namibian Shack Dwellers Association, in which 90% of the members are female. Very poor women from informal settlements are organised within the association. Through this association, they make financial savings and organise self-help, to enable them to become home owners, and thus, Cowser and Barnes see the association as “catalyst for women’s rights” (Cower/Barnes 2016:20).

In Outjo there is a district in Etosha Poort called *Oabatere*, which literally means “get out of my house”. Under the government’s Build Together Program<sup>369</sup>, that gives favourable credits to low-income families, women, in particular, have been given the opportunity to obtain their own houses in this district (this was also the case in Fransfontein, for example, see also Pauli 2007b). As the women are the heads of households here, they do have the option to get rid of partners who are causing problems as a result of alcohol, cheating or domestic violence. This was the reason why the women chose to name the area *Oabatere* (Baraniak, 2002).<sup>370</sup> Women may also decide against getting married or having an intimate relationship because of previous difficult experiences with men (see Section 8.2).

I conclude that, in Outjo as in other places, there is an “increased female autonomy”, as Pauli also found (Pauli 2007a:202). However, the precondition for the women’s autonomy is the availability of independent income sources (Pauli 2014) or being part of a social network, as well as a belief in their own ability to be able to provide for themselves. Callaghan highlights a statement by a woman who is neither well educated nor well-paid, but who gives insight into her situation by telling her own history of depending on a man and subsequently deciding to be independent:

You could sell *kapana* – you don’t have to depend on a man! We should end this. I had a useless husband – no condoms, no money – so I started doing domestic work and I’m not

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<sup>369</sup> In the Foreword of the Build Together Program guidelines it is mentioned that over 49% of the beneficiaries are female headed households (MRLGHRD 2007:iv). In Outjo the Build Together Program has been running since 1996 (Baraniak 2002; see also Section 1.4).

<sup>370</sup> Some researchers advocate not simply analysing these households as broken family units but as another type of family system that works (Pauli 2007a).

dependent on any man. He took everything and then died in 2005 – if I'd depended on him, I'd be dead now! (Callaghan 2015:241)

Pauli describes the diversifying economic strategies used by some women who are in a difficult economic situation, which involve doing things like washing clothes for others (Pauli 2007b), selling sweets or other home-made items (e.g. Magda, 2009). Tvedten describes unemployed women selling various products in informal ways (Tvedten 2011). Other women receive maintenance from some of the fathers of their children.

Hannah (2009) provides another example. She is financially independent because she has a well-paid job, and thus is in a good position to negotiate for her interests. However, she thinks women are demanding change too quickly which might lead to the break up of intimate relationships. She points to the fact that change takes time:

We want the man to change within one day to start and listening to us like we want it. But it won't work like that, because everybody is coming from different backgrounds. Like my boyfriend... he is from a very strong cultural background. I think he wouldn't even listen to me telling him 'No, I don't like that.' He would say 'No. We don't do that. And that's it!' What am I going to do about it? It's his culture after all. He believes in it. That's why he is doing it. (Hannah, 2009)

This quotation reveals her powerlessness. It seems that, even though she is in an economically secure position and is not dependent on her partner, she still did not attempt to voice or impose her own opinions.

These last two examples show that it is not only economic independence that makes female autonomy possible, but also the women's mind-set. Even for a very poor woman it is possible to create a sense of inner independence to enable her to make her own decisions. However, even a financially independent woman like Hannah with many more opportunities accepts her partner's dominance because she has culturalised his dominance, thereby revealing a very static and essentialistic perception of culture (see Section 1.1.1). This also shows that even women who have good jobs are still faced with ambiguous expectations. An anti-rape activist in Britton and Shook's research stated: "From eight to five, they [the women] have to be on top of business, then come home and be the submissive wife" (cited in Britton/Shook 2014:170, iiba by SGA). This expectation of men was also criticised by Expert 5 (2009) (see Section 6.1).

There are variations within the group of female research participants regarding class, age and education. There are some well educated women in well-paid positions, who provide for their own family and for other relatives. Women's economic independence also gives them more options, including with regard to a possible marriage candidate as well as the decision not to marry (Pauli 2014). This self-determination and independence can be challenging for men and may also lead to conflicts about who is the head of the household, especially if the house is owned by the woman (see Tvedten 2011:141). But there are also research

participants who do not have a regular income, or who only get a low salary but are provided by husbands or intimate partners or by maintenance of former partners.

If women self-confidently demand what they deserve regarding gender equality policy, there are still men in political office hindering women's empowerment by withholding resources from them, as the following case of a female politician in Outjo shows. She wanted to attend a workshop on women's leadership abroad and asked the Municipality Council for financial support. However, they refused it on the following grounds: "women workshops, women things ... there is no need", leaving her to conclude: "They don't want to support the women's issues" (Expert 12, 2006). I asked her if she thinks that the men have a problem with gender equality. She answered:

Yes! They are having a problem. Look also, especially in the Council [Town Council of Outjo], when you see that the lady is the mayor and so on, they don't want to accept it. And they feel '(...) How does it come? The lady is the one going to lead us. The woman! The man is a dead bone. [That] is what we are saying.' Yes, there is a problem! (Expert 12, 2006, iiba by SGA)

From this quotation it is clear that men still act as gatekeepers. There may be opportunities for women to achieve their potential, but those who are in charge of financial expenditure might simply reject a woman's request for financial assistance and thus prevent her development and progress.

### **Female perspective on men's multiple concurrent sexual relations**

For many women who are sexually active it is important not to have different boyfriends at the same time, but to practise serial monogamy, because otherwise their reputation risks being damaged (see above). This is in stark contrast to male norms (see Section 6.1). The main concern for women revealed in this research is men's multiple concurrent sexual relations, either in general terms or specifically regarding their male partners. Whereas among men, the concerns about a perceived "lack of respect" are mostly prevalent (see Chapter 6). Many female interviewees perceived the multiple concurrent sexual relations of men as common behaviour (for example Lucy, 2006, Luthrecia and Experts 19, 36 and 43, 2009, see also Pauli 2009 and A. Becker 2009). They also identified it as a cause of substantial conflict in their relationships, as women's activist Expert 19 described in relation to Outjo:

Expert 19 They [single women] are suffering lot from [being] without men. They are taking the married men. (...) men [are] taking 3 or 4 ladies in one place that causes violence.

SGA Can you connect it to culture, that men have different girlfriends? Are there differences in different groups?

Expert 19 No, all the same. (Expert 19, 2009, iiba by SGA)

As will be shown in Section 8.1.2, both men and women having multiple sexual relations leads to violence in intimate relationships as well as between the man's girlfriends (see below).

Women see different factors as helping to explain the behaviour of men who engage in concurrent intimate relationships. Lucy identified migration (see Section 5.2) as a key reason why men have additional girlfriends: “And if they [men] are working in different towns, then in every town they are having a girlfriend” (Lucy, 2006:8, brackets added by SGA). Other interviewees also saw this problem of men and women living a long distance apart as being related to men’s multiple concurrent sexual relations (Carl, Hannah, both 2009). Hannah has a long distance relationship because her partner was transferred to another town, where he had additional sexual relations. Only later on did he admit to her that he had also fathered a child. His behaviour led her to mistrust him. She described what happened: “We got separated again. The distance is killing us. We are trying but really (...)” (Hannah, 2009). Her partner claimed that he is now faithful, but she did not believe him: “I don’t trust him anymore... I cannot trust him when he is not near me” (Hannah, 2009).

Gertrud spent almost 30 years of her life with a married man who was also the father of several of her children. He promised to divorce his wife but did not do so. Moreover, he also had additional girlfriends. At a late stage in their intimate relationship he retired from work and got an allowance. Gertrud was very angry that he did not share the money with her and their children but spent it on other girlfriends (see also Tersbøl 2006). When she confronted him, he became angry. She then decided to leave him, which he did not want to accept. He approached her several times and when she threatened him with a Protection Order, he stopped. Although she suffered because of her married partner’s multiple sexual relations, she accepted the situation for a long time. Only when he refused to spend his money on her and her children, but spent it on his girlfriend instead, did she end the relationship.

The theme of multiple sexual relations often recurred in Luthrecia’s (2009) narratives about intimate relationships: Firstly, when she stayed at her brother and sister-in-law’s house, it was revealed that her brother had additional girlfriends as well as having children with them. This led to violence (see Section 8.1.2). Secondly, Luthrecia herself was proposed and became impregnated by a married man: “I did not know that he was married. When I got to know, I decided to go to his wife and tell the wife, to ask apology” (Luthrecia 2009). The man’s wife visited Luthrecia at the birth of the child and was supportive to her but not her husband. Thirdly, Luthrecia speaks about the relationship with her husband. They have known each other since primary school. He proposed her when they met again as adults but he concealed from her the fact that he already had a girlfriend whom he stayed with. When the girlfriend told Luthrecia, they quarrelled. Luthrecia confronted him and he admitted it. She was very upset and ended the relationship with him for a year. However, he continued to propose her. Therefore, she told him he had to choose one partner. I asked her what convinced her to get back together with the man:

He convinced me. The main point was, the lady [his other girlfriend] was coming to me and fight with me, talk with me, quarrelling with me, I was just quiet. He was that kind of person, who was ashamed, he went to her and coming back. He said 'don't worry, you are the educated person, the other lady is stupid, she is not educated. Don't worry my dear about that case, I will try my best and choose between you.' But it was not very good for me, to stay like that. Every day I quarrelled with him... I don't want ... and one day, I will also sit like that lady [when he has another girlfriend next to Luthrecia]. I have convinced that man... I decided I will go, leave the work and go to Windhoek to my sister. He also decided. The weekend he went to me to Windhoek. He already knew my brothers, there we met. Then I have decided, 'oh, this guy is serious with me, let me choose him.' (Luthrecia, 2009, iiba by SGA)

This shows that her partner only committed to her after she exerted considerable pressure on him to decide between her and the girlfriend. Moreover, she told him that because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic it is not advisable to have multiple concurrent partners. He broke off the other relationship and, two years later, he and Luthrecia married. However, after they got married, at certain times, when she was pregnant or breastfeeding, he had additional sexual partners on several occasions. When she confronted him, he felt ashamed or angry, but he believes that he can do what he wants (see Section 6.1). The next interview extract shows their struggle and how it affects her feelings:

- SGA            If you have that impression [of him cheating on her], do you confront him? Talk to him?
- Luthrecia    Yes, I talk to him and he asks apology. But my dear, until when he wants to apologise and doing the same things again!
- SGA            If he apologises, does it mean he stops?
- Luthrecia    He stops for a long time. But he will do it again. It is very difficult for him. I don't know why it is like that. It will be difficult between us. The love, the love... it will be not the same. (Luthrecia, 2009, iiba by SGA)

This shows how women suffer as a result of the behaviour of men who repeatedly have additional sexual relations, leading to considerable mistrust in intimate relationships. It also shows that a negotiated deal between the partners may not be permanent. In Luthrecia's case, there was no change in the behaviour of her husband after marriage. She sees a link between pregnancy and her partner's cheating: "the problem [is], if I give birth, he is that kind of person, who is going to cheat on me. Why is it like that, why are husbands like that?" (Luthrecia, 2009, iiba by SGA). Hildi's case also shows that a man may look for additional girlfriends in certain phases of the intimate relationship, such as pregnancy or breastfeeding (Hildi, 2009, see in Section 8.1). Particularly in economically unequal relationships, many women are forced to accept their male partner's additional partners, as they are economically dependent on them (see also Tvedten 2011).

Pauli described married women who have experienced being cheated on and their partners producing children out-of-wedlock adopting a more active stance. Women with relatively well-off husbands are using regular church services to create a new moral space. In recently developed *ores*, whereby Lutheran churches have borrowed the Pentecostal Churches' ritual practices of public confessions in Sunday services (see Gierse-Arsten 2005 and see Section 5.1), husbands and their girlfriends are obliged to confess the 'sin' of being unfaithful (Pauli

2012). An *ore* is seen as a precondition for the baptism of an out-of-wedlock child, which is important for the child's mother (Pauli 2012). Wives contribute to this scenario and thus demonstrate active agency, which disadvantages the girlfriends, who are often young destitute women, and maybe also disadvantage the children, as it contributes to the stigmatisation of children born out of wedlock (Pauli 2012). An ELCRN pastor, Expert 4, mentioned that if he is holding a marriage counselling session, as well as counselling the husband and wife, he also counsels the husband's girlfriend. He tells her that "she must look into other sources of income" (Expert 4, 2006). Expert 4 sees financial need as affecting this problem, by encouraging young women to get involved with older men (see above). This highlights differences in opportunity and agency between women. Society condemns multiple additional sexual relationships, especially in the case of females, who are easily stigmatised as prostitutes. Marriage is still the ideal (see Section 5.2); thus, married women have a higher status and better economic opportunities than unmarried women. Therefore, age, education, urban or rural living, and whether or not they have children, are all important factors that need to be taken into consideration in order to understand women's different realities, agency, opportunities, and vulnerabilities – the differences within the group of women (Moore 1996).

Women may have ambiguous attitudes towards men having multiple sexual relations or towards women having intimate relations with married men, depending on their role in the situation, as the examples of Luthrecia and Allison (both 2009) serve to illustrate. Interestingly, in the course of the interview with Allison (2009), she took different stances depending on her relationship to the man who had these additional sexual relations. Allison's boyfriend and father of her children cheated on her, which made her feel very distressed and angry. He even did not use condoms with the other girlfriend and thus risked infecting her with HIV and other STDs. In some cases, the steady female partner accepts a man having several sexual partners or additional girlfriends, as was the case before independence (see Section 2.2). However, the threat of HIV/AIDS and the fact that it is rare for condoms to be used in relationships of trust has led many women to recognise the need to take action. This has only recently been possible as women have become more self-confident in their relationships. Allison, for example, would have forgiven her intimate partner, but the fact that he refused to take an HIV test made her decide to leave him (Allison, 2009, see also Chapter 6 and Section 8.1). She commented that the cheating destroyed many things in her life, especially her trust in her partner:

(...) I have lost trust in him because I trusted him a lot, thinking that I am the only one in his life, and he is the only one in my life. So he broke the trust what I was having in him. (Allison, 2009)

In contrast to Allison's perception of her boyfriend's behaviour, she saw her step-father's repeated practice of having additional sexual partners in a more neutral way. She explained

her step-father's cheating by three factors: his work, his drinking and that fact that "he was behaving like a young boy" (Allison, 2009). She also linked it to masculinity-producing behaviour: "I think maybe he was feeling like he is a man" (ibid). She went on to describe what it means to be a man: having girlfriends and many children (ibid).

Similarly to Allison, Luthrecia had an ambiguous attitude towards men's multiple sexual relations (see above). Although she herself was outraged by her husband having other girlfriends, when it comes to her brother's relationship with his wife, she saw the problem from the other side: "The main problem is that the lady is jealous" (Luthrecia, 2009, and see Chapter 4). This reflects social realities: some women are able to rationalise men's cheating as something that the men concerned are unable to control (see also Jewkes et al. 2007). That means even women themselves sometimes expect women to accept men having multiple sexual relations, because this idea is so embedded in society and is also reproduced by women (see Chapter 2). There are often social pressures on wronged women to forgive their "weak" men. This was also the case with Allison's mother; she tried to convince Allison to forgive her partner for his cheating. Often the girlfriend is blamed for seducing the man, not the man himself (see also Pauli 2012). However, this attitude of understanding male behaviour only applies if women are not directly affected.

Moreover, society draws a distinction between a man who has multiple concurrent sexual partners and a woman who does so (Allison 2009), again showing the double standard that exists (see also Mogotsi 2015). Allison asserted that if she had several boyfriends, her great-grandmother would call her in and admonish her: "Women don't do that!" For a man, however, this behaviour is still seen as acceptable, and legitimated with the explanation that he is a man. This reveals a conflict between the generations (see also Section 4.3). There are differences between the genders in their motivations for having multiple concurrent partners. As described in Chapter 6, for men having girlfriends is an important marker for the production of masculinity. Women, however, have other reasons for having multiple partners, one of the most important being their limited independent access to resources.

The women who were cheated on perceive men having multiple concurrent sexual partners as problematic and conflict-inducing and often have a negative image of men as a result. Several female interviewees of all ages shared a negative attitude towards men in general, and in some cases especially towards younger men (Luthrecia, Allison, Alicia, Lucy, all 2009, Emma, 2006 and see Chapter 6). Luthrecia claimed that: "Men don't have a heart. Man thinks he is the boss; in fact woman is the boss. Women are beaten, killed, not paid" (Luthrecia, 2009).

## Has nothing changed?

If we focus on the limitations of women's empowerment, it is easy to conclude that not much has changed for women since independence. Many women's activists were disillusioned with the situation regarding women's empowerment. The women's activist Elizabeth /Khaxas, concluded 16 years after independence that the lives of women had not changed much because of men's continued dominance (informal communication, 2006). Thomas came to a similar conclusion regarding the situation of women in Caprivi:

It can be argued that the fact that women themselves continue to invest in institutions that subordinate their rights is a clear indicator of their lack of empowerment to do otherwise. (Thomas 2007:611)

Expert 14, interviewed in 2006, also viewed women as "silent, accepting circumstances, and enduring violence" and she sees an ongoing need to empower women, because: "women can be changed by being empowered by economic independence and power over their own sexuality" (Expert 14, 2006). Moreover, it takes time to change the long-established hierarchical gender systems of a society, as such hierarchies are perpetuated, as is violence.

Despite the sense of disillusionment among many women, discussed above, women have gained in self-confidence. Politician and women's activist, Expert 12, thought that there has been a positive change in this respect:

Nowadays, women can also stand up, be in a position of decision-making, stand up and talk in front of the elders, stand up and raise their voice. They can even take up the jobs which were dominated by men. Nowadays, they can also stand up and take the management positions. (Expert 12, 2006)

Another women's activist, Expert 50 (2006) also pointed to the new opportunities occurred since independence because women are now getting higher status jobs. However, she stressed that men find this problematic which was confirmed by Expert 4 (2009) (and see Section 6.1). Luthrecia said that when she heard Rosa Namises talking about women's rights on the radio, it really changed her life. Referring to her behaviour before becoming involved with the group Women support Women, she said "I kept quiet" (Luthrecia, 2009), but now she says to her husband "50:50" (referring to a gender equality campaign by Sister Namibia, see Section 3.2), and expects him to consider her opinions when making decisions (ibid). However, she is financially dependent on him, which reduces her negotiating power, and he behaves violently towards her (see Section 8.1.2).

The explicit and practical empowerment of women is only supported by a few men. Many men feel challenged by the demand for equal rights for females (see Section 6.2.1).

## 7.2 Females and violence

### 7.2.1 Perceptions of contributory factors to male violence against women<sup>371</sup>

While many men blame gender equality as a contributory factor to violence against women (see Section 6.2), an HIV counsellor, Expert 33, agreed that gender equality could cause violence, “because many men don’t understand” (Expert 33, 2006). Moreover, she saw a further factor as important: if women do not accept men cheating on them, men become violent. Women do not want to share their men and may also become violent towards their other girlfriends (Expert 33, 2006, see Section 7.2.2). Expert 50 described a scenario in which the wife asked the husband where he had been, to which he would reply: “it’s none of your business” and beat her up (Expert 50, 2006). This reflects the historical legacy of the independent man making his own decisions, which was described in Section 6.1; or as politician and women’s activist, Expert 12, put it: “They [ the men] believe (...) it is only the man who can do anything (...), and who is used to do everything” (Expert 12, iiba by SGA). Men believe that their dominant position within the family should not be questioned by a female intimate partner. Research participants Gertrud (2006/2009), Magda (2009) and Lucy (2006) think in a similar way. This is also evident in Luthrecia’s narrative of violence (see Section 8.1.2).

A girl who participated in the School Survey ticked the option that she does not want to marry in the future, giving the following reasons: “Because the man, if he marries you, he is just going to cheat on you, and if you do so or talk to him, he will beat you up” (16 year old girl, School Survey, 120 C 10). A similar scenario was described by youth activist Lucy: the husband has a girlfriend, the wife finds out and confronts him. He would first deny it, but if she had proof, he would beat her up. When asked why, Lucy replied:

Lucy	Because her jealousy will make him angry.
SGA	Because he thinks she has not the right to be angry?
Lucy	Ja.
SGA	But why?
Lucy	Because she is married and she is at his home.
SGA	So she should not be angry.
Lucy	Ja. (Lucy, 2006)

This also reveals that because the home belongs to the man (“she is at *his* home”), the woman does not have the right to question him. However, if they are married and live together, couples most often live in community of property, and thus it is also her home, but it seems not to be perceived in this way. However, if it happens the other way round, that the wife has a boyfriend, Lucy thinks that the husband is likely to react with fury and violence:

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<sup>371</sup> As was shown in this chapter, women are not a homogenous group. The women grew up in a society where violence to a certain extent is seen as normal, especially violence by a male partner. For many people it is also regarded as normal for women to be subordinate to their male partners. In this chapter women affected by violence, including some school girls who participated in the School Survey as well as women who are critical of inequality share their views on factors that contribute to violence.

“He will just beat her up, he will beat her, he won’t listen to what she is explaining, he would just beat her” (Lucy, 2006). Jealousy, and suspected and actual cheating by a female partner, is often associated with intimate partner femicides (see Section 8.1.2). This was also the motive behind the triple murder (see Sections 1.3, 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 8.1.2, 8.3). This again clearly illustrates the persistence of the double standard.

What men and women do agree on is that the abuse of alcohol is an important contributory factor in the escalation of conflict (Expert 12, 2006). In the WHO’s multi-country study (2005), women affected by violence saw alcohol – in the form of their violent partner’s drunkenness – as the most important factor in leading to violence (48.7%) followed by jealousy (39.1%) (MOHSS 2004:37). The use of alcohol diminishes the individual’s self-control, lowers the natural inhibitory threshold for violent behaviour and leads to diffuse boundary setting (see Chapter 4). Expert 36 (2009), a teacher and church elder, cited men having multiple sexual relations, and no respect for their girlfriends, as well as abusing alcohol, as the most important contributory factors to violence against women. Expert 11, a women’s rights and community activist, pointed to the fact that wife-battering would happen during weekends and at night-time, when counsellors were not available. She explained it by the fact that weddings and funerals take place at weekends. People would drink alcohol at these events and would then become violent (Expert 11, 2006). According to Expert 50, who was the Chairperson of a women’s organisation in Outjo at the time of the interview in 2006, alcohol and drug abuse, as well as men having multiple sexual relations, are factors behind violence in intimate relationships, as well as in marriages.

In the School Survey, 31 girls claimed to have witnessed violence. Of these, 19 cases were classified as violence against women/girls (domestic, sexual, beatings, etc). These female witnesses assumed the following factors to be causes of violence: alcohol was the most common reason given (13), in second place was jealousy (11), and in third was “wanting to show strength” (9) (multiple answers were possible). This is in accordance with the answers that male witnesses of violence gave in the School Survey (see Chapter 6). Of special interest here is the third most common factor cited by the boys: that the perpetrator was “being insecure” (see Section 6.2.3). Linking both items that could mean the following: if males feel insecure they want to show strength while suppressing feelings of weaknesses.

Hildi and Luthrecia (both 2009) experienced long-term and repeated episodes of violence by their husbands (see Section 8.1.2). In Hildis narratives of violence, the following three contributory factors – alcohol, jealousy and wanting to show strength as a result of feeling insecure – were also identified. Hildi’s husband was very jealous, and suspected her of having sexual relations with men that either he or she was friends with. She recalled one occasion when she was planning to hold a surprise birthday party for her husband:

- Hildi (... ) Friday night, we were at the club, at the private bar and I ... asked one of his friends to meet me outside... so we could discuss ... the husband's surprise birthday party. We wanted to hold it at ahm private bar at the club. And then he started screaming and yelling and I am having an affair and-
- SGA With that one standing outside?
- Hildi With that one standing. And we went back home and ((breathing out)) he started hitting the, the... everything in the house and he grabbed me by the neck... and then ... I had a spank, I picked up the pan and then he took the gun and the two children in the car and he was gone. ... To go hunting... the next day he came back ähm, for a few minutes, to leave the children with me °and then he went again°. The Sunday he came back with, with ...ähm I think, ja it was a Kudu. And then he was all smiling and ... and he is always so sorry, he wouldn't do that again, but ...it never stop. (Hildi, 2009, symbols mean she spoke very quietly, iiba by SGA)

This shows how, for some men, the mere possibility of being cheated on can lead to violence, even if his suspicions are unfounded. Subsequently, Hildi found out that *he* was actually cheating on her. Thus, his behaviour could have been a projection of his own feelings, or it could have been caused by shame (see also Gockel-Frank 2007:191). Luthrecia's narratives of violent experiences also reveal shame to be a factor for violence. She went to confront her husband while he was with his girlfriend, and he reacted in the following way: "He was ashamed when he saw me and then he starts to beat me" (Luthrecia, 2009:8). Thus, it is not surprising that she blames men having multiple sexual partners in one place as a key factor that contributes to violence (see Section 8.1.2).

Expert 53, a nurse, saw alcohol as an important factor in explaining violence against women. To this she added poverty and women deciding to leave their partner or divorce them (Expert 53, 2009). Windhoek-based Expert 9, then working for MOHSS and later on for MGECW, also viewed poor living conditions as contributory to violence (Expert 9, 2006). The politician and women's activist Expert 12 saw a link between the expectation that men should be the breadwinner, and their inability to fulfil this expectation (see Section 6.1) and the perpetration of violence. When men are unemployed they might develop a feeling of inferiority:

- SGA Where do you see the reasons for that, why are the men more violent? Because the conditions are the same for both.
- Expert 12 Unemployment, women are also unemployed, but as a man, now you are talking on gender equality and so on. But as a man you have to bring something into the house, but you see the other men are trying to get something but you don't, sometimes they feel inferior.
- SGA To the women?
- Expert 12 To the women and to the men. (Expert 12, 2006)

She discusses how the implications of poverty differ for males and females. Economically marginalised men who feel disempowered use violence against women to re-establish or reaffirm their position as 'leader' within the intimate relationship or family (see also Silberschmidt 2003 for East Africa). A Gender Officer from the MGECW also took into account male feelings of inferiority and explained violence in terms of power:

It's a power issue, lots of men don't want it [gender equality]. They feel threatened, so they react violently. Men beat because they drink alcohol (...). The men's self-esteem is low, they are insecure and feel inferior. Beating is a way of asserting power, so they feel in control (...). Their

inferiority complex is carried by a lot of changes, alcohol, poverty, culture. (Expert 31, 2006, iiba by SGA)

She thinks that by using violence men can regain power they might have lost by the demand of equal rights. Moreover, as has been shown previously, many people I talked to blamed culture as a contributory factor to violence against women. This attitude was also reflected in various policy documents (see Section 3.3), but it caused considerable controversy within the research on violence against women (Britton/Shook 2014, see Section 1.2).<sup>372</sup> When I asked Expert 12 about the factors that contribute to violence against women she firstly identified alcohol abuse and unemployment. In her response to my additional question about whether she would also blame culture for it (as many interviewees and other people did) she denied it and blamed it on the colonial legacy instead:

I am not blaming culture, because we have a diverse culture here. The thing is, I will blame the system of the – I don't want to be rude, but – the way how we've grown up, the colonial system (...). Because, if they [the white colonialists] gave us, the people, [the black population] the chance to come up and learn in different fields and get educated and so on, then I think these [our] people [would] help the living standard of themselves. But most of them, they [did not] even have that chance. They are forced to be farm labourers and so on. And just remain on the farms. (Expert 12, 2006, iiba by SGA)

This culture sensitive voice was an exception in Outjo. She viewed the neglect of educational opportunities for the majority of people during colonial times as an important factor which prevented people from being in control of their own way of life. This interrelation is very convincing and therefore I focused on it in Chapter 2 and 4. Expert 12 gives her own family as an example. She is the only one of her extended family who got a professional education and, as a breadwinner, she feels responsible for many people who approach her for support. However, in the course of the interview, she also gave the following explanation for why men behave violently:

The social background also. Or maybe, yes, how they grew up in a violent home. The men want to show off their power, want to behave like their father... Now, you can talk about the cultural way, how in olden days, how the men and the women should behave. In olden days the men is the breadwinner, the one with the more power, the one who can dominate the whole situation and so on. (Expert 12, 2006)

Thus, it is important to take into consideration what exactly people mean when they blame culture or tradition for violence. Usually, they mean the dominant masculinity formed in certain ethnic groups or traditions. However, as was shown in Section 5.1, and is also apparent in this example, it is difficult to differentiate the factors which are important for the construction of gender. Moreover, culture or tradition is themselves a mixture of different factors: colonialism, the Christian religion and pre-colonial remnants of indigenous traditions (see Sections 2.1 and 5.1). This statement can be read as meaning that socialisation to a dominant masculinity is important for understanding male violence.

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<sup>372</sup> If we see "Culture" as a space for the production of masculinities and femininities, this makes sense; however it is important to acknowledge the implications if people equate "culture" with "race" or "ethnic groups" (see Sections 1.1.1 and 5.1).

OSS teacher, Expert 42, thought that who controls the money can be an important source of conflict: “in my culture (Caprivi) they believe men should be head of house and make all decisions” (Expert 42, 2009). In many cases, men are the family breadwinner and thus control the money (see Chapter 6). The aforementioned case, where the woman earns more than the man, is still an exception and was viewed by many interviewees as problematic for men (Expert 4, 2006/9, Alicia, 2009). This connection between masculinity and controlling the money is crucial and Alicia saw it as playing an important role in violence within families. She described the following scenario that takes place on paydays: the man gets paid, comes home, but does not want to give money to his family, saying “it’s my own money, I am working for it. You are just here eating my food” (Alicia, 2009). This would then cause an argument. Afterwards he would spend the money on drink, and then come home, wanting food, but there would be no food because of the lack of money. Then he would have the audacity to ask: ‘why did you not cook?’ The women would tell him to go and use his money to buy something to eat, to which he would reply: ‘why are you so rude to me?’ and then he would start fighting with the lady and the kids and everyone. She concludes: “So that’s how kids are beaten up and the mother” (Alicia, 2009). Several research participants mentioned this kind of conflict, often followed by violence, as widespread, for example an 18 year-old boy in the School Survey who had witnessed violence mentioned that he noticed it happening on a regular basis at his neighbours’ house (038 A 11). Another School Survey participant (16 year old boy, 127 C 10) also recalled a violent incident when he was beaten by his father because he had taken money to buy food, and cooked it while his father had been drinking alcohol (see Section 6.1).

These examples also illustrate the factors cited by Expert 9, initially employed at MOHSS in Windhoek and later on at MGECW, as important in causing violence against women: male entitlement and patriarchy (Expert 9, 2006). Hildi, who experienced year-long violence by her husband, described a situation when he humiliated her in front of people in the town where they were staying (see Section 8.1.2): “And that made him feel good °about himself”, made him feel like a man” (Hildi, 2009, symbol ° means she spoke very quietly). She explained it in terms of her husband attempting to bolster his self-esteem, to show that he was in control of her because he suspected that she might be having an affair. Thus, he wanted to show the whole town that he was in a position of power over her (see also Section 8.1). In some cases men may even feel encouraged by their social environment to use violence: “Sometimes society encourages men ‘you should put her in her place, she must know who is the boss’”, as Expert 31, Gender Officer in the MGECW said in Windhoek in 2006.

At times the violence men perpetrate is simply to enforce their own will. The examples of Hannah (2009) and Jane (Group Discussion 2006) reveal that boyfriends use violence when they cannot agree on things such as where to go out (see Section 8.1.2). Another of

Luthrecia's narratives shows that this is also the fact in the sexual realm. Luthrecia's first boyfriend tried to persuade her to have sex, but she refused for two years. Then, one evening in a bar he forced her to go home and have sex with him (see Section 8.1.1). When she and this man met recently, they conversed as she describes in the following excerpt:

Till now we meet, he is also working in Arandes. Till now he says ((laughing)), 'you girl, you were stupid' ((saying it with a grin)). And I say 'ah, go! I was a youngster that time, leave me out'. I say it like that. (Luthrecia, 2009)

This shows that he had no awareness of what he did, and did not even see it as violence, even though she was very hurt and humiliated by it and today sees it as rape.

An interviewee from another Central African country who was working in Outjo as a medical employee thought that one reason for violence against women in Namibia is that men think they are not respected and therefore behave violently. She thinks women in Namibia are not submissive (Expert 54, 2009). She compared Southern and Central Africa and concluded that, in Southern Africa there is too much freedom, whereas women in Central Africa behave more submissively towards their husbands (ibid). These examples support my argument that men react violently if their female partners are not sufficiently subordinate and try to argue against the 'head of the household' as it was revealed in Section 6.2.1.

From the perspective of the violated women themselves, it becomes clear that violence is perpetuated among the next generations. Some of the women said that their violent partner witnessed and experienced violence in his childhood (Magda, Hildi, both 2009 and Violette, 2006). In the case of Violette (Windhoek, 2006) who experienced long-term violence by her violent husband, he had witnessed his father using violence against his mother:

It came because of his upbringing. He will tell you [when under influence of alcohol] about the abuse of his mother by his father. When the father beats the mother, then he and his mother ran to the grandmother's house. He never healed, and in a way he thinks it is normal [for the husband to beat his wife]. ... We did talk about it. He will come back and apologise and cry, but still the next day he will do it again. (Violette, 2006, iiba by SGA)

In Robert's case, his grandfather beat his grandmother and himself<sup>373</sup>, Robert went on to beat several women, and today his son also beats his wife. This further supports my thesis that violence is self-perpetuating. Hildi suffered from psychological and sexual violence for years at the hands of her husband who had witnessed his father behave violently towards his mother as a child. I asked Hildi if anyone knew about the violence she suffered, to which she replied that his mother knew about it:

Hildi            SHE KNOWS... IT HAPPENS A LOT OF ... times before her, but she was also ...  
                    [afraid]  
SGA            [When she] was there.  
Hildi            Ja... she was also afraid of him. HIS FATHER ... he is just like his father.  
SGA            Oh... he also did it with his mother?  
Hildi            °Ja°.

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<sup>373</sup> He grew up with his grandparents and his mother on a farm (see Section 2.2.1).

SGA ... and his father was also like that like with this sexual violence ... and with the manipulations?  
 Hildi °And physical abuse°...  
 SGA And the f- father of him what did he do to his mother?  
 Hildi °Hitting°  
 SGA Ähm ... how did your husband think about that?  
 Hildi It made him angry. ... but ... the other brother [of her husband] also ... hits his wife... She also left him now. (Hildi 2009, capitalised words were stressed and ° means she spoke very quietly, iiba by SGA)

This shows that not only has her husband followed in his father's violent footsteps but also her husband's brother, who beats his wife: thus violence produces more violence, it is reproduced.

Women try to find explanations for the huge amount of violence by men against women. Jane described her reasoning about the murder of a young pregnant woman by her boyfriend she knows from the media:

Nowadays young men are, I don't know what is in them what leads [them], that they really want to kill, want to beat, want to hurt and what that particular person thinking of killing a person who was pregnant, chopping a girl in pieces then opening her up, taking the kids out and doing those ((sad whistling of the group)) horrible stuff, I couldn't understand. I laid down, I tried to consider it. Maybe because they are hopeless, or maybe sometimes we do things. (...) we don't think about the future (...). The question is, was he afraid of being a father, or was he afraid that he impregnated that lady? What was the problem beyond? People were trying to find a conclusion to that. But it's really frightening that in our own community are people who are capable of doing horrible stuff to women. And sometimes we blame the employment, we blame, whatever we blame (...). (Jane, Group Discussion 2006, iiba by SGA)

She tried to understand these horrific acts of violence. However, she is bewildered, horrified and frightened by such incidents. This is no isolated act of cruelty, but is typical of the violence regularly reported in every detail by the media. It makes women fearful and limits their agency. However, particularly cruel and severe violence has prompted women to take action against it (see Section 8.3).

Most cases of intimate partner violence are perpetrated by males against females. However, violence is also inflicted by women against men, although it is not talked about much. Similarly to how the male perspective was discussed in Section 6.2.2, the female perspective is explored here because it can often be enlightening to see things from another angle.

### 7.2.2 Change in perspective: females behaving violently

Although caring for others is important within their gendered socialisation (see Section 7.1), some females do use violence: towards children (see Sections 4.3 and 7.1); towards other females, for example between girlfriends; and also towards males. It is not socially accepted for females to use violence, except in the form of corporal punishment as a means of disciplining children (see Section 4.3). In general, it is simply not seen as an appropriate way for women to get what they want. If females are too dominant, they are admonished (see Section 7.1). The socialisation of females in subordinate femininities as weak and dependent

is still very strong, and remains so in popular perception. Many people believe that women are not able to behave as violently as men. For example, Emma stated: “Women are not so dangerous. Men do very wrong things ((laughing))” (Emma, 2006). When I asked Lucy if a wife could beat her husband when she is angry, she replied:

Lucy	No, it is not possible, because she is not strong enough to beat him.
SGA	So which possibilities does she have?
Lucy	She would just keep quiet and live with it, but maybe she can. But she cannot leave the house, because they have so many children. So she will just keep quiet and live with it. (Lucy, 2006)

Thus, according to widespread perceptions, even a violated woman does not have many options for defending herself. Moreover, people simply do not believe that a woman could behave physically violently. This also shows that using violence to defend themselves is only seen as legitimate for men.

Nonetheless, I came across some cases of women behaving violently, which the research participant Emma (2006) also mentioned in the first section of her interview. While talking about the widespread and shocking violence in present day Namibia (see Chapter 4), she mentioned a woman who killed her three children and threw them into the water because her boyfriend had left her for a new girlfriend. Emma had read about it in the newspaper. She suggested that the woman may have been suffering from mental illness. This shows that, according to her perception, a woman can only behave violently if she is mentally ill. She does not consider the legal realities that abortion in most cases is prohibited (see Sections 3.2 and 5.1). If we take into account that women are still expected to respect male decisions, including in the sexual realm and the limited knowledge of contraception, many women are confronted with unwanted pregnancies. Women who experience unwanted pregnancies are desperate; they do not have many options. Therefore, some females use the option of violence as a solution: cases of “baby dumping” or infanticide are not uncommon” (Ipinge/LeBeau 2005, Hubbard 2007b, MGECW 2013 and see Section 7.1).

David also does not believe that women might behave violently: "I never saw a violent woman" (David, 2009). However, in the same interview, when talking about the multiple sexual relations of men, he mentioned girlfriends fighting with each other. This violence should be viewed in the context of HIV/AIDS. The end of a relationship and a partner starting a new one, or suspecting a partner of cheating has led to a “strong increase of severe violence among young women” (Pauli/Schnegg 2007:433). This shows a discrepancy between the ideal and the reality. Allison (2009), too, pointed to the issue of men’s multiple sexual relations leading to violence among women. In her opinion Damara women<sup>374</sup> do not want to share their men because they are jealous. She said they fight with their female

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<sup>374</sup> This is interesting, because it is not a case of ‘othering’ of violence (see Section 1.1.2); instead she referred to her own ethnic group.

competitor and, afterwards, with their boyfriend. Damara women would sometimes behave violently, for example by breaking things (Allison, 2009). Violence between girls rarely featured in the School Survey: only on one occasion whereby two girls were battling for one boy:

I could have kill[ed] her and I could have lost my school just because of her (...) because of killing a person I could have sit in the prison. (18 year old girl, School Survey, 131 C 10, iiab by SGA)

In the School Survey only three girls claimed to have used violence themselves.

Luthrecia also mentioned that, at the beginning of her relationship with her current husband, his then long-term partner fought with her (see above). The woman confronted her over her partner's cheating. Moreover, in another narrative on multiple sexual relations, her sister-in-law accused Luthrecia of procuring additional girlfriends for her brother. Therefore, her sister-in-law scapegoated and beat her even though she was still young then (Luthrecia, 2009, see Section 8.1.2). One evening, her sister-in-law attacked her while sleeping:

When I was sleeping in the room, she came, she kicked the door where I am sleeping and talked (...) that things. Now, I am that kind of person, if I ... become angry, the only thing I see is I must start to fight, what must I do? Because I've kept quiet, kept quiet, kept quiet and the lady does not ... [Then] I grabbed her hair and started fighting. But she was a big lady ... bigger than me ... but I've decided even if she kills me [I fight], because I am sick and tired about that. (Luthrecia, 2009)

Thus, she defended herself and fought with her sister-in-law. However, then her brother arrived and beat his wife severely (see Section 8.1.2).

As previously mentioned in Section 6.2.2, violence by women against their male partner is still very taboo. I do not know if Luthrecia became violent towards her husband. She described how she felt on an occasion when she was breastfeeding and she discovered once again that her husband had cheated on her, but had tried to conceal it.

I was having that kind of problem already with him, and if I see it again, it boasts up like something, that I want to beat him up... °and it's not good°. I am breastfeeding and it is difficult for me... ((showing painful gesture)). We had it Saturday. Father's Day I was quarrelling with him, about the same problem [his cheating]! Now he said 'It's not true, it's not true, really.' But, I ... I am that kind of person... I just look ...I know him for a long time, and if he starts to do that kind of things, I see him in his face, how he behave[s]. He was like 'Ah!' ((shows anger)) That kind of things, and (...) problems with his cell phone whatever. Ok *now*, I know it!... °Then we quarrel°. (Luthrecia, 2009, iiba by SGA, symbol ° means she spoke very quietly)

Thus, aggression reveals. Luthrecia felt desperate and powerless, as she depends on her husband economically. She did not see any other alternatives available to her (see above).

During my research, here and there I came across statements that showed that men are also affected by violence perpetrated by their partners. For example, it was also mentioned in the Men's Debate, as described in Section 6.2.2. However, some men pointed to women using verbal violence. As was shown in Section 6.2.1, men also used this to justify their own use of

physical violence. The men in these cases seemed to equate the verbal violence of their female partners with their own use of physical violence, looking for an excuse.

Some men mentioned both partners fighting with each other, for example Carl (2009). His partner also used sexual violence (they are both HIV positive) and threatened him with a knife. Carl reported that his intimate partner, who behaves violently towards him, believes that all men cheat (Carl, 2009). Thus, the negative image of men (see Chapter 6) plus the widespread mistrust within intimate relationships (see Section 5.2), as well as fears about getting infected with HIV, or frustration about having been infected by the partner could also lead to violence perpetrated by women. Moreover, she also abused alcohol.

This shows that violence of women also causes suffering. I assume that in most cases the violence perpetrated by women is not as severe as that of their male counterparts and they do not use violence as often as men because they are very differently socialised, often in a subordinate femininity, as was shown above. They are not encouraged to enforce their views or to compete with their female peers or to defend themselves. However, this was not the main focus of the research and, moreover, there are no studies about violence perpetrated by women, neither against other women nor against men as well as against children, in Namibia that I know of (see Section 9.2).

### 7.3 Summary

In conclusion, females in Outjo do not feel equal to men and young women especially are very frustrated by this ambiguous and confusing social reality: theoretical empowerment but practical disempowerment. Females profited from the changes and have better legal opportunities than before independence, and they have gained in self-confidence. However, their scope of action is still limited by society's expectations, their own socialisation to subjugate themselves to male decisions and dominance, and their economic dependency on men as providers, as well as by male violence (see Chapter 8). There are new and widespread conflicts as men feel challenged by the idea of women's equal rights and by females striving to have their say and express their perspectives. This makes females more vulnerable than males.

As was shown in this chapter, there are several factors that serve to hinder the full empowerment of women and thus the achievement of gender equality. From the female perspective, but one that is perpetuated by both males and females, females are still being socialised in a subordinate form of femininity. Girls are still expected "to have respect". 'Respect' means being fearful of and subordinating themselves to men or elders. This is reflected in their construction of femininity which includes women being expected to speak more quietly, sit with closed legs, look after children, elderly and sick people, care for and use their beauty or appearance, and to behave in a sexually restrained manner. Both

females and males receive ambiguous messages. On the one hand, they learn about gender equality theoretically at school and from governmental institutions, but, on the other hand, they have to cope with the reality of schools treating boys and girls unequally or of caregivers adhering to dominant masculinities and subordinated femininities. This results in frustration for many females.

If women behave as self-confidently as males, using a loud voice, they are admonished by their caregivers and the wider social environment. In this way, society maintains separate spheres for males and females with the intention of preventing homosexuality, but in reality this prevents the development of alternative femininities and masculinities. For females this means that the opportunity for self-confident behaviour is limited. Females who choose to live a more independent life and pursue their own interests, and who are not afraid to make their voices heard, are discriminated against and disparaged with the derogatory epithet "tomboy". Some females who try to live in an independent, self-determined way, for example lesbian women, are regarded as a nuisance by a homophobic society. They are violated, disgraced and even cast out by their own family members (Lorway 2015, see also Chapter 8). If women question male behaviour, males might feel challenged and behave violently (see Chapters 6 and 8).

Like men, many females live in a state of poverty, but women are affected differently as they are the ones responsible for children and other family commitments (such as caring for elderly and sick relatives). Many young women have children early and thus are less qualified because of their curtailed education. Their primary societal responsibility as caregivers and hence limited access to socioeconomic resources, are preventing them from fulfilling their potential. Although considerable progress has been made in the education of females, society (including caregivers) still does not invest enough in their qualifications and competence, but over-values their beauty, their appearance and their bodies. Caregivers are still not raising them to be free and independent thinkers, but to be dependent on men, and therefore needing to please men. Thus, females act in accordance with their socialisation and use these assets to form intimate relationships which give them access to resources. This commodification of intimate relationships makes them even more vulnerable because liberty and freedom of choice are not easily possible within financial dependency. Thus, many women live in commodified intimate relationships in which they do not have a free choice about sex.

Some women have chosen not to marry and not live their lives with an intimate partner, which is only possible if they are economically autonomous or are integrated in social networks and believe in themselves. However, both their own socialisation, which teaches them to be subordinate and dependent on a provider, as well as their social environment, still expect them to respect men, which in practice means subordinating themselves to men, thus

limiting their opportunities and their equal participation in society. These factors prevent them from demanding equal rights as granted by the constitution, and instead lead them into a state of dependency, thereby making them vulnerable.

Many women view the multiple sexual relations of males in steady relationships as one important contributory factor for conflict and violence in intimate relationships. Although they are not equal in their relationships, they are not willing to accept this behaviour which also might involve the risk of HIV because their partner did not use condoms and hid their additional sexual relations. Many women are questioning male behaviour that affects them or their children, which many did not do prior to independence (Luthrecia, 2009, Experts 14, 2006/9, and 38, 2006). However, as was shown in Chapter 6, men do not want to be questioned in their behaviour. Therefore, one consequence of women's more self-confident position is tension in intimate relationships because men are not moving towards gender equality at the same speed and some simply reject it altogether. Other contributory factors for violence identified by these research participants were: alcohol abuse, feelings of inferiority and power struggles. Moreover they view pressure on men as breadwinners while unemployed as well as colonial structural violence of limiting education for the majority of the people as factors for current violence. Victims of violence pointed to the perpetuation of violence: their violent partners witnessed violence against their mothers in their childhood perpetrated by their fathers.

The short digressions in Section 7.2.2, as well as that in Section 6.2.2, show that violence and gender are not linked in an essentialistic way but are constructed by Culture. Women, too, might behave violently, and men, also experience violence by women, even if it is not the norm. Violence is not biologically determined but strongly influenced by socialisation, as well as by unequal living conditions and individual and structural constraints. Thus, norms can be changed and alternative femininities and masculinities created, that are not linked to violence.

Nonetheless, the majority of incidents of intimate partner violence in Namibia and worldwide are cases of violence experienced by females and perpetrated by men. Therefore, the perspective of females affected by violence is displayed here.

## Chapter 8 Males violate females: violated equality

Women and girls in Namibia experience high rates of violence during their lifetime (see Section 3.3). Violence against women also takes place in Outjo. Some women who have experienced violence shared their narratives of violence with me. Several themes recurred repeatedly regarding sexual violence and living with a violent partner. These narratives

(Section 8.1) are contrasted with how female victims and survivors<sup>375</sup> of violence are seen by others, for example service providers (Section 8.2).<sup>376</sup> At the end of the chapter, the effects of this violence are discussed (Section 8.3).

## 8.1 Intimidated and misunderstood: females' narratives of violence

The violence that women experience most often is violence perpetrated by men they know: ex-/boyfriends, husbands, or acquaintances (WHO 2005). By contrast, most men are not violated by an intimate partner but by other men (see Section 6.2.2). In many cases women experience violence by a man they are or were in love with or who claims to love them, and furthermore, on whom they depend financially, and/or whom they have children with. Throughout the course of their lifetime, females in Namibia might experience violence at different stages of life, as well as being exposed to common sexual harassment by men and structural discrimination.<sup>377</sup> *Firstly*, many females – as well as males – experience corporal punishment in childhood from caregivers (see Section 4.3). A number of children, both boys and girls, suffer sexual violence by caregivers, relatives, neighbours and others. *Secondly*, during their teenage years, girls have to live with a high risk of being hurt by a boyfriend of their own age or by older men with resources, while dating or engaged in intimate relationships, or by acquaintances and less frequently by strangers, especially in the form of sexual violence. *Thirdly*, in more committed and long-term intimate relationships, involving having children, establishing families, and living together, women experience violence from their intimate partners. Some decide to leave after violent incidents, while others stay. *Fourthly*, in older age, some women also experience violence by caregivers or others.

There are differences between the life worlds of a white and a black woman, such as that in white communities, formal marriage is much more common than in black intimate relationships (see Section 5.2). For the majority of people in black communities, economic survival is generally paramount, which can hardly be compared to concerns about economic uncertainty talked about by white people (see Chapter 4). Nonetheless, some white women and their children are also financially dependent on a male breadwinner. White women who experience violence may also be reluctant to report it to the police, particularly as within the close white communities, resistance against a husband may be seen as fouling your own nest. Moreover, in both white and black communities there are still hierarchical human relations in terms of gender and age (see Chapters 4 and 5), although these are changing. I

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<sup>375</sup> See footnote 10 on my use of “victim” and “survivor”.

<sup>376</sup> This is an ideal-typical distinction made for analytical reasons. Moreover, it also reflects the legal distinction between the two Namibian laws on violence against women: the *Combating of Rape Act* and the *Combating of Domestic Violence Act* (see Section 3.3).

<sup>377</sup> In the following paragraph I recreate an ideal-typical life course for a Namibian woman, comprised of several narratives rather than one person's life story to convey the main points of the life stories of violated women. It is inspired by the life story of South African Magda A. described in-depth by Fassin et al. (2008) as well as in Laura McClusky's (2001) research.

got the impression that in the white communities the gender constructions including the gender hierarchy is even more static than in black communities. However, these differences and particularities in white communities need more research as it was not the focus of my study (see Section 9.2). There are different living worlds separated by variations in financial resources (see Section 1.3) and different memories regarding colonial times: different colonial legacies of, for example, disrupted families and relationships (see Chapter 2). Notwithstanding, women of all groups are affected by violence in the intimate sphere and, despite several differences, there are also similarities in the violence narratives. For instance, I used examples of severe sexual and verbal, emotional, and psychological violence, including psychical manipulation and threats which occur in Hildi's accounts. I do not think that these manipulations are typical of white or black people, but serve to illustrate the vile behaviour of which some human beings are capable and their consequences.

In my study the focus is on the violence that women experience in the second and third stages of life (see above): particularly the violence women experience in their teenage years and in intimate relationships, as these topics were particularly prevalent in the interviews, in the Group Discussion in 2006 as well as in the School Survey. In this chapter I draw particularly on in-depth interviews with several women who experienced violence after independence. They are introduced in the following paragraphs. Some female research participants experienced violence before independence as well, which was explored in Section 2.2.1. Only a few women openly talked about their recent experiences of sexual violence, mostly within intimate relationships. Luthrecia (2009) (in her thirties) gave accounts of several violent incidents in her life: in her childhood, when she was a young woman and more recently within her marriage. In childhood she experienced violence from her brother's wife in whose household she was staying so that she could attend school. Moreover, she witnessed her brother's violence towards his wife who was violent towards Luthrecia. Her first sexual experience with her first boyfriend was rape, which took place in the 1990s. Following that, she left the man. At the time when the research was conducted she had been with her husband for several years, even though he sometimes behaved violently and was repeatedly involved in multiple sexual relations and even risked infecting her with HIV. Jane (in her twenties) reported in the Group Discussion (2006) suffering violence while being proposed and during an early intimate relationship. Hannah (2009) (in her thirties) had a violent boyfriend during her teenage years. She continued to be his girlfriend although her parents advised her to leave him because of his violent and controlling behaviour. Allison (2006) (in her thirties) experienced violence from her boyfriend, several years ago, as he risked her and her child getting HIV. She subsequently left him. Hildi (2009) (late thirties) suffered lasting and severe violence, including sexual, verbal, and emotional violence, perpetrated by her husband during a time frame of over 16 years. At one of the few Namibian

shelters in Windhoek I met Violette in 2006 and took the opportunity to interview her. She had been married to a violent man for 16 years but was currently in divorce proceedings.

### 8.1.1 Rape – a question of definition?

Rape is classified as sexual violence; however, it is physical and psychological as well. Furthermore, physical violence such as rape, beatings, pushing, dragging, slapping, etc., all have fundamental psychological consequences, as does verbal or emotional violence. Thus, those differentiations are ideal-typical, but for the women experiencing violence, these various forms merge together.

In Namibia, since independence, legislation on sexual violence has changed. As mentioned in Section 2.2, before independence certain forms of rape were not classified as rape. Rape could only be seen as such if the woman was not married to the perpetrator. Thus, if a woman suffered rape at the hands of her husband, it was not seen as violence but as the husband's right. Moreover, in the *Combating of Rape Act*<sup>378</sup> the age of consent was raised, making it possible to sanction sex with minors. The age of consent for sexual intercourse is set at 14 for boys and girls (see Section 3.3). If adolescents are below the age of 14, they cannot give meaningful consent to sex with a partner who is more than three years older than them, and thus this situation is seen as "coercive circumstances". Therefore, it is also seen as criminal act if there are no threats or force. However, have these legal provisions influenced people's perceptions and behaviour yet?

In the School Survey, many learners defined "rape" as experiencing sex by force. Some added that it had to be "against the will of the person". Several learners stated that physical violence in the form of force has to be used, in order for it to qualify as rape. Others said that, if the sex does not take place within an intimate relationship, it is rape. One learner in the School Survey defined rape as follows: "(...) [rape] is when you force someone that you don't have relationship with to have sex with you while she doesn't want" (16 year-old girl, 139 C 10, iiba by SGA). It is clear from this that the learner does not see sex without consent as rape, if it happens within an intimate relationship. This perception is still common in Namibia and reflects the old law.

In the School Survey, none of the girls said that they had experienced sexual violence by a boyfriend. Interestingly, 12 of the 32 sexually active girls stated that their boyfriends took the sole decision about their first sexual encounter and, later on, most of them regretted it (10 girls). In answer to the question about, in general, who should decide whether to have sex, three of those who said their boyfriend had made the decision, selected "the woman should decide", and five chose "both should decide". Four of them crossed out "the man should

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<sup>378</sup> See also Chapter 3.3 about the heated debates in parliament when the new law was being discussed.

decide". All 12 of the girls had clear ideas about what constitutes a rape. In response to the question asking them to define "rape", they stated that rape...

(...) is when a person have sex with me against my will, by force. (17 year-old girl, 063 A 11)

(...) is when you forcing somebody to have sex while he/she doesn't want it. (15 year-old girl, 129 C 10)

However, none of the 12 girls perceived their boyfriend taking the decision about whether to have sex as violence, as none of them mentioned it in the section on violence. The girl who made the last statement said she could not protect herself against HIV "because he [her boyfriend] doesn't like protections and at that moment there was no condom" (15 year-old girl, 129 C 10, iiba by SGA). She did not use contraception herself because "I was not having it and I don't know how to start it" (ibid). That meant her boyfriend took sole responsibility for the decision and risked his girlfriend being infected with HIV as well as getting pregnant. She simply hoped "my father in heaven help me to avoid this" (ibid). This example clearly shows a power asymmetry within the relationship, whereby she was exploited for the satisfaction of her boyfriend.

In the Kavango, where teenage pregnancy is also high, similarly to Kunene, Eloundou-Enyegue and Magaz (2011) conducted a study involving 676 young people aged between 12 and 22. Almost 37% of those who were sexually active said their first sexual encounter was involuntary (Eloundou-Enyegue/Magaz 2011:26). The main reason they gave was female dependency on economic resources (ibid). They concluded "(...) it is clear that a substantial number of teens engage in risky sex half-heartedly or fully against their will" (ibid). That means young women and even adolescents have sex involuntarily because they do not have the power to decide because they depend on men. In the WHO multi-country study of 2004 it was found that one third of the Namibian girls who participated, below the age of 15, said they were forced, and 38% were coerced (MOHSS 2004). That means that only one third of the girls had consensual sex and almost 70% of the girls had sex against their will. Jane mentioned in the Group Discussion that if a woman does not want to have sex with her partner, he will often assume that she is having sex with another man (Jane, Group Discussion 2006). Moreover, the Christian idea of married partners' obligation to be sexually available to each other is also influential (Section 5.2). And a girl might have sex although she does not want it because she fears to lose her boyfriend, what still could happen (e.g. Estie, 2009). These factors also play a role in limiting free choice and paving the way for non-consensual sex.

The following example from Luthrecia's account of her first sexual experience illustrates the confusion about whether sexual violence can be seen as rape. At that time – the late 1990s – she had been with her first boyfriend for two years and, until that point, she had decided against having sex. He tried to persuade her to have sex, but she did not want to. However,

one day when they had been to a bar, he forced her to go home with him, where she had her first sexual experience with him, against her will.

- Luthrecia It was very difficult... It was the first time and I was afraid to do it again ... it was painful (...)  
SGA (...) Did you decide, or who decided to have sex?  
Luthrecia It was he who decided and it was with force, and I was very afraid ... I decided I will leave him (...). Then I stayed without a man long time. (Luthrecia, 2009)

To try to gain a better understanding of what happened, during the course of the interview I asked her if she would now say that it was rape:

- SGA Would you nowadays say, would you call it rape?  
Luthrecia Hm [yes], they are saying it was rape.  
SGA But you, what would you say? You personally.  
Luthrecia Ja, I can say it was rape... but... That time I was stupid, 22 years, I was even not knowing. If I [had] got information earlier, then... because I was just staying with my parents and those are respectful people. Who can tell me those kind of things, how to behave? They didn't tell me like that.  
SGA Why do you say, you were stupid?  
Luthrecia ((Laughing)) I was not informed how to stay with a man (...). Maybe if I got earlier evidence [knowledge], men are doing things like that... nowadays we say, he raped. (Luthrecia, 2009, iiba by SGA)

It seems that when the violence happened in the past, she did not have the words to describe it, but now it can be articulated (see also Merry 2009:17). Moreover, she only sees it from her perspective, blaming herself and describing herself as “stupid”. She seems to have simply accepted that “men are doing things like that”; she does not show much anger towards the man who “broke her virginity” against her will. The negative feelings are directed towards herself. She is more concerned with how *she* could have prevented it, although *he* forced her. After this incident she spent the next three years without a man.

Then, she was approached by a married man, but did not know that he was married (see Section 6.1 and 7.1). He invited her to a hotel for a drink. In the interview I asked her who decided on their sexual encounter: “The man decided. We must go and drink tea and beer, in the hotel in Khorixas. He invited me. That day he has decided to sleep with me. He told me directly (...).” (Luthrecia, 2009). In this case, she left the decision to have sex to the man. However, she said “that was also forced” (ibid). It is clear from this interview that there is a grey area about what constitutes sexual violence. If we see the sexual self-determination of women as a precondition for equal sex, this can be seen as rape. However, Luthrecia was smiling when she talked about this second incident, indicating that she thought it normal for men to make these kinds of decisions affecting her (see Section 7.1). As mentioned before, she was impregnated but did not regret anything, despite calling it rape. It also shows that it is seen as normal by many people in Namibia for men to dominate and make decisions about sex but for the women to have to bear the consequences. Gobodo-Madikizela et al.,

who analysed postconflict<sup>379</sup> societies in Africa, highlight the normalisation of violence: “(...) coercion is endemic in ‘normal’ heterosexual practices” (Gobodo-Madikizela et al. 2014:91).

Many people do not view sexual intercourse without consent as rape. This is a legacy of the past. One example of this is that some military commanders in military camps expected sexual favours from their female comrades (see Section 2.2.2). The two cases of rape involving Emma (2006) and Lisa (2009), which were facilitated by people close to them, also suggest a similar attitude (see Section 2.2.1). The individual will of the females was not taken into account, neither by the perpetrators nor by those who facilitated the rape. It has been shown that even in present day Namibia, the free will of a woman is not respected in the realm of sexuality (see Section 7.1).

This becomes very clear in terms of so-called “corrective rapes” of lesbian women or girls. Moreover, many self-designated lesbians were pressured by their close relatives to have sex with men to get pregnant. If they gave in to these pressures, had sex with men they did not want to and became pregnant, they also often became HIV positive (Lorway 2015). Lesbian women become also victims of coercive marriages (Expert 20, Alicia, both 2009; see also Gontek 2007 for South Africa). Expert 20, a representative of The Rainbow Project confirmed that these kinds of rapes happen to both women and men. These violent acts are intended to bring people back on track to the “right” gender side as all gender transgressions are perceived as disturbing, as a disease or a threat (see Section 5.1).

### **Rape of children by older men**

Another example which does not seem to cause a public outcry is sex of elder men with minor girls under age of consent in exchange of resources. Instead, many people accept the girls’ transactional relationships with wealthy older men, whom they call “sugar daddies” (Iiping/LeBeau 2005:36, Thomas 2007, Kaundjua et al. 2014).<sup>380</sup> This euphemistic term suggests a high degree of acceptance of this phenomenon, far from seeing it as violence. Nonetheless, according to Namibian law, these men are perpetrating a criminal act. Therefore, I do not use this term and suggest instead the term “child rapist”. There is hardly any public outcry against teachers having sexual relationships with learners and only sometimes did they face sanctions (see below). Sometimes families condemn this practice involving their young girls; sometimes families support it because the girls are improving the

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<sup>379</sup> The term “postconflict” is used here to address the historic situation after a collective violent conflict in a society is over, such as the Liberation War. However, conflicts and violence of the past have their legacies for today as could be shown in this thesis.

<sup>380</sup> It must be said here that the term “sugar daddy” is not specifically Namibian. It is also used in other African countries and sometimes to describe inter-generational intimate relationships. One example of this is Thomas (2007), who does not differentiate between ages of the females who participated in her research in Caprivi. She just writes about women having relationships with older men in exchange for resources (Thomas 2007:604). I call this “commodified intimate relationships” (see Section 5.2) and would strongly suggest not classifying those men as “sugar daddies”. In my research context older men who have sex with children and teenagers below the age of consent are termed “child rapists”, which I believe to be more accurate.

families' access to resources (see also Hunter 2002:114). This might also be true in Allison's case which took place in the colonial past (see Section 2.2.1). Allison's mother's caregiver tolerated her intimate relationship with a teacher, telling him that if he impregnated her, he would have to accept his child (Allison 2009). However, when Allison's mother got pregnant while she was still at school, the teacher's mother rejected her, the relationship was ended and the child was not accepted. In consequence, the teacher did not support his child and Allison's mother had to leave school before she finished grade 10.

Gockel-Frank mentions a case in Khorixas, where she conducted her research in 2006 (see Section 1.2), where the parents of a poor family approved of a sexual relationship between their daughter, who was a minor, and a much older man in exchange for supporting the whole family (personal communication Gockel-Frank, 22.08.19). A teacher from Outjo claimed that parents are willing to 'sell' their children to get food and alcohol (Expert 43, 2006). Expert 51, a leading medical officer in Outjo hospital, also stated that some mothers do nothing to stop or prevent relationships between their daughters and older men, because it means they will bring something home (Expert 51, 2006, see also Jewkes et al. 2007). Interestingly he did not blame the girls' fathers.

When asked by a teacher who worked at the primary school in Etosha Poort, why girls have sexual relationships with older men, one girl gave the following answer: "Teacher, we don't even have food at home! It's a way we try to get some money from somebody." (Expert 12, 2006; see Section 4.1) Expert 12 stated:

The girls stay alone at home only with their grannies. There is no one going to look after them (...). Sometimes the mothers also don't take care of the kids. It is when the kids decided 'ok, now I have to take care of myself, make a plan'. (Expert 12, 2006)

Once again it is clear that the girls' fathers are not seen as having any responsibility for them. In addition, Expert 12 thought peer groups also play a role: "The reason why I said peer groups is, they saw the luxury things especially in schools from the other learners who come from well-off houses. So they also want that type of things." (Expert 12, 2006, and see Chapters 4 and 7). Some young girls are boasting of engaging in these relationships when they are with their peers. Notwithstanding, this behaviour is harming them and is against the law which is there to protect them. Persisting economic inequalities are important with regard to understanding their behaviour (see Section 4.1). Economic reasons were also cited by a Regional Councillor from Outjo Constituency in 2013: "High unemployment rate is very worrisome and young girls are at times forced to have relationship with older men to survive" (*The Namibian*, 17.05.2013).

I got to know of one case from an interviewee (Gisela, 2009). Her daughter was 14 years old, and in her first year at OSS when she was impregnated by a teacher in the early 1990s. She therefore had to leave the school according to the school policy (see Section 7.1). She and

her mother tried to receive maintenance for the child but the teacher claimed that he did not have enough money to maintain all his children, and some of the others were also claiming maintenance from him. This teacher was an important decision-maker and, during the time I conducted my research, was still working as a teacher in Outjo (Gisela, 2009). Expert 42 (2009), another teacher at OSS, also stated that there are child rapists of that kind in Outjo.

The consequences of these power-imbalanced inter-generational transactional intimate relationships are serious and long-term for the girls: early pregnancies, infection with HIV/AIDS and other STDs, a lack of education as well as the psychological implications. A teacher, Expert 12, described their behaviour in the classroom:

Expert 12 In the class, they are so shy and ... most of the learners, they know what they do.

SGA They are ashamed?

Expert 12 They are ashamed, lot of them and their school work is very bad (...). The time when you try to talk to them through the counselling, then you see that the person cries. This shows me that she is not happy with her life. It's just because of the circumstances that she is involved in... I think they don't enjoy it. It's just for the matter of money because they cry and are upset. (Expert 12, 2006)

The situation is even more complicated if the men they are sexually involved with are their teachers. Then the girls are doubly dependent: financially and educationally, and their school marks could be affected as well. Thus, their future success or failure in life may be determined by these power-imbalanced relationships, in other words by teachers abusing learners. One girl who participated in the School Survey even linked this social problem with her decision not to marry in the future: "Because marriages nowadays are useless. Married men are having affairs with school girls" (17 year-old girl, School Study, 124 C 10). Women may choose not to marry men who behave as they want without thinking about the consequences for others.

On the one hand, these sexual practices are legally regarded as constituting a crime. On the other hand, the power imbalances and financial dependencies involved also prevent negotiations about safe sex. Thus, the HIV prevalence rate among girls aged 15 to 24 (5.4%) (MOHSS 2019:55) is more than twice that among boys of the same age although boys are more sexually active than girls (see Section 6.1). Expert 19 explained:

Some men are taking the small young girls to use them, (...) when they ... already have their wives at home, women in twenties and in schools; to use them for the money. And later on you see the kids having AIDS. The married men are using them. (Expert 19, 2009)

This phenomenon constitutes a challenge for the whole of Namibian society: well-off men in stable relationships and good jobs are misusing their status and resources to get sexual access to young impoverished girls. These very unequal commodified relationships between, for example a teacher or other employed, well-off men and a female learner, are based on the men giving gifts to the girls. School girls get money in order to fulfil their basic needs, to pay school fees and to fund their own and sometimes their families' livelihoods and luxury goods like mobile phones and perfume (lipinge/Lebeau 2005; see Chapters 4, 5 and 7).

Despite sex with a child constituting a crime, causing serious damage to the girls and having adverse consequences, these aspects are not generally talked about and neither do they appear to incur legal sanctions. In general, if a small child is raped people are shocked and this was something that many people mentioned and condemned (see below). However, when it comes to teenagers there is no outrage. The age boundaries are perceived as fluid and few people are concerned about the phenomenon of teenagers having intimate relationships in exchange for goods or money. The following interview excerpt with teenage Alicia illustrates the lack of clear age boundaries between a child, a teenager and an adult woman. We were talking about pregnant teenagers.

- SGA Do you know if that sex which they had, was it with consent? Or was it rape, *somehow* forced?
- Alicia No, most of them do it by themselves, because it's like they have older boyfriends, that are employed, and they will be told 'no, end of the month I will buy for you this and that'. So they just give themselves without thinking twice. (...) they are living the life of adults. They don't live with their parents, so (...) they are living with their boyfriends and so on.
- SGA In which age?
- Alicia Girls starting at the age of thirteen, live with their boyfriends (...).
- SGA Do you mean that story with those sugar daddies? Or is that something else?
- Alicia Ok, some, ja, some also have sugar daddies like they are schooling.
- SGA But where do you see the difference? Having older boyfriends or having sugar daddies?
- Alicia The older boyfriends are a problem. (...) most don't have sugar daddies, only a few have sugar daddies, but most have boyfriends that are maybe [one or two years] older than them. (Alicia, 2009, iiba by SGA)

However, one or two years older might be an underestimate, as she mentioned boyfriends who are employed, which means they must be at least a good few years older to have a job. Boys of the same age would not be employed, meaning must be a larger age difference. Consequently, if the boyfriends are more than three years older than the teenage girls it is illegal. However, from the quotation it is clear that Alicia does not see it as violence. Jewkes et al. also mention that "informants agreed that it was common for teenage girls to have relationships with older men, so-called sugar daddies" (Jewkes et al. 2005:1812). There is no real consensus about the precise meaning of these terms, which makes it difficult to differentiate between them, especially because boyfriends are usually older than their girlfriends. Moreover, the excerpt once again shows a lack of guidance by caregivers (see Section 4.3).

Females generally tend to look for boyfriends who are older than them (experienced, employed, with resources), implying a power imbalance to the adolescent girl's disadvantage. The older men may exploit the girls' innocence and abuse their power. In both scenarios, when the boyfriends are a bit older and when they are much older, the girls are vulnerable to experiencing violence, because of the power imbalances and because there are different sexual norms for males and females. The age difference and the age of consent of the female are important signifiers with which to differentiate different sorts of inter-

generational relationships, as well as constituting important subjects for future research (see Section 9.2).

If people complain about girls having relationships with much older men, they mostly blame the moral failings of the girls, not the men. The widespread idea that males are easily seduced by females plays an important role here (see also Jewkes et al. 2007, Britton/Shook 2014), although normally people see man as the active part living a common dominant masculinity and, although he is the adult who carries more responsibility as a child. This idea of the dangerous woman seducing the man may have a Christian origin. It could even be found in the counselling of a rape victim by a Pentecostal elder (see Section 8.1.2). The biblical image of Eve giving the prohibited apple to Adam may reflect this view. The idea of females seducing males is reflected by the statement of an 18 year-old woman who wanted to wear tight trousers at home, quoted by Jewkes et al.: "(...) when my father, my uncle or my brother is there [at home] I don't wear them because if they rape me, I can't blame them" (Jewkes et al. 2005:1813, iiba by SGA). What does this mean? If she is in the company of male relatives, this girl cannot exercise freedom of choice in her own home. It also suggests that females suspect any man of being capable of sexual violence, including male relatives. The same fear that men will sexually molest girls was demonstrated by one of Callaghan's (2015) interviewees. She gave this as a reason why it would not be easy for men and women to simply exchange roles regarding the division of labour. She thought it would be acceptable for an unemployed man to take on household duties but it would not be advisable to let him take care of children, especially young girls: "But I probably wouldn't leave my children alone with a man, because, you know ... they molest, and things" (Callaghan 2015:205). This attitude was shared by another one of Callaghan's female interviewees, who pointed out that not even the child's father can be considered trustworthy: "You know how men are these days – there's no age that's safe, especially if it's a girl" (ibid). Thus, there is no trust possible in the family, preventing an equal share in family responsibilities.

If this is taken into account, there are numerous crimes of sex with children under age of consent every day, which are never denounced. In the WHO's multi-country study it was revealed that Namibia had the highest figures for child rape of all the 15 participating countries (WHO 2005, see Section 3.3). Jewkes et al., in their ethnographic study on child rape in Namibia (and South Africa), found that Namibian society is one which, "if not legitimating, at least provides space for" (Jewkes et al. 2005:1810) sexual violence against children.<sup>381</sup> Of course, monetary inequalities are not the only factor here; in some cultures it is seen as a normal expectation for girls to be 'sexually available' to their uncles (Jewkes et al. 2007), implying that there is no incest taboo. Moreover, Jewkes et al conclude: "(...) the

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<sup>381</sup> 21.3% of the women who participated in the study in Windhoek aged 18 to 49 said they had experienced sexual violence as a child (Jewkes et al. 2007:167 and also see WHO 2005).

study findings certainly suggest that in many specific circumstances protecting children is given a lesser priority than other things” (Jewkes et al. 2005:1819). This also reflects the fact that children are not taken seriously as persons, as was shown in Section 4.3.

A former magistrate in Outjo said that, if a rape is committed by a relative, it would only be reported in a few cases. Most violent incidents would be kept secret: “In most cases the family don’t do anything if there is child abuse in their family, they do as if everything is ok” (Expert 35, 2006). Two girls in the School Survey reported having experienced sexual violence, both of whom were learners at Private School Morea. One 20 year-old girl claimed that she had experienced physical and sexual violence from her father: “fist by father; he was forcing me to do things” (90 B 12), while a 17 year-old girl had experienced “verbal, emotional and sexual violence by a parent and step parent” (17 year-old girl, School Survey, 098 B 11). She described the consequences for her as a: “broken heart and soul” (ibid). This violence is still very taboo in Namibian society. However, at the conference entitled *We are raped!* in May 2006 (see Sections 1.3, 3.3, and 8.2), a participant from Outjo, as well as several other activists from other regions, talked about cases of toddlers, and both very young and older children (boys and girls), experiencing sexual violence by family members such as the father or grandfather, or people associated with the family. They demanded that society must address this problem (Field Notes, 31.03.06). Jewkes et al. (2005) wrote about people viewing the rape of children as a punishment of the child’s mother.

Interestingly, the section on sexual violence by was only filled in by two female PSM learners and one female learner from Etosha Poort Junior Secondary School with regard to being sexually violated in childhood. Two girls from PSM recounted sexual abuse by caregivers and one from EJSS by a neighbour. In the personal interviews, too, only one white person gave an account of sexual abuse as a child by a neighbour (Linda, 2009). No other woman in the interviews mentioned being sexually harassed in childhood. It shows that there is little awareness of sexual violence. It is simply not perceived as violence because it always happens in certain relationships or, maybe in some groups it is culturally expected and thus not classified as such, such as the violence Rob mentioned in the Group Discussion about the demand for a female to be sexually available to her cousin (see Section 5.2) (Jewkes et al. 2005). On the other hand, being sexually molested in childhood is a traumatising event that may be suppressed from consciousness, and not easily retrieved when filling in a questionnaire (see Section 1.1.2).

In her study on women doing sex work, LaFont asked women about the reasons that they started working in the sex trade (see Chapter 7). 18% of these women said that they started sex work because they had experienced sexual violence, in several cases by uncles (LaFont 2015:82). The explanation the women gave was: “if sex was something that was going to be taken from them anyway, then they might as well sell it and gain from it” (ibid).

The whole issue of sexuality within unequal power relations starts with the unclear definition of when somebody can be seen as the subject of sexual desire. As Jewkes et al. discovered:

Most people interviewed found it unthinkable that an adult man would desire a child, but 'teenagers' were not thought of as children in this respect. 'Teenage girls' bodies were constructed as highly sensual and a 'natural' object of male desire. The word 'teenager' was used loosely in the interviews to refer to children from about nine years of age and explain abuse of them. (Jewkes et al. 2007:170)<sup>382</sup>

This blurring of boundaries between children, teenage girls and adult women can be observed in other social spaces in Outjo, too. The Miss Independence contest in the primary school (mentioned in Chapter 7) forms one example of this. One consequence of this blurring of the boundaries of maturity is the high prevalence of teenage pregnancy and the consequent reduction in life opportunities for these girls (see Chapter 7).

Another more practical reason why the rape of teenagers by older wealthy men is not followed by a public outcry was given by the women's activist Expert 50, who stated that the child rapists are...

(...) officials, men with enough money. People are afraid of those cases, because sugar daddies have money to have lawyers and also bribe. In most cases it's bribery. Maybe he is the best friend of the magistrate. Then the case is over. (Expert 50, 2006)

In 2015, 24 school principals, heads of department and teachers in Namibia were sacked due to impregnating a learner or having sexual relationships with them (LAC 2017:162f). However, it is likely that most cases do not come to light because there is no pregnancy or there are informal agreements between the teacher and the family of the girl (LaFont 2007), or it is just accepted within the social environment. In conclusion, many people see sexuality in a relationship between a girl and a man more than three years older than her as "sugar daddy sex" and not as criminal act what the law demands.

### **Rape within marriage or intimate relationship versus "real rape"**

Rape within intimate relationships and marriages is not talked about as rape. Many people think that if sexual violence happens within a marriage, it cannot be called rape, not even if the couple are separated or if divorce proceedings have not yet been implemented (Britton/Shook 2014). This is according to colonial law (see Section 2.2) but is illegal under current legislation (see Section 3.3). Expert 14 ran workshops in Outjo for women, one aim of which was to raise awareness about rape within marriage. She described this as a taboo topic and concluded: "It is not talked about" (Expert 14, 2009, see below). In 2006, a magistrate in Outjo concluded that people do not regard rape in marriages as rape (Expert 35, 2006). This was also confirmed by the Chairperson of WAD, Expert 50:

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<sup>382</sup> The authors Jewkes et al. (2005) use the term "children" in their text to describe young people from 0 to 17 years of age, referring to the United Nations' definition of childhood. This meaning is used to prevent the differentiation between youth and children, to avoid hierarchies of rape (see Section 1.1.1). However, for political reasons this makes sense but not for analytical reasons. Therefore, I use the same age differentiation that my research participants used. It is, of course, not my intention to imply a hierarchy of seriousness of rape.

- SGA And also if we talk about the husband who is raping his wife. (...) if she reports him, how do the people treat him?
- Expert 50 Oh, in that case I should say that, they would believe that he hasn't raped her although he really did it, because it is her husband.
- SGA Would the people say 'that is not a rape'?
- Expert 50 Yes.
- SGA So that means you cannot rape your wife only someone else?
- Expert 50 That's how they believe. You don't rape your partner or wife or husband.
- SGA Is it because he is the head of the household?
- Expert 50 Yes, and you are legally married and then he has to have sex with you. (Expert 50, 2006)

Many people think that, once you are in a relationship, you have to have sex with your partner. It is an obligation or a duty, and if a woman refuses to do so, many people think that is justification for the man to beat her (see also Thomas 2007 and Chikuhwa 2011) or to take what he wants by force. However, the fact that it happens within a relationship does not negate the harm that it does; the violation of women's self-autonomy by a trusted, intimate, and loved person. This widespread perception of being obliged to have sex within a relationship may explain why Hildi, who experienced violence by her husband over a period of many years, did not call the forced sex she experienced "rape".

- Hildi °And he is making (...) something... wonderful (...) sex is supposed to be between two people ... it has to be wonderful ... but he makes it... ähm... disgusting.
- SGA So... ((breathing out)) so... he- he ... kind of ... also forced you.
- Hildi °Forced me, ja°
- SGA Do you call that, rape? ... °what he did?°
- Hildi More like ((breathing out))... I don't know °I don't know°... more like ähm... I wanted to keep peace in the house (...)
- SGA Like to give in... to what he wanted
- Hildi °Ja°
- SGA Hm ... what did it make to you? (...) how did that affect you?
- Hildi °It made me feel like a whore°. (Hildi, 2009, ° means she spoke very quietly, iiba by SGA)

It is remarkable that she did not perceive it as rape, although her husband often violated her, and threatened her, sometimes with guns. She lived for several years under these "coercive circumstances" created by her husband, as defined in the Namibian *Combating of Rape Act* (see Section 1.1.2). Thus, she had no free choice at all when it came to decisions about sex.

When people talk about rape, they usually have stranger rape in mind and not a married woman being raped by her husband or her boyfriend. This is also a colonial legacy. The narratives of women who suffered sexual violence in an everyday context within the Police Zone prior to independence show that these continuities still exist today (see Section 2.2). For the present, it is important to frame sexual violence as happening *outside* of intimate relationships. The examples of Gisela and Lisa show this as well (see Section 2.2.1). In Lisa's narrative it is revealed that people close to her tried to cover up the rape by insisting that the victim had an intimate relationship with the rapist although this was not the case. These examples from the colonial era show that women's own will in terms of their own body and sexuality did not count for anything. This also reflects the lesser value with which women

were regarded in colonial times. Moreover, these examples show that some women perceive that there are hierarchies of rape, too (see Section 1.1.2). If the violence happens within a relationship it is difficult for them to call it “rape”. The rape of a baby is seen as the worst violation; the smaller the child and the more severe the violence, the more of a public outcry it will cause. This was mentioned early on and empathetically during the *We are raped!* conference in 2006 (see Sections 1.3, 3.3, and 8.2). One conference participant from Outjo particularly condemned this abhorrent form of violence, but “ordinary” rapes within marriages were not mentioned by this women’s activist. This discrepancy was also mentioned by one of Jewkes et al.’s (2005) research participants. However, the older the girl is, the more she is also seen as being in some way responsible if she has been violated. Severe violence, particularly if it leads to death, is taken more seriously (see below).

By contrast, sexual violence perpetrated by men who are unknown to the victim is seen as “real rape”. In some cases men use knockout drops which erase the victims’ memory of the experience. Expert 17, who had worked as a health inspector in Outjo for a long time, talked about this violence. He stated that some men buy these substances in the location (Expert 17, 2009). One case had taken place within the white community, which I heard about from several research participants.

However, in the majority of cases, women experience sexual violence by their own partner (see Section 3.3). Although they do not choose to have sex, they feel that they have to have it because their intimate partners want it. This is not generally perceived as rape, even by the women themselves. The discussions about whether the victim had a relationship with the rapist illustrate this dilemma (see the cases of Gisela and Lisa, Section 2.2.1). Most cases of violence within intimate relationships remain hidden, and only become public if one of the parties involved, usually the woman, is severely injured or even dies. In Hildi’s case this could have happened, because her husband had guns and he threatened her.

The classification of what violence is, and what people accept or perceive as legitimate, for example as punishment for inappropriate behaviour, is in transition and hence is unclear, as previously described (see Chapter 4). Moreover, although the legal definition of “rape” and of intimate violence has changed, this has not been assimilated into people’s realities yet. Still, rape within marriage and intimate relationship is not seen as rape. Adolescent girls are still perceived as normal sexual partners if the older men give them access to resources, although it is a criminal offence.

The statements from the research participants reveal that, in many cases, women do not have a free choice to decide for or against having sex. The gender constructions of female subordination and male domination constitute structural violence (see Section 1.1.2), which makes it impossible for many women to make decisions about sex freely. The construction of

dominant masculinity, including the idea of the independent decision-maker, for many men implies getting what they want and, if they meet resistance from women, they feel justified in using violence to enforce their will. Women's behaviour in giving in to unwanted sexual activity may be interpreted as a defensive mechanism to prevent a worse scenario from developing. Based on the School Survey and the perceptions about sexuality gleaned from the interviews with men and women, I conclude that most of the sexual violence women experience within and outside of intimate relationships is perpetrated by men who believe they have a right to sex whenever they want (see Chapter 6).

### 8.1.2 Violence in intimate relationships

In general, among the Namibian population, a certain degree of violence is considered normal (see Chapter 4), and that is also the case for many women in Namibia, especially within intimate relationships. Many women live with violence perpetrated against them by their intimate partner. How do women themselves view the violence they have experienced? Why do some women stay with a violent partner for years and what makes them decide to leave him? What does it mean for a woman to be harmed by someone she loves? What effects does it have on her?

#### **Violence in dating situations and in early intimate relationships**

In many cases a young female gains her first intimate experiences in dating or intimate relationships with either a male of the same age or an older male. As males and females are socialised within a gender hierarchy, those heterosexual relationships imply a power asymmetry. This imbalance is especially pronounced if the relationship is connected to material gifts given by the male to the female, in exchange for the expectation of having sex (see Section 5.2) and there is a disparity in age. This power hierarchy, sometimes even involving physical violence, may already be implicit in the proposing process. Three different research participants referred to a custom whereby males propose females with a view to engaging them in a sexual relationship. Magda recalled that, when she was young, Damara men used to twist the arm of the woman they wanted to have as a girlfriend, often painfully, until she said "yes, I want to be your girlfriend". Magda's first boyfriend and her husband both did that. The translator of Magda's interview, a Damara woman in her twenties, was also aware of the tradition. Jane, a Herero woman, also mentioned a violent form of proposing, in the Group Discussion. She described a situation that took place at school when one boy wanted her as his girlfriend. She described his behaviour as "sexually harassing": he stole her school bag, beat her, and approached her repeatedly. Jane connects this violent form of proposing with a myth that exists in society and which her mathematics teacher told them about: "Because there is this (...) saying of guys 'if a girl says 'no', that means 'yes'". Ja, ... it's really!" (Jane, Group Discussion 2006) She asserted that, because of this, she ended up

in a relationship with the violent boy. Eventually she decided that she would give in and agree to be his girlfriend but would tell everyone about his violent behaviour. She told him that she was going to give in to his approaches but he must stop his violent behaviour towards her. They went on to have an intimate relationship, but he did not stop the violence. He became violent even when making everyday decisions or when talking about leisure activities. Jane explained:

It's really sexual violence to me (...) offensive (...). They want to date you, if you disagree on something, it turns to be a big quarrel. Even you end up to be beaten up; even if you disagree. That thing maybe it's like you don't go there or you don't want to do that. He will just beat you up until you are green! (Jane, Group Discussion 2006)

This reveals that even in normal situations where a couple have different interests or ideas and are negotiating about these, some boys react violently simply because they cannot enforce their idea of what to do or where to go. Nonetheless, she stayed in the relationship for some time, until she read a book about violence in intimate relationships, in which she found several similarities to her own case:

It's because we go there with a wrong idea or we saw that it's the way that it's been handled, but deep inside we know that we [are] heavily emotionally destroyed. You don't feel..., even if you see that person, you just go like 'oh my goodness, there he comes again, I really don't know how to stop him anymore'. (Jane, Group Discussion 2006, iiba by SGA)

She then decided to leave him. This case illustrates several points: firstly, that violent proposing can be seen as symbolic of the whole relationship. Secondly, it shows that many males are prepared to enforce their will by violence and thus, a general readiness for violence is apparent. Thirdly, the fact that Jane did not know that it was wrong for her boyfriend to beat her reflects a high degree of normalisation of violence by women themselves within Namibian society. It suggests that Jane was not taught during her upbringing that physical violence is wrong. Moreover, her last sentence shows that she feels responsible for his behaviour.

It has been shown above that girls experience boys trying to persuade them to have sex (see Section 8.1.1). Boys take the decision and, as a result, the girls might get pregnant or be infected with STDs including HIV. This is also shown in another example, which reveals men's enforcement of their own will, as well as reflecting the idea that the man alone wants to make decisions about sex in intimate encounters and that the feelings and views of the girl are of no interest to the boyfriend. In the Group Discussion, Paul described a situation involving a girl and a boy who were classmates, dating each other. He and his friends met them by coincidence. They witnessed the boy beating the girl. Paul and his friends intervened and asked the boy why he did it. The boy claimed that the girl had indicated, the day before, that she would have sex with him, but was now refusing to do so. Therefore, he was angry and wanted to take what he believed he was entitled to. Paul and his friends asked the boy what was wrong with her saying "no", and told him that this was the right thing

for the girl. They warned him that if he had sex with her, it would be rape and if she reported it to the police he could go to prison. He then stopped and apologised (Paul, Group Discussion 2006). This case shows that, in the boy's view, the girl is not allowed to change her mind. Moreover, it reveals that there are people who do care and who do not think that the boys' behaviour is normal or not of their concern, they really made a difference.

Alicia observed that some boys would behave very badly, for example by fighting, towards a girl they are dating, and would insult her. She claimed that some boys will accept it if a girl says 'no' to sex, but others will not. They try to convince her or even force it on her. She describes two situations: firstly, girls having sex with older, employed boyfriends, who persuade the girls to have sex by buying them things they want. Secondly, if a boy and girl are dating, they go out together in the afternoon, and the boy carries a condom with him. They chat, and then he says that he wants to have sex but the girl says 'no', and he tries to persuade her ('why are you behaving like that, you are not a small kid?'). She insists that she is not ready yet, but he begs her ('please, just do it, just do it'). Sometimes he will just do it anyway using force, or he will convince the girl but afterwards she does not feel comfortable because she has done something that she had not wanted to do. Alicia often heard this from friends and classmates (Alicia, 2009). It was also confirmed by the School Survey (see in Section 8.1.1).

When Hannah (2009) was in her teenage years and still at school, she had a loose relationship with a man approximately 7 years older than herself. In their fourth year, when she was in grade 12, they started a sexual relationship. He was very controlling, and would beat her for trivial reasons, threaten her, and always wanted sex. He also forced her to have sex, which she did not describe as "rape" (see Section 8.1.1). During the interview, looking back on what happened, she called him a "maniac". Her boyfriend had no understanding of her feelings, even if she was unable to meet him because her parents would not let her, pressurised her to do what he wanted, and threatened her with beatings (and see below).

In dating situations there is a high risk of sexual violence. In their youth, adolescent girls and boys experiment with intimate relationships; they like to play, they are curious, and may not think about the consequences. The young people are engaged in a learning process, gaining experience, and discovering their own sexuality. Their behaviour is influenced by their peer groups and they often lack proper guidance by caregivers (see Section 4.3). Moreover, flirting implies playing and having fun in this kind of situation and maybe not taking things someone says seriously. Playing with someone's feelings might open a frame for aggression and even violence. Furthermore, if feelings are involved, these may be different for each partner. If people do not know each other very well they may have different expectations, which are not clear, therefore there is a high risk of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Boys might be influenced by the saying "no means yes" (see above),

implying that the woman wants sex although she says 'no'. Moreover, males and females have different gendered socialisations, implying different behaviour with regard to having sex: boys are encouraged to behave dominantly and have sex, while girls should be subordinate but restrain themselves to prevent pregnancies (see Sections 6.1 and 7.1). Females neither learn to enforce their will nor to defend themselves, while the male partner may misuse his physical strength to enforce his will using violence. On the other hand, increased female autonomy may be confronted with dominant masculinity and thus end up in violence, as a means for the male to make the female stop talking and for him to enforce his will, or to show her and his peers who is in control.

### **Violence in steady intimate relationships**

When women and men have an intimate relationship for some time and established a closer relation, they may decide to live together. Sometimes they also establish a family by having a child together. They may be living together as a family with other children fathered by different men or children from different mothers. If the couple can afford to, they marry (see Section 5.2). Over time, mutual dependencies originating in the complementary gendered division of labour have developed: often the man is the breadwinner, and the woman cares for the children and does household chores (Magda, Hildi, Luthrecia; see Section 5.2) as they both were socialised (see Chapters 6, 7). The division of labour among younger couples is less static than during the colonial era (see Chapter 2) but it is still common for each partner to do specific tasks associated with their gender (see Section 5.2).

There is a wide range of issues about which a couple may argue, such as decision-making, financial issues, how to raise children, and, very importantly in Namibia, the widespread multiple sexual relations of men. Before independence, couples also argued and violence occurred. What differs today is that women have equal rights and are supported by the legislation in Namibia (see Chapter 3). Moreover, they have gained self-confidence (see Section 7.1). It is no longer prescribed that the man decides, thus implying that some change has occurred. As was shown in Section 5.2, in the case of many couples it is still the man who decides, while in others the man involves the woman in decision-making but the final decision lies with him, which the woman is expected to agree to. However, there are increasing numbers of couples in which the woman wants an equal share in decision-making, but she may have a male partner who has been socialised as the independent decision-maker (see Chapter 6).

An important role in these negotiations and arguments between steady partners regarding the male behaviour of having multiple concurrent sexual partners is the risk of HIV. When men risk the health and lives of their long-term partners by not using condoms in hidden additional intimate relationships, I interpreted this as violent behaviour. Allison gives an

example of this violent behaviour: her partner and father of her child had an additional hidden intimate relationship with a woman from another town. While Allison was pregnant she got to know of his additional girlfriend who was pregnant too. Her boyfriend first denied it, and then he confessed. He also admitted that, during the course of the other relationship, he had stopped using condoms. He refused to take an HIV test and she described how she felt in that situation:

And I was so afraid, my dear! I was praying, if something happen, I will accept. I did the test, after third time, we were still together. After the birth of my child, we were still together ... Then I was thanking the Lord! 'You saved me!' (Allison, 2009)

She would have stayed with him if he had taken a test, but he refused. Consequently, she left him (see also Sections 6.1 and 7.1). Another example was given by Luthrecia. At the time of the interview she was facing her third HIV test.<sup>383</sup> She told her repeatedly cheating husband...

(...) if I go for the third test, now ... I will not even sleep with a condom with him. I will not sleep with him again. He can go and enjoy life outside [marriage]. I don't want. I just want to live with my children. I love my kids, and my life. (...) because, when I am negative, then I... I will not sleep with him like that. I don't care. °I just want to do further studies°... If my kids grow up, I just want a work (...) for myself, and see my salary like this and divide [it] between my kids, give some to my mother. I don't want to lose my life with AIDS. It is very difficult, my dear. (Luthrecia, 2009, symbol ° means she spoke very quietly, iiba by SGA)

However, is she able to enforce her will in refusing to have sex with her breadwinning husband? As has been shown in this work, it is difficult for women to refuse sex, because the man gets angry and it's seen as legitimate for him to go to another woman or to force his partner to comply (see Section 5.2, 8.1.1, and see Edwards 2007, LAC 2006). Many of the research participants said that a man does not really accept a woman saying 'no' to sex in an intimate relationship. This was also confirmed by Expert 44, a community activist and Chairman of the Committee of People with Disabilities. He said that sometimes men want more sex than women. If men are repeatedly told 'no', then they will rape the women (Expert 44, 2009). This was also shown in the case of Luthrecia (see Section 8.1.1). That means women do not have a free choice regarding their own sexuality. It also reflects the constructions of subordinate femininities and dominant masculinities. The following extract from the interview with David demonstrates this:

SGA           And what happens if the man comes and wants sex and she doesn't want? Is it ok for her to say 'no'?

David          It's ok. But in most cases the man doesn't want to accept it, because he is a man, he wants it! Why is she saying 'no'?

SGA           In most cases, are you talking about all men, about Hai//om men or?

David          In general, all men. (David, 2009)

This is connected to the idea of a man as an independent decision-maker, as well as sexuality as a space for the production of masculinity (see Chapter 6) and the obligation to

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<sup>383</sup> At the time of research, it was common to do three HIV tests within certain time intervals (first test, second test after 3 months and third test 6 months after the second test) to identify if someone was infected with HIV (Expert 49, 2009).

have sex in an intimate relationship (see Section 5.2). Women's fear of losing their male partner also plays a role, especially in the context of men commonly having multiple sexual relations and women being economically dependent on the man (see Section 7.1). Moreover, there is a tendency for men to view their female partner as property, including the right to have sex with her (Sections 5.2, 6.2 and 7.2.1).

### **Characteristics of intimate partner violence**

Intimate partner violence can be differentiated into, firstly, single violent incidents that led the women to decide to leave their partner (Allison 2006, Luthrecia 2009 with her first boyfriend); and secondly, long-term experiences involving repeated violence (Luthrecia with her husband, Hildi, Magda, all 2009, Violette 2006) and in some cases even a life-long situation. There is often a conglomeration of different kinds of violence: physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, financial – all reflecting the degrading and humiliating attitude of the domineering man towards his female partner. Sometimes, serious violence provokes reactions such as the woman deciding to leave the couple's shared home, going to the police, getting a Protection Order (see also Section 3.3), and looking for support from elders, pastors or service providers. This might lead to violence free phases for a while, but this is often followed by periods of conflict and violence when.

### **Periods when violence is more likely: multiple sexual relations of men and sexual abstinence**

In Hildi's and in Luthrecia's narratives, it is shown how the multiple sexual relations of men, male jealousy and male violence are interrelated. Luthrecia experienced or witnessed several episodes of violence, as mentioned above. While she was living at her brother's and his wife's household so that she could attend school, her sister-in-law beat her because she wanted her to leave the house. She accused Luthrecia of procuring girlfriends for her husband to cheat on her. However, Luthrecia denied this. Only then did she learn that her brother had other girlfriends as well as children with them. One evening, her sister-in-law attacked her while sleeping (see Section 7.2.2). They fought with each other until her brother arrived:

[He] started to fight, but she was beaten very badly, oh, she was beaten by my brother. I also feel even sorry for her. (...) After all, she stopped a little bit to quarrel with me (...). (Luthrecia, 2009, iiba by SGA)

After the violent incident, her brother wanted to talk to them so that he could apologise to them and to give them a chance to talk about everything.

Several years later Luthrecia met her current husband. They started their relationship while he already had a girlfriend whom she did not know about (see Chapter 7). The woman with whom he lived confronted Luthrecia about it and fought with her. He then admitted to it and she ended their relationship, but he continued proposing her. After some time had passed,

and after Luthrecia put considerable pressure on the man to decide between them, he decided in favour of her and left the other girlfriend. However, after they were married, when Luthrecia was pregnant with their first child, she observed him with another girlfriend:

I saw him with another girlfriend. He was cheating on me, directly after marriage, I was also pregnant that time, in the marriage already. I saw him, oh, it was very horrible. We were fighting (...), he fought with me. He said 'go, take your clothes and go...' but I decided to stay. (Luthrecia, 2009)

She went to the police who referred her to the Women and Child Protection Unit (WCPU) in Otjiwarongo. There she had a mediated conversation with her husband who admitted that he had been ashamed in that situation when he was violent:

... The feedback of the man was he was ashamed and he thought that I will maybe fight with the lady (...). Then he decided, 'that one [Luthrecia] is my own one, then I will I beat her that she must go back home.' (Luthrecia, 2009, iia by SGA)

The husband's perception is clear from this statement: he was of the opinion that she should be subordinate to him because she belongs to him. He thinks that he possesses her and therefore can discipline her, to enforce his will. In the same conversation she described wanting to confront him about his cheating in order to get him to pay maintenance:

I didn't see the pay. He was enjoying with that lady and I was hungry, then I decided 'I will find out with whom is he and try my best to ask the social worker at the Ministry of Justice, that he must pay the maintenance for me. (Luthrecia, 2009)

While he had another girlfriend, he stopped giving money for food to his pregnant wife. This also demonstrates how economically dependent she was on him. When she demanded maintenance, her husband apologised and promised to end his relationship with the other girlfriend and stop the beatings. However, after the birth of their next baby, similar things happened. Luthrecia was either pregnant or breastfeeding when she found out that her husband was having additional sexual relations. In 2009, Luthrecia was caring for four children, the youngest of whom was a baby, and she herself was unemployed. This also shows that, although she was financially dependent on him, she still questioned his behaviour, as other women do in their intimate relationships. Additionally, Chikuhwa (2011) mentions women who questioned their male partners' infidelity even though doing so could have severe consequences such as violence. Her female research participants who had been violated cited their partner having additional girlfriends as an important source of conflict, from which Chikuhwa concludes: "None of them considered keeping quiet, accepting their husband's behaviour despite the consequences" (Chikuhwa 2011:60). The prevailing risk of HIV/AIDS might be a reason for this as well as the new legal rights for women.

Hildi and her future husband met in 1989. They lived together for 3 years, then she became pregnant and they married in 1993. She indicated that they had a good relationship until she gave birth to their second child in 1996, and then her husband started to behave very aggressively: coming home drunk and suspecting her of having affairs, sexually violating her,

kicking furniture, humiliating her in front of other people, and screaming and yelling. There were good times in between but after some time the violence started again. After these incidents he was always very sorry and promised to stop but it happened repeatedly. She wanted to leave him on several occasions but he convinced her to come back. He threatened to take the children away from her and eventually did so. In 2009, she and her husband were involved in divorce proceedings. She only found out much later that he had already lied to her early in their relationship, for example telling her he was working a nightshift when in fact he was going out with friends and having an affair with one of them. Hildi described the following incident after I had asked her about why she thought the situation had escalated:

((breathing out, tearful)) Jealousy, obsession, and I think ...he w- was having an affair, he was afraid that I am going to find out and ... That's what I think... ähm. What do you call that machine that you ähm ((showing)) ... meat master? [mincer] ... Ja. One day he ähm he took my head and ...put it on one of those machines... Luckily it wasn't ((breathing out)) switched on... why he did that I don't know. (Hildi, 2009, iiba by SGA)

Thus, his jealousy and suspecting her of cheating could simply have been a projection of his own behaviour (see Section 7.2.1). Magda's narrative about violence which happened during the colonial era described similar behaviour (see Section 2.2.1). Her partner Robert had girlfriends but at the same time he was worried about *her* having additional boyfriends, even though that was not the case. He asked her 'funny questions' and even became violent. The men's own behaviour led them to expect the same of their female partners. However, their own shame also contributed to the violence (see also Gockel-Frank 2007:191), as was the case in Luthrecia's experiences (see Section 7.2.1).

Hildi and Luthrecia (both 2009) had experienced violent phases in their intimate relationships, for example during pregnancy, after childbirth, and when breastfeeding. It was shown in Section 5.2 that these periods are especially challenging for women and males seem not be much involved. Instead they pressure their partners to have sex or look for additional sexual partners. Women have other priorities during these periods of establishing a family and might not want to have sex. Although they do not feel to have sex many give in to their partners because they fear their partners' infidelity (Gockel-Frank 2009). However, many women might reject their partner's approaches. Their pressures and their behaviour of having additional partners lead to conflicts (see Section 9.2).

### **Suffering (in)visible violence: psychological, verbal and emotional violence in the face of intimate partner femicide**

Hildi feared for her life, but she survived the violence inflicted by her husband, including being threatened with a gun. However, in Namibia many women have been murdered by their intimate partners or ex-partners. Intimate partner femicide is relatively common in

Namibia and has been called “passion killing”<sup>384</sup> (see also Duff et al. 2017). It usually involves a man killing his wife or girlfriend and, in some cases, killing himself afterwards. A case of intimate partner femicide happened in Outjo during my research stay in May 2009: the triple murder mentioned earlier (see Sections 1.3, 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 8.3). The man attacked his girlfriend who, together with a pregnant friend, was looking after her 3-month old and 3-year old nephews in their parents’ house. He attacked his girlfriend around 17 times with a knife because he “had suspected that [his girlfriend] might be seeing another man behind his back” (*The Namibian*, Menges, 21.11.2011, iiba by SGA). She died as a result and left her daughter an orphan. He stabbed the pregnant woman several times as well, accusing her of encouraging her friend to cheat on him. Then he burnt down the children’s parents’ house. The pregnant woman survived but lost her unborn child. It was the most horrific event I encountered during my field research (see Sections 1.3). This shows that threats by a man towards his intimate partner should be taken seriously because they might eventually happen in reality.

In the School Survey one 19 year-old female learner wrote about her experience of violence by her boyfriend:

[He] threatened to kill me, and he wanted to shoot me, and luckily the door was open, I wrote an sms to my friend when things get worse before, and when he wanted to shoot me, my friend enter[ed] the room and I was saved. (19 year-old girl, 005 A 12, iiba by SGA)

It is clear from Hildi’s narrative that it is not only the physical violence which is damaging for the women and may be visible to outsiders, but also the often invisible web of lies and manipulation, the verbal and emotional violence, that causes terrible suffering for women.<sup>385</sup>

The psychological violations are linked to or followed by physical and/or sexualised violence. Hildi suffered as a result of her husband’s obsessive jealousy, especially when he was drunk: “He would usually come home drunk and start yelling” (Hildi, 2009). One way in which he was manipulative involved forcing her to be permanently sexually available against her will.

Thus, in cases like this, verbal, emotional and sexualised violence are combined:

SGA	Did he also, was he manipulative?
Hildi	°Very°.
SGA	Can you describe that, can you give me an example for that?
Hildi	°Ähm, how can I describe that thing?° I would do what he asked me to do! ...Like, like forcing sex on me, just to keep... just to keep him from from ...ähm swearing ((breaking voice)) at me and ähm to the children's sakes...just to keep peace in the house.
SGA	Like to do what he wants.
Hildi	°Ja° ... I almost... sometimes I felt I could die... when he wants to sleep with me. But then I see my children and then I ... I don't know... °I don't know°
SGA	Did your children witness what happened? ... Shall we take a break?

<sup>384</sup> The term “passion killing” is problematic, thus I use “intimate partner femicide”. See the next section, in which I discuss the terms used.

<sup>385</sup> See also below: Hannah’s difficulty in leaving her violent boyfriend also reveals the importance of manipulation by the perpetrator.

Hildi No, it's ok. °I hear him swearing sometimes ((cleared her throat)) (...). Otherwise they were sleeping. I think they were used to it, or something.  
 SGA To hear that.  
 Hildi Ja, to hear that ... every weekend or two three times a week.  
 (Hildi, 2009, symbol ° means she spoke very quietly, iiba by SGA)<sup>386</sup>

This shows how damaging it was for Hildi to be forced to have sex by her husband. It was a regular occurrence, and can be equated to torture, breaking down her own will until she was in despair. She said that, one particular year the violent and controlling behaviour was especially bad. At that time he controlled her completely, she had to phone him all the time to tell him where she was and what she was doing. He repeatedly told her she was a whore. She described how the combined effect of that behaviour was that she felt like a robot. She felt as if she was almost dead for about a year, merely following his will and command. She lost all her feelings and empathy, for herself and for others. But part of the conglomeration of violence Hildi had to endure was also a public humiliation in the town where she lived:

°And he really humiliated me° in front of the whole Kombat... He pulled me out of the women's bathrooms and ähm... swearing and yelling and... in front of I think it was a hundred people. (...)  
 (Hildi, 2009)

Besides this example of public violence, these kinds of violence including emotional and psychological violence are rarely visible to others, as the title of Chikuhwa's Master's Thesis *Invisible Wounds* (2011), suggests. Moreover, the manipulation of perpetrators is not always revealed. The manipulative behaviour of Hildi's husband was not restricted to Hildi. He was able to manipulate a service provider from the WCPU in Otjiwarongo, as he claimed that Hildi was neglecting her children. Therefore, without even telling Hildi, he and the service provider took her child away. Although a Protection Order against the husband had been issued in another town, which was sent to the local police, this got lost. Hildi suspected that a relative who was a former policeman in that town may have been involved by making sure that the faxed copy of the Protection Order disappeared. Through the additional involvement of a pastor she got her child back after several months. Hildi believed that her husband had also manipulated her child because he became very distant towards his mother.

### **Normalisation of violence against women**

When I asked her how these hundred people reacted to what happened, Hildi answered the following:

Hildi They were shocked! Because some knew about that... but otherwise they they didn't... they leave it, ach they left it.  
 SGA They didn't do anything.  
 Hildi °No°. (Hildi, 2009, the symbols show that she spoke very quietly)

That means even if the violence is visible, often people will do nothing if they witness it. This leads to a society-induced normalisation of violence. Hildi belongs to the Afrikaner

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<sup>386</sup> I asked her several times if she wants to take a break or continue at another time, but she stressed that she wanted to tell the world about how the violence of men against women happens and what it means.

community<sup>387</sup> in which a Culture with a high level of normalisation of male violence prevails (see Sections 4.3 and 6.2.1). Moreover, in Outjo I found a quite static perception of gender construction among the Afrikaner community involving hierarchical gender relations putting women into subordination (see Section 7.1).

Chikuhwa (2011) also mentions that violence takes place in public as was the case in the violent scene described at the beginning of this thesis, and people do not react to this violence or only if it is really severe. She points to the contradiction between the violence being visible and the fact that it is expected to be handled as a private matter. As is shown below, many women act according to this expectation and do not talk to others about their violence experience.

Sometimes even violated women themselves do not perceive violence as such, while they are in violent intimate relationships. Chikuhwa describes the process of the normalisation of violence that happens within the violent relationship (Chikuhwa 2011, referring to Lundgren 2004). When psychological violence first occurs, the victim is shocked by the violence and sees causal factors outside of herself. Then the perpetrator points out her own faulty behaviour as a justification for his violent reaction.<sup>388</sup> Thus, he argues, if she would change her behaviour, he would not need to react violently, thus putting the blame on her. In this way, he shifts the boundaries of perception. Gradually, the victim becomes less aware that psychological violence is occurring and even looks for the fault within her own behaviour. The victim takes on the perpetrator's view and comes to see it as relatively normal. This is known as perpetrator-induced normalisation. This also means that one needs to maintain a certain distance from it to be able to recognise psychological violence for what it is. However, threats and controlling, humiliating behaviour may be used in front of others who do not understand the symbols within the abusive relationships.

When questioned about whether people today would take violence seriously, the Expert 50, Chairperson of WAD stated:

No, they are not serious. They think 'ok, maybe she did something wrong, or he did something wrong, that's why he has been beating up', or they think 'ok, it's my husband, it's my boyfriend who did it to me' and then they don't take it seriously. (Expert 50, 2006)

Here, both kinds of normalisations are revealed. This demonstrates that different groups of people, the social setting, and sometimes also the women affected by violence find diverse legitimations for violence. This attitude is connected to the colonial legacy of a Culture of violence against women, and particularly the idea of husbands being allowed to discipline their wives (as was shown in Chapter 2).

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<sup>387</sup> The incidence happened in another town as Outjo. However, the Afrikaner community's dealing with violence as well as the gender constructions might be similar to that in Outjo as both were situated within the former Police Zone. Deeper research into white communities is valuable (see Section 9.2).

<sup>388</sup> Violent men giving their legitimations on violence also blamed their partner, as was shown in Section 6.2.1 ("It's created by the lady").

## Consequences of long-term violence for the victims/survivors<sup>389</sup>

Even though there might be a high level of acceptance of violence against women, this violence has a major impact on the self-esteem of the violated women (see also Chikuhwa 2011 and Rose-Junius 2007). At the end of her relationship with her husband, Hildi felt totally numb, as she described below:

- Hildi I don't know, ... I am not afraid of death... not. Ähm... I think I am afraid of the words that he said to me and his actions... I think that's why I am afraid. (...)  
Ja. ... one night... I took the gun and I gave it to him... and I told him to kill me.
- SGA And what did he say?
- Hildi He was shocked! ... I couldn't sl- ..., the day that I left him, the first time that I really ... ähm could sleep, ...was in Outjo.<sup>390</sup> [When we stayed together] I didn't sleep. He ähm, when he is drunk, ... and he came home drunk, he would keep me awake for until six in the following morning and telling me I am a whore and I am a lesbian... everything (...) And he is also [like that that] he will ask you a question, and before you can answer, he screams at you ähm, 'don't lie, don't lie, I know the truth!'
- SGA So there is no need to say anything.
- Hildi Ja. And if you don't say anything, you are guilty, but if you say anything, you are also guilty. (Hildi, 2009)

The constant intimidation and bullying by an intimate partner that Hildi describes constitute a form of torture, including sleep deprivation. The multi-country study on violence against women found higher suicidal tendencies among violated women (MOHSS 2004). Even so, there were people who did not believe her but believed her manipulative husband instead (see above). I met her during the time when she was prevented from seeing her child. She was desperate. She involved the local social worker and police, but only after she involved a pastor who sent the Protection Order again, after weeks of fear and anguish, did she get her child back. She went to the police, which is unusual for people from the white community, as they prefer to keep problems within the community (see Section 1.4). White people use the informal system of conflict solution within the community, in which pastors and teachers play important roles. Hildi felt let down by the service she received from the police and said that she would not approach them for help again. It was only the involvement of the pastor that led to her getting her child back. This narrative shows that, although women like Hildi have survived terrible violence, sometimes victims of violence are not believed.

This I also heard from other women as well as from men (see the example of Carl in Section 6.2.2). Female survivors of sexual violence often find that their suffering is not recognised but instead they are blamed for the violence or not believed, by many people within their social environment (Alicia, 2009 and see below). Because the victim's self-esteem is already damaged by the violence, this non-recognition exacerbates their suffering. Thus, it is no wonder that they are wary of telling others about the violence.

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<sup>389</sup> This is just a selection of consequences the violence has for the victim/survivor. There are much more consequences for victims and society. The effects of male violence against women are focussed on in Section 8.3. Regarding the use of victim/survivor see footnote 10.

<sup>390</sup> She lived with him in another town but after she left him she stayed in Outjo where I met her.

## **Violence that is not talked about**

Many women do not talk about the violence they experience by a male intimate partner. However, some women do trust someone and are disappointed by the person. Hildi told a friend about her husband's violent behaviour. This person went to her husband with the intention of stopping the violence. However, her husband got very angry and he took out his anger on Hildi. Thus, she regretted opening up to the friend and this caused her to withdraw from friends. She also saw it as a breach of trust. Carl also had a similar experience with a friend who did not keep the information he shared with the person confidential (see Section 6.2.2). The same thing happened to Luthrecia, who confided in a pastor, who then told his own wife. His wife then went to Luthrecia's partner's employer. Luthrecia concluded: "Then I decided, when I have a problem I will share it with God, I cannot trust [anyone else]" (Luthrecia 2009, iiba by SGA). In the School Survey, the learners who mentioned experiencing violence talked to somebody they trusted or they prayed to God. These examples show that trust and confidentiality is important for women who experience violence. As was shown in Chapter 4 a general lack of trust as well as problems with confidentiality can be found in Outjo which prevent women to open up on their violence experience (see also Edwards-Jauch 2012). Furthermore, there are other factors influencing the women's behaviour.

Expert 50 thinks that sexual violence in marriages is quite commonplace but women do not talk about it: "only one out of 10 women talks about it". She assumes that cultural practices help to explain why people believe such violence should not be discussed or dealt with openly and "some also don't know their rights" (Expert 50, 2006). Expert 12 points to the role of elders: Once a woman is married, she is often given the following advice by community elders: "They call you in and say 'if he beat you up, don't run to the street, don't talk to friends, just be quiet in the house. Every house has its own problem'" (Expert 12, 2006). This conforms to what many middle-aged and older interviewees said about the era before independence: problems within marriages or families were not discussed or acknowledged in public but kept private (see Chapter 2).

An ELCRN pastor mentioned a case that happened in 2005, involving an older man who enjoyed drinking with young people: "he also abused young girls" (Expert 4, 2009), but they never reported it, "Until he took a girl to a farm, beat her up, she ran away, he shoot her, she fell down, then he shoot himself. After his death I heard many stories, even from his wife" (Expert 4, 2009). Expert 4 was frustrated by the women not defending themselves and keeping it quiet, for example, the wife failing to report her husband to the police. He concluded: "That's why they [the men] enjoy: there is no defence. They are very aware of the dependency of women" (Expert 4, 2009, iiba by SGA). This implies that women do not reveal

the violence they experience because they are dependent on the perpetrator and because they are not able to defend themselves (see Section 7.1).

The fact that many women do not talk about or report their experiences of violence perpetrated by a male partner was confirmed by Expert 38, a male HIV counsellor. He explained it with reference to “the cultural context of the people” (Expert 38, 2006), meaning that “women are subjected to men’s decisions” (ibid). A former police officer from Outjo confirmed that women felt ashamed and therefore would not lay charges of rape, regardless of whether the perpetrator was their husband or a stranger (Expert 52, 2006, see also Mogotsi 2015). She elaborated on this:

Rapes are occurring daily, but because these people of, I don’t know, our tribes, these Damara>Nama, Oshiwambo, Herero, these people are maybe so shameful; they will not come out whether they are raped, maybe in few cases. (Expert 52, 2006)

She sees shame as factor for the silencing. Shame too was a reason for Luthrecia (2009) not to tell anybody else about the violence that she felt. Edwards-Jauch (2012) also found shame and embarrassment as one reason why women do not talk about their experiences of violence. The quotations of Expert 38 (2006) as well as of Expert 52 (2006) both include “culture” as motivation for silencing violence. However, it gets clear that they apply different concepts of culture. Expert 38 uses a similar concept as my broad definition of Culture while Expert 52 equates culture with ethnic groups connected to an othering of behaviour (see Section 1.1.1).

Expert 48, a former social worker in Outjo, dealt with rape and abuse cases. Most cases involved children who had been raped. She said that women who had been raped did not approach her for help. That means, on the one hand, that many women do not talk about it, and on the other hand service providers do not know about such cases because women do not seek help (Expert 48, 2006). Service providers at Outjo hospital did not know of a single case involving women asking for PEP medicine, post-exposure-prophylaxis against HIV. Some service providers are convinced that there are many cases of rape but the women will not seek help from them or talk about it. Alicia gave this as an explanation for why people often do not react to violence: “mostly it’s not reacted to because they don’t go report the cases” (Alicia, 2009). However, if they report they may not be taken seriously. As Section 8.2 reveals, profound victim blaming might also be a good reason not to open up about their experiences of violence to others.

In Chapter 2 selected aspects of the violence women suffered in the pre-independence era were discussed. Violence against women was a regular occurrence but often not seen as violence. However, strikingly, many people in Outjo stressed that the current epidemic of severe violence (against women) would not have happened prior to independence (Expert 34, Emma, both 2006, Gertrud 2006/2009) (see Chapter 4 and below). There are several

reasons for this discrepancy. *Firstly*, during colonial times if a husband perpetrated sexual or physical violence against “his” wife, it was not regarded as violence either legally or by society in general. It has only become a criminal offence since 2000. Moreover, if the violence was not too serious, violence against women and children was seen as legitimate by many people, particularly if it was linked with the misconduct of the woman or child. The *second* possible explanation is that people are traumatised by the violence they have experienced and thus repressed or split off certain memories. This might be the case with Emma’s narratives (2006) who palliated the past although she was raped then (see Sections 4.2 and 1.1.2). *Thirdly*, people were so accustomed to this everyday violence that only particularly severe forms were perceived as violence. *Fourthly*, the violence that women experienced was normalised as part of the hierarchical gender system (see also Britton/Shook 2014). Their experiences of violence were not perceived as violence, and hence there was no space for them to express their suffering. Consequently, during the pre-independence era many people simply did not know about certain kinds of violence that women experienced. In contrast to the pre-independence era, today many incidents are described in detailed reports in newspapers, on television and/or radio (see Section 4.2). This legacy of the past when violence women experienced was not talked about and thus invisibilised makes it difficult to compare both times what people often do (see Sections 4.2 and 6.2.1). Moreover, people are still influenced by these times. Assessing and confronting violence against women, and/or intimate partner violence in present day Namibia is hindered by this legacy. Moreover, women do not get the recognition they need to heal their suffering.

### **Recognition of violence**

The recognition of violence is very important for victims. This is also shown by Emma’s narrative. She was raped over 30 years ago during the colonial era, which caused her a lot of suffering thereafter (see Section 2.2.1). It was a single traumatic experience. Since then she has been afraid of men and could not forget it. Some 30 years later, the perpetrator who had escaped into exile during the Liberation Struggle, visited her in the late 1990s and apologised to her:

It’s he who came and started the topic first. ‘Emma, I have done a wrong thing to you, it’s why I escaped from Namibia and go there. Now I have come back. But I ask you, if you come, here is my address. I stay now in Ovamboland, you can contact me, and I can surprise you with something, so that you can forgive me.’ He came to ask for forgiveness. (Emma, 2006)

He admitted his misconduct towards her. He promised her a “surprise”, meaning some kind of compensation. Since the perpetrator visited her and admitted his bad behaviour, Emma has felt better. She says she was then able to let this violent experience go:

Emma        I am now feeling better. That time my heart was so full of ... but when he came, my heart is not so painful anymore.  
SGA         But before, the whole time it was in your mind?

- Emma        Ja, it was in my mind. Sometimes I thought if I go and die, I thought bad things about him. But now I don't care, it's now finished. (...)
- SGA         But at least he said sorry, because often they don't see that they did something wrong.
- Emma        Ja, sometimes they don't see that. But I am so happy that he said that he did wrong that time. It's ok. (Emma, 2006)

The apology was just a short sequence in her life, but the violent incident itself has had a big impact on her well-being. This reveals the power of recognition for the healing of victims and presumably even for perpetrators of violence. Moreover, it shows how long-lasting the impact of such violence can be, not just for victims but also for perpetrators. For thirty years the victim was burdened by the memory of the violent incident, and it turned out that the perpetrator was also haunted by it. In the case of women like Hildi, who suffer long-term damage and repeated traumatisation as a result of violence inflicted by the men they love, the consequences for them and their children can be catastrophic, not least in terms of how this violence could be perpetuated in the future.

Expert 9, who was working for the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare in Windhoek at the time, made the following observation: "In Namibia you find a material connotation" (Expert 9, 2006). This means that violent partners try to apologise by offering the victim material goods (for example, flowers or jewellery). Moreover, in Section 3.3 compensation is also mentioned as a traditional way of getting recognition for victims and imposing sanctions on perpetrators, but also limiting prosecution and conviction. Nonetheless, compensation is a visible sign of recognition for the victim. Chikuhwa points to the importance of recognition: "Victims of psychological abuse need to feel that their experiences are validated in order to deal with the trauma and to extract themselves from the abuse" (Chikuhwa 2011:10).

### **Forgiveness?**

In Emma's narrative it is revealed that she felt guilty about her own negative thoughts towards the perpetrator. In this respect, the Christian idea of forgiveness is an important part of the Christian church's agenda. There is pressure on victims to forgive perpetrators. Emma recounted how she still thinks about the rape that took place 30 years ago: "Maybe I forgave him, but I cannot forget it. Forgive I can, but forget ... I will never forget it. They say if you forgive, you must also forget, but it's difficult" (Emma, 2006). In a conversation with an elder from a Pentecostal Church about how he counsels victims of rape, this was the first thing that he told me; that it is important for the victim to forgive the perpetrator. He made no reference at all to recognising the victim's pain during that conversation. Instead, he spoke about the "weak man" who is a victim of his own sexual drives, repeating a widespread attitude in favour of the male perpetrator (see Section 8.2). Expert 50 explained that it could be problematic if women looked to church officials for help. If women look for support from church leaders they would support them spiritually, "but mostly they advise to forgive and

forget because you made a contract with God you have to accept” (Expert 50, 2006). It might be good to forgive, not only for the perpetrator but also for the victim; however, the first step to healing is not forgiveness but recognition, as Emma’s narrative suggests.

### **To stay or to leave?**

Some women stay with a man who violates them for many years, or in some cases they violate each other (e.g. Carl 2009); both cases are often not understood by people in the couple’s social environment. However, there is a variety of factors influencing the decision-making of women who live with a violent intimate partner.

In some cases the women’s parents expected them to maintain the relationship. Allison’s mother, despite being a women’s activist, did not support her, because she trusted the man and wanted her daughter to reconcile with him (Allison, 2009). In addition, there is an idea that endurance makes one stronger (see Section 4.3), which is a component of the normalisation of violence (see Chapter 4). Part of the pre-independence gender expectations entailed the idea of women enduring pain and the expectation that they would understand and forgive their violent men. This is associated with Christian values (see above). An important reason why Luthrecia stayed with her violent husband is her Christian belief: “And in our church, you must not break the marriage, they said it like that” (Luthrecia, 2009). The ideal is to preserve the marriage until one partner dies (see also Chikuhwah 2011). Luthrecia had this belief instilled in her: “when you marry they said till death. I am afraid of God” (Luthrecia, 2009). Thus, she was not only afraid of her violent husband but also afraid of God’s judgement, so she was faced with a dilemma when she considered leaving him.

The violence is self-perpetuating. This holds true for the perpetrators, as the observations of women affected by violence about contributory factors show (see Section 7.2.1), as well as for the victims. Violated women may have already experienced or witnessed violence in their childhood. Many victims/survivors of violence have multiple experiences of violence (for example, Luthrecia, Magda, 2009). Chikuhwa (2011) wrote about victims of violence who had already witnessed violence in their childhood between their parents and experienced corporal punishment. Thus, violence comes to seem normal for them (see also Section 1.1.2). Chikuhwa concludes: “Your boundaries and limits regarding abuse are different from someone who is not used to violence” (Chikuhwa 2011:51). That means that victims who have experienced violence may not react in the same way to subsequent violence as someone who has never experienced violence. This also depends on how previous violence is dealt with in their social environment, whether they saw it as a normal part of life or if they reacted instantly by taking action against it. This is also the case if violence is widespread within the social setting, meaning that friends, neighbours or family members maybe also experience violence, for example from their partners. Chikuhwa mentions a victim of violence

who was “told to stop complaining because her relationship was not that bad” (Chikuhwa 2011:52). If the woman is used to violence as a normal part of life because of her previous experiences or because others around her are also experiencing certain levels of violence, she may only react to severe violence by her partner, and tolerate lower levels of violence and thus stay with her partner. This is also the case if there is a high level of normalisation of violence in the society as is the case in Namibia (see Chapter 4) and other postconflict societies (see also Gobodo-Madikizela et al. 2014, Meintjes et al. 2002 and Krämer 2007).

Several women thought that a separation would damage the children. However, if we listen to what learners affected by violence from the School Survey say, this is not the case. In fact, witnessing violence against a parent perpetrated by the other parent causes even more suffering. There are cases where children are directly involved in and victimised by the violence of their fathers or their mothers’ partners:

When my parents were fighting I was helping my mother, because my father was drunk and after I ran in between them he pushes me and punch me in the face and later he burnt the house. (17 year-old boy 118 C 10)

How will this experience affect the boy in future? What do these children who witness violence against their mothers perpetrated by their fathers learn? Girls learn that, as a female, one has to endure the violence, while boys learn that it is acceptable to violate females. Violence may therefore be perpetuated in the children’s future.

The economic situation of a woman living with a violent partner also plays a significant role in her decision about whether to leave her partner. Because many women tend to have a lower level of education because of early pregnancies and thus fewer qualifications, women have limited options if they decide to leave a violent partner (see Section 7.1). When I asked Luthrecia, what makes her stay with her violent and unfaithful husband, she replied: “It’s just the children. Now the love is off, off, off. Those problems made the love gone. And the main point (...) is, because I am workless, I don’t have work, °he support me and everything” (Luthrecia, 2009, ° silently speaking). One important reason why women with children stay with a violent partner is their financial dependency on him as breadwinner. Luthrecia has to care for four children including a baby and she has no employment. The women’s low self-esteem (see below) may also lead them to think that they are unable to earn an income which would allow them to be independent of their violent partners (see also Section 7.1). Expert 12 confirms the importance of financial dependency in women’s decisions to stay with a violent partner, as well as highlighting women’s tendency to cover up domestic violence:

It is difficult. If you see somebody with a swollen face and ask ‘how are you, my dear?’, they say ‘I just fall on my stairs’, but it’s not true. She does not come out, because she is afraid, cause the men is the only breadwinner in some cases. (Expert 12, 2006)

Thus, economic dependencies keep women in violent relationships. Expert 26 (2006) confirms the relevance of unemployed women being financially dependent on their violent

partners. The commodification of sexual relationships combines with the relatively static division of labour (the idea of the male as breadwinner and female as caretaker) to create strong dependencies (see Section 5.2). In light of these strong dependencies, as well as the male monopoly on decision-making (see Section 5.2, and Chapters 6 and 7), it is clear that women's capacity to leave a violent partner is diminished. Edwards-Jauch sees these gendered economic inequalities, connected to "economic power imbalances", as fundamental to understanding violence against women (Edwards-Jauch 2016:58).

Women of all classes experience violence. Upper class women may have more opportunities to escape the violence of their partners because of their greater resources. However, there are also cases of women who are married to rich husbands but kept in a state of dependency with no money of their own. Some women who are not financially dependent on men may be able to leave a violent partner with the help and support of close relatives or friends. Nonetheless, many women stay with their violent partners. The example of Hannah shows that even young women who are financially independent and who do not have children or who ultimately choose not to stay with their violent partners find it difficult to leave, possibly because of the power hierarchy, emotional dependencies or manipulations involved. Moreover, victims fear their violent partners. Hannah's relationship was causing problems with her parents as they wanted her to leave her violent boyfriend. Her mother gave her a valuable advice: "if you ever get into such a violent relationship, you will die. If he hit you once, quit." (Hannah 2009). However, she explained: "you know how teenagers are, I was stubborn" (Hannah, 2009). It continued to get worse, and then her parents went to see him and his parents and told them that they would report what was happening to the police. Hannah remarked that, normally, Herero parents would not get involved in their children's relationships, but they wanted her to finish her education and were afraid that this man would destroy her. Her partner then started to get scared, while she came to a realisation: "In myself, it also changed, I became distant, there was no love anymore" (ibid). However, ultimately she only got rid of him when she left town to work somewhere else. Today she is happy that her parents got involved as she felt that she was too servile and afraid of her violent boyfriend.

Women who are in threat of violence may apply for a Protection Order (see Section 3.3). It was frequently mentioned and seen with incomprehension by service providers that women withdraw these (see Section 8.2). Moreover, as Hildi's case shows, the victims do not decide whether to withdraw a Protection Order in isolation but are influenced by the perpetrators of violence who are often their husbands, fathers of their children and providers for the family. As was shown above, Hildi had to endure long-term manipulation and other forms of violence of her husband. She first applied for a Protection Order in 2008 when he threatened to take the children away from her. However, he subsequently convinced her to cancel it:

Hildi (... ) ähm and then he also changed again ... he became friendly, ähm ... looking after the kids, he became ... I don't know, like a new man like...with all his promises and... and again I fell for that.

SGA Like he he convinced you to stop that- to cancel the Protection Order?

Hildi Hm ((yes)).

Five months later, she again applied for an order and it was issued in 2009. During that time he had taken her youngest child away from her by using manipulation and perhaps corruption (see above). This shows that although the Protection Order was issued, it did not prevent the months-long abduction of her child by her violent husband.

In 2006, the magistrate from Outjo also stressed several points regarding the withdrawal of Protection Orders in the interview:

Some [women] withdraw because of threats, or having children, or they need the money of their husbands; to insist on a Protection Order creates a gap, the lady may need him for other needs. (Expert 35, 2006, iiba by SGA)

Despite demonstrating empathy for the women affected by violence, he came to a misguided conclusion: he advised women to go back and reconsider applying for a Protection Order (and see Section 8.2).

Another reason why it is difficult for women to leave partners who repeatedly violate them is that, over the years, they may have lost friends and support. Violette's husband did not want her to have any friends. Violette had been a confident woman who was not financially dependent on her violent husband (at least only for a short time when the children were small). Her violent husband wanted to keep her in isolation, prevent her from undertaking further education, and keep her in a state of dependency. He humiliated her, which damaged her self-esteem (Violette, 2006). Chikuhwa identifies such behaviour as a deliberate strategy by the perpetrator to isolate the female partner by keeping her away from any outside influence that might conflict with his interests, or encourage resistance in her, as well as to take away any support system she has (Chikuhwa 2011). Another reason why victims of violence usually have fewer friends may be because other people cannot cope with the violence that the women are experiencing, because it can also be traumatising for them as well (see Section 1.1.2). It may be that they have frequently listened to the woman talking about the violence, and told her to leave, but she has stayed with the violent partner (as was the case with Magda's sister, see Chapter 2). Expert 56 mentioned a friend of hers who was living with a violent husband, with whom she had children. Time and again, over the years, Expert 56 had listened to her friend's narratives about the violence she experienced, but even though she left her husband for a short time, she always went back to him. Expert 56 felt exhausted by these problems. She wanted to help but she could not.

Although much violence is normalised and goes unremarked on within the victim's social environment, in cases of severe physical – which means visible – violence, people often urge the victim to leave her partner, as was the case with Magda's sister (see Section 2.2). Even if

support is available for the woman if she leaves the violent man, many victims stay with or return to the violent man again and again. Then, those who are willing to support the victims become disappointed in the women, or even angry, or in some cases even think that the women must somehow want the violence (see below). Most often a combination of factors influences the victim's decision to stay in a violent intimate relationship.

The effect of long-term verbal and emotional violence needs to be taken into consideration in order to understand why women stay with violent partners. The cases of Violette (2006) and Jane (Group Discussion 2006), as well as that of Hildi (2009), illustrate the huge impact that long-term psychological violence can have. The violent partner makes the victim feel bad about herself; he intimidates her and manipulates her. She feels like she is in a kind of prison of his making; her self-esteem, self-worth, and empathy all suffer, which makes it difficult for the women to leave violent partners. Thus, long-term verbal violation leads to disempowerment, discouragement and a reduction in self-esteem, and can be traumatising as well.

Chikuhwa points to another effect that the occurrence of lethal violence has on women and their families: It appears that violated women are frequently prevented from taking action and from leaving a violent partner in a country where many women have been murdered by their partners or ex-partners (see above). She states:

(...) women are not free to leave their partners, without being faced with serious consequences. Not only is a woman's own life in danger, but also her children and family, because threats against family are not uncommon. (Chikuhwa 2011:55)

Women fear leaving their partners because there might be violent and even lethal consequences.

Many women cope with experiences of violence on their own (see above), do not get the support they need from their social environment and service providers, and stay with their violent partners. It is possible that a woman deciding to stay with a violent partner is perceived as "acceptance" of physical violence, but it might just be that the victim of violence is unable to leave the violent partner. She lives in a relationship characterised by verbal violence, manipulation, and intimidation, which leads to low self-esteem, isolation, and dependency. Moreover, the woman is influenced by the idea of a subordinate femininity and thus does not see a way out (see Edwards-Jauch 2012). Instead of the violent perpetrator himself, it is his victim who is imprisoned psychically. All these forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence combine together (WHO 2005). Dependencies are crucial, often financial, and sometimes emotional. Some women simply do not believe that they can make it alone, because they have been told that they cannot do anything and that they are worthless (see also Chikuhwa 2011). However, many ordinary people do not understand why

women stay in violent relationships and sympathy and concern for them may turn into incomprehension, contempt and blame (see Section 8.2).

It takes extraordinary strength and self-confidence as well as adequate emotional and financial support to leave a violent partner after several years of pain, torture and manipulation. However, these difficulties and the individual suffering of the women are often not seen by people or are misunderstood.

## 8.2 Attitudes towards violated females: victim blaming and hierarchies of rape

In the previous chapters it was demonstrated that violence against women is perceived as a problem by many people in Outjo. However, there are ambiguities. At the beginning of my research I mistakenly presumed that there was solidarity among women. Thus, I was surprised by some women blaming other women who experienced sexual violence. Many people believe that the violated women were somehow responsible for the violence, either because they were wearing immodest clothes or because they simply went to the “wrong” places (see also Britton/Shook 2014, and see below). However, women are part of the same society as men. They also reveal ambiguities and contribute to the normalisation of violence against women. They sometimes do this in a surprising way, as the example of Emma, a rape survivor, shows. She normalised violence against women in the colonial past even though she was victimised herself then (see Sections 2.2.1 and 4.2). Nafuka and Shino also found no significant differences between males and females with regard to victim blaming in their study on rape myths among university students in Namibia (Nafuka/Shino 2014). A leaflet produced by the Legal Assistance Centre gives an overview of rape myths prevalent in Namibia (LAC 2001:4f), which they adapted from training material used by the Namibian NGO Women’s Solidarity.

Many people in Outjo believe that most violence happens in *shebeens* or clubs (for example, Alicia, 2009). Therefore, women should not go there and drink alcohol, in order to prevent sexual violence. In the School Survey, I asked how girls and boys could prevent violence. Some of the learners reflected these kinds of attitudes as well. For example, one female learner gave the following advice to girls to prevent violence: “to stay at home and do their chores. Not to be at clubs and all the bad places” (18 year-old girl, 013 A 12). Several people took the view that girls or women who do not wear modest clothes are to be blamed for the violence which is perpetrated against them by men. This reflects the aforementioned idea of women seducing helpless men (see Section 8.1.1). This conception is also found in South Africa, as the title of an article by Moffett (2006) suggests: *These women, they force us to rape them*. A politician even appealed to young women “to behave well and not to wear mini dresses” (Britton/Shook 2014:167). This could also imply that any females who transgressed

this norm are at higher risk of experiencing sexual violence (see Section 1.1.1). The example of service providers' perceptions about whether a 17 year-old client who had sex with older men could have been raped or if she had just made it up (see below) illustrates this. A female learner said that girls "should stop wearing short things" (18 year-old girl, 049 A 11). This statement, as well as several interviews with female participants, shows that females deliberately restrict themselves and their activity radius in order to protect themselves. If some females fail to do so, they are blamed for not protecting themselves; it is only a small step from this to blaming the victim for the violence. The Chairperson of WAD, Expert 51 (2006), pointed to the fact that some people spice up a narrative about rape in order to show the woman in a bad light, while others side with the man.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS can also lead to the stigmatisation of victims of sexual violence. Some people think that the female victim must be HIV infected and therefore discriminate against her (Expert 50, 2006). In some other interviews about how people perceive specific cases of violence experienced by women at the hands of men in Outjo, several people understated this violence, for example if the victim is not seriously injured or not HIV infected. This implies that the rape of a woman is regarded as "not too bad" if the victim was not infected with HIV as a result of the rape (for example, Emma 2006, see Section 4.2). It also shows how much HIV has changed society, in that the individual suffering and traumatisation of the victim is not taken seriously, but is trivialised and invisibilised.

People's perceptions can be interpreted in the following way: some forms of rape are seen as "real rape", for example the rape of "innocent" victims such as babies, small children and older women (see Sections 1.1.2 and 8.1.1). In contrast, violence such as rape within an intimate relationship or the rape of a prostitute are seen as less serious or even as not being violence at all. This was found, for example, in interviews with some service providers from the police, hospital or magistrate's court, or when people were discussing cases of violence against women, or when I asked various people about certain cases of gender violence. Many people revealed a lack of understanding towards victims and survivors of violence.

The attitudes of two service providers in high ranking positions, one in the medical profession and one in the police force in Otjiwarongo, are especially striking (Experts 51 and 30, both 2006). A service provider in a high ranking position within the police who works closely with women and children affected by violence in Otjiwarongo, claimed that perpetrators of sexual violence against children said that, "nowadays women are allowed to say 'no' to sex with her partner" (Expert 30, 2006). He concluded that, after months of the woman refusing sex, the man goes to the children for sex instead. He sees women who refuse to have sex with their partner as being responsible for men sexually abusing children (Expert 30, 2006). This reflects his attitude that men who perpetrate violence are not to blame but the victims are. Meanwhile, Expert 51, an important leading medical officer in Outjo, stated in 2006:

We have daily assault cases. We never had a wife who was raped, most of rape cases are of minors, 7-10 year old girls, 2-3 adults, not really rape cases, because they drink and agreed to have casual intercourse, then after [sex] the men don't want to pay, then the women make an accusation of rape. (Expert 51, 2006, iiba by SGA)

The second sentence could also mean that he thinks that rape within marriage is not possible. A magistrate in Outjo confirmed that reported cases of rape are mostly those against female minors (Expert 29, 2009). This means that adult women who experience violence neither look for professional support nor report the crime officially. This attitude of not classifying the sexual violence that women experience in a context of alcohol consumption and within a marriage as violence may prevent women from seeking help. It becomes clear how easy it is not to define something as a violent act, if the rape victim is not seen as an “ideal rape victim” (see Section 1.1.2), for example by not living according to the prevailing norms and morality or simply because she is married to or has an intimate relationship with the perpetrator. This reflects the perception that “good girls” should wear modest clothes (not too short or too tight), should avoid going to *shebeens* or clubs and drinking alcohol, and should avoid having several sexual partners. Moreover, if a female behaves confidently and assertively, and tries to enforce her own will, she may be blamed for provoking a rape (Edwards-Jauch 2012). Thus, rapes of “good girls” behaving in a manner appropriate to the social norms are seen as worse than others which are perpetrated in a situation that is seen as inappropriate for females, reflecting the hierarchy of rape (Britton/Shook 2014, see Section 1.1.2). However, a rape of a previously “good girl” could damage her reputation and turn her into a “bad girl” without her doing anything wrong because people tend to look for faults *she* might made and judge about the victim rather than looking at the perpetrator's behaviour. Did she invite him in? Did she drink with him? Did she wear provocative clothing? Was she out late at night? Some interviewees took the view that “she was looking for it”, as Jewkes et al. indicated: “The responsibility for preventing a socially unacceptable act such as rape, was thus placed on the female victim who could be criticised, ostracised, or otherwise punished” (Jewkes et al. 2007:173). The statements from leading service providers in Outjo are especially disturbing as they have much discursive power and their attitudes towards female victims/survivors may adversely affect the work they do with them.

The legacy of the normalisation of violence can also be found among women's rights activists. At the *We are raped!* conference in March 2006 (see Sections 1.3, 3.3, and 8.1.1) a participant from Outjo (Expert 11, 2006) highlighted a case of a young child being raped by its grandfather. Other activists also spoke about sexual abuse by family members with horror. Thus, again it was shown that people are especially shocked by such violent incidents, especially those involving small children. However, other violent incidents like the rape of a woman within marriage or the rape of a teenage girl in a *shebeen* were not

mentioned. At the conference I got the impression that the serious sexual violence against small children was such a focal point that it completely eclipsed the violence against women in the women's activists' narratives, even though it was meant to be the theme of the conference.

This pattern of perception of the hierarchy of rapes contributes to a rigid scheme: men who rape "innocent victims" are stigmatised as some kind of monsters, and as mentally ill. They are the blank page onto which all kinds of violence by men is projected. On the other hand, the rape of women in relationships by "beloved partners" or by men in general is trivialised. The males are assumed to have been seduced by the clothing, the situation or the beauty of the female, or by alcohol consumption (see Section 8.1.1 and Jewkes et al. 2007, Britton/Shook 2014). Interestingly, according to this view, the males are constructed as weak and seducible and lacking their own will, in other words as victims who cannot defend themselves. Thus, the violent reality of everyday life is turned upside down, presumably to protect the perpetrators. Jewkes et al. also point to the perception that "the responsibility for controlling men's sexual desires, and any ensuing acts of molestation or rape, was placed on women and girls" (Jewkes et al. 2005:1813), thereby putting the blame for the violence on the victim. This was also found in Ndeyapo and Shino's study of students from the University of Namibia (UNAM) (Ndeyapo/Shino 2014).

Edwards-Jauch, who conducted research about gender-based violence in UNAM, point to female students complaining about a lack of confidentiality from counselling services on reproductive health as well as by nurses in the UNAM clinic including:

The most worrisome issues reported were the lack of confidentiality and embarrassing and judgemental remarks made by nurses about the sexuality of the students. At times, students are publicly humiliated and the reasons for their visit announced to all waiting in the queue. (Edwards-Jauch 2012:109)

If survivors of sexual violence are treated with such a lack of sensitivity, this is clearly problematic and counterproductive, as confidentiality is especially important for victims and survivors of violence (see Section 1.1.2 and Ellsberg et al. 2001:11).

The perception of an "ideal rape victim", including victim blaming and the discrediting of women, is reflected among women as well as men. In one example, two HIV counsellors, a man and a woman, who work together in the same office, talked about cases of rape and domestic violence in Outjo (Experts 49 and 18, 2009). The female HIV counsellor, Expert 49, did not believe the version of events given by a female victim whom they had to deal with, while the man did. Expert 49 answered my question about rape cases in Outjo as follows:

Expert 49    There was one lady... who was raped. She came with the police in December 2008.  
SGA            How did you counsel her?

Expert 49 She had no shoes, her hair was out of control, the doctor brought her to my office. She said she was raped. The man said 'you are just drinking my money' (Expert 49, 2009)

Although this should not be part of victim-centred counselling, they also called in the man and let him give his version of events. The man claimed that they had been drinking together, had agreed to have sex and then went into the bush to do so, whereupon some boys saw them. According to the man, she felt ashamed so she said it was a rape. The woman's perspective was that they had not negotiated sex. She said that he had just grabbed her and pulled her into the bush. She claims not to have been drunk. Expert 49 mentioned that the man asked the woman why she did not refuse and scream. In the course of the interview I asked the counsellor, Expert 49, what she thought had really happened: "What the man was telling was the truth. She said she was bleeding but I did not see bleeding and she was halfway drunk" (Expert 49, 2009). However, the police saw it differently, opened a rape case, and arrested the man. They took a sperm sample but the man said that they had had consensual sex. Expert 49 added: "Then I heard rumours, this lady likes drinking and sleeping with men. She was 17 years old but having sex with older men." (Expert 49, 2009)

In this case, the service provider who is employed to serve the client passed her moral judgment on the girl. Moreover, it is clear from her statement that, in her view, the victim's previous sexual history is important in terms of whether to classify it as a rape or not. If she has been drinking alcohol and sleeping with men, then she cannot be seen as an "innocent victim" and thus it cannot be a real rape (see Section 1.1.2). Thus, according to this view, she has no right to report it to the police and nor is she deserving of any empathy, showing that she is not seen as an "ideal rape victim". Moreover, for this expert, the victim's age does not make any difference, even though, according to Namibian law, anyone below the age of 18 is a minor and in need of special protection. At the beginning of the interview she described her as a lady and only later on does she mention her age: 17.

This case shows that even service providers are not implementing the new law on rape but are still creating their own reality. She is not believed and instead her own sexual history and her behaviour is scrutinised, which is forbidden by the *Combating of Rape Act*, but was a normal part of legal procedure under the old law (see Section 3.3). This is devastating for a victim who is there to be supported and helped because she experienced violence.

Contrary to her view, the male HIV counsellor, Expert 18, said: "you cannot believe the rumours" (Expert 18, 2009) (on rumours see Section 4.2) and he added: "the man raped her" (ibid). In the course of the interview Expert 49 repeated the reason why she thought that the man was telling the truth: "But you didn't see it at her body" (Expert 49, 2009). Such polarisations, including blaming and not believing the female victim, and not taking sexual violence seriously, are widespread. Jewkes et al. (2007) also found that it is common

practice to blame female victims of violence, even if they are minors, or if an adolescent girl has already been sexually active (see also Jewkes et al. 2007).

Many lay people and professionals do not understand why women stay in violent relationships (see in Section 8.1.2). An initially sympathetic attitude towards them can turn into incomprehension, or even contempt and condemnation. A point which irritates people regarding women who experience violence is that many women withdraw Protection Orders (see Section 3.3). The magistrate (Expert 35) interviewed in 2006 said that he does not like to grant Protection Orders (PO) because often women will subsequently withdraw cases. Therefore, he sends women who ask him for a PO home and tells them to re-consider whether they really want one, thus possibly intimidating them. In the interview he revealed his personal opinion that such cases should not be taken seriously: “You don’t hear of such cases, but it always happens but the women just accept and don’t regard it as violence” (Expert 35, 2006). Although he also understood that women may withdraw POs because of financial or other dependencies on the perpetrator (see Section 8.1.2), his empathy for the victims turned to incomprehension. He is not alone in this opinion. Many people think the same way about victims of domestic violence, assuming that they want to protect their violent partners. The magistrate I interviewed in 2009 said that, in 2007 no Protection Orders were granted, in 2008, two were granted and one dismissed, and up to June 2009 there had been five incidents reported; one was confirmed, but the others did not show up and were thus dismissed (Expert 29, 2009). That means that women who experienced domestic violence in Outjo did not apply for Protection Orders, although these protective instruments should be available to them and their children. As described above, the situation of women living in violent intimate relationships is very sensitive, and therefore the negative, grudging attitude of the former magistrate may be the cause of the low numbers of POs granted. This shows that even professionals draw erroneous conclusions about the behaviour of women who have been violated, with adverse consequences for the women and children who come to them seeking help. The high-level police commander who works with cases involving women and children expressed the view that women stay with abusive partners because “women like to be beaten” (Expert 30, 2006).

Women who express their own opinions, enforce their will or simply do not keep quiet in arguments or negotiations are blamed for the violence they experience (Chikuhwa 2011 and see Section 6.2.1), or they are blamed because of their behaviour, such as having additional sexual partners to the one who is financially supporting them. This is reflected in the widely used term “passion killing” with reference to intimate partner femicide. In the Namibian media as well as in an academic context<sup>391</sup> this euphemistic term is commonly used. First used in

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<sup>391</sup> There is even a doctoral thesis in Educational Psychology written at the University of the Western Cape about this topic in Namibia and South Africa which uses this term (Eze 2016).

Botswana in 2005, it implies that a man has killed his female ex/partner due to passion; that the murderer actually loved his victim. Thus, an act of murder is somehow elevated into an act of love, implying that it was the victim's own fault that she was murdered. On Wikipedia the term "passion killing" is defined on a Namibian user page, as follows: "a crime committed due to heartbreak or outburst of emotion just to get rid of things done deliberately, especially in relationships" (WEB WIK PK). Mogotsi mentioned a pastor pointing to economically disadvantaged women who turn to well-off men, but if the man lost his job, they would leave him. He claimed that such men would then want to kill the women (Mogotsi 2015). Furthermore, the gendered dimension of this violence is covered up by the term passion killing.

There are also critical accounts of the term passion killing being used. In 2012, the Namibian clinical psychologist Shaun Whittaker and others questioned the appropriateness of the term, which implies an understanding of the violent man: the perpetrator financially supported his partner, and did not get what he wanted or perhaps was cheated on, and *thus* became violent. He found that there was seen to be a link between "passion killing" and the man providing and expecting sexual favours from the woman, or for her to submit to his will (*The Namibian*, Whittaker, 30.10.2012). Gwen Lister, a Namibian journalist and founder of the daily Namibian newspaper *The Namibian*, spoke of "particularly horrific incidences of what are unfortunately termed 'passion killings'" (OSISA, Lister, 19.02.2014). Instead, Lister used the headline "Namibia's war on women" (ibid) and referred to a "moral breakdown" and a "breakdown in the country's social fabric" (ibid). Moreover, in the UNAM's report on gender-based violence in Namibia (Mgbangson 2015) they also caution against using this term. Therefore, although the term "passion killing" has been widely used in Namibia (Duff et al. 2017, Eze 2016, Alweendo et al. 2018), in this thesis I use the term "intimate partner femicide" (see Alweendo et al. 2018:15).

Thus, it seems that, at this point in time, when there is a lot of change taking place, women are unable to do anything right. If they stay in a difficult relationship they are blamed, but they are also often blamed if they leave for destroying families. If they say 'no' to sex, they are blamed if their partner then sexually molests others, and if a woman has sex with a partner because he wants it, she is blamed for respecting him too much.

Regardless of whether the victim is a child or an adult, the focus of questions is initially directed at the victims, instead of considering the mind-set or behaviour of the perpetrator or factors related to the social environment. Female victims of violence are blamed for the violence they suffer, by society, by family members, and sometimes even by themselves (see also Chikuhwa 2011). Zembe et al. mention that, in South Africa too, it is commonplace to blame the female victim for the violence she experiences (Zembe et al. 2015).

The tendency to blame may be connected to gendered behaviour if it transgresses gender norms. Referring to the pioneering academic Susan Brownmiller, who was one of the first women who defined rape as violence against women and as social problem, Britton and Shook state: “The more a woman transgresses domestic roles, the more vulnerable she becomes to rape and the more culpable she is held for her own violation” (Britton/Shook 2014:166). People do not consider how the men’s behaviour is at fault, but sometimes they look for reasons to absolve him. Britton and Shook found that: “(...) persistent patriarchal views normalise gender-based violence” (Britton/Shook, 2014:155). Edwards-Jauch also found a “high degree of societal acceptance of GBV [gender-based violence] as a legitimate means of control” (Edwards-Jauch 2012:104, iiba by SGA). All the participants in Mogotsi’s study including police, social workers, pastors, and traditional leaders voiced a concern about the “extent of tolerance toward GBV in society” (Mogotsi 2015:19). A normalisation of intimate partner violence is also found in neighbouring South Africa (Zembe et al. 2015).

Although people focus their attention on the victim when violence happens, many only look to blame her for potentially faulty behaviour. Painful experiences and the suffering of ordinary women and adolescents are belittled, morally condemned, and not taken seriously. Many people do not recognise the victim’s suffering. Thus, empathy for the female victims is lacking.

### 8.3 Effects of violence against females in the intimate sphere

Communities, as well as society in general, are confronted with high levels of violence which are reproduced both in the present and in the future. Females are often treated badly and are restricted in their equal rights granted in the constitution. Many violated female citizens are not able to work or fulfil their potential. These are not only a problem for the females but for the whole of society.

On the one hand, violence in the intimate sphere is directed against bodily, sexual and psychological integrity, and on the other hand is often perpetrated by a well-known and trusted person. Most victims of intimate violence are women. If a woman suffers violence by her “beloved” intimate partner, her self-confidence, which may already be low due to the widespread female subordinate socialisation (see Chapter 7), is damaged even further. However, it is exactly this self-confidence that is needed for her to act independently, make reasonable decisions for her children, set boundaries for the transgressions of a violent partner and to make the decision to leave a violent partner.

Violence affects the victim’s whole identity and well-being. This is apparent from the following statements made by participants in the School Survey who had experienced violence. The 17 year-old girl from PSM had experienced physical and emotional violence by people close to her and she described the consequences for her as follows: “I lost track of who I was and

the truth of God.” As a reaction to it, she started self-harming (17 year-old girl, School Study, 075 B 12). Self-harming can be interpreted as disorder as consequence of traumatisation (Herman 2015). Traumatisation also leads to incongruent narratives by victims because of their restricted memory (see Section 1.1.2). However, this memory has not simply disappeared but continues to have an impact on the victim, and may result in physical illness. This restricts people in terms of their behaviour and thinking, as well as preventing them from fulfilling their potential, thus reducing life opportunities. Although this is a consequence for the individual, it also affects their immediate social environment, because of the fundamental effect it has, and may even influence a whole society, if many people are traumatised, such as after a war. The above quoted 17 year-old girl stressed this effect of violence in her definition of rape:

It is where a man takes advantage of a girl/woman. It's just sad and it hurts more people than the woman/girl who is/was raped. It affects the whole community” (18 year-old girl, 075 B 12).

There may be long-term effects on the community, whereby the violence will be perpetuated in the future.

Sexual violence also leads to a high risk of contracting HIV and other STDs. The concept used in earlier HIV campaigns to foreground people’s personal freedom with regard to decision-making about using contraception does not work in this situation (Gierse-Arsten 2005). If women are not free to make decisions about having sex how can they decide on preventional methods? (See Section 8.1.1 and see also Tarkkonen 2017). Violence destroys their freedom of choice. Women who are dominated by men do not have a free choice (see Section 8.1.1). Moreover, the victims of violence also suffer as a result of the stigmatisation attached to losing their virginity, in a context where sexual reputation is very important for women (see Chapter 7), which also puts a burden on the women. Sexual violence leads to unwanted pregnancies. Women who are impregnated by the rape perpetrator might get traumatised a second time. In a country where abortion is illegal, it is very difficult for victims of violence to get an abortion (Edwards-Jauch 2012). Is the victim forced to report the rape? Edwards-Jauch asserts that illegal abortions also contribute to a high maternal mortality rate (see Chapter 7). There are women who give birth to their baby and then kill the baby due to desperation and maybe traumatisation (see Section 7.2.2).

Although one reason that women stay with a violent partner is to avoid harming the children, the witnessing of violence also harms them as was shown in Section 4.3 when displaying their perspective. Within a family, witnessing violence has a major effect on children who are socialised gender different: girls might learn to become subordinate in order to prevent violence, while boys might learn that violence is a way of enforcing their own will. In Section 7.2.1 it was shown that perpetrators of violence witnessed violence perpetrated by their

fathers. Moreover, children's school work suffers as they are distracted by these other problems.

### **Consequences of victim blaming for the victim**

Women who experience violence are confronted with the widespread attitude of victim blaming (see Section 8.2). This may be a significant reason why women who experience violence decide not to report those cases and risk exposing themselves to these unjust attitudes focusing on them instead of the perpetrator and even leading to them acquiring a bad reputation through no fault of their own. Or, if they do talk about it, they may not be taken seriously by their social environment or by service providers, such as the police or magistrates. Consequently, the next time they suffer from violence women keep it to themselves. Thus, victims of violence are prevented from seeking help and leaving a violent partner. Furthermore, sanctions are prevented and perpetrators of violence continue to behave violently, while others might follow their example as they will think that they do not need to fear any sanctions.

If society blames victims of violence for the act of violence, then victims might also blame themselves for the violence, as was the case, for example, in Luthrecia's narrative (see above), and that of Emma (see also Chikuhwa 2011 and Nafuka/Shino 2014). During the apartheid era Emma (2006) went out in secret with a friend who led her into a trap, whereupon Emma was raped. When she told her caregiver, she blamed her for not staying at home and following her rules:

- Emma        She said 'When I say something don't do that! If you would not have gone out of this yard that day, it didn't happen. Now you have to think ....' And I said: 'yes, but I will never do it again.' ((She sounds disappointed, sad, quiet, hurt, bitter))
- SGA         Afterwards, did you blame yourself?
- Emma        Hm ((nodding)).
- SGA         But it was not your fault!
- Emma        It was not my fault, but I have blamed [myself] 'why have I gone out?' (Emma 2006, iiba by SGA)

One consequence of this self-blaming is that many violent incidents are neither reported and nor is the perpetrator prosecuted or punished. Victims of violence live in a social environment where victim blaming is usual. As a member of society, they too may have held similar attitudes towards females who experience violence, thinking that perhaps they deserved it because of inappropriate behaviour. Thus, if they themselves become a victim of violence they may also feel shame afterwards and ask themselves what they have done wrong. Moreover, Chikuhwa points to this problem of women blaming themselves and, consequently, not leaving their violent partners (Chikuhwa 2011). Even if women are rendered unconscious by knockout drops, as explained earlier, they often do not report it as they cannot remember exactly what happened and are confused about it. These victims fear that people will not believe them.

Thus, the women suffer doubly as a result of violence: firstly, the violent act itself from which they may even experience a traumatisation (see Section 1.1.2 and Nafuka/Shino 2014). Secondly, they do not get the recognition and support they need. Moreover, the perpetrators of violence can simply continue their unsanctioned violent behaviour. The widespread attitude of victim blaming, which is also found among those charged with policing it, acts as an impediment to reporting as well as prosecuting and punishing cases of violence.

### **Normalisation, invisibilisation and invalidation of violent experiences suffered by females**

On the one hand, the high tolerance for violence is reflected in the fact that only severe violence is paid attention to (as described in Chapter 4). On the other hand, by examining how people react to female victims of violence (such as victim blaming, etc.) it becomes obvious that normalising and thus trivialising or invisibilising the violent experiences of females hugely disadvantages women. This is similar to my findings regarding the corporal punishment of children (see Section 4.3): in the abstract, people feel overwhelmed by the pervasiveness of violence but, they do not see tangible violence that is happening in front of them; violence against women. Thus, I conclude that the normalisation of violence against women and children serves to re-establish or perpetuate and manifest the subordination of women and children within hierarchical gender and generational relations. Moreover, Gobodo-Madikizela et al. (2014) identify another effect of postconflict society in Africa, in that only selective attention is paid to violence. Less severe forms of violence are overlooked: “when attention is deflected from everyday violence, important clues may be missed about the conditions that make more brutal manifestations of violence against women possible” (Gobodo-Madikizela et al. 2014:91).

The use of palliating terms also reveals a strong normalisation of violence. For example, the commonly used term “sugar daddy” to describe older men having sexual relations with females in exchange for resources is not differentiated regarding the age of the female. This serves to illustrate how fluid age boundaries are when it comes to the sexual activity of females. Clearly, older men who have sex with minors under the age of consent should simply be defined as child rapists as they perpetrate a criminal act (if they are more than three years older than the adolescent). Moreover, the term “passion killing” implies that a perpetrator of lethal violence felt love for his victim, which is certainly not an appropriate way to describe a murderer. Furthermore, it overlooks the clear gendered dimension of the crime, thereby covering up the fact that the perpetrator was male.

If the violent experiences of women and children are trivialised, knowledge of them is invalidated (Chikuhwah 2011, Kelly/Radford 1996). If the violence that women experience is not seen, acknowledged and sanctioned, it will further reproduce and thwart the achievement

of substantive gender equality. Moreover, if people hold women who have experienced violence responsible for what happened to them, it not only damages those women a second time and prevents them from talking about their experiences but also illustrates the political dimension. Thus, the invisibilisation of violence that women experience has a political implication: society in general ignores this violence in the intimate sphere, resulting in the further subordination of women.

### **Subordinate femininity and violence**

Through their socialisation in a subordinate femininity, women are brought up to accept orders from males (see Chapter 7). Women are still confronted with the prevailing gender expectations of being passive, calm and beautiful; in churches, through tradition and the teachings of their elders they learn to submit to their males (see Section 5.2 and Chapter 7). This construction of femininity makes females vulnerable to violence. If they follow these norms as they are expected to, they are not able to intervene effectively if men behave invasively or aggressively, and set clear boundaries. It makes it difficult for them to defend themselves, as they learn to subordinate themselves to their male partner and his interests and needs. Thus, they are vulnerable to being unable to defend and enforce their own interests. In this gender construction female feelings and needs get lost, thus preventing them from fulfilling their potential. This also makes it difficult for them to develop authentic intimate relationships, in which their own needs are met. For example, Jane (Group Discussion, 2006) stayed with a violent partner for some time, although she was not financially dependent on him. The violence has a humiliating effect: women's self-esteem is damaged and they are less likely to leave a violent partner because their belief in themselves as capable and active human beings has been undermined. In Jane's case, she developed a negative attitude towards her own femininity (see Section 8.1.2). This shows that violence clearly plays an important role in adversely affecting women's self-image.

### **Women's empowerment and free choice is hindered by male dominance and violence**

Violence prevents females from living a free and self-determined life in which they are able to fulfil their potential both personally and for society as a whole. The violence of men constitutes a major impediment to women's empowerment. It was shown by the exploration of the common gendered admonishments for girls – by the use of derogatory terms such as “tomboy” for self-confident girls – as well as by restricting boys and girls to different gendered spheres (see Chapter 7), that society does not really want self-confident women, who speak up for themselves. Thus, if admonishments do not work, violence is used (Edwards-Jauch 2011). In this regard, it was noticeable that many women who experienced violence by men, or who witnessed, or heard about friends affected by it, or got to know about it via the media, developed a fear of men, and felt intimidated. Violence leads to fear. Many women are

preoccupied with the violence that women experience, like Jane, a participant in the Group Discussion who stated:

Lot of lot of people, women, I think, are getting frightened, even if they are in a relationship, they wonder, whether they are the next victim or not. Really it's frightening; it's getting out of proportion. (Jane, Group Discussion 2006)

She described her fears when it comes to men who react violently. Women feel intimidated and unsettled by the violence of men. They develop a strong mistrust of men (see also Lorway 2015). A female learner in the School Survey gave the following advice on preventing violence to girls, which also reflects this view: "Stay away from man, they are angry, and you know he will beat you" (18 year-old girl, 076 B 12). Luthrecia, too, expressed a general mistrust in men: "(...) I don't trust a man, really, as I am sitting here" (Luthrecia, 2009). In the School Survey, a girl from PSM wrote about her boyfriend who had knocked her down the stairs, as a consequence of which she explained: "I've become afraid of men ... I still have my boyfriend, but [I am] afraid [of] him" (18 year-old girl, School Study, 078 B 12, iiba by SGA). The theme of women who have been violated by men subsequently becoming afraid of men in general was also mentioned by rape survivor Emma, who talked about her experience of rape 30 years ago. This shows that the effects can last for a lifetime:

(...) that time I was in standard 4<sup>392</sup>, from then ... but I don't know for how long. I was afraid. Until now, sometimes I am so afraid of men ... ((quiet)); even to talk to them alone. (Emma, 2006, iiba by SGA)

Taking into account the high incidence of intimate partner femicide and the accompanying media coverage, the fear that women feel towards men is disempowering and restrictive. Jewkes et al. interpret the perception of men as dangerous because...

The idea of uncontrollable desire operated more pervasively as a discursive device to coerce girls into more conservative styles of dressing and behaviour and to remind them of the need to respect (inherently dangerous) men. (Jewkes et al. 2005:1814)

This shows that women are not empowered in the way that the Namibian government with their Gender Policy intended (see Chapter 3) but instead are further disempowered and intimidated by violence perpetrated by men. In the School Survey several female learners gave advice to girls about how to prevent violence: to restrict themselves regarding clothes and where to go. This reflects widespread views about the prevention of violence against women. It also reveals how much the ongoing violence and discussion of it restricts women's freedom of movement (see also Nafuka/Shino 2014, Jewkes et al. 2005). Males have a much wider radius in terms of their activities. Noone of the learners in the School Survey said that boys should stay at home to prevent male violence.

A female learner who participated in the School Survey gives the following advice to girls about how to prevent violence: "not to start an argument" (18-year old girl, 050 A 11). This

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<sup>392</sup> She was talking about school before independence, when a different system was used: standard 4 in the current system means grade 6 in primary school.

suggests that a democratic negotiation of a couple's differing interests is prevented by the fear of widespread violence of males. Chikuhwa mentions a violated woman who was given the advice, "to bite her tongue in certain situations so as not to provoke her husband" (Chikuhwa 2011:55). Thus, women's freedom of expression or freedom to voice a different opinion is also restricted (see also the statement by Alicia in Section 7.1). Women are patronised and restricted, instead of looking at the underlying factors that influence male perpetrators' motivation, and the wider social causes.

The focus on the victim by society regarding the causes of violence, as well as the aforementioned fears amplified through excessive media coverage of the topic, serve to constrain women's freedom of movement (see Moffet 2006, footnote 38 for South Africa), as well as female agency in general. Lorway reported that fear of men was also mentioned as a reason why women turn to other women as intimate partners, because they feel much safer than with a man (Lorway 2015). Thus, male violence is connected to women's disenchantment with men. Women have hoped for justice and for equal opportunities since independence. Thus, the violence of men contributes to the blocking of female empowerment: men refuse women their constitutional rights by using violence.

### **Negative self-image of males**

Men are feared because they use violence. This further exacerbates the negative image of men which presents them as causing harm; behaving recklessly and irresponsibly (see Chapters 6 and 7). Within this fear lies the expectation that men will commit violence; thus, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. One male participant in the School Survey advised girls to prevent violence by doing the following: "to stay out of danger places and from boys", reflecting the negative image of his own gender. The same person told boys of the same age as himself: "That it [violence] can affect the person/victims' life very seriously" (079 B 12). This shows that the use of violence is so common and normal for boys that it is necessary for him to point out the negative aspects of it. One of Jewkes et al.'s research participants identified the disadvantages of this image for men: "it is bad because, as a man, you also feel like a rapist. It becomes difficult for you to play with your own children in the family." (Jewkes et al. 2005:1814) There is a strong mistrust within families towards males.

That means as long as boys are still socialised in a dominant masculinity and girls are socialised in a subordinate femininity, violence will not decrease.

### **Women's activism**

Many women feel disempowered, frustrated, and disillusioned because of male dominance including violence. However, this frustration has also led to activism. As male violence hinders women's empowerment and thus, gender equality, it is no wonder that violence against women has been a key theme for the women's movement since its beginnings in

Namibia (see Chapter 3). One important focus of the women's organisation "Women support Women Outjo", is to support women who are experiencing violence (Experts 7 and 19, both 2009). They do this by offering counselling for women affected by violence on a private basis. Moreover, women's activists organise demonstrations. A few days after the triple murder happened in Outjo (see Sections 1.3, 6.2.1, 6.2.3, 8.1.2), there was a big Women's March in Outjo, supported by national women's groups (Woman Solidarity Namibia, The Peace Loving Namibians) and local women (Women support Women). By participating in this march, many women and some men protested against the abhorrent violence being perpetrated against women and children. Symbolically, they carried two small and one large white coffins to the burnt-out house in Outjo town. They then walked to the police station and to the Magistrate's Court where a local women's activist handed over a petition from Woman Solidarity Namibia to a judge in the presence of NBC. In the petition it was stated:

(...) Violence is a burning issue in the Namibian society and in Outjo in particular. The streets are not safe, neither are the four walls of our homes, like it was not for the two little boys and their auntie who were murdered and burned in their home, while the other one has lost her expected unborn baby and now still fighting for her life (...). (Petition Woman Solidarity Namibia, 06.05.09)

They demanded of the Outjo Police:

Please ensure that justice is done, that the case is investigated intensively and professionally, and no bail granted to the murderer at all because he is a danger to the society, the families and to himself. (ibid)

And, of the "Magistrates Justice System", they asked: "Please ensure this murderer is sent to prison for life and that he does not get any pardon whatsoever in the future, and that no delay occurs in the matter." (ibid) The petition then continued to address the community at large:

We call on the community to stand together against violence. Raise your voices because it is quite likely that you will be affected with the high rates of violence in our society. Each one of us has a role to play. We have to gain the strength, courage and wisdom to take on this violent enemy that has made a home amongst us.

I ask all of us to work together, inform ourselves, and make a change. We need to stand by the families and condemn the act and not blame those who have been affected. We have to support the police and the courts to carry out their tasks.

Once more, stand up and fight against violence on our town Outjo (...). (ibid)

This implies that male violence does not necessarily lead to the subordination and disempowerment of women but instead can awaken a fighting spirit and the deep conviction that something has to change. This is reflected in the violence against women movement, which is a constituent part of the women's movement in Namibia (see Chapter 3). Finally, violence can have the effect of intensifying and enhancing the work that is being done to achieve democratic gender relations and substantive gender equality. Violence leads to frustration, subordination, and resignation, but also to powerful activism.

## 8.4 Summary

Many females experience violence by males. Very often this violence happens in the intimate sphere by someone known. What does this intimate violence mean for the victim? The experience of violence by an intimate partner means for the victim being intimidated, hurt, humiliated and possibly even traumatised. The individual's sense of self is diminished. It means the destruction of trust, in the perpetrator, in herself, and even in the entire male gender. If it is witnessed by people close to the victim and they do nothing to help, or say or do the wrong thing, it also means a loss of trust in them. Victims of violence develop a lack of trust in general and keep the violence to themselves.

It has been shown that, not only has society been changing since independence but definitions of rape are also in transition due to legal changes (see Section 3.3). Nowadays, many people still do not view sexual violence that happens within an intimate relationship, marriage, or if an economic transaction is involved, as violence, even if it involves a minor below the age of consent and the man is three years or more older than the minor, which is legally defined as rape. Women in intimate relationships and marriages feel obligated to give in to sex when they do not want to because they fear losing their male partners; or that the men will find additional girlfriends; or perpetrate sexual violence. In this regard, and in the examples taken from the School Survey it is obvious that the consent of the females is not seen as important. Women do not have a free choice to take decisions about sex.

One key factor behind violence in the intimate sphere is the widespread tendency among men to have multiple concurrent sexual relations, which are often hidden. Such behaviour was found to be common, especially in specific phases of family formation and connected sexual abstinence. Sometimes the steady male partner risks getting and transmitting HIV and other STDs because condom use is not that common and because the relationship is kept secret but subsequently discovered by his long-term female partner. However, females are now much more reluctant to accept this behaviour than they were in the past (see Section 2.2). Usually, the woman questions her partner's behaviour, they argue, and she demands that he ends the affair, or she decides to leave him because she is so angry about him having risked infecting her with HIV and her trust in him is fundamentally shaken. He might then react violently. Alternatively, he behaves violently even if she asks no questions, simply because he feels shame, as was the case in Hildi's narrative, or because he is projecting his own behaviour onto his female partner, suspecting her of having additional sexual relations.

Female multiple sexual relations, real or imagined, also play an important role in the use of violence by men. If the men know or merely suspect their female partner of having multiple sexual relations, they feel a need to show her and their immediate social environment that

they are taking an aggressive stance against it because many men do not view women as having the same rights as them when it comes to additional sexual relations.

The existence and proliferation of commodified intimate relationships whereby a man provides resources and a woman gives sexual availability and access to an intimate relationship often involves (male) possessiveness and (female) dependencies. This acts as a constraint which hinders free choice, equal decision-making, reduces women's ability to leave a violent partner and disempowers women regarding the enforcement of their own individual will, as well as narrowing the scope in terms of what kind of intimate relationship an individual wants to engage in. As long as the production of a subordinate femininity and a dominant masculinity continues, substantive gender equality cannot be achieved.

Psychological violence, which is often connected to sexual and other physical violence, is especially devastating for the victim and her sense of self. This invisible violence, which often goes unnoticed by others, is one important reason why women stay with their violent partners, sometimes for many years. The woman's perception might shift over several years of violent experiences from blaming the male perpetrator towards blaming herself, as she is manipulated by him. Moreover, economic dependencies and not wanting to damage their children through separation or divorce are other factors why women do not leave violent partners. As Hildi's case shows, leaving the relationship is not easy; often the victim leaves initially, but is then sweet-talked and manipulated by the violent partner, goes back to him, and then leaves again. In such cases of long-term violence, the victim really needs professional support. If she does not receive it, often she will withdraw a Protection Order, which contributes to the formation of negative sentiments towards women affected by violence (see Section 8.2). Moreover, women also fear violent consequences when they leave their partner. Their fears are fuelled by actual threats made by him or by the ubiquitous, sometimes sensationalised reporting of femicides in the media, also using euphemistic terms. Women do not feel safe anymore. Thus, female victims of violence are intimidated and misunderstood.

There is a widespread tendency to blame female victims of violence for the male violence which reflects the normalisation of male violence against women. This is also prevalent among service providers dealing with women affected by violence. It was shown that women who have experienced violence are morally judged, with the ulterior motives of seeking to place the blame firmly with them instead of looking at factors that contribute to violent behaviour by men. This reflects the old legislation and the fact that people's attitudes have not yet changed enough to give the appropriate support to victims of violence. In consequence, victims of everyday violence tend not to seek help from official institutions in Outjo, or at least only in very severe cases.

Many women do not talk about the violence they suffer for various reasons: *Firstly*, because women fear the perpetrators and they might tell them to keep quiet, and because they fear there could be negative consequences for their children too; *secondly*, because they are economically dependent on the perpetrators; *thirdly*, they are taught by elders to keep it to themselves, as was the case in the past (see Section 2.2); *fourthly*, their social environment normalises it and expects them to do the same; *fifthly*, because their self-esteem is damaged either by their female socialisation as subordinate or after various violent incidents over the course of a lifetime or by the same perpetrator over a long time period; *sixthly*, because they are emotionally dependent on the perpetrator or being manipulated by him; *seventhly*, because they have lost trust in their social environment and/or service providers due to their inadequate response and/or lack of support; *eighthly*, because they feel ashamed as violence is conceptualised as a punishment for wrongdoing; *ninthly*, because they are told to forgive their violent partner according to Christian doctrine even if the violence has not been recognised or sanctioned yet. Thus, it is far too simplistic to conclude that women keep silent because they accept the violence. These factors that contribute to women keeping silent about the violence are also relevant as reasons for staying with or leaving a violent partner. Moreover, the Christian belief in and expectation of remaining married until death is salient as well.

It was also shown that women experienced intimate violence during the colonial era, which was not recognised as such, but which damaged them fundamentally. Even many years later victims/survivors are still dealing with its effects; it influences their whole lives, for example, by causing them to fear and mistrust men in general and to feel unsafe. However, as women were strongly expected to keep silent and not open up to others about the violence they experienced, and because legally it was not classified as violence, it was not a topic of public discourse. This stands in strong contrast to present day media reporting. However, both in the past and the present women have experienced severe violence by their male partners and others, and continue to do so. However, women's suffering in the past still does not receive sufficient recognition.

Today, society has become accustomed to intimate violence perpetrated by males against females. The colonial Culture of violence against women still exists. Often only very severe violence is reported at the police. If the violence is not recognised, it causes further damage to the victim and their social environment and might be perpetuated within the social environment or in the future. This non-recognition of the daily violent experiences of females reflects an invalidation of female experiences, knowledge, and perceptions. It also reflects an asymmetric gender system in which females are perceived as having a lesser value. This non-recognition effectively leads to the invisibilisation of this violence which, in turn, prevents prosecution.

In effect, the violence will perpetuate itself either in the victim's immediate environment or in the future. If the violence is not sanctioned, perpetrators and children who witness it will further learn that violence is acceptable and normal. In addition, females are growing up in fear of males and with a lack of trust in them. Social cohesion within families and communities is destroyed. A negative image of men is prevailing. Thus, pervasive male violence against females blocks women's empowerment, prevents the achievement of gender equality and moreover harms social cohesion.

## Chapter 9 Conclusions: Gender (in-)equality struggles

### 9.1 Research results and interpretations

Namibia has made steady progress towards gender equality. Since independence, the Namibian government as well as female activists organised in NGOs have invested considerable effort in achieving formal gender equality, based on the provisions of the new constitution. In the first twenty years after independence, women's empowerment and gender equality were a priority in gender policies. The government passed several laws, launched campaigns for the empowerment of women and signed international conventions for the implementation of gender equality (see Chapter 3). Moreover, as the violence against women was recognised very early on as a societal problem, structural measures were introduced, such as establishing Women and Child Protection Units, and progressive laws were passed to protect women and children. Many activities were supported financially by donors from the global north. Gender equality is disparaged by its critics as an invention of the global north, but it was shown that Namibian women were actively engaged in demanding equality during the Liberation Struggle (see Section 2.2.3) and after independence (see Chapter 3). Before and after independence, as well as in the present day, many women have organised themselves in self-help groups to improve the situation for both themselves and their children.

Despite all these efforts, only few research participants really *live* gender equality in their families and in their intimate relationships. People's socialisation has a strong impact on their perceptions and behaviour. Gender norms have not changed much as the research in Outjo has shown. There is opposition against gender equality mainly by men and there are ambiguous messages in institutions such as schools and churches. If women want to enforce their equal share and put gender equality into action, many men feel challenged and react aggressively and reproach women for not respecting men. Currently, females and males are not yet valued equally and several double standards remain, as was found in the research site of small town Outjo. This is sadly reflected by the widespread violence of males against females – a symbol and a cause of remaining gender inequalities.

The violent incident witnessed in Outjo described in the vignette at the beginning of the thesis (see Chapter 1) effectively showed the normalisation of violence perpetrated by men against women. It is a further example of a Culture of violence that is described in relation to Outjo but which also prevails across Namibia (Edwards-Jauch 2016:49). The man who dragged the woman behind him by her hair did not show any shame for his actions. Instead, I interpreted his attitude as “this has to be done, to show her and them who is the leader, who is in power and control of the relationship”. This can also be understood as one expression of the form of dominant masculinity that is still widespread in Outjo. His violence also shows a sense of possessiveness that reflects the commodified character of intimate relationships (see Section 5.2), like a customer buying a product and gaining the right of ownership. Another interpretation involves the idea of man as a hunter, grasping his prey (see Sections 6.1 and 6.2.1). The woman’s dignity as an equal human being was violated in front of others, which constituted a very humiliating act (see Section 8.1). Her self-determination and physical and psychological integrity was abused and restricted (see Section 8.3). Thus, violence that entails no sanctions is an impactful means of enforcing women’s subordination. Moreover, violating the woman in public also sends a powerful message to other women about what could happen if they do not show respect and subordinate under their partner. In Namibia respect is primarily associated with fear (see Chapter 6) and thus, if one person respects or is expected to respect another, it indicates a hierarchical relationship (see Sections 4.3, 6.2.1 and 8.3).

### **Remaining static and hierarchical gender constructions**

One important reason for the remaining inequalities and problems with regard to gender relations is that gender norms have not changed much despite the aim of gender equality. During the research in Outjo it was found that dominant masculinities and subordinate femininities are still being (re)produced (see Chapters 6 and 7). Males have been socialised in dominant masculinities. The gender norms of being strong, dominant and able to provide for their families continue to prevail. Being the head of the household remains a cornerstone of these masculinities (see Section 6.1). Females have been socialised in subordinate femininities, associated with the gender norms of caring for others, and being soft, agreeable, passive and beautiful. Furthermore, they are expected to be respectful towards males; that means subjugating themselves to a male authority who makes decisions for them (see Section 7.1).

In particular, males are socialised in suppressing their feelings and needs, which are denigrated as “weaknesses”, so as to turn them into the kind of dominant males that society expects (see Chapter 6). This in fact produces men who lack empathy and the ability to take responsibility for themselves and others; who are emotionally truncated. They have difficulties in forming emotional attachments. Moreover, the former and current gender norms

associated with dominant masculinities do not embrace the idea of men caring for their children. Males do not learn how to take care of themselves and others very well. Therefore, in phases of crisis such as unemployment they might develop toxic masculinities. This involves the abuse of alcohol, and risking their own and others' lives (see Chapter 6). This was shown by the example of one young research participant who was admonished to be strong and not cry when he was a young boy (18 year-old boy, School Survey, 033 A 12) (see Section 6.1 and 6.2.1). And at the time of research he was involved into many violence involving activities, perpetrating and experiencing violence. This is only one example but is very striking. Ways to dominant masculinities and to maturity are increasingly blocked due to economic restraints and this might be a reason for males to develop a toxic masculinity. Thus, males not only benefit from the advantages of the "patriarchal dividend" (Connell 1995:79) but also have to contend with the disadvantages.

Implicit in the production of a dominant masculinity is the use of violence to enforce the dominance of men. As was shown in Chapter 6, in Outjo violence between boys is seen as normal – a common ingredient of life that is believed to make them stronger. They learn to suppress weaknesses and fears. Similarly, empathy for themselves and for others is diminished, which is a common factor in using violence. They are socialised to stand up for themselves, to be active, not to put up with things they do not like, to defend themselves, and to pursue their own interests. Thus, the male inhibition threshold for using violence is lowered (see Chapter 6).

Many females in Outjo, by contrast, learn neither to enforce their own will nor to defend themselves (see Chapter 7). It was shown that females still learn subordination which is inscribed into their bodies: they are admonished to sit with closed legs, to lower their voices and to be soft and not rough, and to invest more in their beauty than their brain (see Section 7.1). Although the empowerment of women continues to be strived for, females are still not encouraged to raise their voices, act independently or enforce their own will. Instead, they are admonished to stop such behaviour. If they question male or older people's behaviour, which they increasingly do, they are reprimanded for showing disrespect. This means that, as long as boys are still socialised in a dominant masculinity and girls are socialised in a subordinate femininity divided by strict gender barriers, substantive gender equality will not be reached and violence will not decrease.

### **Ambiguities regarding gender equality**

In this study several ambiguities were found regarding gender constructions, reflecting social change. Many people themselves have ambiguous perceptions, and they are confronted with ambiguous expectations. While some men and a few women openly oppose gender equality, I found that many people supported the idea of gender equality. But, simultaneously, they

and others still perpetuate the idea of dominant masculinities and subordinate femininities. The ambiguity of living in a hierarchical gender system and approving of gender equality was shown not only among older and middle age research participants but also among the young research participants (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7). In schools, learners are taught about the right to gender equality, but for example, in the OSS boys and girls are not treated equally: girls are restricted while boys are encouraged to be dominant. In churches too, people get ambiguous messages. In all the churches I visited the importance of gender equality was conveyed. At the same time, though, the idea of men being respected and women being loved is presented, which people interpret as men dominating and women subordinating.

Both males and females are confronted with ambiguous social expectations: although the idea of gender equality as a right exists in families, men are still expected to be the breadwinner for women, the family or the household. Women can succeed in qualified jobs just as men do, but their male partners are not equally expected to take on caring responsibilities for children or sick relatives. However, several men felt challenged by successful better-paid women. Women expect to be empowered by the gender policies, but they are taught that they should neither raise their voices and contradict men, nor express their own ideas or needs. Men more often expressed discomfort about current gender relations than women, but among young women there is also frustration about the withholding of equal rights by society.

Females today live in far better conditions than during the colonial era and have many more opportunities. However, those women who want to put their new rights into practice are often confronted with obstacles that limit the new opportunities available to them. Violence by males against females (see below) is one important obstacle that intimidates females and thus limits their agency.

Despite several hurdles, a strong kind of femininity is emerging that allows women to speak in their own voice. Many women are empowering themselves and establishing important networks to support each other (see Chapter 7, and Tvedten 2011, Pauli 2009). However, many other women are still subordinate to male control and decisions, and many men see the empowerment of women as a sign of a lack of respect for them and feel challenged by it (see Section 6.2.1). If women contradict men and raise their voices, they are accused of not respecting males, which has a moral connotation. Men are confronted with a stronger self-determination among women (see Section 7.1), and broader female political representation (see Section 3.2), as well as women occupying well-paid jobs and positions. As was shown in Section 6.2.1, for some males their masculinity is dependent on how their partners react to them, meaning whether they are subordinate or not. These are consequences of the legacy of a complementary gender system and of essentialist discourses about gender as “inborn” (see Section 5.1). People identify with their gender norms and if the intimate partner of a man

wants to change her role, the male feels challenged and even threatened in his own role. Men who were socialised in an authoritarian system to become the dominant partner, feel that they are losing power and may even feel inferior (see Sections 6.2.1 and 7.2.1). In addition to this, many underprivileged men feel a general lack of respect from society (see Section 6.1).

In a democratic system, intimate relationships should not be a field of power but of negotiation and understanding of different perspectives. The often used term, “misunderstanding gender equality” (see Section 6.21) not only reveals the existing ambiguities and confusions but also reflects the fact that people in intimate relationships and within families do not understand each other very well. However, there are also examples of women who lead a self-determined life, while at the same time are formally subordinate to their husbands, perhaps because they themselves want a “strong man” but they have their own strategies for furthering their interests.

The gendered perspective of this thesis has shown that males and females in Outjo do have different encounters with social reality because of their differing gendered socialisation and gendered history. In society there are different expectations towards males and females; they also have different opportunities, and they have to cope with the different limitations on their agency accordingly. However, the widespread ambiguities in attitudes can be found in both males and females. The prevalence of ambiguities in messages from institutions that are meant to provide moral guidance reflects the fact that gender equality has so far only been achieved at a superficial level. Moreover, there might have been slight changes since the research took place, and there are also geographical differences between areas in Namibia. For example, Callaghan, who applied a gendered perspective in his work in urban Walvis Bay, a much more cosmopolitan area than Outjo, found that femininity constructions are considerably more flexible than masculinity constructions there (Callaghan 2015). However, the new challenges caused by economic crises and COVID-19 pandemic will be especially difficult for women as they are perceived as solely responsible for children and are therefore more vulnerable.

### **Commodified intimate relationships entailing societal problems**

One area where it is clear that inequalities in gender constructions remain is intimate relationships (see Section 5.2). The prevailing common pattern in Namibia is one of commodified intimate relationships which are often connected to the multiple sexual relations of males. This is a remnant of pre-colonial and colonial times (see Chapter 2), and is also prevalent in other countries of Southern Africa (M. Hunter 2015). People were socialised in dominant masculinities and subordinate femininities, framed by colonial legislation that privileged men. Europeans brought their own hierarchical gender system with them (see

Section 2.1), including the idea of the male as breadwinner and the female as homemaker. During pre-colonial times, *lobola* and polygyny were common in most ethnic groups. However, polygynous marriages were connected to females' access to resources regulated by customary laws. During the colonial era, women as a group lost opportunities for agency and access to resources, as colonial, religious and traditional powers joint forces to represent male interests (Lorway 2015, Jauch et al. 2011). Since the introduction of Roman Dutch Law by South African colonial administration, the husband was granted marital power which also gave him sole access to joint property. Since the 1970s, marriage rates have decreased during class formation processes (Pauli 2009) and females, in particular, have been deprived of resources (see Section 2.2). Thus, people entered into informal intimate relationships in which men gave women access to resources and, in exchange, women gave the men access to sex and intimate relationships (ibid). Well-off men could establish multiple sexual relationships. The hierarchical gender system was further reinforced by these commodified intimate relationships (see Chapter 2 and Section 5.2): men had better access to resources than women, which entailed economic dependencies for females.

Even in present day society, males provide resources and thus create a kind of debt for females which they are expected to pay sexually. Males and females live together in cohabitating units without a sufficient legal framework, or they might just stay with each other temporarily. The commodified character of these intimate relationships contributes to uncertainties, dependencies and possibly weaker emotional commitments on both sides.

The male investment of resources is connected to an assumption that he has the right to have sex with his female partner, even if this is without her consent (see Section 6.2.1). Many men develop a common feeling of male possessiveness towards their female partner. The common pattern of commodified intimate relationships forces women to have sex under conditions that they may not be free to decide on, according to their own needs, or choices about contraception and sexual health. This relationship pattern involves a perception of women as objects: of "being available" and "being possessed" instead of as equal self-determined subjects. Moreover, this male patronising attitude of giving resources to a female and then making decisions for her also extends to other areas of life. This is shown by the example in Section 6.2.1 in which a man wants to prohibit his female partner from looking for employment.

From the female perspective, if she grants access to an intimate relationship and sex, she expects the man to provide resources in return. That means unemployed and young men have difficulty getting access to an intimate relationship or their partners might leave them if they become unemployed. Men and women cannot equally negotiate their own interests in this pattern of intimate relationship. This system devalues each partner and as well as

sexuality itself. This creates frustration and limits intimate partners' options for action. Each partner is at the mercy of the other, in a sense, and this creates frustrations on both sides.

The different socialisation of sexuality (see Sections 6.1 and 7.1) produces double standards. Young men are encouraged and even urged to acquire multiple sexual experiences, which are highly relevant for their masculinity production and their reputation among their peers. By contrast, teenage girls are warned not to have sex, and remaining a virgin is important for their femininity production. This begs the question of how teenage males are supposed to gain sexual experiences, if teenage females are supposed to remain chaste. This is only possible if females are categorised into 'good' and 'bad', which is an important factor in the conceptualisation of hierarchies of rape (see below and Section 1.1.2 and Chapter 8). Although some girls (and also some boys) make an effort to abstain from sex at a young age, many adolescents do have intimate relationships and/or sex (see Section 5.2). They experiment with each other at a time when they are still inexperienced and insecure, which creates vulnerabilities that could be exploited. If the male takes this game more seriously than the female, he might try to enforce his will and show her that he is the dominant gender, especially if there is peer pressure to do so (see Section 8.1.1). In present day society, younger women are increasingly self-confident and are also questioning male behaviour. They want to fulfil their own needs and enforce their right to equality, which makes many males feel challenged.

There is already a power imbalance in sexual encounters between teenage girls and boys of the same age as well as between adults, but the common commodification of relationships is also intertwined with inter-generational relations. Poverty and inequality lead to sexual relationships between younger women, including teenage girls, and well-off and thus mostly older men in exchange for resources and sex, respectively, as well as multiple sexual relations. In these inter-generational relationships, there is a strong power hierarchy in favour of the older male, whose dominance is based on his abundant resources and life experiences, which the younger female lacks.

Economically successful older males having multiple, economically dependent girlfriends can be seen as role models for masculinity constructions for younger males. This also implies that younger and underprivileged men are confronted with what they do not have. The adolescent boys are still in school and many men are underprivileged because of high unemployment rates, thus putting additional pressure on them. Several younger males were critical of these older men who had sexual relations with adolescent girls. These older, privileged men having sexual intercourse with girls under the age of consent are euphemistically called "sugar daddies", even though this constitutes the criminal offence of rape if the girl is under age of consent (see below). They misuse their status and resources

to get sexual access to children, thereby exploiting the difficult situation that these girls and their families are in.

The hierarchical gender system entails a high risk of teenage girls experiencing sexual violence by males of the same age and by older men (see Section 8.1.2). Moreover, there is a fear among females that males could sexually attack females of all ages whenever they want to, even in families (Jewkes et al. 2005:1813, Callaghan 2015:205). This has created much mistrust in families and towards males in general and also reflects the negative image of men. The hierarchical gender relations, economic inequalities and the normalised pattern of commodified intimate relationships including inter-generational sexual relations, are important factors behind the very high rate of teenage pregnancies in Outjo and in Namibia generally (see Section 7.1). These female adolescents are not yet adults themselves but already have to take on responsibility for a child, which makes them and their children vulnerable. Until 2013, pregnant learners were expelled from school and, thus, many women lack adequate education.

As numerous women have children early in life, their job opportunities are limited. Usually, women have the sole responsibility of caring for their children and other dependants (e.g. older or sick people) (see Section 7.1), and the situation is not helped by a lack of care institutions. Therefore, many females are dependent on a male breadwinner. If women find a job and they do not have people close to them who can take care of their children, they give their children to relatives living elsewhere to look after. These children mostly grow up without both parents (see Section 4.3). That means females have to make strategic decisions because their own and their children's economic survival is at stake.

Women who live with a violent partner who provides for them and their children are particularly vulnerable and underprivileged. Often, economically dependent women stay with or go back to their violent partners. Moreover, violence leads to fear and, after several years, has the effect of decreasing self-confidence. These violated women do not believe that they can make it alone, especially if they do not have the economic means to provide for themselves and their children. The women's only choice is between a violence-free life and food for their children, which is no choice at all (see Section 8.1.1).

Males are dependent on their employment status: if they do not provide, they may not be able to find or maintain a long-term intimate relationship or maintain access to their children. Even if men are unemployed, they do not take on responsibilities for a household or children. Thus, they are perceived as useless in the eyes of many women who might then choose to leave their unemployed partners. Moreover, women do not want a partner who does not provide but still wants to decide as head of household. The high prevalence of absent fathers might also be influenced by this dynamic (see Sections 5.2 and 6.2.2). As Connell concludes:

“Men cannot be the beneficiaries of women’s domestic labour and care work without many men losing intimate connections with young children” (Connell 2011:14).

### **Multiple sexual relations causing conflicts**

Many men, who can afford to, have multiple concurrent sexual relations, as do a smaller number of females. This is connected to the lack of emotional commitment in commodified intimate relationships and the breakup of families and intimate relationships as a result of current labour migration patterns and a lack of local employment opportunities. Moreover, for men it is connected to their perception of themselves as independent decision-makers, and the pre-colonial legacy of polygyny, as a means of producing masculinity in challenging times (see Section 6.1). Women have additional partners to secure (additional) resources, and some do so because they want to drawing on equal rights (Carl, Men’s Debate).

Both males and females try to hide these additional sexual partners from their regular partner, as those are unlikely to accept them. Therefore, there is a lack of trust and considerable jealousy, which may or may not be justified. However, there is a double standard in the way that this behaviour is judged by the community in Outjo: males are belittled, admired or condemned as irresponsible and their female steady partners are often expected to accept cheating men. However, the common behaviour of men having multiple sexual relations also produces children. Men then leave women alone with the resultant responsibilities. Moreover, they put their steady partner at risk of contracting HIV when they do not use condoms and hide their behaviour. This has led to them acquiring a bad reputation as irresponsible and egoistic in the eyes of many women. Women who have multiple sexual partners are commonly called bitches among the communities. If they experience serious violence by their steady partner they are often blamed for it. However, it is important to look at the perpetrators’ role: men’s possessiveness connected to their investment of resources in commodified relationships, and their socialisation in dominant masculinities, opens up the space for male violence.

Moreover, in a context where the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is high and condoms are not commonly used, this leads to a further escalation of conflict. It was shown that several men risked the life of their long-term partners, which I suggest should also be classified as intimate violence. They did not use condoms, neither with their girlfriend nor with their long-term partner and concealed their additional relationship. Although the deadly threat has been somewhat reduced by more effective treatment, HIV still endangers life and access to treatment is restricted (see Section 4.1). The threat of HIV/AIDS, in combination with mistrust and jealousy, led to serious conflict when long-term partners found out. The escalation of conflict into serious violence was also shown to be heavily influenced by the widespread

abuse of alcohol (see Chapter 4). The behaviour of having multiple sexual partners is an important factor behind escalating conflicts in intimate relationships.

### **Factors contributing to the remaining gender hierarchies and violence against women**

As was shown in this study, even those research participants in Outjo who support gender equality do not 'live' equal gender relations in their daily lives, but often reveal ambiguities. It was also shown that opposition to the shift towards gender equality remains. Many people want to keep the old gender norms. The common pattern of commodified relationships entails many dependencies which create vulnerabilities and conflicts, especially for teenage girls and women but also for males. It prevents people from forming healthy and committed relationships on an equal basis. This pattern of commodified intimate relationships rigidifies the gender hierarchy and creates a serious obstacle to gender equality.

The fact that the hierarchical gender constructions, which are contrary to gender equality, are still being re-produced, can be linked with the common essentialist perception of gender as static. Research participants in Outjo perceive gender either as natural or as God given (see Section 5.1). Male and female research participants have both been admonished for behaviour which does not conform to these constructions (see Sections 5.2, 6.1 and 7.1). Both men and women reproduce gender constructions, as they are both socialised in a hierarchical gender system. If a 'normal' gendered admonishment does not achieve its aim of behavioural change in the individual in a way that conforms to the hierarchical gender system, some people call the person derogatory names such as "tomboy" and "sissy", which are linked to homophobic perceptions and fears. Taking into account, too, that LGBTTIQ people are often victims of corrective rapes and other kinds of hate crime (see Sections 6.2.2 and 8.1.1) it becomes obvious that, by this mechanism, the clear dividing line between male and female is maintained by society, and emerging alternative gender constructions are suppressed. This was also shown by the example of men who engaged in the NGO NAMEC which aims to change masculinities. Many men stopped working for gender equality when they were called by derogatory, homophobic names (see Section 3.3). The powerful and disapproving essentialist perceptions and discourses about males and females regarding gender construction, including homophobia, form a barrier to gender equality.

One factor behind these prevailing hierarchical gender constructions is that, in the first two decades after independence, gender policies and activities were not aimed at changing gender norms and at achieving substantive gender equality. The realities of prevailing hierarchical gender constructions, despite strenuous efforts to achieve formal gender equality, show the power of gender norms (Butler 2009, see Section 1.1.1). The aim of

governmental gender policies, as well as of various campaigns, was to achieve formal gender equality, but little attention was paid to existing restrictive, static gender systems.

Moreover, in the first two decades after independence, either men were excluded from efforts to achieve gender equality through campaigns or addressed negatively (Kandirikirira 2002, see Section 3.2). Nonetheless, they were affected by legal changes intended to bring about gender equality. They lost the legally enshrined privilege of being the person in charge. On the other hand, women have gained new rights and they were addressed positively in empowerment campaigns. It was not made clear how males could gain from gender equality. Thus, many men have negative attitudes towards gender equality.

Only in the National Plan of Action on Gender-Based Violence 2012-2016 did a change in gender norms become a stated aim (MGECW 2013). However, only male norms are addressed and femininity is not included. It is equally important to deconstruct the production of a subordinate femininity for two reasons: firstly, both masculinities and femininities are interlinked in the gender system and, secondly, women are also active agents in the gender system and they too perpetuate inequalities. It is not sufficiently recognised that gender relations constitute a system (see Section 1.1.1): if one element in a complementary gender system is changed, the other element is also affected, and needs to change accordingly, and to be addressed, as well (see Chapter 3). This study shows that gender equality and gender norms need to be thought about together in order to achieve substantive gender equality.

Colonial legacies are another important factor behind the persistence of hierarchical gender relations. A clear hierarchical and complementary gender system had come into being in colonial times supported by legislation. Interestingly, several research participants who were in favour of gender equality, perceive tradition or culture as patriarchal and thus as a barrier to gender equality. People seem to think that they need to decide whether to stick to their longstanding traditions or to work towards gender equality. This can cause a lot of uncertainty. In fact, culture and/or tradition are a mixture of various pre-colonial influences, encompassing the remnants of indigenous cultures, and European culture, including the Christian religion (see Becker 1995, and see Section 2.1 and 5.1). Moreover, customary law, which was applied north of the Police Zone, was infiltrated by colonial forces and interests (Gordon 1991). Thus, people do not need to feel that they are rejecting their cultures in order to achieve equal relations but rather that they are reacting against the legacy of the former hierarchical, colonial Culture.

Those factors responsible for the continued existence of hierarchical gender relations play important roles in explaining the current prevalence of violence by men against women. Inter-linked with these is the violent colonial heritage.

## **Colonial legacy of normalisation of violence perpetrated by men (against women and children)**

Within the Police Zone the overarching framework for life, including gender relations, during the colonial era was a restrictive, authoritarian, racist system. The violent system put in place by the colonial administration imposed many restrictions, facilitated violence and put strong emphasis on difference (See Chapter 2). Interestingly, many male research participants in Outjo referred to a past in which gender relations were fixed, expectations were clear and therefore not much violence happened. They felt respected by their female counterparts and their children and contrasted it with the present day when they do not feel respected. However, several female research participants mentioned violence in general and often personal experiences of severe violence that they had suffered (see Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.3). This violence that females experienced was not recognised as violence and is not included in the postcolonial master-narrative.

During colonial times it was legitimate for men to enforce their will and pursue their interests because they were legally positioned as being in charge. Consequently, violence was implicit within the socialisation into a dominant masculinity. This is classified as structural violence. Related to this hierarchical view were a profound misogyny and a devaluation of female abilities, perceptions and experiences; that is, symbolic violence. Females were expected to respect – meaning to fear – the authority of males and suppress their own feelings and opinions, including in the realm of sexuality. The generally subordinate position of females as well as their commodified intimate relationships opened up the space for males to enforce their sexuality as they wanted to. Moreover, if the woman did not behave according to male or social expectations, or if she did not accept male behaviour or decisions, men could “discipline” her using physical and psychological violence. Inter-generational relations were organised along similar hierarchical lines to gender relations. The younger generation was expected to show respect and if they failed to do so, or did not follow other rules, it was normal for them to be “disciplined”, i.e., corporally punished by middle aged or older people. Thus, there was a normalisation of violence by men against women and children; a Culture of violence against women and children thereby came to prevail (see Chapter 2).

In general, during the colonial era a normalisation of violence took place. White colonialists perpetrated violence against black people, in order to enforce and maintain their rule over different aspects of life, such as employment, administration, policing, education, and health (see Chapter 2). Violence was an accepted means of enforcing rules and personal interests, enforcing subordination of those deemed inferior, and of raising children; in other words, it was a normal part of life. During these violent times, human relations were organised within a colonial hierarchical order, according to skin colour, generation, and gender. Within this rigid colonial hierarchy, women and children were subordinate to men and older people. They

experienced violence which was not perceived and recognised as such. Thus, misogyny and racism were inter-linked.

In addition, there was mass violence during and after the Namibian War from 1904 to 1908 including the genocides against the Herero, Nama and San people within the former Police Zone, as well as during the Liberation War from 1966 to 1989, mostly north of the Police Zone (see Chapter 2). Colonialism, the Namibian War and the genocide destroyed lives as well as social and economic structures while traumatising generations of people. The Liberation Struggle inflicted terrible suffering on combatants of both sides and the wider population. The perfidious colonial strategy of divide and rule privileged a minority, and created mistrust, internal divisions, distress, and fragmented memories. The conscription of every male above the age of 16 within the Police Zone also contributed to divisions between the Namibians of the northern part and those of the Police Zone (Wallace 2013:294). This is especially clear regarding the special unit Koevoet, which spread fear and panic.

Since independence, past violations have not been worked through or addressed, but covered by the policy of national reconciliation (see Section 3.1). Jewkes et al. (2015) highlight the importance of contextualising countries with long histories of war and violence in working towards the prevention of violence against women:

The need exists to address normative use of multiple forms of violence, change gender norms, strengthen livelihoods, and recognise the pain of men's (and women's) experiences as victims at a population level. (Jewkes et al. 2015:1584, brackets in the original)

In present day Outjo, I found a restricted sensitivity and limited empathy, especially in the attitudes towards women (see Chapter 8) and children (see Section 4.3) who had experienced violence. Only extreme violence is seen as violence that is talked or complained about. There were several examples of learners who had suffered severe corporal punishment (see Section 4.3), or of women experiencing long-term sexual and other physical and psychological violence by their intimate partners (Hildi, Luthrecia, both 2009) which was neither properly recognised nor sanctioned at all, reflecting a high normalisation of violence.

Continuing gender and age inequalities inform people's reactions to victims, as became obvious from this research (see Section 8.2). In a context of a high normalisation of violence, it is easy to avoid classifying something as sexual violence if the person is not viewed as an "ideal rape victim" ((Britton/Shook 2014:165 and see Sections 1.1.2 and 8.2). Moreover, the widespread pattern of perception, which includes a hierarchy of rape, leads to polarisations, between monsters who inflict horrible severe sexual violence against little children on the one hand, and poor seduced men who are victims of their own sexual drives on the other (Section 8.2). Often female victims of violence are blamed for causing the violence. Neither the violence nor the victim's suffering receives recognition; women and children are not taken seriously. This is also reflected by the use of euphemistic terms like, for example, "sugar

daddy” instead of “child rapist”, “passion killing” instead of “femicide”. Even if a woman has been murdered, people still look to find fault with her as the victim and emphasise the “passion” involved on the part of the perpetrators of intimate partner femicides (see Section 8.2). The victim blaming attitudes of people whom the women turn to for help, including service providers in Outjo, can have the effect of deterring violated women from seeking help and support. Women keeping the violence they suffer to themselves is mostly understood as a form of acceptance, although there are many other factors at work too, such as fear, economic dependency on the perpetrator, shame, loss of self-esteem after several years of manipulation and forced subordination (Section 8.1.1). Moreover, the lack of confidentiality shown by people such as pastors, medical staff, the police and magistrates in Outjo, observed by several of the research participants, might also be a reason for women not to trust anyone (see Section 1.4) and to report the violence because confidentiality is of particular importance for victims/survivors of violence (Ellsberg et al. 2001:11, and see Section 1.3). As was shown in Section 8.3, violence and the threat of violence by the perpetrators and by permanent and detailed media coverage of violent incidents causes females to feel fearful.

Thus, violence perpetrated by men against women is an instrument to maintain or re-establish the old hierarchical gender system. Moreover, caregivers in Outjo still use violence to enforce respect and to set boundaries. Long-term violence in intimate relationships, as well as the overall threat of violence, leads to disempowerment and decreased self-esteem. And, if women and children actively use their legally granted rights they are criticised for going too far (see Section 6.2.1) and are blamed for the violence they are suffering. Thus, I conclude that the normalisation of violence against women and children serves to re-establish or perpetuate and maintain the subordination of women and children within hierarchical gender and generational relations.

In contrast to the daily normalisation of violence by males against females, there is an abstract general feeling among research participants – both men and women – of being overwhelmed by an excessive level of violence (see Section 4.2). The media plays an important role in people’s perceptions of overwhelming levels of violence in present day Namibia: during my stay in Namibia, every day the newspapers and television reported on cruel and abhorrent incidents of violence against women and children, sometimes in a sensational way and without anonymising it.

However, at individual level, the everyday violence experienced by women in Outjo was not seen (see Chapter 8). Several research participants in Outjo thought that current levels of violence were worse than under the apartheid regime (see Chapter 4), showing also that violence against women was not perceived as such by colonial society, and was often not reported, and thus not widely known about (see Chapter 2). Nonetheless, there were

undoubtedly high levels of violence against women and children in the colonial era. The resultant damage will be perpetuated both in the present and into the future, if not addressed by individuals and by society at large. This idea of palliating a difficult past might also have occurred as a result of traumatisation and other factors (see Chapter 4).

Another finding in Outjo was that violence is only ascribed to others – by white to black, by Damara to Herero and other permutations. Thus, violence is only seen as being committed by others, but not by one's own group. I assume that this is a colonial legacy originating in the colonial emphasis on difference of ethnic groups. On the one hand, this othering of violence (see Section 1.1.2) leads to more stereotyping and hostility towards other groups. On the other hand, this attitude prevents people from realising that something needs to be done by society as a whole to change the Culture that tolerates violence against females. Consequently, male violence impedes women's empowerment and gender equality in general. Male violence can thus be interpreted as a remaining symbol of colonial dominance. Further contextual factors that help to explain the current high levels of violence by males against females can be seen in terms of democratic change as well as economic inequalities.

### **Democratic change and economic inequalities**

The overall framework for present day Namibia is a general transition from colonialism, characterised by violence, restrictions, segregation and hierarchical human relations to a democratic society characterised by equal rights. The current older and middle-aged generations were socialised in an undemocratic system characterised by hierarchical human relations. However, the younger generation has been raised by them but they have also learnt about equality and freedom in schools. Previously, people did not learn how to negotiate their interests as equal partners. Nowadays, in a democratic system, differing interests and opinions have to be negotiated in relationships between men and women but also between generations (see Section 4.3). It was shown that gender and inter-generational relations are interwoven, as are their transitions towards greater equality. They are also an important cause of conflict and violence in families in Outjo. Men and older people perceive the behaviour of women and children as disrespectful and excessive, and take the view that they misunderstand the notions of rights and gender equality (see Section 6.1 and 7.1). Many male research participants feel challenged and some react violently (see Section 6.2.1). The transition from hierarchical towards equal and democratic gender relations has been fraught with uncertainty, confusion, tension, misunderstanding, conflict, resistance, opposition and violence.

The systemic change has been accompanied by socio-economic challenges posed by the daily struggle for survival for many people, confronted with a small elite living in affluent conditions. The structural violence of poverty and extreme economic inequality limits

opportunities and creates permanent uncertainties and frustrations (see Chapter 4). It creates stress for those who are striving just to survive as well as for those who have steady jobs, as the pervasive poverty generates fears about social decline and exclusion (Wilkinson/Pickett 2009). Young people remain in a state of waitness (Honwana 2012). Due to high unemployment rates, the usual route into adulthood, via marriage, is restricted. It was shown that marriage is still the ideal, although wedding rituals are very expensive and many cannot afford to marry (Pauli 2009). Thus, the extreme economic inequalities in Namibian society were also found in Outjo and are highly problematic in many regards and thus, need to be addressed.

In Outjo it became clear that social cohesion generally is low. Widespread mistrust, envy, racism, rumours about supposed and real corruption as well as commodified social relations, old and new political affiliations and divided memories, all serve to decrease people's willingness to cooperate with each other to bring about improvements in communities and society. The high mobility of the people in Namibia, because of limited job and educational opportunities, breaks up families and intimate relationships and creates vulnerabilities. In addition, inequalities regarding housing and economic opportunities create social distance. Moreover, within families the fear of men behaving sexually aggressively leads to mistrust and prevents cooperation between intimate partners as well.

Nowadays poverty and extreme inequality can be read as a legacy of colonialism: as a consequence of more than a hundred years of labour exploitation, inhibiting adequate education, causing dispossession of land and cattle, forced removals, and all kinds of violence. Colonial education in the Police Zone was characterised by a two-tier system, leading to a lack of education that restricted opportunities for generations of black Namibians. It is to assume that this still has an influence on the current economic inequalities and poverty experienced by many black people. However, regardless of how these facts are interpreted, they are part of current everyday living conditions, which means a daily struggle for survival for many people (see Melber 2014), as well as a fear of social relegation. Moreover, young people are prevented from fulfilling their potential as they lack opportunities (see Section 4.3 and see Hailonga-vanDijk/Mulunga 2015). All these factors cause substantial frustration and many people try to escape by abusing alcohol, which only leads to more problems (see Chapter 4). These ongoing tensions and uncertainties also form a framework for present day violence.

### **Attention towards factors accompanying the transition to gender equality**

The global and local idea behind implementing gender equality has also been to reduce violence against women, as the WHO report of 2009 entitled *Promoting gender equality to prevent violence against women* suggests (see Section 1.1.1). From a qualitative

perspective, violence against women is prevalent in two scenarios involving gender relations: Firstly, in societies where gender relations are very unequal, there is violence because women are not seen as equally valuable by men or by society as a whole; secondly, in societies on the transition towards gender equality, because they have not reached substantive gender equality yet and are still experiencing many struggles.

This study has shown that it is important to look carefully at the path towards gender equality. Substantive gender equality has not yet been achieved in Namibia and, in some quarters, might be violently opposed. Females are increasingly making their voices and their wish to participate equally in decisions heard, while many males feel challenged by this and want to put women back in 'their place', as this was formerly understood. In general, for a country to achieve substantive gender equality, it is important that this transition has to be linked with a change in gender norms. For this to happen, we need to take into account how gender is constructed as a system within a country, which factors are important, such as cultures, religions and traditions, how they are inter-linked and increasingly under tension.

It is very important to look at where a country is coming from when the transition towards gender equality takes place. Namibia is a postwar, postcolonial country with a legacy of a high normalisation of violence. Much of the current violence by males against females is grounded in colonial legacies. In particular, the colonial legacy of a Culture of violence and a Culture of violence against women and children, as well as the legalised hierarchical gender systems, are important. The devaluation of female perspectives and the dominance of males reflected in commodified intimate relationships contributed to past and present violence against women perpetrated by males. Moreover, the (gendered) economic inequalities and poverty need to be taken into account in order to support people effectively on the road towards gender equality.

Bearing in mind Namibia's histories and historicities, real success has already been achieved by formal gender equality at different areas. However, to achieve democracy within gender relations, without violence, as well as a society in which males and females can fulfil their potential, substantive gender equality is necessary. In the next section I make suggestions based on the research for how to support a positive change in this direction.

## 9.2 Future perspectives

### **Flexibility of gender constructions, equal opportunities, and mutual respect**

The most important obstacle to the achievement of peace in gender relations is violence perpetrated by men against women. If both halves of the population – the female half as well as the male – is valued equally, violence will no longer be necessary. The difficulties encountered on the road towards gender equality do not make gender equality any less of an

imperative. The transition to gender equality needs to be linked to a shift in what constitutes the norms of masculinities and femininities, as well as eradicating the clear distinction between the genders (as was shown in Section 5.1). People should be socialised in a gender system that creates equal opportunities for all, to discover and fulfil their potential, for the benefit of society as a whole. Therefore, the current system of gender relations has to become more flexible, open and willing to experiment, and less static. It is important to move away from essentialising gender discourses as these lead to people identifying too much with gender norms and being limited by them. If a female partner does not behave according to these fixed gender norms and wants to change something, for example regarding a more equal division of labour, then the male partner might feel threatened in terms of his whole identity construction and might react with violent behaviour (see Section 6.2.1). Therefore, society should create new visions for gender constructions that are not pre-determined but open to change. This also includes removing the strict gender barrier between the genders as well as addressing the problem of homophobia as both prevent gender equality and lead to violence. In their evaluation of successful interventions to prevent violence, Jewkes et al. stressed the importance of similarities between the genders (Jewkes et al. 2015:1585). Moreover, they too come to the conclusion that is essential to deal with homophobia in order to bring about a real change in gender constructions.

Why is it not normal within a family, if the father is unemployed for him to accept the responsibility for family-related work, such as caring for children and household tasks and support the mother who then provides for the family? Why is a caring man associated with gay behaviour? Within families, mothers and fathers should be enabled to share the responsibilities of caring for children, sick and older people, income generation, and the division of labour, equally; moreover a temporary role swap would surely help to increase mutual understanding and communication. However, at first, men need to work to regain trust in families, as many women believe they might sexually molest their own or their step-children (see Section 8.1.1). Couples should be encouraged to negotiate all issues as equal partners. In both general and specific cases of conflict, communication is important, especially if there are competing needs and interests. In a democratic society, power is not a limited “cake” as it might be seen in an authoritarian system, but dynamic and negotiable. There is a need for alternative ways to negotiate boundaries and differing interests in social relationships without resorting to violence. Non-violent communication is useful for mediating in all sorts of conflicts within human relations (Rosenberg 2012).

Despite the positive effects of achieving the ideal of gender equality, the transition towards it entails challenge and opposition, as has been shown in this thesis. Focusing only on one perspective to the exclusion of others, may have the opposite effect to what was originally intended – rendering women vulnerable rather than empowering them. Therefore, a change

in gender norms needs to be conceptualised through being aware of everyone who is affected by the intended changes, and taking current gender systems as well as family systems into account. The transition needs to be accompanied by professional support, equipped with sufficient resources, and by involving all stakeholders including those who are affected. The old hierarchical structure needs to be analysed and its disadvantages pointed out. Many of the current generation of men view women as less competent and have a negative attitude towards them. On the other hand, many women fear men and have a negative attitude towards them too, regarding them as incompetent, irresponsible, and violent. This is very problematic and thus, for the sake of social cohesion, it is vital to improve gender relations. Funmi Para-Mallam suggests holding “gender dialogues” both between members of one gender and between males and females, as well “to increase the social space for alternative femininities and masculinities” (Para-Mallam 2017:46). The Men’s Debate in Outjo (see Section 6.2.3) can be seen as a first step in this direction through discussing male norms and challenges.

In the research town Outjo it was shown that many men feel they are treated with a lack of respect (see Chapter 6). This has to be addressed and discussed. A general appreciation of men should be shown for their everyday efforts in terms of providing for their families and taking responsibility. Moreover, men need to realise that taking on household tasks could also be seen a source of respect while they are unemployed because it is useful for the family. In this regard, the positive steps taken by men towards peaceful, democratic and caring masculinities should not be laughed at or even discredited but recognised and valued. Moreover, it is important to give males a forum in which to discuss masculinities (also supported by Expert 14, 2009), as was done in Outjo via the Men’s Group. This provided a space in which awareness of historical and current masculinities, or different expressions of masculinity associated with different ethnic groups, could be encouraged. This shows that there are different versions of masculinities, which means they are socially constructed and not static, and thus are flexible and fluid. Moreover, alternative masculinities could be discussed, and role models for peaceful, caring, responsible, sober and committed masculinities developed. The calendar entitled *The caring Namibian man* (OYO 2005) is one such example (see Section 6.1). It is valuable to stress positive examples of men living according to the emerging alternative masculinities, including negotiating calmly and respectfully with women and other men, as well as sharing childcare and other responsibilities. The prevalent idea of man as an independent decision-maker (see Section 6.1) needs to be addressed. Men should also recognise that there will be benefits for them if they do not have to carry the sole burden of responsibility for the family, because if men and women make decisions together, there will be no need to blame the male if things do not work out.

Conversely, the reproductive and caring work that women do outside of the formal employment sector should also be recognised and appreciated. These women are by no means “inactive” as they were called in the Inter-censal Demographic Survey (NSA 2017b:36) but carrying the society by their unpaid care work. Furthermore, women should be shown the advantages of taking responsibility for themselves and for their family, and in becoming more involved in decision-making and breadwinning, as well as voicing their own opinions and pursuing their interests.

With regard to the current situation of women, I come to the same conclusion as Expert 14: “It is still important to empower women because that’s still reality that more women are suffering” (Expert 14, personal communication 2009). Jewkes et al. (2015) believe this is vital, too. However, this has to be an empowerment that is promoted and made possible by society in general, including males; an empowerment that is aimed at producing self-confident females who can make their voices heard and make their own decisions without needing to fear sanctions. There should be awareness campaigns addressing society as a whole to promote understanding of female autonomy, and demonstrating the advantages of women acting independently. In addition, women should be encouraged to think about their own role in reproducing male dominance and inequality (see Sections 7.1). Men have to learn that women have their own minds, their own ideas, and their own interests as well as needs that might differ from those of males. Males need to learn to include others in decision making, thereby fostering a situation in which both partners make decisions together and have an equal say. Males should be empowered to live a caring form of masculinity. Men also feel insecure about being expected to do chores that they are not used to doing, such as caring for a child or taking on household responsibilities. In this respect, males need empowerment and patience if these things do not work perfectly straight away.

It is not easy to achieve sustainable change. Norms of hierarchical gender relations have been reproduced over a long period of time by society as a whole, by males and females involved in social relations, and intersected with different social categories such as age, skin colour and class. If change does not happen quickly, this is welcomed by opponents of gender equality, and it is very easy to believe in natural dominance and natural subordination, especially if conflicts and violence arise. If people simply assume that females are naturally subservient or shy, it will only perpetuate colonial patriarchy. Genuine and lasting change takes time.

In order to achieve democratic gender, generational, cultural and class relations it is necessary to transform the old form of respect associated with fear and hierarchy into an encounter characterised by mutuality and appreciation. This is also promoted as an aim in the National Plan of Action on Gender-Based Violence: “gender equality and mutual respect” (MGECW 2013:27). Mutual respect was demanded by some of the research participants

(see Section 4.3 and 6). Building trust could be achieved by listening to and learning about each other's perspectives; swapping roles could lead to a change in perspective and an increase in mutual understanding and empathy. Moreover, this mutual respect should also be reflected in sexual relations. Under all conditions, sex should be voluntary and consensual for both partners, and not an expectation but an act of free choice with respect for each other's body and soul. The general understanding of sexuality and consent should be on the agenda for discussion. Moreover, it is of fundamental importance to address the subject of adolescent pregnancies and sexual double standards for adolescent girls and boys.

As religion is seen as fundamental within Namibian society, as well as important for gender constructions, it is necessary to include religious leaders when addressing gender equality. In this regard, Expert 6 suggested that the bible, tradition and constitution should be thought of altogether: "let's take that which fits to our time to get things again in right order" (Expert 6, 2009). I think this is a valuable suggestion and shows that all three elements could be changed and re-evaluated. The bible was written many years after Jesus' life and it was selectively produced by male decision-makers at a certain time within a certain Culture. Furthermore, it is vital to discuss traditions and neo-traditions, as the project aimed at seeking greater clarity and certainty about customary law intends to do (Hinz 2010, Hinz et al. 2013 and 2016, see Section 5.1). The problematic and ambiguous elements of the customary law regarding women's rights have been highlighted in this thesis, thereby showing that even if human rights are integrated into neo-traditions, this may not mean that women's and children's rights are included as well. I share Becker's (2006) view of fluid and intersecting categories and the possibility of changing traditions (see also Thomas 2007), as well as religions, as they are dynamic and reflect a Culture of a certain time. Therefore, it should be possible to create this Culture anew.

One important response to the opposition to gender equality could involve presenting the advantages of gender equality for society as a whole. The transition to a gender-equal society opens up individual freedoms and opportunities for males and females alike. Gender does not necessarily imply a pre-determined life, as static gender constructions suggest. Thus, both men and women can develop according to their abilities and without any limitation of their potential by pre-determined fixed gender norms. It should be clear that, ultimately, everyone will gain from the change, meaning shared responsibilities, fewer dependencies, better understanding and both genders being equally valued.

### **Fighting economic inequalities and improving everyday life**

Of vital importance to reducing the significant inequalities in Namibia, is the creation of employment opportunities. Moreover, integrating women, including young women, into the job market requires the establishment of public childcare services such as kindergartens. It is

important to eliminate the existing gendered discrimination in terms of access to employment. Additionally, Chikuhwa (2011) suggests that micro loans should be made available to women in order to increase their income generating opportunities. The Basic Income Grant could prevent women from engaging in transactional relationships (Jauch et al. 2011), thereby risking their health and reputation as well as creating dependencies and vulnerabilities. On a wider scale, it is important to reconstruct economic relations within intimate relationships. The commodification of intimate relationships should be critically discussed and discarded. However, healthy relationships can only evolve if both parties are equally valued, and men and women share responsibility for providing, and are able to negotiate democratically on an equal basis, including financial issues.

For the many people who are already affected by alcohol abuse it would be helpful to introduce self-help groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous as well as for the people close to them (co-dependency) to escape the vicious circle of alcohol abuse, poverty and violence. So far there is one branch in Windhoek. It would be very useful to open up groups all over Namibia including also smaller towns such as Outjo. This approach is applied globally and helped already many people.<sup>393</sup>

### **Creating prospects for the youth**

Young people need a perspective which gives them self-belief. Therefore, young people's access to employment and knowledge needs to be improved. As has been shown, many young people have no income and are in a state of waitness, lacking prospects for the future (see Section 4.3). Thus, they spend their time abusing alcohol or other drugs, which creates space for violence and associated problems such as teenage pregnancies or infection with STDs. These adolescents are trying to escape from a social reality that shows no interest in helping them discover and unfold their potential. However, even if employment prospects are difficult, these young people need positive impulses, inspiration and guidance. They could be offered internships in companies to give them more ideas and practical input about employment prospects. Moreover, specific programmes could be established, for example involving voluntary social commitment such as a "voluntary social year" to provide support to those people in society who need it. Maybe artists could be involved to support creative projects.

Regarding the severe and widespread abuse of alcohol, as early as 1990 Namibians demanded that the government create "recreational facilities, such as swimming pools, organised sports facilities, libraries, and so on" to decrease the use of alcohol (Siiskonen 1994:83). However, towns like Outjo offer few opportunities for (young) people to spend their time in a constructive way, especially as they have a lot of leisure time while they are seeking

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<sup>393</sup> In Windhoek there is the Namibian branch of Alcoholics Anonymous (WEB NAA). There I also conducted interviews with members.

employment (see Section 4.3). Not only the capital but also smaller towns and rural areas need to offer young people affordable opportunities to spend their time, to meet friends, to talk to others, and to take up hobbies, which constitute healthier alternatives to the use of alcohol.

Furthermore, there should be a focus on inter-generational relations and the existence of the generational divide (Winterfeldt 2010:156, see also Hailonga-van Dijk 2006). Moreover, different life worlds can only connect if they approach each other and keep the channels of communication open. Issues regarding children should be discussed with them, thereby giving children the chance to express their views and for these to be included in decision making. There is currently a lot of conflict within families (see Section 4.3). This is influenced by a lack of unity between caregivers about how children should be raised and their misbehaviour dealt with. It is helpful to develop alternatives to physical methods of disciplining them, and look for new ways of raising children and setting boundaries for them. It was very clear in this research that the youth need support and guidance rather than admonishment.

For those adolescent girls who already have children, there should be a programme of affirmative action established, to increase their opportunities, to enable them to finish their education, and to get qualified employment, in order to prevent a further reproduction of poverty, and break the vicious circle of female poverty in particular. Thus, young mothers and their children can be enabled to have a better future in which they are no longer dependent on and at the mercy of a male provider.

### **Sanctions for adults who rape children (in exchange for resources)**

It is important to look at inter-generational relations with a particular sensitivity to sexual violence against those under the age of 18, meaning children. The “age of consent” to sex and the blurring of clear boundaries between childhood and adulthood in particular requires attention (see Section 8.1.1). It should be made clear that the age of consent means that children, both under age boys and girls, who are sexually approached by a person more than three years older than them are not able to give consent; it is obvious that this is especially the case if the man wants to seduce the girl or her family with the promise of resources she or they otherwise would not have access to. There should be awareness raising about the damaging effects for the children who are being sexually abused by adults. It should not be seen as an option for income generation. The euphemistic term “sugar daddy” should be discarded and anyone fitting that description re-conceptualised as a child rapist, with the aim of bringing about a change in how people perceive them as well as improving legal prosecution.

The sexual violence within families committed by a parent or other caregivers needs to be addressed too. A child is not able to give consent to sex and needs protection urgently. More research is necessary in this respect, to find out more about the social environment as well as about male and female child rapists themselves. In general, though, girls and boys under the age of 18 are not appropriate sexual partners for adults. It would be much better for well-off adults to give charity to children living in poverty instead of sexually abusing them.

### **Combatting violence against women, violence in the intimate sphere and supporting victims and survivors of violence**

Violence is self-perpetuating. It was shown that perpetrators of violence in several cases witnessed violence against women in their childhood. Trauma and violence have the effect of being perpetuated in the next generation. Therefore, it is important to support children who have experienced or witnessed violence, psychologically. This vicious cycle of violence needs to be broken. Therefore, society has a good reason to react to violence against women: it has to be stopped, punished, and addressed by both victims and perpetrators and the children involved as well.

The victims and survivors of intimate violence need material, psychological, and social support. It is important to support traumatised victims in their transition to becoming survivors of violence. The violence victimises a person and the traumatisation has such fundamental consequences for them that their life is at risk. They have to strive very hard to overcome the violence. Because they were disempowered and helpless in the traumatising situation, when they were victimised, it is crucial for them to develop autonomy and agency in order to survive. This shows that violence can be survived, worked through and turned into power and strength. This can be achieved much more effectively if victims get the appropriate support they need which involves listening to them, taking them seriously, treating their issues with confidentiality and giving them a safe place to regain trust and self-determination.

The general tendency of society to blame the victim should be addressed by public campaigns. No victim can be blamed for the violence s/he has experienced. The responsibility for violence lies with the perpetrator. It is important that the *perpetrator* understands the consequences his use of violence has for the victim; therefore, victim-offender-mediation could help to increase empathy, if the victim agrees. Victims need empathy and support. The discrepancy between the needs of a victim and what service providers may be able to give because of their victim blaming attitudes should be addressed. The professionals who work with victims of violence also need training, support and supervision to prevent misunderstanding, victim blaming and harm of themselves and the victims (as was described in Section 8.2). Consequently, it is also important to inform service providers about the effects of trauma, traumatisation, and vicarious traumatisation. It is also

vital to increase the resources available for psychosocial counselling in rural areas and small towns, and to increase the number of professionals who are qualified and competent to deal with traumatisation and long-term consequences of violence.

Violence against women is no private matter – it has consequences for the whole of society. Therefore, it should be a public priority to banish violence, which should also be reflected in the allocation of resources, for example by expanding the numbers of shelters (see also Chikuhwa 2011), and improving the services provided by Women and Child Protection Units (see Section 3.3). As was shown in Chapter 8, victims of long-term violence in particular need professional ongoing support to leave a violent partner. The frequent occurrence of the withdrawal of Protection Orders needs attention (see Section 3.3). There needs to be a discussion about how to deal with cases that are withdrawn by the victims. The question arises of why it is not in the interests of the population and the state to prosecute cases of serious or long-term intimate violence even if the victim withdraws them.

Women who have been violated over a long period of time should be given psychosocial counselling, in any case, as the perpetrator's manipulative behaviour and the traumatisation of the victim are severely limiting women's agency in ways that cannot be understood by lay people and professionals as well (see the case of Hildi, 2009 and see Section 8.3). Many women are unable to leave their violent partners because they are under their manipulative influence, and their self-esteem has been crushed. I suggest a toll-free telephone hotline for females who are threatened by violent males. This would be a low-threshold option for females affected by violence. At this first stage they could just have anonymous access to a qualified person who would listen to them, and who can give advice without necessarily having to report anything to the police which might happen in public. This step might be the first step towards the woman changing and maybe even saving her life as intimate partner femicides occur regularly in Namibia.

Furthermore, women who experience violence should be financially supported to access opportunities for change. In Thomas' (2007) research which took place in Caprivi, the lack of material support from civil institutions was found to be the reason why women preferred traditional courts that provide material compensation. Moreover, in these traditional courts, proceedings were quicker and the perpetrator was fined (Thomas 2007:610). Rape survivor Emma (2006) also suggested this, because it would give the violated woman who is often responsible for children an option to leave the violent man.

As was shown in this work, violence women experience as well as their suffering has often been trivialised and like this rendered invisible. Thus, recognition of violence against women has not been taken place. To change this, the use of unequivocal terms to address the problem is also required. Therefore, it is vital to stop using euphemistic terms. Femicide

should not be glossed over with the euphemistic term “passion killing”, while “sugar daddies” should be called child rapists. Furthermore, I suggest using the term “violence of males against females” as it makes two things clear: on the one hand, the gender of the perpetrator which suggests that factors involved in the use of violence can be located within gender constructions, and on the other hand, it acknowledges the victim’s/survivor’s needs for support and protection.

There is still a lack of research into the realm of intimate violence. There are many issues regarding intimate violence that require more in-depth investigation. In Chapter 4 it was explained that young people in particular are in a condition of “waithood” for adulthood. It is striking that most rapes (40%) were perpetrated by young men in the age group 20 to 29 (LAC 2006a:177, see Section 3.3). Thus, it would be valuable to conduct in-depth research with this age group, with a particular focus on their experiences in the intimate sphere, their gender construction and their economic prospects. Females of the same age should also be involved in constructing a holistic picture. Furthermore, there should be research about the rape situation, and about a possible facilitation of a rape by someone the victim trusts (see Section 2.2). One other important area of research should be the situation of children. How are they affected by witnessing violence? Moreover, there should be research about women on farms who are affected by violence.

It would be advisable to undertake in-depth research regarding pregnancy and breastfeeding, when the female partner may be sexually abstinent. In this research it was found that men had additional girlfriends during these periods. Thus, research about how men feel during that time would be useful. Maybe the expectant father should be more involved in the pregnancy and preparations for the baby. In this regard, open communication about feelings, anxieties and needs between the expectant parents is of importance. Moreover, society should look for ways to integrate fathers into childcare, to make them feel part of the new experience, as well as to relieve the mothers of some of the caring responsibilities. Like this the fathers can develop a stronger emotional bond with their partner as well as with their own child. Integrating males into the exhausting responsibility of looking after a baby could increase their understanding of mothers and leave them little time to look for somebody else during this important phase of establishing a new family.

I would suggest conducting in-depth research to address the profound lack of research on sexual violence against boys and men, including violence by their female intimate partner (see Sections 6.2.2, and 7.2.2). As a first step, society should be more open about discussing this tabooed topic. Violence can happen more easily if no words can be found to talk about it and no one takes it seriously. Men can also be victimised and need support as well as women. Perceived weaknesses in men should be discussed not as weaknesses but as part of being human. It would be very useful to compare male and female narratives of

violence. However, there is a lack of statistics on male victims of violence. Male victims of violence perpetrated by females are not taken seriously and are laughed at by the police and other men (See Section 6.2.2). These men deserve the same empathy and recognition as female victims of violence should get. Moreover, female perpetrators should be reported and sanctioned as well.

I recommend conducting research about two mutually exclusive but connected items: laughter and violence (see Sections 4.2 and 6.2.1). It was very noticeable in the Men's Debate how often any mention of violence was met with laughter. Moreover, Luthrecia's narratives on violence and other serious misdemeanours that she had suffered were sometimes also accompanied by a grin (see Chapter 7 and 8). Maybe laughter also reflects a normalisation of violence (6.2.). Laughter is related to Culture and therefore may be interpreted in different ways (see Suarez-Orozco/Robben 2000:22). Conceivably, an individual may be laughing because they feel shame, or to conceal deeper feelings of mourning, or even gloating.

Research about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTTIQ) intimate relationships, including intimate violence, should also be undertaken, as well as research with LGBTTIQ people about their experiences of discrimination, including hate crimes, such as corrective rapes. This is also important because people who do not conform to gender norms are at the cutting edge of changing gender constructions.

There is a lack of research regarding white communities: about violence constructions in general and especially among men and their socialisation which involves a normalisation of violence. During the colonial era white boys and men learnt that violence was an acceptable means of enforcing their rule over the black majority. They have been socialised in a repressive, violence-imbued system ruled by whites. They were socialised with white men such as their fathers, uncles, and brothers in the regular use of violence against others who were seen as inferior, as part of the racist and sexist colonial ideology. One consequence of this is that, even within their own group, violence is seen as a normal means for men and older people to enforce their own will and to maintain power hierarchies of skin colour, gender and age (see Chapter 4). Thus, suppressing women and children from their own group who are seen as inferior, has been perceived as a normal part of the hierarchy of human relations. Therefore, it is important to research white women's experiences of violence as well as the corporal punishment of children in white communities. This applies to the present as well as to the pre-independence era. In cases where white learners in the School Study had experienced violence by caregivers, they did not go to the police but to teachers or pastors. It would be advisable to try to integrate white communities into Namibian society to a greater extent and address them directly.

In general, research on violence should be carried out with caution and supported by the appropriate resources. The self-perpetuating character of violence should be taken into account when conceptualising and conducting research into violence, as well as during data analysis, writing up and publishing of findings. Taking into consideration and looking after mental health during all these phases of research is necessary so that neither the researcher nor the research participants have to cope with painful side-effects of the research. Therefore, qualified supervision needs to be part of research into violence.

It is also very important to work towards more balanced and sensitive media reporting regarding violence. The anonymity of those involved should be a high priority. The media should also avoid relating horrific traumatising details of crimes, because people, especially females, are living in fear and their scope of action is restricted as a result (see Section 4.2 and 8.3).

### **Addressing the Culture of violence**

Overall, perceptions of violence, including the general tendency to normalise violence, should be addressed, especially regarding violence against women and children. It is necessary to have a broad discussion about what is seen as violence within society as well as the sensitisation of violence. In what kind of society do people want to live? How can children be socialised peacefully? Which alternative methods are there to set boundaries for children? As a result, society can develop a clear definition of what is regarded as violence and should therefore be reacted to.

It would be helpful to start talking about past wrongs by all parties involved in Namibia's violent history. It is also very important that the Namibian Government, representatives of the affected groups as well as the white community in Namibia, and the German and South African governments are involved in the recognition of all kinds of violence during colonial era. This includes the genocides and other violence, including dispossessions, committed by the German colonial forces and settlers who profited from them, as well as the atrocities perpetrated as part of the Liberation War, including Koevoet activities as well as the extreme violence against suspected spies and also attacks by the SADF.

Both new and old forms of violence need to be dealt with, so that wounds can heal and society can grow into a peaceful future where all are equal and free to achieve their full potential. It is important for Namibia to address its past violence: giving recognition to victims to heal, for perpetrators to recognise their own wrongs and for society to prevent a further continuation of violence.

Recognition of violent experiences is vital for the healing process – both at an individual level and that of society as a whole. Moreover, the different memorialisations of history should be taken into account; people's "fragmented past" (Kössler 2007) as well as their experiences of

violence need to be recognised. The varying histories of different regions and groups should be better integrated. It is important to discuss multiple histories and historicities (see Section 1.1.1 and Chapter 2). This should include the profound violence females had to suffer from during the past. Thus, a new postcolonial master-narrative for the Namibian population could be developed. Out of fragments, a whole mosaic could be created that all Namibians can identify with. It is vital to use a wider concept of Culture that prevents the essentialism associated with ethnic groups, or skin colours, blood, and inheritance. The idea of social categories such as gender constructions and ethnic groups as static and unchangeable should be discarded. Instead, it is advisable to use a more malleable concept of Culture – including gender constructions – that is associated with socialisation, that is flexible as well as hybrid. Why not talk about a dynamic Namibian Culture?

At this point in time and space, there are men who behave violently because they do not equally respect and value women, everywhere in the world. Violence in all its forms is a sign of weakness and powerlessness. Violence is used if convincing and respectful human exchange is not possible and words are not adequate. Violence damages: the victim, the perpetrator, the social environment, and wider society. Thus, it has to be stopped and be sanctioned. Society as a whole needs to discard the Culture of violence against women and children and create a new Namibian Culture characterised by mutual respect and appreciation for all, as human beings independently of any differences.

## Epilogue

I finished this thesis on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019<sup>394</sup>, the *International Day for the elimination of violence against women*. Worldwide, it is mostly women who remind us to continue the fight against violence in the intimate sphere, violence often perpetrated by people the victims love or have loved. We should remember the countless females who have suffered and even died through violence by their fellow men, in all countries – in Namibia, in Germany, and globally. In Namibia the *16 days of activism against gender violence campaign* has started on this day for many years. Let us take the step to ensuring equality and a violence-free world for the sake of our children, so that they can grow up in peace; and girls, boys and children with diverse gender can fulfil their potential equally – independent of gender.

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<sup>394</sup> After this date, I made some revisions.

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## Film

“Walk a mile in her shoes”: Namibia-Windhoek, 10.03.2014 (YT 2014)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmSS\\_v6BCac](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TmSS_v6BCac)

(accessed 26.11.2019)

## Transcription symbols

°text°	quietly spoken
TEXT	loudly spoken or with emphasis
((text))	comments by transcriber like “somebody came in” or “laughter” etc.
[text]	information added by SGA
tex-	abrupt stop in the middle of the word
‘text’	quotation
?	rising intonations or question
!	emphasis at the end
.	falling intonation or end
...	pause
(...)	text omissions

## Overview of research participants

### In-depth interviews

All interviewees are from Outjo, otherwise it is marked with Windhoek.

#### “young age” cohort (aged 15 to 24)

Alicia	female, not married, no children, learner at OSS, 2009
Lucy	female, not married, no children, youth activist, 2006
Laurentia	female, not married, learner at OSS, 2009
Pieter	male, not married, no children, learner at PSM, 2009
David	male, not married, girlfriend, no children, youth activist, 2009

#### “middle age” cohort (aged 25 to 60)

Innocentia	female, late twenties, unmarried, 2 children, grew up in the north, studied/employed, 2009
Hannah	female, over thirty, not married, boyfriend, 1 child, studied/employed, 2009
Allison	female, over thirty, not married, 2 children, 2006 + 2009
Luthrecia	female, over thirty, married, 4 children, 2009

Hildi	female, late thirties, divorced, 3 children, employed, newly arrived in Outjo, 2009
Misheke	male, over thirty, not married, 2 children, grew up in the north, employed, 2009
Carl	male, over thirty, not married but girlfriend, 4 children, grew up in the north, participant of the Men's debate, 2009
Jeremy	male, over thirty, not married, one child, 2009
Sam	male, over forty, married, 3 children, 2006 + 2009
Johan	male, over forty, married, 2 children, studied/employed, 2009
Timotheus	male, over forty, married, studied/employed, 2009
Gisela	female, over fifty, not married, 7 children, 2006 + 2009
Emma	female, over fifty, not married, 3 children, studied/employed, 2006
Loutjie	female, over fifty, married, 2009
Violette	female, over fifty, divorced, 3 children, studied, Windhoek, 2006
Sandy	female, 50, married, 2 children, studied/employed, Windhoek, 2009
Isak	male, over fifty, married, 11 children, employed, 2006 + 2009
Lisa	female, over fifty, divorced, 2 children, pensioner, Windhoek, 2006 + 2009

#### “old age” cohort (above 60).

Gertrud	female, over sixty, not married, 6 children, pensioner, 2006 + 2009
Linda	female, over sixty, married, 2 children, pensioner, 2009
Robert	male, late sixties, married, 11 children, participant in the Men's Debate, pensioner, 2009
Magda	female, over seventy, married, 5 children, pensioner, 2009
Peter	male, over seventy, married, 4 children, pensioner, 2006

#### Informal conversation

Elli	victim/survivor of violence, met her in Police Station Outjo, 2009
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#### Expert interviews

All Experts are middle aged with 1 exception, all are from Outjo, unless otherwise indicated as from Windhoek.

Expert 1:	My field assistant, community activist, member of Men's Group, member of CCGR, male, married, 2006 + 2009
Expert 2	DRC Pastor, male, married, 2006
Expert 3	DRC Pastor, male, married, 2009
Expert 4	ELCRN Pastor, member of CCGR, male, married, 2006 + 2009
Expert 5	Chairperson of the Crime Prevention Project, teacher, member of CCGR, male, married, 2009
Expert 6	Regional Councilor of Outjo Constituency, Chairperson of CCGR, male, married, 2006 + 2009

- Expert 7 Women's Activist, WAD Vice Chairlady, activist for Women support Women, Member of CCGR, female, not married, 2006 + 2009
- Expert 8 Outjo District Social Worker, member of CCGR, female, married, 2006 + 2009
- Expert 9 Employee at MOHSS in 2006 and at MGECW in 2009, female, married, 2006 + 2009, Windhoek
- Expert 10 Reverend Ngeno Nakamhela, ELCRN, Chairperson of NAMEC, Chairperson of Friendly Haven Shelter, male, Windhoek, 2006 + 2009
- Expert 11 HIV counsellor at Outjo hospital, women's activist, female, not married, 2006 + 2009
- Expert 12 SWAPO Community Councilor at Outjo Municipality, teacher and vice-principal, was Chairperson of WAD, female, married, 2006
- Expert 13 SWAPO District Coordinator for Outjo Constituency in 2009, member of CCGR, 2006
- Expert 14 Rosa (Visolela Rosalinda) Namises, Women's Activist, Chairlady of "Women's Solidarity Namibia", COD politician and Member of Parliament 2000-2005, Windhoek, 2006 + 2009
- Expert 15 Community activist, male, over twenty, not married, 2009
- Expert 16 Outjo Municipality, male, married, 2009
- Expert 17 Health Inspector Outjo Municipality, male, married, 2009
- Expert 18 HIV counsellor in Outjo hospital, member of Men's Group, male, not married, 2009
- Expert 19 Women's activist for Women Support Women Outjo, female, married, 2009
- Expert 20 Male employee of NGO The Rainbow Project, Windhoek, 2009
- Expert 21 Chairperson of the Men's Group, businessman, male, married, personal conversation, 2009
- Expert 22 Retired Police Officer, female, married, 2006
- Expert 23 Dianne Hubbard, director of GRAP in the LAC, Windhoek, 2006
- Expert 24 Elder of LPC, male, married, 2006
- Expert 25 Principal of EJSS, female, married, 2009
- Expert 26 Community activist, male, married, Vice-chairperson of Crime Prevention Project, 2006
- Expert 27 Farm worker, male, 2009
- Expert 28 Pastor LPC, male, married, 2006 + 2001 (from my previous research)
- Expert 29 Magistrate in Magistrate's Court Outjo, male, in 2009
- Expert 30 Leading officer of WCPU in Otjiwarongo, male, 2006
- Expert 31 MGECW Gender Officer in Windhoek, female, 2006
- Expert 32 Acting principal of OSS, male, 2009
- Expert 33 HIV counsellor at Outjo Hospital, female, not married, 2006 + 2009
- Expert 34 Teacher at Jack Francis Primary School, Councilor at Outjo Town Council, female, married, ELCRN elder, 2006
- Expert 35 Magistrate in Outjo, male, 2006
- Expert 36 Elder of the Catholic Church, teacher at Outjo Primary School, female, 2009

- Expert 37 Former Outjo Municipality member, member of the Outjo hospital board, female, 2006
- Expert 38 HIV counsellor and nurse/midwife at Outjo hospital, male, 2006
- Expert 39 LPC elder, married, male, 2002 (from my previous research)
- Expert 40 ELCIN Pastor, male, 2006
- Expert 41 Teacher of Outjo Primary School, counsellor in school, male, 2009
- Expert 42 OSS teacher, female, 2009
- Expert 43 Teacher of Jack Francis Primary School, female, not married, 2006
- Expert 44 Chairman of Committee of People with Disabilities, community activist, male, not married, 2009
- Expert 45 Abdallah Mwakembeu, former executive director of NAMEC, male, Windhoek, 2006
- Expert 46 Charles Simakumba, Chairperson and Co-Founder of White Ribbon Campaign Namibia, Windhoek, 2006
- Expert 47 Former leadership member of NAMEC, personal communication at CCN Workshop, male, 2006
- Expert 48 Former social worker in Outjo, female, 2006
- Expert 49 HIV counsellor, female, 2009
- Expert 50 Chairperson of WAD in Outjo, female, 2006
- Expert 51 Former superintendent of Outjo hospital, male, married, 2006
- Expert 52 Police officer, female, married, 2006
- Expert 53 Nurse at Outjo hospital, female, married, 2009
- Expert 54 Medical doctor at Outjo hospital, female, married, 2009
- Expert 55 Principal of PSM, 2009
- Expert 56 Business woman, Windhoek, female, married, 2006 and 2009