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OWNING THE IMAGE:
PHOTOGRAPHY AS A MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT IN CONTEMPORARY NAMIBIA

Hugh Ellis

A thesis submitted to the School of Literature, Language and Media, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg

2018

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.



Hugh Ellis

Signed this 12th day of June in the year 2018

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

The research undertaken for this thesis has been approved by the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), and a Clearance Certificate (number H14/06/31) issued.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is about photography and its potential to motivate, to serve as a medium for self-expression, and to change the lives of marginalized people. At the same time, it is about the limits to this positive role for photography due to power structures and societal discrimination. These potentials are investigated through observation, interviews and analysis of photographs within three participatory photography projects in community-based organizations in Namibia. The thesis argues that a number of critical perspectives relating to the polysemic and yet potentially colonial nature of the photographic gaze, and to the pedagogy of adult education in settings where differentials of privilege between teachers and learners predominate, need to be integrated in order to understand these photographic movements. Explaining in detail the ethnographic and participatory approaches used, the thesis reports on this researcher's immersive investigation in the three Namibian photography projects. The thesis makes conclusions in a number of key areas, which need to be taken into consideration by both planners of and academics working within these projects. These conclusions include, centrally, the need for facilitators in these movements to become aware of their relative privilege and how it affects the learning process about photography. Also, the thesis examines the role of liminality among members of the photographic projects surveyed. This liminality involves being in flux between privilege and oppression, suffering multiple intersecting oppressions and anxieties, lacking a clear concept of 'home'. The data suggest how photography as an art form can relate to these liminal spaces. Finally, the thesis makes use of semiotic analysis of pictures taken during the projects the author was involved in. The research data, it is argued, make the case that this kind of analysis is useful for understanding photography and its potential socioeconomic impact.

Keywords: photography, media, empowerment, marginalization, ethnography, Namibia, Southern Africa, pedagogy, participatory media.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the participants in the photography workshops I conducted in the course of the research I describe, and more broadly to all those using photography as a means of empowerment for marginalized people around the world.

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS EMANATING FROM THIS RESEARCH

Ellis, H, 2018. 'Marginalized Namibians are trying to reclaim photography after colonialism'. *The Conversation Africa* (April 15, 2008). Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/marginalised-namibians-are-trying-to-reclaim-photography-after-colonialism-94591 on May 20, 2018.

Ellis, H, 2016. 'An ethnographic approach to investigating photography as a means of empowerment in Namibian community-based organizations'. Paper presented at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) Postgraduate Research Conference, November 2016.

Ellis, H, 2015. 'Why it's not (all) about the technology' Talk at TEDx Windhoek, April 2015. Available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYSSgXhajqQ

Ellis, H, 2014. 'Investigating issues relating to the teaching of photography.' Paper presented at Polytechnic of Namibia annual research day, November 2014.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of my supervisor, Dr Nicky Falkof, without whom this research would not have seen the light of day. I also thank the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) for paying my fees at Wits, and for providing venues and equipment for the photography workshops I undertook. Other assistance with workshop costs, venues and catering was provided by the organizations I worked with, namely Physically Active Youth, Sister Namibia, and the Namibian Women's Leadership Centre.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Photography as a mass medium and art form is central to modern life, and the consumption of photographs is part of the everyday life experience of many people around the globe (Evans, 1999; Szarkowski, 2003; Thompson, 1995, pp. 18–23, 159). In recent years, the proliferation of the Internet, photo-blogging sites like Instagram, and mobile phones equipped with cameras has arguably intensified this trend (Chaves, 2010; Schules, 2005; Valtysson, 2012). Much of this proliferation may not be great art – in fact it may be meaningless beyond a basic act of consumption. One can certainly say that the majority of uses of photography may be related to voyeurism and to versions of consumerism that have little to do with the empowerment of people and enabling them to live full lives. (Bourdieu, 1999, pp. 172–175; Schules, 2005; Sontag, 2003, pp. 64–66). However, photography *can* be more than this. It can have social consequences including empowering marginalized people. As a critical academic, I endeavored in the research project on which this thesis is based to investigate one of the ways in which this empowerment through photography could take place. Empowerment may be defined both as 'authority or power given to someone to do something', and more importantly for our purposes, the individual and collective/ societal 'process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights' ('Empowerment', 2018). When it comes to this research project, my core interest was in asking how taking photographs can allow marginalized people to indeed become stronger to tackle their daily challenges and to demand their rights, both individually and as members of various collective identities. I was interested in how photography could serve as a vehicle for economically disadvantaged youth, sexual minorities, and other vulnerable people to gain a degree of power over their difficult circumstances, or at least a degree of symbolic power over how their lives were portrayed in broader societal discourse. However, one can question how empowering, under any of the above definitions, some of the common everyday uses of photography really are to socially marginalized people, or indeed to the majority of people who consume images or take their own personal photographs. It is critical to ask whether people are using photography to advance new social movements, empower themselves with self-belief, or make room for discussions of the socio-political reality they experience, or whether they rather use it to experience whatever Western pop/news culture serves up to them, and to produce imitations thereof.

As my preliminary literature review suggests, the tendency towards the latter is very strong globally. In the case of Namibia, where this study is based, and many other postcolonial Southern African countries, this is compounded by the history of the use of photography in the support of colonial exploitation and by the current inadequacy of

professional photojournalism to capture Southern African people's socio-cultural-political experiences. I argue, however, that the literature suggests several possibilities for re-imagining photography in such a way that it contributes to both individual emancipation and the building of postcolonial group identities, building on documentary photography's more empowering moments in the recent past (see, for example, Liebenberg, 2011; Liebenberg and Hayes, 2010; Price, 2000; Waller, 2000) and on the successes, however limited, of other kinds of participatory or community-based media (see Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Hadland and Thorne, 2004).

This thesis, and the fieldwork that I have conducted to inform it, builds on these theoretical understandings and practical experiences, and explores ways in which photography could function as a medium that empowers members of historically disadvantaged communities, especially women and youth. I argue for a distinctly politically conscious, bottom-up, socially engaged and radical mode of photography. I argue that this is possible in existing radical and even liberal spaces in Namibia, but that careful thought is needed about how this photographic project is implemented, by whom, and what its end goals are, among other questions.

The thesis also focuses on the critical role of teaching and learning in this possible transformation of the photographic medium. I argue that, for people to use photography beyond merely occasionally taking a happy snap or self-portrait with their cellphones, teaching and learning in varied fields is required. These may include camera control, ethics, issues of representation, and visual literacy, among others. Namibia, like practically all postcolonial countries, has inherited vast skills and educational imbalances, and this is true in photography and media as much as anywhere else.

I therefore argue that, practically speaking, this education process may require socioeconomically advantaged people to take a key role as teachers of photographic skills to relatively disadvantaged people. Since these two groups have very different life experiences and opportunities, such a situation could, if critical questions are not asked, lead to a photography movement that has little actual meaning in the life experience of members of marginalized communities, and where facilitators do not take the lived experiences of the participants into account in their teaching around key concepts of visual literacy, photographic techniques, and activism through pictures.

The questions I set out to answer (and I will argue, have answered) in the course of my research flow from the above concerns about the expansion and democratization of Namibian and other postcolonial photography. They include asking how photography could function as a medium that empowers members of historically disadvantaged groups, especially women and youth, and ways in which can it serve to encourage people from such groups to challenge patterns of privilege. Also of vital importance are questions relating to how the teaching and

learning of photographic knowledge can be structured in such a way that they do not replicate structures of dominance that exist within society at large. Finally, this thesis will investigate how such photographic education could expose students to the socially constructed nature of the photographic medium itself.

The research questions

1. How can photography function as a medium that empowers members of historically disadvantaged communities, especially women and youth?
2. In what ways can photography encourage people from historically disadvantaged communities to challenge patterns of privilege?
3. How can teaching and learning processes facilitate the acquisition of knowledge about photography in such communities, without replicating structures of dominance within the broader society?
4. In what ways can practicing photography allow students to become aware of the socially constructed nature of the photographic medium?

The following chapters

Chapter 2, 'The context: photography, the media and marginalization' explains in detail a number of theoretical concerns around the emotional power of photography as a visual medium, and also delves into the history of photography to show how many marginalized groups of people were systematically denied access to the full use of this medium. It lays out how psychoanalytical theories may help explain some of the voyeuristic and fetishistic uses to which images, especially images of others' suffering, have been put, especially by privileged communities. It further explains how the way photography was used by European colonialism in Africa casts a long shadow, as do contemporary realities of racial, gender, and class-based exclusions. I show how these realities have limited the extent to which advanced knowledge about photography, as well as means to publish photographic work and get it noticed, are available to members of marginalized communities, despite advances in access made possible with digital technology.

Chapter 2 also draws on conceptualizations of community media and other forms of participatory media practice to offer possible alternatives to current types of photographic media. The hope is that these alternatives may empower, rather than disempower, the most marginalized photographic 'subjects'. I critique, however, some of the well-established models of community media practice, and especially the role of well-meaning privileged members of society in these structures. I further argue that, in many participatory photographic and media movements, the relatively more marginalized status of some groups,

such as women, sexual minorities and indigenous minorities is inadequately taken account of, with regard to both theoretical and practical considerations.

Chapter 3, 'Research Methodology and Ethics', examines the various methodological considerations employed to collect empirical data for this study. The research relies on qualitative methodologies, more specifically those of critical media ethnography and participatory action research. An ethnographic, immersive approach was considered appropriate because I, as researcher, had links to a number of participatory media projects and was also in a relatively unique position to explore the effects of my own social privilege as a facilitator in these groups, using myself and experiences as a laboratory to examine these issues. Also, the ethnographic approach enabled me to explore nuances of meaning and observe practices in more depth than a relatively objective approach, such as a survey or purely observational study, would have allowed. Because this study entailed participants being involved in the research as co-designers and co-curators of information - this included them being involved in, for example, planning the photographic training workshops I undertook, their curriculum, and the eventual products, if any - the research also fits into the paradigm of participatory action research (PAR). A key outcome of PAR is the production of knowledge that will be useful to the participants, for example to enable effective continuation of a community-based project, which was certainly one of the goals of my research. The chapter explains how these two paradigms fit together, and how, based as they are on the same premise of a committed, involved, humanistic researcher, they can serve to complement each other. I also explain in this chapter the roles of various forms of data, such as interviews, observational notes/ diaries and videos, and photographs produced by participants. I lay out in brief how these different forms of data were analyzed, and how I tried to ensure that limitations in one form of data were compensated for by the strengths of another. I explain my sampling process: how the three community-based organizations I worked with in this project were selected, as well as how participants for each photography workshop were identified.

Questions of how one collects information are, of course, always linked to questions on the morally right way to collect this information. Therefore, Chapter 3 also delves into research ethics. It argues that despite the nature of qualitative research in general, and ethnography in particular, where the researcher's own experience is part-and-parcel of the research, there are key ways to ensure rigor and integrity in one's relationship to the data one collects, and to ensure the trust the research participants place in the researcher is not abused. The chapter also discusses some of the ethical boundaries and safeguards necessary for participatory action research. Since this paradigm implies by its very nature that the researcher is a participant in processes of social change and community empowerment, it is important that the exact nature of the researcher's role be defined, so that the research remains

primarily *about* the research participants, and the researcher does not seek, directly or indirectly, to become savior of the people he or she is researching.

Finally, the chapter deals with the necessity of attaining informed consent for all the participants in the research process, especially those who fall into vulnerable groups, such as children under 18, members of sexual minorities, people potentially regarded as lawbreakers, and others. The chapter explains the mechanisms I put in place for ensuring that consent principles were understood, that participants' consent was adequately recorded, and that participants knew they could withdraw their consent at any time.

Chapter 4 is the first of three chapters that mainly deal with the findings of the research (although, following the practice of a large number of qualitative researchers in recent years, the findings of this thesis are melded with theoretical conceptualizations where appropriate). Titled 'The challenge of being a self-reflexive facilitator', it deals mainly with pedagogical concerns about the teaching of photography in the workshops, as well as with how my privilege on several levels could have limited this process, and makes some suggestions about how the limitations imposed by a privileged facilitator teaching a group of much more marginalized participants – a situation I argue is likely to be commonplace in any attempts to establish Namibian participatory photography movements - can be overcome. In this chapter I show how the kinds of privilege associated with being white, like myself, or even being of an African ethnic group that enjoys certain relative privileges over others in society, like many of my non-San participants, being male, or being heterosexual, can be a threat to a kind of pedagogy that treats learners as equals, and that respects their own process of construction of knowledge. I explain why such a constructionist pedagogy is essential in a participatory movement that seeks to make learners empowered owners and users of knowledge about media.

I argue that, despite the inherently anti-learning nature of social privilege in general, an *awareness* of a facilitator's privilege can sometimes serve as a useful starting off point for helping learners become more aware of the nature of social injustice. I also point out that, whether shared with learners or not, awareness of a facilitator's privilege is necessary for him or her to know when to decide to stay outside discussions, when to deliberately note that it is time to let marginalized people's discussions and expressions predominate. As this research is situated in the ethnographic paradigm, I explain how my own interactions with participants as a facilitator in photographic workshops, and my own privilege as a white, male, middle-class, heterosexual Namibian citizen served to illustrate, exemplify, and expand upon these themes of privilege and pedagogy.

In Chapter 5, 'The participants and their relationships with photography', I introduce the participants in the photographic workshops I conducted. I explain the sociological categories of privilege and disadvantage they fall into, and explain how the experience of being both

repressed by social systems and a member/ part of organizations that support these same repressive structures was a common theme. I also show how certain identities were represented that are especially marginalized within the black Namibian community were represented among the participants, such as San and LGBTQ+ people, and argue that these marginalized are often ignored in Namibian public discourses, including those discourses that exist around development and decolonization. I also show how all these identities profoundly affected people's relationship with photography as a practice and with the photographic image. In particular, members of San communities growing up in rural areas were often widely photographed, but infrequently, if ever, by themselves. Members of LGBTQ+ communities had frequently been involved in photography in some or other way, but were often at pains to stress how visual stereotypes of sexual minorities had severely affected them. Often the experiences of some members of sexual minorities who were not 'out' concerning their sexuality was to deliberately avoid portraying any of these visual stereotypes in their everyday dress and deportment. Conversely, black and female members of wealthier urban communities had developed and participated in their own traditions of photography, especially within the family and other small-scale structures like the church or small businesses, which served some countervailing purposes in representing another side of black people than stereotypical images of poverty, correction, etc., which the participants felt was often shown in the mass media. Finally, I talk about how a great number of the participants felt themselves to be itinerant, that they came from no fixed home and that many of the identities they had inherited seemed to them invalid of only semi-true. I link this to ideas of 'liquid modernity' and to social anxiety as the inherent state of much urban working and lower middle classes under globalized capitalism.

Chapter 6 is simply entitled 'The photographs'. Here, I critically examine a selection of the photographs taken by the workshop participants during the study. I use techniques taken mainly from semiotic analysis, to uncover the most common visual devices used and themes/ subjects explored by the participants. Themes including the gaps between Windhoek's rich and poor, as seen in cityscapes; landscape and nature; portraits and selfies; the college or university as a place of hope and aspiration; were commonly explored by many of the participants. I argue that the photos did indeed provide a means for expressing different visual ideas than those that are often seen in the mass media, and while adopting several of its conventions, also sometime broke these rules in potentially empowering and even revolutionary ways. Having said that, I do use the photos to suggest several possible blind spots in the participants' – or the workshops' – vision, or possible ways in which future participatory photography projects can build and expand upon some of the emancipatory ways in which the photos built visual meaning.

These suggestions lead into Chapter 7, 'Conclusions: the future of Namibian participatory photography', which weaves together stands of both theory and practice to recommend various ways in which the fabric of Namibian participatory photography can be refurbished. In this chapter I argue, based on the results of the fieldwork, for several notes to be made in the margin of both the theory and practice of participatory photography.

On the theoretical side, these notes include the importance of different gazes in photography. I also stress the relative importance of photographic tropes from the mass media, including the Internet, versus the power of individual photographers to transform these tropes into something more emancipatory. I offer some preliminary answers to the research questions identified earlier in this chapter, suggesting that all the four ways of photography being empowering identified in those questions are in fact possible, but with certain conditions and at certain costs. I explain how the theoretical understandings advanced by my research could be useful to other researchers both globally and in sub-Saharan African contexts.

With regard to questions of practice, I make recommendations as to the way participatory photography projects can best manage differentials in privilege amongst their members, and between relatively privileged facilitators and relatively marginalized participants. I also suggest several ways in which Namibian participatory photography projects can become more focused than at present, and how they can perhaps integrate photography more closely with other emancipatory political objectives. I also show how the practices of ethnographic and participatory action research can be useful to scholars studying photographic projects in various locales, and how semiotic analysis of photographs can also compliment these. Finally, I present several recommendations for further research studies in the future.

Potential and limitations of the research

The research and its results carry lessons for participatory projects in marginalized communities in sub-Saharan African and the Global South as a whole, and perhaps even for such projects in marginalized communities in the West. It seeks to advance theory about photographic representations, gazes and the power of visual meaning to achieve social change and a revolutionary mindset. It also seeks to advance pedagogical theory concerning teaching of practical skills to adults and its relationship to privilege in a marginalized environment.

As qualitative research, this thesis and its findings do not claim to be representative of all participatory photography projects of this kind. However, it does offer suggestions as to key questions that may be asked of such projects, and suggests important considerations that theoreticians should bear in mind when investigating photography projects of this nature. It gives activists, NGO executives and policymakers innovative ways of thinking about photography and social empowerment that go beyond commonly accepted conventions and

that avoid ‘development speak’ and similar meaningless platitudes that often dominate debate about community and participatory media.

However, one should not interpret the research by making blanket statements about its reliability, such as ‘the research proves that participatory photography projects will fail unless they…’. Rather, the research is more concerned with the reader to be informed about the potential hazards and pitfalls, as well as the potentials, in starting such a movement.

Because of the sociological rural-urban divide in Namibia, this research may need to be replicated in a rural setting before comprehensive assessments of some of the issues uncovered may be made. Most rural settings in Namibia are, as a whole, more marginalized than equivalent urban settings, and influences such as the role of customary law and traditional leaders need to be taken into account to a greater extent. Differing (though not necessarily more conservative) gender dynamics may also need to be taken into account.

CHAPTER 2: PHOTOGRAPHY, THE MEDIA AND MARGINALIZATION

The research project outlined in this thesis concerns photography, its place in marginalized spaces and the possibilities of it being used by marginalized people for personal and social empowerment. However, before we can tackle these questions, we need to ask some more basic ones: Why photography? What special characteristics does contemporary photography have that make it particularly well suited to such a project? Conversely, what problematic characteristics of the medium have led to it not fulfilling this empowering role historically or currently? What has led to the ubiquity of photography in modern society (personally, I find it difficult to imagine a social world without it), and from where does photography derive the emotional power it seems to have with many audiences? These are the questions I will attempt to address in this chapter.

An illustrative example

During a standoff with police during student protests against university tuition fee increases in Cape Town, South Africa in October 2015, a group of white[1] students formed a human shield around their black counterparts. The ensuing photographs, showing the white students, their arms raised, forming a line two people deep with their black colleagues in the background and heavily armed police officers nearby, struck a chord for many in racially polarized Southern Africa (Ahmed, 2015; Sherriff, 2015). The picture, and several others seemingly like it that were taken at other protest sites in ensuing days, seemed for many to cut through dry arguments about socio-economic exclusion and to strike an emotional nerve (Ahmed, 2015). The picture was widely shared on social media (Sherriff, 2015), both in South Africa itself and in neighboring countries like Namibia. But what did the picture *mean*?

Some on social media saw it as a notable display of disciplined white allyship, perhaps even a hopeful sign that some white South Africans were prepared to cooperate with movements that challenge their privilege (@RhodesMustFall, 2015). For others it was a depressing sign of how little had changed, if there was even a suggestion that the police in an independent majority-black African country could contemplate brutalizing young black protesters but would leave their white colleagues alone (@crazynellz, 2015). A South

[1] In common with most social researchers, I acknowledge the constructed nature of racial divisions and therefore terms such as 'black', 'white' and 'colored'. However, owing to the commonness of use of these terms in contemporary Southern Africa I have, for ease of reading, chosen not to put these terms in inverted commas.

African academic put this into more formal language in a major US newspaper, stating the human shield showed that 'in South Africa, even now, unruly white bodies aren't threatening but unruly black bodies are' (Falkof, 2015). A white Namibian commentator in the country's highest-circulation national newspaper asked, doubtfully, if whites in Namibia would ever emulate such an action, and if they were not even more enclosed in a privileged racial bubble than some white South Africans (Marcus, 2015).

The human shield picture illustrates some important points about the way photographs work in media discourse. First, they generate an emotional response in viewers that mere text may not. They force the viewer to look in a way he or she might not normally look (Taylor, 1998: pp. 100-104). One gazes at photographs in a different way than one would look at events happening in front of one's own eyes. This difference can be either positive or negative and can be interpreted through various psychoanalytic lenses. Second, the exact meaning of a photographic image is hard to pin down. Because a photograph only captures the view in a single direction in a single moment in time (a photograph is often captured in a mere $1/100^{th}$ of a second or much less), what happened before or after, and what the broader context is, has to be filled in by the viewer. However, the viewer is often unaware that this filling-in is taking place (Sontag, 2003a: pp. 100-102). Much of this filling-in takes place subconsciously, and uses imagery that is commonplace and accepted in the person's cultural and media space. This leads to a third point: the overall meaning of a photograph in the media depends very much on the context in which it is published. In a famous study, Barthes (1981, 2003) discusses a picture published in a glossy magazine of a black soldier saluting the French flag. The image, Barthes maintained, need to be understood not only in terms of its rich visual imagery, including the connotations of the salute, the military uniform and the soldier's unflinching stare, but also such contexts as France's history of colonization and the role of its military therein, as well as the more immediate contexts of a magazine and the connotations of glamour and aspiration that such a medium embodies. To give another example, Taylor (1998) shows how, in the first Gulf War, photos of mangled bodies of the dead in Saddam Hussein's army were seen by British newspapers not so much as a human tragedy for which the British air force was partially responsible, but rather as evidence of Hussein's cruelty in using young conscripts as 'cannon fodder' to enable his own survival. In a different national context, these same photographs, Taylor argues, may well have had a radically different meaning.

Fourthly, many of the pictures of this moment, and of the 2015 South African student protests as a whole, were captured on mobile phones, and were as widely shared, if not more so, through social media as through mainstream news outlets (Sherriff, 2015). This phenomenon is not unique to Africa. The same can be said for many of the videos and photographs that have surfaced of police brutality towards African Americans in the last two

years, their rapid dissemination via digital media galvanizing support for the Black Lives Matter movement (Day, 2015).What this seems to suggest is that new technologies such as social media and digital imaging have provided a means, however flawed, for members of marginalized groups to both make and share images on their own terms, which would simply not have existed in the days of traditional mass media and analog photography and cinematography. The observation that new media allows more people, and more marginalized people, to take and publish pictures, as well as media in general, has been subjected to various critiques and has its limitations (some of which I discuss later in this chapter, and add to in my finding chapters). However, in general, it holds true that the Internet, mobile media and other technologies have given meaning-making power to many otherwise 'voiceless' groups and individuals (Lister, 2009; Marshall, 2006, pp. 634-644; Howard & Hussein, 2011).

I will now deal with each of these topics in more detail, explaining why each of these observations impacts upon my research project, as well as some of the critiques these ideas have been subjected to, some of their limitations that have been most widely noted, and ways in which these limitations may be overcome.

Photography, psychoanalysis and the emotional content of the image

To deal with the first point, the emotional power of the image, we have to consider contemporary visual culture and how it has developed. We have to understand the power of images to sometimes be fetishistic objects, that is objects that, in psychoanalytic theory, serve to compensate for a profound perceived (often sexual) lack. We need to understand how images have been used to suggest a realism that other media do not have, and how this relates to certain pleasures of looking and being looked at. We also need to be aware of how these gazes, these ways of looking and being looked at, are constructed (whether we are aware of this construction process or not) by certain groups and not others, and how they benefit certain groups and disadvantage others (Mulvey, 2007, pp. 384-5). For the people participating in my research project, as will be discussed in more detail in later chapters, the taking of their own photos provided an opportunity to recapture these pleasures of looking, on their own terms, and to acknowledge that they would as seen through their own, often conflicted gazes, as valid. For these reasons, we would fail to see much of the potential power of photography in the hands of marginalized people if we do not first explore theories relating to the ideas of the gaze and of visual pleasures. Indeed also, if we do not explore, as it were, the dark side of the gaze, including voyeurism in popular culture and the fetishisation of women of color, we would not see why marginalized people like this study's participants feel the need to engage in alternative, subversive visual projects in the first instance.

Christopher (2015, p. 76) states that 'photography's relationship to the real is what draws us into the frame'. This 'real', according to Roland Barthes (1981, p. 76), is 'not the optionally real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph.' What Barthes implies is that, for a photograph to be formed, an object or person must be placed in front of the lens. (This is still largely true today, despite advances in Photoshop and similar programs). However, once that is done, the photographer selects what part of the scene in front of him or her to portray, and makes a number of choices about how an image will be constructed, as do those who take the image further to reproduce and publish it (Barthes, 1981, pp. 76-80). However, despite the fact that cameras and photographers do sometimes lie and always tell stories from a certain point of view, the idea that, once, there was something 'real' in front of the photographer's lens still captivates the public imagination. The idea that, through the photographic process, we see what the photographer saw, is hard to dispel (Christopher, 2015, pp. 76-77).

Beyond this, however, it needs to be asked why the act of 'seeing' so entrances us. There are circumstances in which looking itself is a course of pleasure, as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure at being looked at (Mulvey, 2007, p. 381). This pleasure in looking, scopophilia was identified by Freud (1927) as one of the basic 'component instincts' of human sexuality. For Freud, this pleasure in looking was a primal human instinct, reflected even in the way children are curious to see the private and the forbidden. As Mulvey (2007, p. 381) points out, the healthy desire can became fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching another person. This person easily becomes an *other*, having no conscious role in the pleasure of the watcher except to be seen. While psychoanalytic scholars often focus on the most extreme cases of this, the media create various approximations of this voyeurism, in which even 'normal' people participate. According to Mulvey (2007, pp. 381-2), the classic cinema experience, where people sit in a dark room watching often flawless others, especially women, who seem to have no awareness of an audience presence, is one such outlet of media voyeurism. Another, as we will see in more detail later, is colonial photography, which sought to give fascinated Westerners the chance to look into the supposed lives of native peoples (Bhabha, 1999; Mercer, 2007, pp. 438–440). Once can also see how many products of the modern media, whether gazing at people's housebound lives in Big Brother (Andrejevic, 2002, p. 252), or at African famine victims and other suffering souls (Sontag, 2003a, pp. 100–103), might be seen as voyeuristic perversions of this basic human instinct to look at our fellow human beings, where the instinct finally becomes not so much to look at as to exert one's power over people and other them.

These considerations should give us a hint that the gaze itself – the attitudes and experiences and expressions which we bring to the seemingly simple act of looking – can in

itself be problematic. Photographs, through their unique ability to capture a person or scene in a way that appears to a casual viewer to be identical to something a human eye might have seen, and preserve that scene to be looked at intensely, inevitably generate unique kinds of gazes (Sontag, 2003a; Szarkowski, 2003). A photo, especially one displayed in a gallery, invites a kind of sustained looking, examining or staring, which a viewer would be unlikely take part in if he or she viewed the scene in real life (Sontag, 2003b). Even in media images, which especially online, may be quickly glossed over, the fixing of an image in a photograph invites a different sort of look than when one might encounter a similar scene in real life. It invites looking, knowing that one will not be seen. Also, unlike a scene experienced in real life, it can be considered in a more detached way, since there is no likelihood that the people in the scene will notice or respond to, much less threaten the viewer. Furthermore, a photo saved online can usually very easily be retrieved for a second, and even a third, look.

One of the many things looking does is help to constitute our very sense of self. Jacques Lacan (1955, quoted in Mulvey, 2007, p. 382-3) states that the first moment a child recognizes his or her own reflection in a mirror as crucial to the development of the ego, the self – at least the self in which we all believe. In Lacan's formulation, the infant who has not yet mastered the upright posture and who is supported by either another person or some device will, upon seeing him or herself in the mirror, 'jubilantly assume' the upright position. He or she thus finds 'already there' in the mirror image a mastery that he or she will actually learn only later. He or she 'appears to be what he or she will only later become' (Gallop, 1982, p. 120). It also is involved, in Lacan's psychology, with the child beginning to form a sense of itself as an independent person. This mirror-moment precedes language for the child. It is important for us to see that the image, whether in a mirror or on screen or in other formats, is intimately bound up with the human senses of self, achievement, and processes of psychologically separating oneself from the other.

In a society of unequal power relations it becomes commonplace for the person with power - men, white people, heterosexuals, rich people - to be the "bearer of the look" and the powerless person - a woman, or black or queer person - to become the "image" (see Mulvey, 2007, p. 383). This appears in many forms in different media, but has at its heart the common attributes of the woman (black person, LGBTIQ+ person, etc.) being the provoker of the hero to action rather than being part of the action in her own right, the intense stylizing for the marginalized person's body while not of, for example, white heterosexual male heroes, and marginalized people's bodies often presented for purposes of 'erotic contemplation' (see Mulvey, 2007, p. 384) than to make a sociopolitical point or advance the action of a storyline. The making of less powerful others into images for the gaze of the privileged has been seen in many media forms, for example the woman not the man as "image" in narrative cinema, with most of the tropes described above being put into practice in classical Hollywood narratives

(Mulvey, 2007, pp. 383-384). The woman in cinema has traditionally been displayed on two levels: as an erotic object for the mostly male characters in the story taking place on screen, and as an erotic object for the audience sitting in the movie theatre. The man's role is more often than not the one actively driving the story forward, making things happen. Often his gaze upon the woman as an object of beauty provokes him to do this. The woman's role in the narrative is to only to provoke this response and to provide interludes in the action, where 'something striking to look at' is presented. (Mulvey, 2007, pp. 381-382).

Another common example, of this objectification through the gaze, involves the black person as an image to be looked upon by the chiefly white audience in some modernist art photography (Mercer, 2007, pp. 438–440). Photography of black men has often facilitated the projection of supposedly fixed sexual characteristics of dominance, power and heightened sexuality onto the black body. Difference between individual back bodies and the very possibility of difference are often denied (Mercer, 2007, pp. 435-436). In this way, even black men are put in the same category as women are in cinema, in that they are set out as 'one to be looked at' with whites as the purveyor of the look (Dyer, 1988, quoted in Mercer 2007, p. 437). Furthermore, as I shall explain later in this chapter, fixity, the idea that a black person can only have one set of attributes, one possible reading of his or her motives, one sexual identity, and so on, is a key attribute of colonial discourse (see Bhabha, 1999), one that colonial photography took up as much as any other medium.

Sometimes it has also been suggested that the gaze of the viewer on a photograph is not just marginalizing in and of itself, but also because it approaches elements of the fetishistic. Fetishism suggests an intense connection to and reverence for an inanimate image or object, which in a Freudian understanding cannot be separated from the fetishist's sexual desires and ideas. According to Freud (1927, pp. 350-352), the fetish was as a stand-in, in certain stages of the development of the personality of a man who goes on to become a sexual fetishist, for the disturbing-to-him fact that the female human being has no penis. More broadly a fetish is an object or image that has the psychological function of standing in for a sexual object that is seen to be flawed or lacking (Freud, 1927, pp. 351-3). This image or object becomes the repository of profoundly displayed feelings and unresolved emotions (Hall, 2007, p. 312). Freud argued that objects of fetishism can be unrelated to sexual imagery; in fact how and why the object or image was originally created may become irrelevant (Freud, 1927, pp. 351-2). Marxist and feminist critics have extended the argument to show how the fetishism of commodities and of familial relationships is commonplace and necessary for the maintenance of certain forms of exploitation within capitalism and patriarchy (Mulvey, 1993, pp. 4-5). Mass-produced images, if not viewed from a place of critical consciousness, often become objects of fetishism, disavowed from the contexts in which they were originally made and held up as an ideal or as an unquestioned reality (Mulvey, 1993, pp. 11-12).

The term ‘fetish’ itself is not a neutral one. Before its application by Freud, white European explorers used the term to describe artifacts intended for religious or ritual use (such as shrines, masks, etc.) that they observed indigenous peoples using, or dug up in archeological digs in Africa and Asia. It was thus seen as something belonging to ‘native’ peoples, not to whites or Westerners (Apter and Pietz, 1993). Only after the fetish was reinterpreted, first in psychoanalysis, then in critical social theory, did it come to be seen that fetishism was something white males also did. What is more, the expansion of the definition of fetishism allowed theorists to see that a fetish did not need to have a religious object attached to it (Apter and Pietz, 1993). In fact, common objects of fetishism in Western popular culture, such as familial relationships or consumer objects, may have little to do with religion or supernatural beliefs (Mulvey, 1993, pp. 11-13).

To use a photograph in a fetishistic way may imply a number of scenarios. The using of images of human pain and suffering as mere stand ins for the fact that famines and wars are going on, as fundraising campaign posters, or as stand-ins for ‘Africa’ or ‘the developing world’ is a good example. Another is the use of images implying state power, such as photographs of soldiers on parade, to imply ‘patriotism’ or say ‘you must support this government’, rather than seeing those soldiers as people with perhaps mixed emotions and loyalties. Yet another example, closer to home, is the use of images of natural beauty, such as the Namib Desert or African wildlife, to suggest a particular conception of what it means to be Namibian, a Namibian citizen, or a ‘patriotic Namibian’, to the exclusion of others, or the use of similar images for other countries (snowy mountains and lochs to suggest Scottish identity or the Tour de France cycling race to suggest ‘Frenchness’, for example).

In general, there are two key humanitarian concerns when producers and consumers of an image use a photograph - consciously or unconsciously - in a fetishistic way. First, it tends to deny real conditions of production, substituting a false or simulated view of the world that potentially obscures real suffering and exploitation. Second, we tend to forget that the images we fetishize are of real people, with complex feelings, life stories, and needs. The glamorous picture of the fashion model denies her private identity and does not acknowledge the patriarchy and exploitation inherent in much of the modeling industry. The picture of the African famine victim becomes a rally cry for action against hunger (whether for charity or global economic reform), or an icon of African failure, but in the process the black child’s suffering, feelings and life history are all but forgotten. He or she is, in a real sense, dehumanized (Kleinman and Kleinman, 1996; Watts, 1991). The image of the dead soldier quickly either becomes a symbol of heroism or of disgust at war but the fact that he was a flesh-and-blood human being slips below the level of public consciousness (Taylor, 1998, pp. 13-14, 130).

As mentioned earlier, another phenomenon we should be wary of is the use of photographs for voyeurism. Voyeurism was originally a psychoanalytic term for the practice of a person gaining sexual pleasure from seeing others nude or engaging in sexual acts, especially while they are not aware of the viewer's presence (Dwyer, 1989). It has also developed a broader meaning, of gaining pleasure from watching the problems, distress or private lives of unsuspecting others ("Voyeur," 2015). This meaning is relevant to photography, as many of the great street and news photographers of the 20th century, such as those of Arthur Fellig, better known as 'Weegee', and Henri Carier-Bresson, can be said to have offered a voyeuristic experience to some extent (Orvell, 1992, pp. 36-39). Very often, news media and book publishers have used photography to offer up the experience of the sufferings of the poor, to the rich and middle-class. Some have said they have deliberately done this in order to humanize the poor and suffering, and to force the rich and comfortable into a position where they cannot easily look away (Orvell, 1992, pp. 27-30). However, the fact is that this type of photography places considerable power in the hands of the photographer, who often gets rich from making the middle class pay for viewing the suffering of others. In particular, viewing the suffering of others to whom one is not closely connected, for example in a foreign country, or one that is at war while yours is at peace, is always likely to be socially and culturally problematic (Sontag, 2003a, pp. 100-103). Viewing these photographs may elicit strong emotions of pity and sorrow, but they are also part of a glut of a vast number of these images currently on display in the media, often without much context, and which are by no means guaranteed to provoke social action (Sontag, 2003a; Taylor, 1998).

In fact, these images can become consumer objects – a product, which, in an unusual way, gives pleasure. As Sontag (2003a, p. 211) states, each of us in the Western world has hundreds of images stored in his or her memory by the time we reach adulthood. For these photos to stir compassion, they must be translated into action soon after viewing. Otherwise that compassion is a transient emotion, and can easily fade away when presented with yet more troubling images (Sontag, 2003a, p. 948). What is more, the Western mainstream media displays images representing human suffering in 'exotic' parts of the world, away from the centers of power such as Western Europe and America, far more readily than suffering in or near those centers. Many western media consumers are familiar with images of famine in South Sudan or genocide in Rwanda in the 1990s (Sontag, 2003a, p. 663), less so with pictures of the homeless in United States cities, for example. This leads to a situation where a lot of images are put into public circulation, but there is a pervasive feeling that not too much can be done about them, and since they belong to far off, exotic places, maintaining an emotional connection to these images is difficult. It becomes easy to rather see these pictures as something that is just there, to wonder for a second what it must be like and then to move on to the next item on the TV news or in a newspaper (Sontag, 2003a, pp. 660-663). It may

be that such images do more for our desire to feel that we are compassionate, or connected to the world, than for the person who is depicted.

Many of these images are related to ways of seeing the poor, which do more for the rich having a good self-image than demonstrating genuine compassion. Volunteering and voluntourism provide good examples of this. Although much has been written on the potential harm of voluntourism, especially in certain situations such as orphanages (see Guttentag 2009, Helle 2012, McLennan 2014), the practices continue partly because people of the upper and middle classes in developed countries want to be seen to be doing good, and feel that they are good people. Many images are, of course, produced in the course of these trips to experience 'how the other half lives'. As will be discussed in a later chapter, I found out that the effects of this on the self-image of some members the San communities in Namibia are far from neutral, and often harmful.

The dangers of this on a global scale, when non-Africans frequently depict Africans and other members of the global south, and gaze at such pictures in newspapers and art galleries, given the weight of centuries of colonial stereotyping (see Bhabha, 1999), are significant, and imply a situation where members of the global south are fetishized as exotic and glamorous and as bearers of suffering, but never really understood as human beings. This exoticization often, but of course not solely, works through specifically visual means, though pictures and moving images. As will be discussed, these images have not only been the perhaps expected ones of the barbarous or rebellious or violent black person, but also have involved more subtle forms of stereotyping, such as Africans and other people from the Global south as victims or as ideal servants or junior employees (Bhabha, 1999, pp. 106-108). It is important to stress that these representations, enforced by arms during colonial times, still exist in more subtle ways in the post-colonial era.

The term 'global south', as used here, suggests a theoretical work-in-progress, since it represents concepts that are 'still in the exploratory stage' and is a term that brings together a diverse set of peoples, problems and issues (Iqani, 2015, pp. 2-3). Following Prashad (2014), Iqani (2015, p. 4) states that: 'The term "global south" signals a complex and dynamic vocabulary for speaking about certain similarities in cultures, economics and political histories in contexts outside the historically privileged metropoles of the US and Europe.'

It is important to emphasize that, despite the existence of pockets of often-considerable privilege within the global south, the term implies the countries and regions of the global south as a whole are subject to Western power and hegemony, and do not share in this power (Iqani, 2015, pp. 4-5). Since colonial times, and also in postcolonial spaces, the effects of this power has been seen in both material relations (economic exploitation) and the ways in which the 'colonies' or the 'third world' has been represented discursively, for example being seen as poor, barbaric or uncivilized (Mbembe, 2001). However, the term global south also

implies a cautious optimism (Iqani, 2015, p. 5) in that it stresses that a level of successful resistance to this othering can be, and has been, maintained.

This resistance has taken various forms, including both at the level of actual material conditions and also, importantly for this project, in symbolic and ideological terms. A good example, though not without controversy, has been the Fees Must Fall movement in South Africa, and how it has used social media to promote its agenda. Images emphasizing police brutality, for example, and the perceived alienating nature of university institutions have been widely circulated on social media by proponents of these movements. Online media such as The Daily Vox have privileged radical students' views of protests and clashes, in contrast to more mainstream print media, who have given official sources, such as Ministers of State and university Vice-Chancellors more prominence. Another example of media offering resistance to othering is the World Social Forum and its online presences. The Forum is designed to be a meeting place for representatives of the working classes and other marginalized groups around the world, and to be a places where new social formations are thought about. Yet more examples of media used for resistance, and for offering alternative representations of marginalized groups in society such as the community radio movement, will also be discussed later in this chapter.

Enabling marginalized people in the global south (and indeed, marginalized minorities in privileged countries) to develop an oppositional gaze, which counters the prevailing fetishistic, often voyeuristic, white, male, capitalist gaze described above, has been seen an important part of resistance against systems of oppression (Hill Collins, 1991, pp. 81–85). Liberating photography from its role in supporting patriarchy, and developing a specifically female and feminist gaze, would clearly be a critical part of this project.

Brettle and Rice (1994, p. 94) argue that:

> Women live in a patriarchal culture and see in images - and think in concepts - that come to them from the past. Even their knowledge of their own bodies and minds will be mediated by a culture in which the male provides both the idea and the norm… We cannot simply reach back nostalgically into that past for images than can subvert the present in a direct or celebratory way. Rather, the conventions for visualizing themselves have to be questioned.

To translate these to the realm of practical photography, questioning 'conventions for visualizing' may include such aspects as not using softer lighting when photographing women, questioning the widespread use of Photoshop to airbrush away imperfections in women, making men rather than women the subject of beauty or glamour photography. Indeed, there could be many others, and only the engagement of women and other marginalized groups can determine exactly what direction such radical photography may take (Brettle and Rice, 1994, pp. 92-94). It needs to be specifically noted, however, that developing oppositional gazes –

and image-making that allows them - is especially important in the context of the *black* female experience, where black feminists have seen it as of a process of self-redefinition, in resistance to dominant white, male definitions of black women, which have dominated media discourse (Hill Collins, 1991, pp. 105-113; hooks, 2013, 1992).

In her article 'In our glory: photography and black life', hooks (2003) argues that much of the work of progressive African American photographers in recent years has centered around the question of highlighting the resistance of black Americans to dominant systems, reimagining the archive of historical images of people of color. There has also been a constant struggle to find spaces – galleries, media – to show diverse images of black people. In the light of this many black photographers and communities have found alternative spaces to view their own images. Images, she points out, have to power to give renewed psychic strength to people of color in ongoing societal battles. I would argue that a similar redefinition, of what photography has meant and can mean, needs to happen in Southern Africa.

The redefinition might involve imagining photography that celebrates aspects of the black female experience ignored by the mainstream media, or which makes white males into subjects of anthropological study, as black women so often were in the past, usually mediated by white cameramen. But once again, photography that supports the development of these oppositional gazes is still developing or still to be developed. Thus, the exact form it may take cannot be predicted with any kind of certainty.

In fact, the above considerations can be expanded into a general principle: given that mainstream Western image-making, including photography, is often undertaken for a specific gaze which in turn privileges certain power relations, one of the chief challenges for progressive photography projects should be to turn this around. They should aim to take photographs, and enable others to take photographs, which reveal an oppositional gaze: perhaps a black, African, global south, female or sexual minority gaze, which turns on its head the fetishism implied in conventional portrayals of these historically disadvantaged groups. Such representations would undermine and usurp some of the stereotypical representations that have been made of people marginalized by systems of power, in total undoubtedly the majority of the world's population, while at the same time refusing to deny the severe problems these people experience.

Theorizing the social-democratic practice of progressive photojournalism

While photography has often been used, directly or indirectly, to disempower people in the Global South (and in Africa in particular), there are other examples of photography, at least in principle, leading to potentially empowering and oppositional public discourse. One of these is the Western European tradition of progressive documentary photography. Azoulay (2008)

argues that in two critical cases of social injustice, Palestinians under Israeli military occupation, and women oppressed by patriarchy in Western Europe, photography sympathetic to their struggles has been critical to these struggles being *seen,* and thus being acknowledged, by a wider international public.

In *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence,* Linfield (2010) argues that not all images of marginalized people's suffering are inherently voyeuristic in nature, and offers some examples of where this appears not to be the case. Linfield examines the case of photographs from the Holocaust and suggest that, rather than perpetuating a past violence, people looking at the photographs of the Holocaust continues to defeat historical and modern Nazi attempts to erase Hitler's victims from history and existence. From the photographs taken in China during the Cultural Revolution, Linfield (2010, pp. 113, 788) demonstrates how photography can connect us to humanity even in the midst of totalitarianism. However, Linfield (2010, p. 171) does moderate the obligation with the clause that 'there is a limit to the visual cruelty' that is wanted, needed, or appropriate. There is the implication that the power of these photos to translate into responsible civic practices related in part to them having become symbols for broader social movements, such as active effort on the part of worldwide Jewry to keep the memory of Holocaust victims alive and prevent that legacy from being misappropriated. These social movements have used photos to keep memories of wrongdoing alive and have used these public memories to subvert disempowering narratives (such as modern right-wing holocaust denialism) that might otherwise gain traction in the public domain.

In contrast to the critique of contemporary photojournalism associated with theorists like Sontag (1978, 2003), Hariman & Lucaites (2016) elucidate a number of examples of ethical and careful photojournalism associated with Western social-democratic values that have sought to sympathetically expose injustices and provoke a moral response from the public. They assert that in these contexts, a photograph's accessibility can give it greater reach than many other forms of civic discourse, in the same way that a rock song can convery sentiments to a wider audience than a literary poem can (Hariman & Lucaites, 2016, pp. 14-15).

Hariman & Lucaites suggest that a photograph *can* imply a 'civic spectatorship' among its viewers, a way of looking which implies certain attributes of the one who looks. 'The civic spectator,' they state, 'is one who sees through a frame of ongoing discussion about public affairs who assumes that other spectators are also seeing and discussing the same or similar images' (2016, p. 15). They also, however, state that this potential will only be fully realized by an 'imaginative interpretation' of photos by audiences, which 'places the viewer in an engaged relationship with the real world and those who live there' (Hariman & Lucaites, 2016, p. 59). As they admit, this is not always the case even in engaged Western liberal or social-democratic photojournalistic contexts. What is more, I would argue that exactly this

lack of an engaged relationship between viewer and viewed, between spectator and 'actor', is part of what is wrong with much documentary photography and photojournalism about the Global South, especially photos about the Global South consumed in the Global North, and photos of the marginalized consumed by more privileged citizens of the South.

To be clear, it is important to note that Western socially aware documentary photography stands as an *exception* to the dominant trend of voyeuristic images of human suffering in news media, especially when people from the Global South are portrayed. However, this exception, and others that will be described later, should be instructive to anyone who wants to build a photographic movement where the gazes of marginalized people are prioritized and their work is given space to exist and access to audiences.

Polysemy: what does a photograph mean?

Returning to another set of key points I raised concerning the photos of the 'white human shield' discussed above, the meaning of photograph is never easy to isolate. Barthes (2003) argues convincingly that the meaning of a photographic image in the media can never be divorced from both the medium it is published in, and the political context. Aspects such as captions and other texts in the media, the pictures that a single picture is routinely shown together with, public discourse around the meaning of well-publicized photos, all effect what a photo ends up meaning to a viewer (Barthes, 2003; Sontag, 1978; Taylor, 1998). In a study illustrating this, Taylor (1998) shows how the meaning of photos published in the West showing human rights abuses from the Vietnam and first Gulf wars changed according to the prevailing political sentiment about those wars. The identity of the photographer invariably influences these meanings as well. Two relatively recent photo documentaries of objectively very similar male circumcision and initiation ceremonies in South Africa, one by a black person who had the privileged position of an insider and one by a more economically privileged white man, produced radically different photos, captions and understandings of these images (Waller, 2000, pp. 192-200). These examples do not mean a picture can mean anything. What they do imply is that the broader implications of a photograph's meaning are always up for contestation.

This contestation also relates to who the viewer of the photo is, and his or her cultural and socioeconomic positioning: Sontag (2003a, pp. 32-35), for example, makes the point that women and men have inevitably viewed photos of war differently, as they are historically victims of war in different ways, and because of the understanding that war has been, and for the most part still is, a male game, while women are disproportionately its victims. In fact, different viewers may even use similar language to describe a picture, but nevertheless see different things and experience different emotions in that same image (Sontag, 2003a, p. 34).

Another way of putting this is that a photo is *polysemic*: it contains the potential to display many signs (see Chandler & Munday, 2011, pp. 220, 461). In the language of semiotics, it becomes a *signifier*, just like an alphabetical word or a logo, than can stand in for a variety of different *signifieds,* or material or abstract things that a signifier represents (Chandler & Munday, 2011, pp. 220, 461). One of the functions of writing and speaking around photographs, therefore, is to limit (or enlarge) the range of meanings that the viewer can obtain from a picture (Barthes, 2003, 1999). As I will discuss in a subsequent chapter, the participants in one of my photo workshops demonstrated this very aptly in a discussion on photographs of the black female body.

It can be argued that, because of the polysemic nature of a photograph, it is vital to have critically aware practitioners who can fight for fair representation of their work as well as, ideally, presentation that magnifies the meaning they deem most important, while defending it against possible misinterpretations and distortions of their intended meaning. Of course, most photographers in the media industry have very little control over the ways in which their photographs are used, especially now in an age of internet sharing of photographs and the widespread availability of digital image manipulation software. However, it should still be a goal of photographers, photography movements and critical educators to fight for the improvement of this situation, and for photographers and the subjects of photographs to have a greater say in the way their images are presented.

Considering the polysemy of photographs, the current situation where photographers are often not involved in editorial decisions, and the propensity of photos to be consumed in fetishistic way, the increasing use of Photoshop and similar image manipulation software is cause for concern. One of the most dramatic examples of this is the use of Photoshop to create flawless images of celebrities, especially female celebrities and women in advertisements (Jones, 2013, pp. 19-22; Kilbourne, 2013). During the fieldwork I conducted for this thesis, members of one workshop group specifically asked to learn basic Photoshop, and several of them flagged digital manipulation, without prompting from me, as a problematic aspect of photography, especially for women and gay men.

It can be argued that Photoshop is a medium in its own right, due to its ability, in skilled hands, to produce images with little resemblance to the original photos (Jones, 2013, p. 22). Photoshop is, nevertheless, closely related to photography, as most media photos, even those that are not heavily altered, go through a Photoshopping process (Jones, 2013, p. 23-24), and photographs provide the starting point for even the more heavily manipulated images. The danger of fetishizing such an unobtainable ideal of female beauty as can be generated through Photoshop on the one hand (a now routine practice in the global advertising and magazine industries), and judging women who fail to live up to this in real life on the other, is obvious. It renders invisible all those (the majority) who do not live up to, or come close to, this ideal,

denying them acknowledgement that they exist in today's cultural space (Jones, 2013, pp. 22-23, 27). It has also been argued that the effects of this fetishisation are evidenced in increasing rates of psychological disorders relating to body image in women and girls (Jones, 2013, p. 27; Kilbourne, 2013). This situation is often worse with regard to women and girls of color (Noble, 2013).

The power of digital imagery

The explosive expansion of digital imaging technology in the last two decades and the integration of both cameras and internet/social media access into mobile phones in the last 10 years, has opened up dramatic possibilities for self-expression for historically marginalized people. As we have seen in the discussion of Photoshop above, this can be problematic, but it can also have positive and emancipatory effects. One of those is to have made the public circulation of photographs much easier and quicker. No longer is one required to carry a full-size camera, develop a film (or get a film developed), make and/ or select a print, send the picture to a newspaper or magazine and persuade the editor to publish it. Now anyone with a mobile phone can publish a photo or a video in a few seconds, at a relatively cheap cost and without passing through a once obligatory set of gatekeepers such as newspaper photo editors and darkroom technicians. Castells (2000, pp. 61-69, 217-218) argues that, while the explosion of Internet and related information and communication technologies has created new life chances for members of underprivileged groups, it has also increased the exploitation of certain categories vulnerable people, including being a vehicle for sexual harassment, cybercrime, cyber warfare by nations and sub-national groups, and the so-called 'gig economy' which often means that previously secure jobs turn into precarious self-employment. These contradictory currents can also be seen in the development of digital photography and in photography movements that seek to empower marginalized people.

Thompson (2005) argues that, owing to the ubiquity of such technologies as mobile phones and wireless Internet access, it is no longer necessary for a person to be present in the same spatial or cultural setting to be a witness to events and to see the other. Thompson claims that savvy politicians and their public relations staff have been able to manipulate this to their advantage, while those rulers who imagine they can keep their population in ignorance have often suffered harsh comeuppances. It may, however, be inappropriate to generalize these statements too widely, especially in parts of the global South where access to these technologies is still limited, particularly to the economically marginalized. It also remains true that not much research has been done on the ways new media technologies interact with various forms of power, which obviously remain very unequally distributed (Mansell, 2004). However, the real effect that new media technologies have had cannot be understated. A good example is the Black Lives Matter movement in the USA, which has

rallied against police brutality and other abuses undertaken against African Americans. The mobile phone as a video, photo and audio recording device, as well as the sharing of such recordings and commentaries on social media through the use of hashtags (such as #BlackLivesMatter, and #SayHerName, dealing the with brutality towards and invisibility of African American women) were key components of the movement. Although police abuse of African Americans is nothing new, these recent youth and technology driven movements have brought this social problem to global consciousness (Farmer et al., 2015; Carney 2016, pp. 180-181; Rickford 2016, p. 34).

Another example is the Bring Back Our Girls campaign. On 14 April, 2014, Boko Haram, a terrorist group in Nigeria, kidnapped about 276 girls at a school in Chibok in northeast Nigeria. A total of 43 of the kidnapped girls escaped, leaving over 200 girls still missing (Chilua and Ifukor, 2015). A protest campaign in Nigeria led by parents, relatives and other sympathizers began quickly. Using the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, the group made a point of highlighting the girls' plight on social media, as well as their concern that the Nigerian government was not doing enough to secure the girls' rescue. The use of photographs of the girls, of the protesters in Nigeria, and of previous survivors of Boko Haram captivity formed a key part of the early campaign (Chilua and Ifukor, 2015). Digital media enabled the campaign to quickly spread beyond Nigeria, with solidarity protests being held first in other African states then around the world (Chilua and Ifukor, 2015; Jackson, 2014). US First Lady Michelle Obama famously posted her own picture holding a '#BringBackOurGirls' placard on social media (Chilua and Ifukor, 2015).

The desirability of such a global protest has been much debated. Some have argued that, by discursively taking agency away from Nigerians themselves, the campaign may have done more harm than good (Balogun, 2014). Others have suggested it can only call itself successful when and if all the Chibok girls are released (Chilua and Ifukor, 2015). Another aspect that is problematic is that some of the photos of African girls widely used in the campaign as it progressed to other nations were not even of Nigerians, much less the Chibok missing or their relatives, but more generalized photos of grief-stricken young black women. However, the fact remains that #BringBackOurGirls put the previously neglected struggle against Boko Haram on the agenda of both news media and governments, led to intergovernmental co-operation against the terrorist group, and was a rare show of solidarity among Africans of different countries and members of the African diaspora (Jackson, 2014).

New media technologies have also increasingly been used by marginalized peoples in the South to document their traditions, which are dying out under the strain of Western cultural domination. One group of such projects has involved rural communities in Northwestern Namibia, whose way of life is rapidly changing due to urbanization, economic pressure,

cultural discrimination and other reasons. These projects have utilized such media as photos, pencil drawing and 3D visualization software to document traditional ways of life, including customs, arts, and economic survival mechanisms. Some of them have used devices like tablet computers to collect this information, and for younger people associated with those communities (who may or may not live there) to use these devices to learn about them and their practices. One of the added benefits of such projects is that indigenous peoples have begun to develop, albeit on a small scale, user interfaces and visualization systems (ways to see the online, computer-mediated world) that may be more appropriate to their cultures and modes of perception than interfaces designed in the West (Jensen et al., 2012; Winschiers-Theophilus, 2013). However, these radical projects represent resources and experiences that, generally, are not widely available for the majority of black Namibian communities (Winschiers-Theophilus, 2013).

Despite these positive developments, the fact is that photography as a medium and a technology has had at best a complex relationship with marginalized peoples. The basic technology behind the medium was invented in Western Europe in the 1830s (Langford, 1999, p. 13). During its rapid evolution, photography soon ceased to be dominated by the artists and scientific hobbyists who had initially developed it, and was taken over by a new group of professionals, and eventually, as equipment became relatively more affordable, the basic art also fell into the hands of many middle-class families (Szarkowski, 2003). Literature on the history of photography shows that since its invention, it has been used both as an empowering medium that could serve the interests of social justice, and as a medium that could be used to advance exploitation, imperialism and even genocide (Barthes, 2003; Hartmann et al., 1998; Price, 2000; Sontag, 2003a).

As Westerners settled in and conquered large parts of Africa and Asia in the late 19th century, cameras and photographers went with them. Often the images these photographers created served to normalize relations of domination between white ‘settlers’ and the metropolitan elite on the one hand, and black ‘natives’ on the other (Barthes, 1999, p. 57; Price, 2000, pp. 68-71). In the West, however, some important counter-trends also became apparent, especially from the 1930s onwards. Many photo documentarians, especially in the US and Britain, made the achievement of social change their central objective. These included famous photographers such as W. Eugene Smith and Dorothea Lange, whose work during the Great Depression became famous. This work involved both exposing conditions of exploitation, and making images that were intended to humanize the poor and oppressed by showing their everyday lives, not only seeing them as an exemplar of socio-economic deprivation (Price, 2000, pp. 95-97, 99-102).

So, we have seen that photography globally has not always empowered marginalized people. Because the gaze of the photographer is such a key consideration, it is problematic

that the ones possessing the photographic gaze, by virtue of having cameras and manes to publish pictures, have been non-marginalized people. It is problematic that the photographic archive mainly consists of work done through the white, bourgeois, male, heterosexual gaze, and that this archive has influenced the norms that novice photographers, even marginalized ones, may aspire to. Any attempt to facilitate a civic or progressive photography movement that empowers both its creators and consumers clearly cannot ignore photography's history, especially if it seeks to learn from the most progressive uses of the medium and create a radical alternative to the worst examples of the practice.

Photography in Namibia: a problematic history

In the case of Namibia, where the research for this thesis is based, one cannot ignore the history of the use – and often misuse – of photography. In particular, it is worth recalling as a starting point that photography in colonial Namibia, especially in the years of German and later South African occupation, frequently served to legitimize colonial domination and promote ideas of racial superiority (Hartmann et al., 1998). The public memory of this time period is alive and well in post-Independence Namibia (Du Pisani et al., 2010a), and as a result the consumption of media, including photography, in present day Namibia is bound to be directly or indirectly affected by it.

During the German colonial period from the mid-1880s to 1915, photographs often portrayed 'native peoples' as both exotic and uncivilized. Photographs depicting colonial officials showing off indigenous people in traditional dress are common, for example, as are pictures of Africans admiring European technology – such as airplanes, agricultural equipment, cameras themselves - and working under the direction of Europeans. Pictures of Europeans being schooled in African traditions or activities are mostly absent (Silvester et al., 1998, pp. 14-18). There was also a tradition of anthropometric photography, the point of which was to classify black 'tribes' on the basis of physical characteristics (Harris, 1998, pp. 22-24). Much of the photography of the period served to define the various black ethnic groups as an other, a group of outsiders, when compared to the white setters within the country (Harris, 1998). This is a clear example of photographs becoming fetishistic, representing Africans as an exotic other, and in so doing giving colonial settlers and metropolitan Germans a sense of their historic civilizing mission, encouraging them to feel good about the German, and more broadly European, colonial project. The real situation of the black Namibian was not given much exposure, nor the costs on black bodies and lives of the colonialism this photography supported. This pictorial representation of Africans, Indians, indigenous Americans and other colonized peoples as exotic others was a common feature to the colonial enterprises and industrial complexes of Western countries such as England, France and the white United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The so called civilizing mission of white people and the impossibility of white Europeans being civilized of being in meaningful dialogue with the white colonizer were common themes in this imagery (Price 2000; Corbey 1993; Berkhoffer 2011; Shohat 1991).

Many of these trends continued into the South African occupation of Namibia, which lasted from 1915 to 1989. While South African authorities commissioned photographs celebrating certain aspects of native cultures, aspects less conducive to colonial control were ignored. The official photography of communities in Northern Namibia at this time, for example, sought to legitimize the power of chiefs and headmen. This was done by, for example, photographing traditional festivals where chiefs were honored, and showing

traditional leaders dispensing power in various ways (see Shiweda 2010 for one example of this from Northern Namibia). Instances where this power was being disrupted, such as attempts at the formation of trade unions, youth organizations and political parties, were not photographed. The chiefs' power had to be preserved. They often played a role in ensuring a supply of migrant labor to mines and industries in southern Namibia and South Africa and often supported indirect rule by white authorities (Shiweda, 2010). What is more, at least into the 1950s photography continued to be largely a tool to keep the races separate and to reduce native peoples to stereotypes. As Jeremy Silvester et al (1998, p. 22) have noted, 'It is rare that photographs from the South African colonial period show white and black people in the same frame, let alone in non-servile relationships.'

Different political uses of photography, and especially photojournalism, did emerge in Namibia as the armed struggle for independence intensified in the 1970s and 1980s. During the difficult and often bloody years of the 1980s, progressive photojournalism served as a medium to make things visible, highlighting conflicts and atrocities, showing things which the Namibian apartheid regime wished to hide (Hayes, 2010). The work of John Liebenberg and other photographers from *The Namibian* newspaper during the 1980s is some of the best-known examples of this (see Liebenberg and Hayes, 2010). However, photographs were also an arena of political contestation used by both sides in the war (Hayes, 2010, p. 116). For example, photographs of mass protests in Namibian townships (some of the most famous of these were taken during high school student boycotts and demonstrations in the 1980s), seemingly moving inexorably towards breaking the down the apartheid system, were published in Namibia (with some restrictions) and around the world (Liebenberg and Hayes, 2010). Photos of Namibians in exile, working together in harmonious ways that seemed to exemplify the Marxist beliefs of liberation movements at the time, were widely circulated by those movements, but their distribution was restricted in Namibia. Photos of atrocities committed by either side in the war were circulated by that side's opponents (Hayes, 2010, pp. 113-116). These included graphic photos of landmine victims and of civilians killed in the South African Air Force bombing of a refugee camp at Cassinga, Angola, in 1978.

The Namibian history of photography has many parallels with that of South Africa, which was de facto ruler of its territory from 1915 to 1990. In particular, the early uses of photography as entertainment for the white ruling classes and as a means of categorizing, organizing, and often fetishizing, the indigenous black population were common themes in both South Africa and Namibia, in South Africa's case from the earliest days of photography well into the 1940s and 50s (Hayes, 2007, pp. 139-141). Photographs of whites and blacks in South Africa in colonial times were often composed and cropped differently. For example, whites would be photographed in formal poses, such as sitting in a chair in formal clothes, while blacks were more likely to be snapped while in the act of doing something. Where

black people were the subject of formal photographs they were often wearing an approximation of white colonial fashions, or otherwise in situations that would look as 'white' and respectable as possible. From the 1950s onwards many black (and some white) photographers in South Africa did challenge apartheid practices and cruelties with often striking images, such as that of Hector Peterson, killed in the 1976 Soweto uprising, which became iconic around the world (Hayes, 2007, pp. 144-145). However, photographic traditions and continuities linger in time long after their main originators are no longer with us (Hayes, 2007, p. 159). Therefore, the effects of the early, more dehumanizing colonial genres of photography still can be felt at some levels. This may be truer in Namibia, as the initial (and extremely brutal) colonial conquest and genocide was a quite recent event (taking place mostly in the first decade of the 20th century), and many of the photographs showing and supporting it are thus widely available and known in public memory. Also, photography-as-resistance only became a significant movement into the 1970s and 80s, and some of these photos are not as well known in the public imagination as, say, equivalent photos from South Africa or even from African-American resistance (Hayes, 2010; Silvester et al., 1998).

One form of this persistence of photography as an othering device is within township tourism, where photos are sometimes taken from tour buses without informing the township residents first, much less asking permission. Another is cultural tourism, whereby the opportunity to photograph black Namibians in rural areas wearing traditional outfits, such as the OvaHimba in the far Northwest (who often wear outfits consisting of a leather skirt or kilt, sandals and elaborate hair arrangements, and where both men and women traditionally go topless in hot weather) is part of the experience one pays the tour operator for. Photographing people like the OvaHimba, of course, can be managed ethically. Namibian professional photographer Hentie Burger's photos re-imagining the OvaHimba beyond the fetishistic tourist-type gaze at bodies and body parts can be mentioned here. His images instead emphasize aspects like family life and the journey into adulthood in these communities, and he refuses to pose photographs (Smith, 2013). Another example is the documentary work produced by some of my final-year students at the Polytechnic of Namibia who accompanied OvaHimba curio sellers making business journeys from their homes in Namibia's Northwest to Windhoek and back (Kamara and Haufiku, 2015). If not contaminated by fetishism, a visit to a poor township could be an opportunity for genuine learning by rich Westerners. However, it cannot be denied that the standard way in which photographic tours of these places take place, and the typical photos that are taken, hark back to colonial days and to the white, Western gaze on the black body as something exotic, often sexualized, and perceived as totally alien to the Western way of life. Particularly problematic is the idea that what matters and is to be photographed is the people's dress, dwellings, environment, etc., not their

personalities, opinions, conflicts or any of the other things that make them rounded, complex, full human beings.

From the 1980s South Africa had a significant documentary photography movement, where photographers set out to record people's, especially black, poor and marginalized people's, everyday lives, outside of big political events. This movement can be seen especially in the archive of the now-closed picture agency Afrapix (Hayes, 2007, pp. 153-156). It is questionable whether Namibia had a similar movement before independence, and even now, documentary photography in Namibia is uncommon. As a young photojournalist in the early 2000s, based at *The Namibian* newspaper, I was impressed by Tanya Bause's work as chief photographer: she would often go into Windhoek's townships, looking for ways in which people's day-to-day lives were being impacted by the political and economic circumstances represented in the news reports, and also by how she had built up relationships with those communities. Some years later I volunteered with a feminist group called the Women's Leadership Centre, one of the organizations involved in my research for this thesis, which at the time had just begun to add a small documentary photographic component to their women's writing project, which assists Namibian women to write fiction and non-fiction relating to their experiences and regularly publishes volumes of this work. However, other than these and possibly a few other examples, Namibian photojournalists only regularly photograph 'hard' news stories and newsmakers. Photos of politicians, business leaders, senior police and army officers, and other elite members of society still dominate the pages of Namibian print media. The effect of this may be that photography that captures people's everyday lives could be a strange concept to many people in Namibia, which is regrettable because such photography could be a way of democratizing the medium and helping to liberate it from its colonial associations.

Photography and Spectacle in Namibia

It has been argued that spectacle – the staging of events and experiences to be seen and heard by the populace rather than genuine, accountable discourse between rulers and ruled – has become a common form of political control and legitimation of regimes in many societies, including those nominally identifying as democracies (De Bord 1977; Kellner 2015). This is at least as old as the earliest civilizations, but in recent centuries and especially in recent decades, this spectacle has become mediated through technology rather than something a citizen sees with the naked eyes or hears with the naked ear. Photographic images and visual culture have played a central role in this, in Africa and around the world (DeBord, 1977; Frederico, 2010; Kellner 2015). According to DeBord (1977), the image is increasingly separated from the actual physical thing it represents, and for the citizen, public spectacles, often involving the creation of dramatic images, take the place of true participation in

communal life. When, according to this conceptualization, the real world is transformed for the typical person into simple images, these images themselves "become real beings and effective motivations of behavior" (DeBord, 1977, pp. 96-97). According to one reviewer, for DeBord, "the spectacle manifests itself as a secularized form of religion in which the followers worship the image itself, the commodity, the estranged work of men" (Frederico, 2010, p. 183) "Estranged work" here is meant in the Marxian sense where the commodity is revered but the work in making it is hidden (Frederico, 2010, pp. 183-4). Photography, especially news photography, commonly plugs into such spectacles. What is more, not only does some photography hide the labors of the working class, the photographer's work and the choices he/ she makes in making images (such as choice of angles, shutter speeds, lighting, even subjects) are hidden from non-experts and less privileged people who lack knowledge about the technical details of photography, so photos are seen not as art (or spectacle) but as the 'real world'.

In Namibia images have frequently been invoked as part of the spectacle of politics, as in the continuing debate over reparations requested by Namibian communities from Germany for the colonial genocide of 1904-08. Demands for reparations for these mass killings intensified from the mid-2000s after an apology for the atrocities by the German Minister of International Development (Meldrum, 2004), and the revelations in the early 2010s that Namibian and German government were involved in preliminary talks about the issue. In media reports on these subjects, and in social media discussions, graphic historical images of brutal atrocities were widely published. Often these were not captioned with specific details but merely used generally to represent the brutality of the genocide as whole. These included pictures of Namibians' skulls which were exported to European universities for dubious research as to whether Africans had lower intellectual capacities. Many of those skulls that could be traced were returned to Namibia in 2011 - 2012 and interred with full military honors. The return of still more is planned (Mund, 2015; Sasman, 2011a). Macabre images of the skulls displayed on their return in glass cases and other receptacles, as well of as the original export of the skulls, dominated the newspapers. A historical archive picture of a German officer carelessly packing Namibian skulls into a shipping crate made it onto the cover of the popular Namibian hip-hop group Black Vulcanite's debut album 'Remember The Future' (Mazaza, 2013). As a Namibian, it was not easy to view the images of some of these skulls. As a Namibian of European (albeit not German) descent, I felt a strange mixture of anger and guilt when looking at them. In a conversation with a black Namibian friend I was asked why I don't automatically feel the same way when seeing images of poverty in Namibia and wealth in Germany, or how I would feel at photos of injustices black Namibians had committed against each other. I couldn't give good responses, but at least part of the answer to these questions, I think, has to do with the power of images in social spectacle to

emphasize some aspects (the historical suffering of the Namibian people and the responsibility of white colonial powers for that suffering) and de-emphasize others (poverty and inequality in Namibia today).

In Namibian media discourse the skull images came not just to stand for the specific communities that were victimized, but for victims of colonialism as a whole. Yet they also served to maintain a single story about Namibia's past: questions of present day inequality due to colonialism, beyond the occupation of land, of what sort of modern-day Namibia should be built in their memory, or of the complicity of some indigenous Namibians in co-operating with colonial forces, were not discussed. Indeed it can be argued that these questions have not generally been given the careful consideration they deserve in postcolonial Namibia (Du Pisani et al., 2010a, pp. VIII–XI). At the same time, dissent around the manner of the skulls' return was harshly criticized. A journalist who wrote an article questioning the cost of the repatriation of the skulls was publically condemned by a Namibian Minister as a 'bloody Boer' who did not care about reconciliation (*Kazenambo fumes at the Namibian Sun*, 2011; Sasman, 2011b). The above example also serves to illustrate that present-day Namibia faces many challenges as a result of its often-brutal colonial past, and among them are how to deal with the effects of such a past on people's imaginations of nationhood and personhood, which are often mediated by images.

The Namibian past and its impact on the present

This Namibian past includes a history of colonization, first by Germany from the 1880s to 1915 then by apartheid South Africa from 1915 to 1990. It also includes one of the worst genocides in Africa in the 20th century from 1904 to 1908, when, in response to an uprising, Imperial German troops wiped out at least 50 per cent, and possibly as much as 80 per cent, of the Herero and Nama ethnic groups in central and southern Namibia (Katjavivi, 1988, pp. 8-11; Wallace, 2011, pp. 177-182). This genocide, and the discourse around it, in many ways prefigured genocides which were to be perpetrated a generation later in Nazi Germany (see Olusoga and Erichsen, 2010). On taking over the territory of Namibia during World War 1, the white South African government put in place its own forms of racial segregation and discrimination (Wallace, 2011, pp. 218-222).

Various people's movements culminated in the launching of an armed struggle for Namibian independence in 1966 (Katjavivi, 1988, pp. 59-60; Wallace, 2011, pp. 268-269), which would eventually be successful, with elections held in 1989 and Independence in March 1990. The liberation struggle, however, took a severe toll in ways more significant than simply dead combatants. Based on a perceived need to hold their movement together under severe assault, the leadership of the South West Africa People's Organization (Swapo) frequently adopted similar coercive strategies on Namibians under their control as colonial

occupiers had done (Leys and Saul, 1995, pp. 52-58), a trend that some argued continues to influence post-Independence political culture (Leys and Saul, 1995, pp. 200-203). Attempts by South Africa to set up various transitional governments or indigenous-ruled tribally-divided client states in Namibia from the 1980s onward left a legacy of deep political divisions between black Namibians (Wallace, 2011, pp. 296-304) and the liberation struggle as a whole may have significantly worsened ethnic tensions.

Namibia became independent in 1990, with a popularly elected government promising a state based on the rule of law and respect for human rights. It has been argued that the post-Independence regime has been reasonably successful, and has promoted a degree of peace and political tolerance (Leys & Saul, 1995, p. 190-191). However, severe economic inequalities, many of which can be linked to colonial exploitation, remain (Leys and Saul, 1995, p. 190; Wallace, 2011, pp. 310-316). Thus, the past casts a long shadow over Namibia's efforts to move forward as a nation. In the public imagination, reconciliation is often contrasted with the need for justice and even retribution for colonial era wrongs (Hunter, 2010). Although widely regarded as a success story in terms of transformation from a racial war situation to a harmonious democracy, Namibia in fact faces conflicts over land, race, class, gender and official memory as it seeks to complete transitional processes begun at independence in 1990 (Du Pisani et al., 2010b).

The possible role of photography in social empowerment

This is the social and political environment in which photography in Namibia takes place. But what role should photography play in these postcolonial conflicts and contestations? The examples I have mentioned suggest its role could be significant. That photos seem to have an effect at some of the deepest psychoanalytical levels of human personality suggests that their uses in situations of contestation could be profound. Images are routinely fetishistic objects, they are often used in a voyeuristic way, and can become separated in people's minds from the conditions under which they were created and the real people they depict. All these suggest that photos cannot be separated from processes of political change and issues of power. Photos serve as powerful symbols, which can effect emotions and may lead to personal and political action. At the same time, we have seen how a medium that could be change-inducing has instead been used to give pleasure to elite members of society, rather than motivate social change to benefit the most vulnerable. For these reasons, photography is a site of socio-political contestation, and how that contestation plays out can determine either positive or negative effects for marginalized people's images – both how others see them and how they see themselves.

In his classic anti-colonial text, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon states the critical importance of participation in cultural and artistic practices for the oppressed native person[2] to regain a healthy sense of self in the face of a colonial system which would inevitably deprive him or her of such personhood:

> The native rebuilds his perceptions because he renews the purpose and dynamism of the craftsmen, of dancing and of music and of literature and the oral tradition. His world comes to lose its accursed character. (1961, p. 196)

Fanon's point is that a colonial system requires, as one of its basic conditions, a denial of the colonial subject's true self. The self can only be seen as something that needs the colonizer's authority for support. This leads to widespread mental illness among colonized peoples, but also to an easily controllable populace (1961, pp. 200-204).

Early postcolonial theorists such as Fanon have been criticized for many perceived deficiencies in their work, including unnecessarily disavowing any kind of North-South dialogue and refusing to take seriously enough the idea of nonviolence as a method of resistance to imperialism (Lal, 2012, pp. 191-194). It has been argued that a truly transformative postcolonial theory must do more to address 'the dissent that is beyond dissent,' in other words dissent that does not take commonly prescribed or easily recognizable forms (Lal, 2012, pp. 203-204). Nevertheless, the concern of Fanon for the importance of the (post)colonial self, and of cultural production's power to influence that self in a potentially productive way, remains a key theoretical concern.

Many scholars responding to Fanon's critique of colonialism have singled out the text – here implying any reproducible cultural product, including a photograph – produced in colonial Africa and Asia as a key part of the process of colonial domination. Homi Bhabha, for example, outlines how the stereotype is a key part of many colonial texts. By reducing indigenous people to often ridiculous stereotypes, these texts serve to set up the colonial subject as 'other' – as not central to the dominant narrative of progress in the colony (1994, pp. 106-108). We can see this clearly in the photography of colonial Namibia, which insisted on picturing black ways of dress or rustic dwellings, while any technology of advancement was pictured as something white people, especially white males, brought. These pictures included photos of airplanes and cars, agricultural machinery, still photo and movie cameras, and often involved the white people (mostly white men) supervising the black people using this technology, or showing them how to use it (Silvester et al., 1998, pp. 14-18).

The activity of any revolutionary organization, Fanon argues, should not be just to fight against colonial rule but to educate the indigenous subject to see him or herself as the equal of

[2] The term native is commonly used in Fanon's work, as it was at the time, to mean a black person. By using it when discussing his work I do not in any way intend to legitimate its use today.

the white person. Indeed, without such education, any other resistance is pointless. This would require oppressed people's involvement in the arts and other forms of cultural production, reflecting their desires and needs and inspiring them to stand up for their rights (Fanon, 1961, pp. 195-199). It has also been argued that the discourse produced by such organizations has the potential to impact not just struggles in colonial or postcolonial societies but also on those of underrepresented and oppressed minorities in the West, such as sexual minorities, women, people of color in Western societies and the working class (Prakash, 1990, p. 403). This implies that part of the role of organizations trying to empower formerly colonized subjects is to make them aware of the universal or worldwide elements of their struggles.

These theoretical conceptualizations are important to the research described here because, although it is a relatively minor intervention, this thesis hopes to be part of a larger social process. Working in a postcolonial political space, this project seeks to find out – within the specific context of Namibia – if photography can somehow contribute to the postcolonial project of reclaiming the colonized African self, as identified by Fanon and others. In other words, it aims to investigate whether photography, which has previously played a role in colonial domination, can play a role in building a free person, who does not feel him- or herself subject to the whims and domination of others, or who is at least ready to challenge such domination where it occurs, and who sees his or her story not as a meaningless footnote in history but as having significance in terms of broader global and macro-historical narratives. This could be a difficult process, given, as we have seen, photography's propensity to inspire fetishism and voyeurism, as well as its own historical links with colonialism in Namibia. It could also be problematic owing to some of the current uses of photography within the public sphere.

Photography in modern day Africa, especially the professional or non-recreational practice of photography, is often associated by the public with photojournalism (Price, 2000; Silvester et al., 1998; Waller, 2000). This association is problematic because it can be argued that mainstream photojournalism, as it is currently practiced, may have difficulty living up to the revolutionary role outlined by Fanon and other postcolonial theorists. Waller (2000, pp. 192-222) writes that contemporary photojournalism in Southern Africa has to judge difficult issues relating to representation, and will continue to face these issues in the future. These include its portrayal of race, culture and class. They are compounded by the fact that, at the moment, many professional photographers belong to a more privileged class than their subjects. Some media researchers argue that most southern African photographers are privileged across at least one of the axes of race, gender, culture and class (Waller, 2000, pp. 190-192), and this has often limited their ability to successfully speak for the less privileged people they take photographs of. Unless handled with great sensitivity, photojournalistic and

photo-documentary projects can easily be yet another instance of the ruler defining the ruled, and can say more about the photographers' biases than about the people they portray (Waller, 2000, pp. 190-191).

The development of civic media

One of the possible ways to begin to correct this situation may be the development of a civic or community photographic sector, working in parallel with, although with a different ethos to, the mainstream, professionalized photographic media. Curran (2000, pp. 142-145) argues that civic or community-based media can function as a vital umbilical cord which can connect nationwide media, both public and private (and through them, government and national political discourse) to the communities and people they represent, thus facilitating more representative professional media and wider national public dialogue: in other words, giving those traditionally marginalized more of a seat at the table. He argues that this can help the media approximate what Habermas (1991) calls a *public sphere*: an institutional space where citizens can discuss matters of common concern without limitation because of social status, and where at least an approximation of public opinion can be formed.

A critical condition of a public sphere is that people's social status is *bracketed* in the discussions that take place in it. That is, the topic being discussed is seen as more important than the social status of the person raising that topic. We have clearly seen that this is unlikely to be the case in photography in formerly colonized countries, and Curran (2000, pp. 140-141) following Habermas (1991, pp. 175-177) argues convincingly that contemporary mainstream media is unlikely to achieve such conditions either. However, civic media, which are community-owned and are not-for-profit, can help the media system as a whole to approximate the public sphere ideal. They can do this by, among other means, prominently promoting views and opinions of people (for example, people of color, women, sexual minorities) that the mainstream media tend to ignore, challenging the mainstream media to represent these viewpoints accurately, and providing alternative content that fills the gaps in the mainstream media's coverage (Curran, 2000, pp. 142-145).

A number of projects in Southern Africa have shown promise in the possible development of such a civic movement where photography is the main activity. For example, the In Thokoza photography project in South Africa has shown one way a civic photography initiative could be structured (Ithuba Arts Fund, 2013). Another model, combining photography and writing in the Namibian context, is the Women's Writing and Photography Project of the Namibian Women's Leadership Centre (Khaxas, 2007, pp. 4-5).

The In Thokoza project was based around the Buhlebuzile Secondary School in the township of Thokoza, east of Johannesburg, South Africa. It involved giving 34 young people access to cameras and mentoring from four professional photographers. Each young

photographer explored his or her home and neighborhood, using different photographic and interpretive lenses to explore what made Thokoza what it is. The students' work was exhibited and received widespread publicity (Ithuba Arts Fund, 2013). The Women's Writing and Photography Project is an initiative of the Women's Leadership Centre (WLC), a Namibian feminist organization. Since the late 2000s, the WLC has held a number of writing and photography workshops for women, and has published the results in a number of books. Initially, only writing was considered for the project, but in its second year of existence, a photographic component was added (Khaxas, 2007, pp. 4-5).

While these and other similar projects have shown two ways a civic photography movement could work, they have also been of limited scale and there has been limited research on their long- and medium-term effects on their participants. For this reason, it may be worth looking at participatory initiatives in other media, in order to help us imagine the possible shape of future civic photography schemes.

The development of community radio provides another instructive point of departure. In the decades since the 1970s, a number of community radio stations have been set up worldwide, in a number of countries especially in the developing world. These radio stations have differed in how they operate and how they understand their mandate, but in general terms they understand that they must be owned and controlled by their target communities, where target community is taken to mean either a geographical area covered by the radio station's footprint or community of interest such as members of a certain interest group, socio-economic class, religion, political affiliation, and the like (Bonin and Opuku-Mensah, 1998; Hochheimer, 1993; Van Vuuren, 2006). One major way in which they have done this is through employing volunteers drawn from the target community. These volunteers are required to be knowledgeable about the community, its important issues, and the places in which discussion takes place and public opinion is formed (Van Vuuren, 2006, pp. 397-380). Although the representative activity of these volunteers has often been flawed, at least in Southern Africa (Davidson, 2004; Ellis, 2008), they have contributed through their media to both social change in their target communities and to the personal empowerment of individuals within these communities (Gumucio Dagron, 2001; Servaes, 1999).

Low-power FM radio in the West has also provided a historic counterpoint to the mainstream media and could be seen as an alternative model of media that serves to resist rather than support the narratives of the dominant power. Low-power radio stations typically can reach people covered by a circle from 1 to 10 miles (1.6 to 16 kilometers) in diameter. Unlike major stations, which have tended to generalize news and other content for a mass audience, low power stations must of necessity be community focused (Hayes, 2012, p. 3). In the United States, where the low-power FM radio movement has been particularly active, the establishment of such stations followed the realization among many activists that the US

radio industry in the 1990s was increasingly becoming monopolized by a few key players, while content was increasingly homogenized for a mass audience. There followed an intense period of lobbying before the US Federal Communications Commission agreed to issue low power licenses in the 2000s (Franck, 2014, pp. 11-12; Hayes, 2012, pp. 11-13). Since then low-power radio stations have become active in a range of locations, and have typically been active in supporting the causes of those marginalized by systems of power. Examples of this activism include promoting the rights of Mexican and other Hispanic migrant workers in the face of mainstream radio often ignoring their voices (Hayes, 2012, pp. 18-20), and being a critical tool in the fight for better treatment of African Americans and people with disabilities (Franck, 2014). Low power stations have helped create an 'emerging resistance identity' among members of marginalized groups in the US (Hayes, 2012, pp. 19-20).

The use of low-power broadcasting has also become a tool of what is sometimes called the Alter-Globalization Movement (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006; Franck, 2014; Pickerill, 2007). This movement, which became widely known after protesters disrupted a World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in 1999, has brought together an eclectic group of unionized workers, students, indigenous rights activists and others to challenge what they see as the increasing neoliberalism of the international economic order, and the potential for immense exploitation contained therein (Pickerill, 2007; Sen et al., 2004, pp. xxii-xxiv). This activism has mostly been based on the sidelines of high-profile meetings such as those of World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Economic Forum (WEF), especially in Europe and the Americas, as well as at the World Social Forum, set up to provide an alternative space for gatherings of activists to the challenge the capitalist outlook of the current world economic order. These activists have used low-power radio stations, and well as hastily set-up and often only semi-legal transmission systems, along with paper-based media, to keep members of the movement informed about protest actions, to discuss the movement's aims, and to resist attempts in the mainstream media, as they saw it, to demonize the movement (Pickerill, 2007). The precise ideology of these media is still evolving (Carpentier and Cammaerts, 2006) and they are often characterized by deep divisions between different ideologies and races within the alter-globalization movement (Pickerill, 2007, p. 26-76). Also, in many cases, the alter-globalization 'movement' can be argued to have now been subsumed into many single issue movements, such as various anti-racism movements, and those fighting against, for example, the global arms trade, multinational corruption or the exploitation of workers in various countries (Halvorsen, 2012). Nevertheless, the media associated with this movement, as well as its successor movements, have shown another way in which ground-up, resistance based media, driven by advances in digital technology, is possible.

Media education and privilege

Fanon (1961, pp. 198-199) states that one of the key tasks of the intellectual – the learned person – in a postcolonial state is to foster the development of a national culture in a way that is not exclusive, and that allows for interaction with international progressive culture at the appropriate time. If this were applied to photography, it would envisage the learned photographer in some kind of a teaching role in a community or civic photography movement: teaching both technology and the idea that historically oppressed people need to create their own visual culture.

One of the concerns in facilitating a civic photography movement is in the teaching of photography to historically disadvantaged peoples, including women. Although no statistics have been collected on this, it is a widespread observation that the make-up of the Namibian photographic profession – those who would be best placed to teach photographic techniques to emerging civic photographers – is similar to that described by Waller for Southern African photojournalists as a whole: more from privileged than underprivileged classes. In general terms, professional photographers in Namibia (as well as serious amateurs) are upper to middle class rather than poor. The majority are male, a challenge in a country that still suffers from widespread gender-power imbalances and high rates of gender-based violence (Khaxas, 2007, p. 5). Furthermore, many of the photographers exhibited at well-known galleries in Namibia have been white Namibians. A number of leading press photographers also fit into this racial group (Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre, 2013; National Art Gallery of Namibia, 2013). Despite the fact that the ranks of these well-known photographers have recently been joined by some black Namibians (Lazpak's Blog TV, 2013; Republikein, 2013), it would be fair to say that black people as a group remain under-represented.

The extent to which a more advantaged group of established photographers, even a concerned and critically aware group, can serve as facilitators of a revolutionary meaning-making movement is a key question that this thesis has tried to answer, and one I explore in detail in my chapter on being a critically aware, self-reflexive facilitator. It is necessary to note here, however, that social privilege has the potential to limit both what a photographer, writer or other storyteller sees, and how he or she portrays it (Hook, 2002; hooks, 1992, pp. 97-100; Waller, 2000, pp. 193-200). Particularly within black feminist discourse, theorists and activists have been at pains to stress that only the black woman, and no-one speaking on her behalf, can fully put across black female concerns to the world at large (Hill Collins, 1991, pp. 110-115). This does not mean that advantaged allies cannot be useful to a movement, but they must continually be aware that the movement is not primarily *for* them. In helping facilitate that movement's progress, they must take note that their views are not the only valid ones, and, indeed, are influenced by the very social privilege they are seeking to fight against (Blum, 2011; Boutte and Jackson, 2014; Gardiner, 2009). It should be advantaged allies'

primary goal not to express themselves, but rather to allow the marginalized people they support a fuller opportunity for self-expression.

All the aspects I have described in this chapter show that there is potential in the recent explosion of digital photography and digital image sharing, as well as in nascent community or civic media projects, for photography to serve as a medium that empowers marginalized people. However, it is also clear that there are aspects of photography that are deeply troubling and problematic, and will have to be dealt with if this empowering photography is to become a reality.

Among these aspects are photography's tendency to become voyeuristic and fetishistic and its close historical links with colonialism and patriarchy. These can also be seen, however, as definite *reasons* to engage in critical or revolutionary photography – to challenge the white, male, capitalist monopolies on photography, and thus on defining the public gaze, that have existed for generations. Meeting this challenge will have to be led by progressive facilitators and educators who are aware of the dangers of simply reproducing images that assume one or more privileged gazes (including rich, white, male, heterosexual, non-disabled and other such gazes), and instead aim to encourage the production and acceptance of images from a black, female, queer and otherwise oppositional standpoint, that require an oppositional gaze to be fully appreciated.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS

The research project described in this thesis uses qualitative methodology – more specifically it fits into the critical media ethnography paradigm, a broadly interpretivist way of thinking about methodological issues. While some of the details as to what I did and how I did it, in co-operation with the research participants, can be found in other chapters, this chapter seeks to lay out the basic framework for the research design, its epistemological assumptions, and the ethical concerns which were necessary to keep in mind.

To recap, the research questions that I set out to answer in this thesis were:

1. How can photography function as a medium that empowers members of historically disadvantaged communities, especially women and youth?

2. In what ways can it serve to encourage people from such historically disadvantaged communities to challenge patterns of privilege?

3. How can teaching and learning processes facilitate the acquisition of knowledge about photography in such communities, without replicating structures of dominance within the broader society?

4. In what ways can practicing photography allow students to become aware of the socially constructed nature of the photographic medium?

As I will show, the nature of these questions was often personal as well as political, and getting answers to them required an understanding of both the individual psychological processes and those occurring in the socio-cultural space in which the participants live. Furthermore, my understanding of these processes was inextricably bound up with my own socio-cultural positioning and privileges. For these reasons, as I shall explain below, a qualitative research design, based on an interpretivist way of thinking, was the best way to approach the answering of the research questions.

Paradigmatic considerations

This thesis is situated within the paradigm of qualitative research. It has been argued that the chief task of qualitative research is to uncover meaning, that is, to reveal individual, specific, in-depth understandings about the social world (Deacon et al., 2007, pp. 5-11; see, for example Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, pp. 112-3).

This research project also intended to be interpretivist. In other words, it is concerned with the multiple versions of reality that people develop as a result of their social experience (Bhattacharya, 2008, pp. 464-465). To put it another way, this research is chiefly about narrative: in this case, narratives about how individual women and youths experienced the

photographic workshops and understood the meaning photography has for them. In particular, the interpretivist paradigm accepts that any investigation that surveys multiple human beings will produce multiple and often competing narratives of the same underlying phenomenon. What is more, the main focus of a researcher should not be on examining which of these narratives is 'true' in an objective sense, but rather on elucidating the processes that led to person X producing narrative Y that foregrounds Z as a key consideration (Bhattacharya, 2008). These focuses on meaning, narrative and understanding of process are key to qualitative research in general, but especially to research which takes place within the interpretivist paradigm (King and Horrocks, 2010, pp. 15–16; Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, pp. 112-116).

This study is placed also within the ethnographic tradition of critical media research. Ethnography is essentially the art and/or science of describing a culture and its practices (Fetterman, 2008, p. 288). 'Culture' here has both a broader and a more specific meaning than it is often given in everyday language. Cultures may include groups that form only for a short time. The group members need have no necessary ethnic affiliation. Groups studied as cultures in the ethnographic sense may be united chiefly by their common use of symbols, including symbols embedded in the mass media, as a means of understanding their social world (Fetterman, 2008, pp. 289-290). Key to the worldview of the ethnographer is a desire to understand people's social worlds from an insider's perspective, rather than the supposedly dispassionate outsider's stance that much contemporary social science assumes. Fetterman (2008, p. 288) states that:

> The ethnographer is interested in understanding and describing a social and cultural scene from the emic or insider's perspective. The ethnographer is both storyteller and scientist; the closer the readers of an ethnography come to understanding the native's [that is, the person who lives in the culture] point of view, the better the story and the better the science.

In my study, this ethnographic approach manifested itself in three practical ways. Firstly, the interviews I conducted with the workshop participants were situated within the tradition of media ethnography, especially as this relates to interview driven-studies. Secondly, I used auto-ethnography as a critical tool for understanding my own role as facilitator/teacher in the workshops. Thirdly, my analysis of the photo workshops was very much based on me taking a role as participant observer, trying to understand the processes and tensions involved in these workshops from the inside out, as far as possible an emic perspective, rather than positioning myself as a detached outsider.

Media ethnography is essentially a movement that aims at using techniques from anthropological investigations in media studies. A central point of this movement has been the understanding that the researcher is a participant – an 'insider' – in the media production

and/ or consumption processes that he/ she studies. Research processes frequently include semi-structured interviews as well as direct participant observation (Mayer, 2001, pp. 308-309).

This thesis is situated within the paradigm of *critical* media ethnography. These ethnographies use the term 'critical' to indicate that, while remaining focused on their subjects' personal understandings, the studies stress the need to make power relations in societies, and the levers for transforming power relations, more visible (Davis, 2003, p. 3; Lindlof and Shatzer, 1998, pp. 1-3). It is important to understand that these levers of power may operate without people subject to this power having a full understanding of them. Nevertheless, following the ethnographic approach requires that even a critical ethnography have great respect for the people it surveys, and does not second-guess or invalidate their perspectives.

When choosing to apply an ethnographic perspective to my research, the above reasoning was extremely importing in influencing my decision. The approach was chosen in order to counter not only the way photography often undermines marginalized people, but also the way many academic research does the same thing. This is often, unfortunately, a pitfall to which other social science research methods can easily succumb. Miller (2008) argues that the preponderance of quantitative-only methods in social research, and a pervasive public idea that social science should produce universal laws or principles that apply to all people, regardless of their social privilege or disadvantage, have led to them often failing the cause of social justice. While qualitative research has a chance to rectify this, it should not be assumed that the use of qualitative methods would necessarily lead to social justice concerns being addressed. As Miller (2008, p. 824) notes, 'research that seeks to free the oppressed must first vocalize the oppressed. Those who were systemically quieted must be strategically amplified.' Creswell (2009, p. 9) states that an advocacy/participatory worldview, which is becoming increasingly common among researchers working with disadvantaged participants, holds that research design needs to be intertwined with politics and an emancipatory political agenda. This has often meant researchers need an in-depth, insider's view of the situation, so they make sure they hear and report the genuine voices of oppressed people (Creswell, 2009, pp. 8-10; Miller, 2008, pp. 823-825). Ethnography provides a set of means and strategies to enable just this amplification of insiders' voices in various historically disadvantaged communities.

Authors such as Ien Ang in Living Room Wars (1996), for example, have used critical ethnographic perspectives to examine power relationships in families and societal groupings and how these interact with media use. In Southern Africa, Tomaselli's (2005) studies of San communities' interactions with the global media are often cited as an example of the value of the ethnographic approach. These and other critical media ethnographies have often been

instructive in that they have shown the complexities of the relationships between media, its makers, and its audiences, and have highlighted struggles over meaning-making (Ang, 1996, pp. 1-5; Mayer, 2001, p. 309).

Mayer (2001, pp. 309-311) argues that developing specifically feminist and multicultural methodologies is necessary for a truly critical media ethnography, especially when studying young people and those from marginalized backgrounds. These methodologies should involve the researcher's critical self-reflection, and an awareness of power relations between researchers and research participants. This is especially important where, as in my case, the researcher is from a more economically and/or racially privileged background than most of the research participants. Critical ethnographic studies should also involve researchers and research participants collaborating towards mutually satisfying goals, and should acknowledge that social relations allow some research subjects/participants to speak more loudly than others. As part of this acknowledgement, such studies should seek to amplify the voices of the most marginalized within the participant group (Mayer, 2001, pp. 319-320).

Although participant observation is the research technique most commonly associated with ethnographic studies, interviews situated within the paradigm of media ethnography can provide an important tool for understanding individuals' responses to the media, especially where such individuals can be said to be part of a 'meaning-making community' (Ellingson, 2009, pp. 131-135, 140-141; Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, pp. 141-142). Interviews were as central as participant observation to my study. By interviewing the participants during and after the workshops, I wanted to uncover ways in which the participants delineated broader themes in their photographic and visual journeys, aspects that might not be apparent from merely observing their participation in workshops. It is important to note that, by making these interviews semi-structured (an aspect I will deal with in more detail later) and considering the focus one of meaning and culture rather than merely technical information, I kept these interviews within the paradigm of ethnography, rather than some other forms of social science interviews where the main focus might be finding out discrete nuggets of easily quantifiable information. I planned that my interviews, undertaken mid-way through and at the end of the workshop process, were to be conducted as much as possible from an insider's or emic point of view, a factor that, as mentioned, the ethnographic approach considers to be of critical importance.

In recent years, ethnographic studies of communication within community groups and organizations, in urban rather than rural settings, have formed an important cluster within applied communication research, as have ethnographic studies within educational settings (Ellingson, 2009, p. 137). My study fits into these important movements. It has been argued that these settings (community groupings and educational institutions in urban centers) have been neglected in 'classical' or traditional ethnographic studies (Ellingson, 2009, pp. 137-

138), despite them being critical to the life experiences of especially young people and people in poor urban areas. I hope my study will be part of the movement to address this scholarly deficit.

The emphasis that ethnography places on people's roles in relation to others in their social space and in culture (Sprawled, 1979, pp. 6-10) was important to my research. This is because my study deals with numerous socio-cultural issues, for example relating to empowerment, to the socially constructed process of meaning-making, and to the social uses of the image. Therefore I tried, for example, to set the focus in the interviews not just on how image worked in people's individual life stories, itself a fascinating topic, but also on how their interactions with specific images in their lives served to empower or disadvantage them.

The practice of autoethnography has proved extremely useful in understanding the researcher's relationship with the people he or she is researching. Such an understanding is a critical part of this thesis. Autoethnography has been particularly useful in understanding the role of a social researcher who may be considered, to a lesser or greater extent, an outsider to the community he or she is researching (Ellingson, 2009, pp. 137-140, 146-147). As in this study, this positioning may be imposed by society and its system of privileges, rather than being designed by the researcher. For example, a white, male, heterosexual researcher such as myself may intend, as part of his ethnographic study, to experience a community as an insider. But the fact of his social privilege means that he may not be able to shed his outsider-ness, either in terms of how the participants see him (and thus seek to, say, make their answers to his questions more 'mainstream' or 'acceptable') or through his own unconscious biases (for example seeing their demands for social change more in terms of what he might have to give up than in terms of the participants' needs). This in turn may hinder the scientific value of the data he collects, and may reduce the methodological rigor of the study. This is a problem, to be clear, not because the ethnographer may personally feel like an outcast, but because the data he collects will lack richness and credibility. Autoethnography provides a way of reconciling these opposing currents through recognizing, cataloging, exploring, and even possibly forestalling some of these unconscious points of bias.

My use of this approach should be considered part of a broader academic movement. In recent years, more and more scholars have stressed the importance of the researcher's critical self-reflection in any kind of qualitative research (King and Horrocks, 2010, pp. 126-132). Autoethnography as a specific movement to address this has intensified in recent years, with a number of publications by scholars in fields as diverse as educational research, research into the social effects of health systems, and research in gender studies (Ngunjiri et al., 2010). In a recent special issue of the Journal of Research Practice on Autoethnography, auto-ethnographies published included those of Carolyn Pearce (2010), who writes about the sense of heightened vulnerability that awakened in her while doing research with girls who had

experienced the loss of their mother; Robert Mizzi (2010), who uses stories from his experiences as a teacher in Kosovo to expose a variety of people's voices around him as these voices respond to an event - including where the voices demonstrate tensions within the writer as he thinks through what is happening to him; and Elena Maydell (2010) who describes her experiences as a researcher amongst Russian immigrants to New Zealand, and her realization that her perspective as a member of that same immigrant group was her most important tool in interpreting and representing these stories. Another example that has been widely quoted is Ann Neville-Jan's (2003) article 'Encounters in a World of Pain' where she examines her own encounters with Americans suffering from chronic pain conditions, and describes how they feel they are treated by society, from her specific point of view as a sufferer of such a condition herself. I intend that my work will follow the example of these and other authors in recognizing the importance of both others' experiences and my own voice as focuses of critical study.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

While ethnography has been critical to my unpacking of this thesis topic and my answering of the research questions, the Participatory Action Research (PAR) paradigm was also critical to the research project, in both its gathering of data and more fundamental questions about the overall value of the research. In essence, PAR is research that involves communities of participants/ respondents as co-designers and owners of the research (Jordan, 2008, p. 601). Insofar as this thesis sought to involve participants in being empowered owners and co-designers of the photography workshops and their results, it can be considered to fit into this paradigm. PAR had its genesis in work conducted by the social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s and 1950s (Jordan, 2008, p. 601). However, although Lewin's work, and his psychological approach have been influential, several other intellectual traditions have increasingly shaped contemporary approaches to PAR, including Marxism, feminism, and (in the case of this thesis,) Paulo Freire's constructionist approach to principles of adult education (Jordan, 2008, p. 601-2; Cooke & Kothari, 2001, pp 10, 100). Jordan (2008, 601) states that PAR is political in the sense that its core values and practices have emerged from a critique of Western social science methodologies that it views as deeply implicated in the maintenance of social order within capitalism. As can be seen from my context chapter, this thesis is grounded in such critical scholarship. As such, it cannot, in its fieldwork, merely replicate research methodologies that, directly or indirectly, disempower members of the most marginalized groups. My embrace of both PAR and critical ethnography is critical to this search for methods and methodologies that empower and involve as actors, rather than disempower as subjects, those whom the research is about.

Elements of the fieldwork that are directly linked to the PAR research philosophy include the way the curriculum was designed, broadly speaking, in consultation with the community-based organizations involved. My attempts to understand the dynamics of the teacher-learner or facilitator-participant interaction in the hope that this relationship could succeed in achieving its educational aims without reproducing broader sets of inequalities and privileges, also represents an essential ethic of PAR. Also, the research was designed to improve the contribution of photography to the organizations' and individual participants' own needs and goals. Rather than seeking to achieve a set final objective, the research was more interest in what the participant would decide to do, or not do, with his or her photographic knowledge, how he or she would use it as an empowered person. Finally, my research project was informed by a political and social agenda – to make photography in Namibia more accessible and less elitist – and thus fits into PAR's understanding that research should always have academic activist agenda – that describing conditions of societal life is not enough if such description does not aim to change conditions.

While there are parallels and commonalities between the ethnographic and PAR approaches, there are also areas of tension. One of these is that the ethnographer – at least traditionally – sees him or herself as an observer, rather than principally an activist. However, there are ethnographers who increasingly question this view. Indeed, there are those ethnographers whose participation in marginalized cultures has led them into a lifetime of activism and on to putting their own lives at risk for this activism. (Hale, 2006, p. 96-99). Increasingly, academic ethnography has gone hand-in-hand, albeit in a contested way, with the struggle for the rights of the world's indigenous peoples (Hale, 2006, p. 96). At times, this activism has involved a reversal of common anthropological practice, whereby members of marginalized communities become ethnographers of white, middle-class and Western cultures, often providing a devastating critique thereof (Kirsch, 2010; Marcus & Fischer 1999; Cohen 1994). While these practices are by no means universal, and while are there are also problems in suggesting that academic activists and members of marginalized communities necessarily share similar objectives, the fact is that, increasingly, critical ethnographies and PAR share common concerns about empowering marginalized people and questioning the established societal order.

Sampling

The sample was selected through purposive sampling. I chose participants for their ability to speak to the theoretical concerns of the thesis, rather than because they form a statistically significant representation of a defined population (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, pp. 125, 158). This is in line with the thesis's paradigmatical positioning as ethnographic and qualitative research. Existing organizations, which represent women and youths in historically disadvantaged areas, were asked to suggest people to take part in the project. For this reason, the sampling design can also be said to be a form of snowball sampling, whereby initial contacts lead the researcher to further participants in his/ her research (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, pp. 99, 125). I chose to approach three organizations to be part of the research project:

Sister Namibia is one of the oldest currently-operating women's rights organizations in Namibia. Since its founding in 1989, it has worked on awareness-raising through workshops, public events, giving advice to women, running a resource center and most visibly through publishing a bi-monthly magazine. This magazine is still the only regularly published feminist magazine in Namibia. Sister Namibia has also been particularly active in promoting the rights of sexual minorities and the cause of economically marginalized women (Sister Namibia, 2013). It was chosen because as a well-established women's organization, it has networks among women, especially members of sexual minorities who may be among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable women in Namibia. It has been widely argued, and indeed statistically demonstrated, that women are poorly represented in the Namibian media (Gender Links/Media Institute of Southern Africa, 2003). One can argue based on this, that women constitute one of the key constituencies whose voices are excluded from Namibian public discourse as played out through the media. It would seem to follow that any social empowerment project that involves media representation that does not specifically empower women will be inadequate and even reproduce existing inequalities. It follows that women should form a key group to be investigated for a research project documenting the empowering potential of one of these media. I hoped that participation in this project would provide Sister Namibia with a resource to draw on for production of their magazine.

In the end, this human resource-building may not have happened to a significant degree, as many of the participants in these workshops tended to be those with weak links to the organization, who were involved in its activities somehow but who were not prominent members of the network or contributors to the magazine. This may have been because Sister was going through a change in management at the time. A director was newly appointed, and the position of media officer was vacant during some of that time. Also, Sister had been trying to re-focus the editorial direction of the magazine, restoring its feminist focus, as it was felt in some quarters that it had become more of a general NGO-type magazine, simply

talking about progress being made on various development projects involving women. It was in this atmosphere of change that I conducted my research. Only a few people were writing articles for the magazine on a regular basis at the time. For this reason, it was thought best, in discussions with the management, that I use the Sister blog and social media accounts to advertise for women who would be interested to participate. A few men also responded to the invitation. This may have led to a participant group that was less interested in contributing to Sister Namibia than if the management had been more involved in directly choosing participants.

Physically Active Youth (PAY) is a community-based organization that provides additional school-subject tuition, sporting activities, and life-skills training for high-school age youth and school-leavers. It is based in the township of Katutura in Windhoek and is run mainly by volunteers drawn from the Windhoek area, as well as a small number of volunteers from foreign countries (PAY Namibia, 2013). This organization was chosen for the research because it generally involves younger people than the other two organizations, including 16- to 18-year-old school learners, which I expected to add greater depth to the research findings. The PAY learners were a necessary part of the study because the mainstream media and political organizations in Namibia are often accused of overlooking the Namibian youth. The Afrobarometer perception study for Namibia, which is based on the perceptions of representative sample of civil society, reported in 2013 that the majority of youth 'do not feel represented in political discussions in the media' and 'do not feel close to any political organization' (Afrobarometer, 2013). Indeed it can be said that, despite the majority of the Namibian population being people under the age of 35 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011), the voices of youths in general and children especially are often absent or contribute little to Namibian public discourse (see Chanda et al., 2008; Keulder and Spilker, 2002). Similar findings can be seen in a 2015 Afrobarometer survey of 33 African countries, including Namibia, which found that, despite a general interest in political affairs, African youth not are connecting with political processes, including political parties, the media, NGOs and other gatekeepers of national discourse (Nkomo and Du Plooy, 2015).

PAY is also based in one of poorest and most socially troubled areas in Windhoek. This is important because the research questions for this thesis involve examining the potential of photography in a historically disadvantaged space, and most PAY members certainly come, to a lesser or greater degree, from such a space. Another research question asks how teaching and learning processes can facilitate the acquisition of knowledge about photography in such communities without replicating structures of dominance and privilege within the broader society, and as a youth empowerment organization situated in a community poorer than the researcher's own, PAY indeed provided a productive environment in which to explore this question.

The Women's Leadership Centre (WLC) was established in 2004, chiefly to promote spaces for women's creative expression and to accelerate the personal development of the next generation of Namibian feminist leaders (Khaxas, 2005; Women's Leadership Centre, 2013). Previous to my research it had conducted a number of women's writing workshops as well two experimental women's photography workshops, the results of which have been published in book form (Khaxas, 2007, 2005). The WLC has also been outspoken in defending the rights of indigenous minority women, including those from the San community, and is in discussions about forming a community radio station with a group of San people in Namibia's Zambezi Region. The WLC was chosen partly for its focus on women and indigenous minorities as historically disadvantaged groups. To include the San as a particularly marginalized group, which is often thought of as an underclass even among other poor, black Namibians (Sullivan, 2001), was something I regarded as especially important. The WLC was also chosen because it was hoped that an institutional memory of its previous media, arts, and specifically photography-related projects could be drawn upon, especially with reference to teaching and learning practices in these areas. To some extent this proved true. However, many of the participants in previous workshops or book projects had since moved on to other activities or were no longer in much touch with the WLC. Nevertheless, a number of the WLC's leadership did have awareness and experience of the previous projects, which did prove useful. For example, a system of organizing logistics for workshops was already in place. The WLC were able to fundraise for a venue and refreshments to be provided at no cost to them or me. Most of the participants were members of established groups under the banner of the WLC. These included an established group of young lesbians who met regularly as a 'personal empowerment'/consciousness raising group, and a group of young San women, who have since formed their own youth organization, with the WLC's support. The presence of people who knew each other in some groups may have contributed to freer and deeper discussion among the participants.

For each group, 10-15 participants were selected in co-operation with the management of the organization. They took part in a series of basic photographic workshops, each lasting one or two days, run by two project assistants and myself. These workshops were scheduled on different weekends over the space of around three months. During the workshops, and to an extent in the intervening weeks and months, participants documented their communities and daily lives through photographs.

Two assistants were chosen from the Bachelor of Journalism and Media Technology Honors class, of a class of about 25, at the Polytechnic of Namibia (now the Namibia University of Science and Technology). Both were interested and could commit to the schedule. Both were black, one woman and one man. The woman is a black Zimbabwean, who is married to a white American. The couple are permanent residents of Namibia. The

man, who is unmarried, is a Namibian from Zambezi Region, formerly Caprivi Region, in Namibia's extreme Northeast. Both were in their early twenties, and defined themselves as middle-class Namibians. This social positioning was not deliberately chosen (beyond the fact that that particular Honors class was 100 per cent black), but it proved to be interesting for a number of reasons.

As I will detail in subsequent chapters, they are from somewhat un-centered black identities. There is a degree of suspicion of foreigners in Namibia, especially 'economic migrants', though nowhere near the levels of xenophobia in South Africa (Crush and Pendleton, 2004, pp. 12, 29-33). While xenophobia in Namibia has mostly targeted Chinese and other Asian migrants so far (Dobler, 2008), citizens of other African states have not been totally invulnerable. Also, the Zambezi region has been the site of ethnic tensions and secessionist violence as recently as 1999-2000, and a level of distrust of 'Caprivians' remains, as well as a feeling that they are culturally distinct from other black Namibians (Melber, 2009). Also, the two students' middle-class-ness set them apart economically from many (but not all) of the participants in the workshops. However, at times this positioning served to be advantageous. An example of this is detailed in my discussion of a workshop deliberating photographs of the black female body in Chapter 4 where I describe the challenge of being a self-reflexive facilitator. In this case, by good fortune, the workshop assistant's black but 'non-typical' social positioning proved an asset in unraveling some of the strands of identity questions posed by photographs. The male facilitator's social positioning as a black male from a non-dominant black grouping may also have served a useful purpose in helping some of the group identify with him, since they were almost all, in one or other way, black Namibians who, through being for example women, San, or gay or lesbian, fell outside hegemonic definitions of Namibian blackness. While the social positioning of the various participants in the team (myself and the two project assistants) came about largely by chance, the productivity of our group of three, in terms of rich interaction with the participants, suggests that assembling a diverse team for ethnographic research is of critical importance.

Fieldwork – the practicalities of the research

The workshops involved a series of practical seminars on photography, which the project assistants and I conducted at three existing community-based organizations. These took place in various venues, mainly at the various projects' headquarters (one of which was in Windhoek's central business district, one in a middle-class suburb and one in Windhoek's township of Katutura), and also at a community youth center in Katutura, and one at the Namibia University of Science and Technology main campus in central Windhoek.

Participants investigated the basics of photography, discussed what pictures have meant in their life experience, and took pictures of each other, important places in their lives, and their

immediate neighborhoods. Although I did not plan this, participants also in some cases took photos of organized cultural and sporting events.

Depending on resources available and logistical considerations to the group concerned, the practical photographic element of the project usually involved participants being lent small digital cameras to go out into neighborhoods for about two hours at a time, or setting up a makeshift photo studio at a central location, to which people were invited to be photographed. In one case, cameras were lent out overnight. In another, some cameras were stored at a central location at PAY, with participants taking pictures using these cameras over a period of four weeks around a central theme of 'LivesMatter' a theme which the participants at this organization decided upon, which were then published in blog format by the participants, linked to the organization's website[3].

The participants took part in semi-structured interviews about half way through each series of workshops and at the end of the project. I chose the semi-structured interview as a form because flexibility is a key requirement of all qualitative interviewing (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 35). The interviewer needs to be able to respond to unexpected topics and narratives as they come up in an interview, therefore a fixed interview schedule, as used in quantitative research, was inappropriate (King and Horrocks, 2010, pp. 35-36). Rather, I developed interview guides, which listed a number of questions and focus areas but were not prescriptive.

Given the theoretical concerns of this thesis, the interviews clearly needed to gather information not just about the interviewees' relationships to the photographic medium but also what they see as their relationship to Namibian society and its power structures. For this reason, questions in the interview guide covered all the categories listed by King and Horrocks (2010, p. 37) as being of use for qualitative interviews in social research, namely: the participant's background and demographics, experience and behavior, opinions and values, feelings/ emotions, sensory experiences and knowledge.

Because of the involvement of the researcher as a performative actor in the workshop process, the interviews should be considered to be situated within the paradigm outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), where the interviewer avoids the common assumption of seeing him/ herself as a miner of information, merely decoding data that he/ she digs up. Rather he or she regards himself or herself as a *traveler*. This traveler, through what is said in the interview, finds himself or herself in a different place and sees things in a different perspective at the end of an interview compared to at the beginning.

For the group of PAY youths, I used the technique of the focus-group discussion rather than semi-structured interviews. I did this partly because I thought it could be somewhat

[3] Accessible through www.paynamibia.org. Some of the blogs created are no longer visible but some of the images may still be viewed under the link 'media gallery'.

intimidating for 16-18 year old youths to sit down for a half-hour to one hour long face-to-face interview with a 36-year-old researcher. I also felt that the presence of their fellow participants in a focus-group discussion would contribute both to a more relaxed atmosphere and, more importantly, to discovering what the debates, points of agreement and points of contention were among the group of learners as a whole, rather than at an individual level. The ability to produce such data has been recognized as an important characteristic of focus group discussions (Lunt and Livingstone, 1996; Morgan, 2008; Seal et al., 1998). For this reason, many qualitative research theorists have called for focus groups to be a more common tool alongside individual interviews in the qualitative researcher's toolbox, especially where corporate or group understandings and disagreements are as important as individual perceptions (Morgan, 2008, p. 353).

A vital component of ethnographic research, and qualitative research generally, is the researcher's own reactions to, and involvement with, the group of people he or she studies. In this sense it has been said that 'the qualitative researcher's laboratory is himself or herself' (Deacon et al., 2007, pp. 5-6). This was the more so in this project as I was, in a sense, performing one of the roles I argue is inevitable in the medium term in the establishment of a civic photography movement: that of the socially privileged and experienced photographer teaching photographic practice to more or less disadvantaged learners. For these reasons it is clear that investigating my role in the project, and my own thoughts and feelings on the topic, were critical. In some ways, then, my research role was that of participant observer (see Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, p. 139), a role which has been commonly sought out by researchers in the paradigm of ethnographic media research (Ellingson, 2009, pp. 138–139).

As participant observer, I kept field notes during the workshops about my interactions with participants, my thoughts and emotions, and any issues that cropped up. My two project assistants attended a short training session, where I explained to them the goals of the research, how the project was going to work, and their role in it. Both were paid a small stipend in return for their work. As well as assisting with the actual discussions in the workshop and technical matters such as downloading photos from cameras, these two assistants video-recorded most of the workshop discussions.

These video recordings proved to be an invaluable source of data, as often the making of detailed field notes that captured most interactions, while simultaneously running a workshop, proved impractical. Nevertheless, the field notes did serve to flesh out my own reactions to events, and to incidents or nuances of incidents that were not fully captured on video.

Data analysis

There were three levels of data analysis in this research project:

1. Analysis of interview transcripts of photography workshop participants, as well as a focus-group discussion at PAY.
2. Semiotic analysis of photographs produced.
3. Autoethnographic analysis of my own experience, as recorded through field notes, and video and audio recordings.

I analyzed data from the interview transcripts, video recordings and field notes using qualitative methods, elucidating from the material common themes, narratives, patterns of word use, and characterizations of key human subjects (see Ellingson, 2009, pp. 141-142; King and Horrocks, 2010, pp. 152-158). The ATLAS.ti qualitative research software program was used to categorize and record the findings from the interviews. This involved, among other processes, tagging and coding key themes and phrases within the transcripts of each interview, and noting and recording significant commonalities between interviews, so that a sense could be obtained of which groups were pre-occupied about which issues, and which common viewpoints were shared among particular groups or among the interviewees when viewed as a whole (for example, women or young people might have shared particular areas of concern that the general group of participants was less worried about).

The participants selected what they considered to be their best or most meaningful pictures from the workshops. My initial plan was to stage an exhibition of this work. That did happen in the case of the WLC, along with photos that the participants had taken at other times. In others, the photos were exhibited on the Internet, on the PAY Namibia website[4] and on Sister Namibia's blog[5]. I analyzed a selection of these chosen photos using techniques from the critical textual analysis paradigm, especially semiotic techniques (see Barthes, 2003, 1999; Bourdieu, 1999), including those adapted specifically for analyzing media images.

The photographs were analyzed to discover common categories of people/ objects photographed, as well as the use of devices such as lighting, selective focus, common camera angles, use of wide-angle or telephoto lenses (or wide/ telephoto options within a zoom lens), and whether these could be linked to categories pictured, and to key themes in the interviews, as indeed they often could be (see Deacon et al., 2007, pp. 208-247; Waller, 2000, pp. 190-192; Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, p. 127). The questions of *who* appeared in the photos

[4] www.paynamibia.org

[5] https://sisternamibia.com/category/sisters-blog/

(Some of the pictures may no longer be visible, as only the most recent entries are shown).

(men, women, children and their race or ethnicity) and *what* each category of people was typically doing or how they were typically posed were of key interest to me in analyzing the pictures. I discuss more about this process in my chapter on the photographs themselves.

My autoethnographic analysis took an eclectic approach. I started with the video recordings I deemed to be most important in line with my thoughts on how each workshop had gone and the critical challenges in terms of my own interaction with the participants. Concurrent with this, I also consulted my field notes for the biggest challenges recorded and used ATLAS.ti to cluster them under key themes. I then watched those videos to examine the detail of the dialogue and what socioeconomic lessons could be obtained from this dialogue. In keeping with the qualitative approach used in this thesis I did not select sections of dialogue or field notes to analyze based chiefly on how representative they were of the overall experience (although they were generally representative, in my opinion), but rather, how well they fitted with the theoretical concerns of this thesis.

All the methods outlined above helped to answer all the research questions. However, the participant interviews were especially helpful in answering questions 1, 2, and 4. The analysis of the photos was of critical importance in answering questions 2 and 4, whereas the autoethnographic aspect of the research was most vital to answering question 3.

Ethics

Ethical considerations are a key component of any research endeavor, but this is particularly true when the subjects of one's research are human beings, and even more especially so in qualitative studies where one often requires in-depth information on the details of people's thoughts and everyday lives (Preissle, 2008, pp. 276-277). The concept of getting all participants' *informed consent* – not only that they agree to be a part of the study, but also that they know exactly what the study entails, what information they will be asked for, and what will be done with this information, before and after the study is concluded - is often thought to be a key consideration (Israel and Hay, 2008, p. 231). In studies involving children, as this one did to some extent, special considerations come to the fore, such as ensuring they truly understand the nature of the project, are not coerced into it by elders or authority figures such as schoolteachers, and that their legal guardians are adequately consulted. Another critical consideration is that the privacy of the research participants is preserved.

This study tried to ensure that participants had given informed consent in a number of ways. Prospective participants were given an information sheet at the start of each series of workshops. This information sheet explained the purpose of the workshops, the interview process, what the information would be used for, and how data would be stored. I generally also started the workshop with a basic discussion of the research project. Basic information of this type was also given to the management of the organizations that nominated the

participants, who were informed that they should share this information with potential participants before inviting them. I asked participants to fill in and sign a consent form after having read the participant information sheet. In the case of children (those under 18) both the child and a legal guardian had to sign a consent form. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and, if they did so, would face no negative consequences as a result of their withdrawal.

This process of ensuring informed consent was and is particularly important when dealing with a subject such as the photographic representation of marginalized Namibians. As I shall discuss in more detail in other chapters, some socially marginalized Namibians feel that their images are often misused by outsiders such as aid organizations and government departments, often under the guise of showing how these bodies are helping the people. Obviously, I wanted this study to not be associated with this kind of behavior in any way, and had an extra burden of convincing the research participants that it would not be. I felt this was behind me being asked, a number of times, in private, if I could indeed ensure that the photos would not be used for anyone's profit outside of the organizations concerned, and in this thesis. I felt that the fact that I had prepared information sheets and consent forms and other official documents bearing the Wits logo, and that I am also known as being a member of the Polytechnic of Namibia, which has a reputation for doing ethical research, helped reassure people. Although it did not become a significant problem within the research project, it was noted that most participants did require reassurance that their photos would not be misused and they would be consulted should the photos be published. All photos used in this thesis are reprinted with the consent of the participants.

Data storage has become another area of critical concern in research that involves human participants in recent years. The intensification of this concern may be due to a number of technological and sociological changes, including the ease with which data can be transferred over the Internet, the ease of storing and copying large volumes of data on small-sized media, the increasing computer-sophistication of government bureaucracies, and the perceived ability of skilled hackers to break into data storage systems (Godard et al., n.d.; Nosek et al., 2002; Orb et al., 2001). For this reason, I made a decision to limit the storage of raw data to a fixed number of years after the project's conclusion, and to store raw data only on password-protected and other secure computers, drives and folders. I also communicated this to participants in the participant information sheet.

Pseudonyms were used rather than real names in this thesis. I felt this was necessary to protect identities where revealing them might have caused embarrassment or harm to participants. An example of this would be the young lesbian women in the WLC group, since female same-sex relationships, despite not being technically illegal, are often condemned in Namibian popular culture, and lesbians have often been ostracized by their families (Keulder

and Spilker, 2002; Khaxas, 2005). Another example could be some of the San women's group, who are studying in Windhoek on a Government grant for historically disadvantaged people. Some of them may have been reluctant to criticize the Government's treatment of their communities (as some did in the individual interviews) if they thought their names would be revealed, which might have led to the termination of their scholarships. I also decided, and made known to participants, that their real names would not be saved in the interview transcripts, and text files linking real names to pseudonyms would be kept on different computers or servers than the transcripts themselves. Therefore, even if someone were successful in hacking into one system, he or she would not be able to know for sure the real names of the participants.

A key ethical consideration was making sure that the research process was as participatory as possible. While wanting to learn certain things and answer certain questions from the project, it was my goal to involve the participants in setting the agenda of the workshops and contributing to the setting of the overall goals of the research as much as possible. As organizations and people, I wanted them to feel they were getting something out of the process, and that they had some input into deciding what that something was.

This involvement proved much easier to organize at the level of individual participants and specific workshop groups than at an organizational level. A key example, discussed in my chapter on being a reflexive pedagogue, was a Sister group requesting a specific session devoted to Photoshop, something which I had not previously planned to include. I engaged all three organizations' managements on the broad scope of what I intended the workshops to be about before they began. Only in the case of PAY did I receive significant input from the management about what they would have liked to see the workshops cover. However, I was keen to stress that they were welcome to comment on anything they wished to change as the workshop process proceeded.

My overall impression is that the research design I had laid out at the beginning of the project was feasible, both in terms of broad epistemological positioning and practical techniques for collecting information. I am generally satisfied that I was able to fulfill the requirements of being a reflexive, self-critical researcher that are so crucial to the ethnographic approach to social enquiry, and that the two project assistants I selected were instrumental in helping me achieve this. I am also satisfied that the ethical requirements relating to working with the personal details of people's, especially children's, lives and personal narratives, and that managing-of-expectations aspects, such as re-assuring participants that my research was something other than the work of the 'big NGO industry', were adequately responded to.

CHAPTER 4: THE CHALLENGE OF BEING A SELF-REFLEXIVE FACILITATOR

As I have argued in my introductory chapter, one of the strongest potential barriers to a truly empowering participatory photography movement in Namibia is that many people with advanced photographic knowledge, who could potentially take on a valuable teaching or mentoring role in such a movement, are white, male, wealthy and/ or otherwise socially advantaged. I further argue that such privilege can often blind those who have it to the lived daily realities of those who do not. Therefore, it was critical that I explore some of the pedagogical dynamics of situations where teachers or facilitators or mentors have more social privilege than other participants. In this chapter I explore such dynamics as they unfolded between myself and the participants in the photography workshops. I also argue that this experience contains broader lessons for participatory photography projects globally.

A cautionary tale

In early June 2015, US academic and civil rights activist Rachel Dolezal, who had presented herself as a person of color, was 'outed' by her own parents, in media interviews, as in fact being white. A decade of dedicated advocacy on behalf of marginalized communities was called into question as people of color all over the world hauled Dolezal over the coals on social media. The problem, the consensus appeared to be, was that she had put her white privilege on hold for now, but could take it back at any moment she wished, and by pretending otherwise she had insulted the very community she wished to help.

McIntosh (2012, 1990) envisions white privilege as a weightless, invisible knapsack. This metaphorical backpack can be thought of as containing provisions, passports, visas, dictionaries, maps and other things that make our life's journeys easier, and which often give us subtle advantages over those who don't have them. What it can also do, McIntosh argues, is make those of us who have a degree of social privilege blind to the problems and issues of those who do not. Because we don't have to deal with these problems on a daily basis, we can only know them, at best, from structured learning and not easily on a human level. McIntosh refers specifically to white privilege, but the metaphor can easily be extended to other areas where power and influence are unevenly distributed due to various forms of social oppression.

Race, privilege, and Namibian photography

One of the challenges of promoting photography as a socially empowering medium in Namibia, in common with Southern Africa generally, is that many of the people with the best

qualifications to teach photography are white, male, middle-to-upper class or otherwise socially privileged (see Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre, 2013a; National Art Gallery of Namibia, 2013).

For example, many of the photographers exhibited recently at well-known galleries in Namibia have been white Namibians. A number of leading press photographers also fit into this racial group (Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre, 2013a; National Art Gallery of Namibia, 2013). Despite the fact that the ranks of these well-known photographers have recently been joined by some black Namibians (Republikein, 2013), it would be fair to say that black people remain under-represented. Namibian government data is not disaggregated by race, but the CIA World Fact Book estimates white people make up no more than 6% of the Namibian population as a whole (Central Intelligence Agency, USA, 2013), a much lower proportion than the proportion of white professional photographers. It is important to mention this because it is felt in many quarters that whites in general retain a set of privileges inherited from past regimes, including access to land and networks in business (Hunter, 2010; Du Pisani et al., 2010). Some of Namibia's well known photographers came from relatively humble economic backgrounds (Liebenberg, 2011). However, some photographers these days have access to substantial capital holdings in business (Bloomberg Business Week, 2013; Franco-Namibian Cultural Centre, 2013b; Informante, 2011). To summarize, a set of privileges separates the life experiences of many of Namibia's professional photographers from those of the typical young man or woman living in a Namibian township. As discussed in a later chapter, this must be seen against the background of photography's history in Namibia as an elitist and mostly white medium (see Hartmann et al., 1998).

The danger here is that a teacher/facilitator attached to a radical photography project may have the technical skills but lack the necessary empathy to see where (and even if) photography can make a difference in the lives of students/participants in a photographic training project. This may make photography seem remote to the everyday concerns of the participants in such a project, even where it may truly have liberating potential. Another danger is that the privileged facilitator, perhaps a bit like Rachel Dolezal is alleged to have done, fools him or herself into believing that he or she is totally one of the participants – in other words, he or she feels himself or herself to have transcended his or her privilege, and so does not do the necessary work of critically examining it. In a teaching and learning situation, it is important to stress that all actions (or inactions) of teachers have pedagogical significance (Van Manen, 2008, pp. 1-3). This makes it even more apparent that the relevance of the social situation of teacher and learner cannot be overstated, as this frequently becomes apparent in the most minor of exchanges.

Namibian education and learner-centered pedagogy

This can be yet further compounded by the fact that the discourse of education in Namibia has tended to follow a top-down model, where the 'teacher' is seen as a giver of knowledge, rather than a joint constructor of knowledge together with his/her students. This presents a dangerous situation. It has become clear to educators in radical social movements in recent decades, that it is essential, as Fanon (1961, pp. 196-199) states, that teaching and learning take place in a way that encourages people to see themselves as independent thinkers, not subjects of someone else's power. For this reason, it is worth following the lead of movements in education that have urged a move away from what Paulo Freire (1970, pp 57-60) calls the 'banking' philosophy of teaching and learning - the mere transfer of information and technical skills - towards education as a tool to engender political and societal consciousness as well. Such consciousness may include many aspects, including self-confidence, belief in one's basic human rights, and a questioning attitude towards social stereotypes and the dictates of the powers that be (Freire 1970, pp 60-64). Also critical in this understanding is the idea that learning must involve thinking - about oneself, one's art or profession and its place in the world – and this thinking can only take place in conversation (Freire, 1970, pp. 64–65).

This has not by any means been the typical Namibian educational situation. The Namibian apartheid educational system was heavily teacher-centered. Indeed, attention on the learner's construction of knowledge was linked with the socialist leanings of the liberation movements and thus almost totally rejected. This teacher-centeredness has been widely linked to a stifling pre-independence educational milieu characterized by rote learning (O'Sullivan, 2004). Learner-centered pedagogies were put in place at policy level in the two decades since independence; these have, however, often not been fully implemented (Nyambe and Willmot, 2015; O'Sullivan, 2004). Reasons for this non-implementation include teachers' limited professional capacities, limited resources, cultural factors and learner backgrounds (O'Sullivan, 2004). Indeed, it has been argued that efforts at Namibian education reform have been characterized by severe turbulence with divergent forces wrestling over its philosophical and epistemological orientations. One of the factors contributing to this turbulence has been resistance among a number of established stakeholders to education that sees learners primarily as constructors of their own knowledge (Nyambe and Willmot, 2015). Therefore, the empowering educator can be said to face a block before he or she even arrives: these are 'not the way things are usually done'.

Experiences and challenges in the workshops

I faced the challenges of privilege potentially interfering with this ideal critical role of an empowering educator head on, when I was a facilitator of photography workshops in 2014

and 2015 at Sister Namibia, Physically Active Youth and the Women's Leadership Centre. As a white, male, heterosexual, adult, middle-class person, I can consider myself privileged in at least one way (often several ways) compared to practically all of my participants. All but one of the participants in all my workshops were black, in a country where the results of the apartheid system, which was implemented up to 1990, are still very keenly felt. A number of the participants in the WLC workshops were San[6] women, who are socially marginalized both when compared to whites and Bantu-speaking[7] black people. Most of the participants in the Sister Workshops, and all in the WLC, were women, and most of the PAY participants were high-school going youth, generally of ages 16 to 19 (I was 36 years old at the time of conducting the research). A larger number of the WLC group are lesbian women, whereas a few gay men also participated in the Sister Namibia workshop. Generally, in class terms, most participants in all workshops were from low-income areas and families, although this was by no means always the case.

At first, I surprised myself by fitting in to the group well. I did not feel I stood out as someone who was perceived as different. However, on inspection of video recordings and field notes from the workshops, I did begin to see a number of ways in which my position as both a teacher/ lecturer figure and as a socially privileged person limited my involvement with the participants and potentially reduced the power of the workshops. I tried to rectify these in some of the later workshops. Consider the following exchange (transcribed from video recording) from one of the workshops at Sister Namibia:

> Hugh Ellis: This picture was probably taken with a 15-milimetre lens. A 'fish-eye' would be probably, like, a 5-milimetre lens. What happens is, as Ronele knows, there that effect is taken to extremes [moves hands from center of chest to wide apart]. So actually with a picture taken with a fish-eye lens normally the edges will actually be

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[6] The San are often called Bushmen/ women, a term some prefer to be called by outsiders, although it originally had pejorative undertones. Other prefer to be called by individual 'tribe' and clan names, e.g. Khoe, Hai#om, etc. For this thesis, I have opted to use the word 'San' as it is the most recognizable word within Southern African academia.

[7] 'Bantu-speaking' is used here as a general term to describe black Namibians not of San or Nama heritage. The term 'Bantu language' refers to a group of similar languages spoken by most black Southern Africans. The term 'Bantu', not referring to the language, has been used as a term to imply a blanket 'sameness' among black people, especially in South Africa. This thesis does not buy into this offensive use of the term. It should be noted that the term 'Bantu-speaking' in this thesis does not imply recognition of any claims to cultural sameness, and merely serves to distinguish San people from other black ethnic groups, while at the same time noting that boundaries between these groups are always fluid.

> curved. And you'll see, a straight line, like a wall, at the edge of an image taken with a fish-eye lens, will end up looking curved even though it's straight in reality.
>
> Lize (participant): Sorry to interrupt. If you don't know, it would sound as if you need a different lens. But the camera I had, a simple camera, a long time ago, there is a little switch, you switch to that, not that you have to have an extra lens.
>
> Hugh: But what the *camera* is doing is changing the lens, even though you are not perhaps physically…
>
> Lize: But what I'm saying is you'd be surprised how simple a camera can be and have that function.
>
> Hugh: Yeah, a lot of cameras have what they call a fish eye mode, which will, um, have that kind of effect. (To group as a whole) You might want to look on the Internet, sometime, do a search on Google for 'fish-eye images', or something like that. But you see it a lot in sports journalism, used for shots of the whole stadium, for example

A number of things happened in this exchange. It is clear I tried to convey technical information, but was interrupted by a participant who wished to share her own experiences and how it seemed to differ from what she heard from me. When I corrected what appeared to be her technical error, she still came back with a *desire to be heard*, 'what I'm saying is…' It is clear from this exchange is that I did not do enough to validate her opinion that she had something useful to say from her own experience, rather substituting my own 'expert' knowledge. The role of the teacher and the role of the expert, as we have seen are both roles traditionally imbued with a degree of power. The role of the expert, who possesses/ creates knowledge, and the teacher, who distributes it, are often conflated, adding another level of complexity to the power dynamic. Both of these ways of thinking about knowledge are problematic; nevertheless in the lived experience of many participants in an educational process both these forms of power seem very real and interlinked (see, among others, Freire, 1970, p. 122; Lingard et al., 2003; Scott et al., 2011).

In the exchange I quoted above, I was talking about very expert, technical knowledge: aspects such as lens focal lengths in millimeters, photographers' terms such as 'fish-eye' (meaning an extremely wide-angle lens). Lize, on the other hand, was talking about more situated, everyday, commonplace knowledge – you simply push a button on your camera and x happens. The *intersection of these two kinds of knowledge* could prove vital in making the facilitator-participant interaction a meaningful one. However, in this case it appears as though I was, to an extent, implying the superiority of scientific, technical knowledge to other kinds of knowledge.

In the context of Namibia as a postcolonial country, this distinction is a vitally important one. In common with much of the formerly colonized world, Namibian indigenous knowledge has been edged out of public consciousness by Western knowledge, often

presented as 'science', which has been seen by those in power (in government, education, research establishments and elsewhere) as the only acceptable form of knowledge (Le Grange, 2007; Shapi et al., 2011). In Namibia, as in many other places, this happened to such an extent that much pre-colonial indigenous knowledge is on the verge of dying out, if this has not already happened (Shapi et al., 2011). Even as an educator/ facilitator working hard to avoid colonial modes of address, one can easily be caught up in this tendency. The benefits of being a successful scientific researcher are clear: rewards and social recognition for scientists - in the Western understanding of the term – are numerous (Cullen-Unsworth et al., 2012; Le Grange, 2007; Shapi et al., 2011). By comparison, methods for the collection and preservation of indigenous knowledge – seen by some as a precondition for it even being recognized as science – are still in the infancy of being worked out (see Shapi et al., 2011).

As much as I, a full-time lecturer at a polytechnic, may *say* – sincerely – that I am interested in situated knowledges, including indigenous knowledge systems, and believe they should be given equal weight with other systems, I benefit immensely from an academic system which rewards my own chiefly Western scientific knowledge, and which has only recently come to see other forms of knowledge as also having merit. This has two key implications for me as a facilitator in community-based movements. Firstly, it is clear I must be careful that I am part of a system which was not set up to benefit the kinds of knowledge participants may bring to the table, thus have a big incentive – which I must guard against – to dismiss it. Secondly, I should see my participation in such spaces as offering possibilities to be part of the decolonization/ de-Westernization of knowledge. As a person who potentially occupies both kinds of spaces for knowledge, I could help both kinds of knowledge speak to each other. However, in order to effectively do that, as I will discuss later in this chapter, I would have to become aware of the limitations of my own technical/ scientific knowledge.

A further point may be worth noting from my interaction with Lize over the fish-eye lens issue: Lize is white, and was the only white participant in these workshops. She works as an executive assistant and is married to a relatively wealthy qualified professional. Thus, it may have been that her *race and her class made her more willing than some to challenge the facilitator*, even though her position in the gender order would have otherwise disadvantaged her.

The desire of the participant to be heard, the intersection of different kinds of knowledge, and the effects of race, class and other forms of systemic disadvantage, came up repeatedly in my reading of the field notes, videos and audio recordings from the workshops.

The desire to be heard among participants in a learning setting has increasingly been a central concern of pedagogic theory. It is viewed as essential to learners gaining a sense of competence and independence (Lingard, 2007, pp. 250-251). In contrast to some other bodies

of pedagogic theory, critical pedagogic theory – on the basis of which I had conceptualized this project - sees actual *instruction* as secondary to the gaining of this sense of *competent independence* by learners or participants (Lingard, 2007, pp. 251-253). To put it another way, what is needed is a move away from what Paulo Freire (1970, pp 57-60) calls the 'banking' philosophy of teaching and learning - the mere transfer of information and technical skills - towards education as a tool to engender political and societal consciousness as well. Such consciousness may include many aspects, including self-confidence, belief in one's basic human rights, and a questioning attitude towards social stereotypes and the dictates of the 'powers that be' (Freire 1970, pp 60-64). Also critical in this understanding is the idea that learning must involve thinking - about oneself, one's art or profession and it's place in the world – and this thinking can only take place in conversation (Freire, 1970, pp. 64-65).

In the context of this project, these conversations would focus on several things, including the way the media represents people like the participants visually, how these representations might be challenged, what other visual representations can be thought of, and the best way to gain the technical skills to confidently challenge these representations, if only to themselves and each other (and possibly more widely). Clearly these conversations, and the sense of independence as visual media representatives that they should engender, cannot happen in an environment where participants/ learners feel they have less right to speak than the facilitator/teacher.

The danger of taking on the role of the expert is that one can easily relegate participants (who might start to refer to themselves as 'students' or 'pupils') to the counterpart role of non-expert. This is dangerous because it can obscure and undervalue the very real knowledges that participants bring to the table (Lingard et al., 2003, pp. 400-402; Pretty et al., 1995). This is especially true in the case of media education where it is almost universally acknowledged that everyone in modern society is a media consumer, and thus influenced by the media, and increasingly a media producer as well, at least through social networks (Branston and Stafford, 2000, pp. 20–25; Curran, 2000, pp. 120-122). It cannot be denied that being a media consumer means that every participant in a media education workshop has a degree of expertise on the media. Although this expertise is of a different kind than that of a media practitioner or a media academic, it is a valid way of relating to many media issues, and on some aspects may be richer than the knowledge of, say, a media academic. This suggests that the concept of expertise is a problematic one. To suggest that experts know best is to deny non-expert the potential power of their lived experiences. On the other hand, to deny the power of knowledgeable opinion is to potentially rob ordinary people of a valuable resource they can call on when they need it (Day 1997; Page 2010) .Therefore, to deny participants' experiences (as non-expert and thus irrelevant) would serve to deny the workshop access to a rich potential range of intellectual resources.

Scott et al (2011, pp 9-10) state that making links between scientific or technical and everyday knowledge, and between different modes of representation of all kinds of knowledge (linguistic, mathematical, pictorial) is critical to meaningful learning processes. In the setting of a photographic workshop, many such connections need to be made. They would clearly include links between the photographer's picture-taking practice and his or her socio-economic situation, between the history of photography and how it is currently practiced, between media discourse and Namibians' social world, and between technical photographic issues and discussions around representation and ethics. Scott *et al* (2011, pp. 6-10) suggest that the teaching and learning process should make links between three things: students' real world experience, scientific/technical concepts, and possibilities of personal empowerment. Clearly, without mentioning students' situated experiences of the media, such a process cannot take place. Furthermore, such link-making is not guaranteed simply by presenting material in a classroom or other learning environment. It works best when it results from awareness of the process from both learner and teacher, and from a commitment to communicative interaction between them (Scott et al., 2011, pp. 19-21).

Personal experience and image interpretation

The power of situated experience for enhancing a participatory photography workshop in particular was well illustrated in the first workshop I conducted with a group from the Women's Leadership Centre. During a discussion on the potential power of images, the group was asked to pick out a photo that disturbed them from a section of *The Black Female Body: A Photographic History* (Willis and Williams, 2002), which is an exploration of photographic representations of black women, both historical and current. The group chose to discuss a historical photo from the USA, featuring a black nurse breastfeeding a white baby, presumed to be the baby of her employer. The group involved in the discussion featured myself, about half of the participants, consisting of four young black Namibian lesbian women, and a research assistant, who is a black Zimbabwean resident of Namibia and happens to be married to a white American man (Ellis, 2014a). The following is a transcript of an audio recording of a part of the conversation that followed:

> Lauryn: For me, this picture represents, like, the strength of the woman, especially the black woman, you know? And the love of the woman. Even though she was raising someone else's kid, probably raising someone who would grow up to hate her, she can still show that love in that moment…
>
> Rita: You can't be sure what the photographer wanted to show. Like, maybe he wanted to show the good obedient servant-woman. But for us it's like her power comes through. Like we see the strength of our mothers in her…

> Lauryn: And some of our mothers, our aunts, if I can say so, were also housemaids and nannies, and raised boys and girls who sometimes ended up hating us.
>
> Toni: For me, I saw this picture somehow differently. Being married to a white man, having a light-skinned baby… it's hard to explain. Obviously the interaction, the situation is completely different… You do meet people in town who assume you're this stereotype, this white man's child's nanny or…
>
> Unidentified speaker: Or he's your white sugar daddy…
>
> Toni: Well, yeah, so I want to say this picture speaks to my experience, but it's also, I suppose, an image I want to get away from. As I said, it's hard to explain.

What this interaction shows is that each participant brought a different kind of knowledge to the discussion, each bit of which was able to inform the group's understanding of the photograph, and virtually none of which depended upon the prior knowledge of the facilitator. Indeed, it could be argued that, as a white male, it was correct of me as facilitator to stay out of the conversation as much as possible, beyond having a basic role in starting off the discussion, or answering technical queries. Anything more could have slowed down the creative flow of the discussion by, for instance, encouraging the participants to slow themselves down in order to explain things to me that are not generally assumed to be common knowledge for people of my cultural background.

It can be argued that, to avoid interrupting and insisting on giving my own opinion, as I did in the example above, and as I failed to do in the example earlier concerning the fish-eye lens, requires a level of critical awareness from a facilitator. This may be a challenge especially when the facilitator works with participants of less privileged backgrounds than his or her own.

This differential in social privilege was certainly a factor, in one way or another, when comparing me as a facilitator to all the participants in all the workshops. Namibia remains one of the most unequal societies on Earth, owing in no small part to its history of apartheid and colonialism, the colonial regimes also being frequently sexist and homophobic in their ideology (Du Pisani et al., 2010). Namibia also has one of the highest rates of gender-based violence of any country and it has been widely recognized that a public discourse that privileges hegemonic masculinity – where men are equated with power and responsibility and weakness or 'femininity' is seen as unmanly autoethnographic contributes to this (Khaxas, 2007, 2005).

These social cleavages have obviously affected me personally. I live in a middle class suburb of Windhoek that was reserved for white persons before reforms in the 1980s and is still majority white. As a heterosexual person I am free to express my sexuality, whereas being a lesbian is widely socially condemned and male homosexuality is technically illegal (albeit under colonial-era laws that are not usually enforced, see Hubbard, 2000) In analyzing

field notes and video from the workshops I found both instances where my privilege had limited my facilitation, as well as where I was, seemingly, able to partially transcend it by putting it to a subversive or dissident use. At other times, it was by no means central, and at yet other times, being a possessor of privilege forced me to, for the best interest of meaning-making processes, to stay more or less out of key exchanges.

Consider the following exchange, between me and two workshop participants, Frieda and Fransina (who both happen to be young black Namibians):

> Fransina: Well, according to me, I can't say there is anything such as serious racism in Namibia. Or maybe there is. Maybe in the media, as some of you say. But not much racism out there, in life. I don't think it's a big deal, anyway. Maybe we're being to mean to the white people. White people are very nice, mostly.
>
> Hugh: Fransina, maybe you and I should go to Checkers sometime…
>
> Fransina: Um, yeah, okay. And buy food?
>
> Hugh: And see which one of us gets searched by security!
>
> Frieda: Hey! And they *always* search the black people. I don't know why.
>
> Fransina: Well, maybe. OK yeah, there's that. But some black people like to steal. You can't deny that. Put five white people together in a room, even if they get drunk, there won't be a fight…
>
> Frieda: Whereas our people, yoh…
>
> Hugh: But maybe racism is not only about white people being mean…
>
> Fransina: Maybe…
>
> Hugh: Um, yeah, you see, I'm white, and one of the things that interests me is how we so easily get the wrong idea about black people, even black people who we've never even met…
> (Ellis, 2014c; Hartz, 2014)

Here I used my race to play Devil's advocate in order to challenge Fransina's dismissal of the pervasiveness of white privilege in everyday life. I also tried to make the claim that *as a white person* I had something useful to say about how people can use the constructs of race to oppress others.

At other times I felt that, despite my gender, I played the role of being the radical element within the group as far as anti-sexist politics was concerned, perhaps because my academic background placed feminist discourse easily within my grasp. Towards the end of my first workshop with the Sister Namibia, group, I had the following exchange:

> Taylor: Next time we should talk more about the power of photos, in our lives as women. You know, there are so many naked photos of women out there, I don't always like them…
>
> Hugh: Yeah, that's true. We could watch that documentary *Killing Us Softly*[8]. You know, advertising has always made women into not much more than their sexuality, and manipulated their images on Photoshop. Now it's increasingly starting to do so with men, too…
>
> Toni: Please, man. It's always been manipulating men. Do you think George Clooney *naturally* looks like that, every day of his life? (Laughter from the group). Of course they're *making* him look cute; they've been lying to you… (more laughter).
>
> Hugh: I'd still say it's worse for women. Men aren't raped or beaten when they don't live up to the image…

In this conversation, I ended up receiving the situated experiences of the women participants (the preponderance of sexualized images of women in the media, and the sexualisation and manipulation of images of men) and put a critical spin on both of these (a global sexist advertising industry, and limited media representation not leading to real world oppression for males in the same way as for females, respectively). This may, ideally, be the role of the critical academic, to be a resource to help enable marginalized people to put their situated experience of oppression – which they are certainly aware of and do not need reminding exists – into a broader globally critical context - which they may need further elucidation of, to see links which may not be obvious to them, and, indeed, are often deliberately concealed by those in positions of power.

My background as it relates to this research project is a complex one. Although white, male and heterosexual, there are various aspects in which I might not be considered a typical white Namibian male. My parents were exiled from Namibia by the South African-backed South West Africa Administration in the late 1970s due to their activities in the anti-apartheid and pro-independence movements. I grew up in the UK, mixing in multi-racial and left wing circles, up until Namibian independence in 1990s. Post-independence and my family's return to Namibia, I attended a high school populated largely by children of the new black middle class. Therefore I believe I can say I was not exposed to the same level of anti-black propaganda as, and probably to a lot more black culture than, a typical white Namibian born in 1978. The danger of taking this approach to one's identity, however, is that it can blind you to the level of privilege you still enjoy, simply and often purely as a result of being born a certain colour, sex, and to parents of a certain economic background. It can be all too easy to see yourself as the same as your black (and often female) high-school comrades, with whom

[8] The documentary in question is by the feminist media activist Jean Kilbourne, and examines advertising's image of women from a critical perspective (see Kilbourne, 2013)

you often seem have more cultural commonalities than the virulently racist white folks down the road.

At first glance it may be that this background of relative assimilation into Namibia's post-Independence black middle class seems unique – and indeed, few white Namibian professional photographers can be said to share it – but it is true that many white males in progressive movements in Namibia generally may face similar challenges and contradictions. The Namibian State's policy of national reconciliation since Independence and more recently president Hage Geingob's rhetoric of the Namibian body politic being 'one Namibian house' (see, for example Geingob, 2015), has generally led to those white people who wish to participate being welcomed into both public and private social service initiatives. The danger of this to white, male and otherwise privileged individuals is that one may be accepted as, for example, a 'good white man' and may be seduced into seeing oneself almost as an honorary black person, which may in turn lead one away from the necessary work of, for example, confronting other privileged people and their prejudices. A further danger may be that some white males may end up working to help the socially disadvantaged without realizing how their own privileged position in society required others to be deliberately disadvantaged in the first place.

The core of this argument relates to what it may mean to be a good white ally – that is, a person who, despite benefiting from the privileges of whiteness, nevertheless allies himself or herself with the struggles of people of color. Related questions could and should certainly be asked of people with other types of privilege, such as males, heterosexual and cis-gender people, and so on. Scholars who have written on whiteness present a wide variety of views on the responsibilities of the critically aware white person. Many have argued that the widespread strategy of simply declaring oneself to be opposed to racism and/or living one's personal life in a non-racist manner is not enough to be socially meaningful (Blum, 2011; Boutte and Jackson, 2014; Greenberg, 2014). Some theorists have even argued that speaking about race and acknowledging racial privilege alone cannot be equated with the work of beginning, however tentatively, to dismantle racist institutions (Ahmed, 2004, para. 52-55).

Gardiner (2009) argues that to develop a meaningful identity as a white ally in the fight against racism, a white person, at minimum, should: be in accountable relationships with people of color, work to change those institutions where he or she is in positions of power or influence, seek authentic interactions with people of a variety of racial communities, take responsibility for his or her own racial identity journey, and work to build a white anti-racism collective. This work is vital. Many have argued that, in the Southern African regional context, especially in a time when political pressure for transforming the legacies of Apartheid is increasing, it is not enough simply for whites to stay silent or only to express

remorse. Concerning the situation of South Africa specifically, Mbembe (2015 para. 34-37) writes:

> To demythologize whiteness, it will not be enough to force "bad whites" into silence or into confessing guilt and/or complicity. This is too cheap.
>
> To puncture and deflate the fictions of whiteness will require an entirely different regime of desire, new approaches in the constitution of material, aesthetic and symbolic capital, another discourse on value, on what matters and why.
>
> The unfolding new/old trial of whiteness won't produce much if whites are forced into a position in which the only thing they are ever allowed to say in our public sphere is: "Look, I am so sorry".

For the photo workshops, the question of the extent to which I was in what Gardiner (2009) calls *accountable relationships* with the participants is a crucial one. At least on the surface, I was. Each of the workshops was planned with the buy-in of the management of the community-based organizations concerned. However, the precise planning of the actual activities was left more or less up to me. My very conceptions of the way the workshops should have worked is that I would be a resource to the participants, who would determine the content of my teaching. To some extent this happened. For example, I conducted a session on Photoshop because members of the Sister Namibia group requested (with no prompting from me) that I should do so. However, at other times (the fish-eye lens example at the beginning of this chapter, for instance), I failed to live up to that ideal of accountability.

In bringing up the issues of white people not being searched by security guards or racism being more than just verbal abuse, as in my example above, I hope I was active, to an extent, in demythologizing whiteness, which Mbembe implies is a process whites should participate in. However, in order to be effective in this role, I had to make my whiteness apparent, and draw attention to it, in order to be effective at making apparent the damaging effect of white privilege in society. Whereas, in the discussion around the images in 'The Black Female Body' book, clearly the better option for demythologizing whiteness was to do what I did – raise the topic, allow a space for it to be discussed, then stay out of the ensuing discussion. To do otherwise, without prompting, may have been to imply that I have special knowledge, and thus reinforce the mythological idea that only whites can respond to black suffering. As Mbembe (2015) points out, 'part of what racism has always tried to do is to damage its victims' capacity to help themselves … it has encouraged its victims to perceive themselves as powerless.'

The workshops at Physically Active Youth (PAY) contributed another key element of social privilege to the environment: that of age. The situation of a 36-year-old adult facilitating a workshops attended by a group of participant of high-school-going age (mostly

16-19 years old) youths would normally be subject to a number of social privileges that would, if left to their own devices, render the adult as the active speaker and the youths as passive observers. Obviously this would not be conducive to the kind of empowering experience with photography that I hoped my participants would have.

The reasons for this include both legal and cultural restrictions on what youths and children may do and what decisions they may make (Messiou, 2006, pp. 305-307). While this may be appropriate in some contexts, such cultural scruples could lead to certain thoughts and questions being considered disrespectful or subversive and thus not being voiced. This may include potentially serious problems with how the workshops are going. This would be counter-productive for an intervention that seeks to use photography (or any other mechanism) to put participants in greater control over their own lives.

The background to Namibian youth often feeling constrained because of their age relates to various social factors. One of these is that Namibia has a very young population – the median age is only 21 (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011, p. 28), but the majority of higher-level politicians and other decision makers are much older, often into their 50s and 60s. Unemployment is also most severe among the youth, especially in urban areas (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011, pp. 56–61). What is more, there are effects of the educational system that need to be taken into account. There is a long-standing tradition that teachers are the people with power in the classroom. Although post-independence governments have made efforts to change this, the rightness of the teacher being absolutely in charge is still a widespread belief among teachers, and often, poor results at certain schools are blamed on the 'indiscipline' of learners (Nyambe and Willmot, 2015). There is also a widespread view that children are to be controlled by adults and not allowed too much freedom. Corporal punishment still sometimes takes place in school, although technically banned, and is thought to be widespread in Namibian homes (Burnett et al., 2010, pp. 35–54; Whittaker, 2013).

At the beginning of the first workshop with the PAY participants, I insisted that none of them call me 'Sir' or 'Mr. Ellis'. The intended effect of this was to reduce the formality of the setting. I am not sure how effective this was, not least because some of them started referring to me as 'Mr. Hugh' (In my experience, the combination of Mr./Ms. + first name is not an uncommon way for Namibians to refer to school teachers and even university lecturers). I was also careful to arrange the chairs in the venue in a circle rather than the usual classroom configuration of straight rows, and to sit down myself, rather than stand up to address them. A related challenge was that the PAY management saw my work as adding to the English skills and media literacy of the participants, who were enrolled in sporting and educational programs (including mathematics and English) with the project. So I was seen as a teacher at PAY, that is, in a social space similar to a school teacher, to a greater extent than I was at Sister Namibia and the WLC.

My experiences in reviewing the workshops I conducted at the WLC and Sister Namibia also made me aware that there was sometimes an issue with me imposing my views, either knowingly or unknowingly, on the participants. However, at other times this was clearly not an issue, and I remain uncertain as to how significant the issue was when it was present. A number of different conceptions of my role were expressed in a focus group discussion I held at the conclusion of the series of three PAY workshops:

> Jonas: I like the way that Mr. Hugh has helped us to capture photos and how we have discussed how to better capture photos. What has been good is that we could capture pictures of what we wanted, how we lived our lives. I like that we discussed the newspapers and how they… how do you say? How they capture pictures that don't tell the whole story…
>
> Rihanna: Yeah, there were things I didn't understand about how to capture photos… before the workshop… now I understand how they do things. It's like, this is how they capture photos so it gets our attention.

During another part of the discussion:

> Rihanna: It is good that we are learning to capture photos professionally…
>
> Ellen: NO! We are learning to capture OUR photos. Like Mr Hugh said. Not like professionals.
>
> Rihanna: What I meant was, we are learning to not take pictures into the sun and so, like, follow those rules. Because otherwise our pictures will, you know, get laughed at. But we are still taking photos of OUR stories, because we don't see our stories in the media, unless someone is killed or something.
>
> Adele: Me, I didn't get that. To be honest, I don't see the point of some of these photos. Like, we took them, but for me, I can't really see what's a bad one or a good one. Perhaps it was not explained well enough.

These discussions could indicate that, perhaps I did not, despite my best efforts, entirely manage to dispel my image as a teacher or lecturer, where a teacher is defined in the colonial way as 'one who tells us what to think'. However, they also indicate that at least some of the participants began to see the media and photography in a different and more critical way as a result of the workshops there. However, even here, it is clear that the two PAY conversations should give me pause as a critical educator. A 'let's be critical consumers of media because that's what we've been told to do' attitude (although that is a somewhat crude simplification) cannot be considered empowerment.

The ideal would be somewhat different: I would be discovering *with* them how media was biased (such as through them only photographing the township when someone died there), how media presents a slick and enjoyable product (such as by not taking pictures looking into

the sun), and considering jointly how we could use those same product-making techniques to combat media bias (such as taking glamorous photos of township divas to combat negative mainstream media images). But that would require someone from the marginalized community itself. Or, if not, it would at least require a privileged person who is able to first, imagine how it would be if he did not have his privilege, for long enough that he or she can truly hear what the participants have to say and feel their suffering, and second, be cognizant of his or her own privilege nevertheless, so that he or she does not seem a fraud or counterfeit, denying or negating facts about the participants social reality that they know to be true, but which he or she may not be aware of, or may wrongly perceive to be a personal attack.

Another issue that needs consideration is my dealing with San people, who face unique challenges when compared to Bantu-language-speaking Africans in Namibia. The noun or adjective 'San' has been used to describe a range of groups that together were the first inhabitants of southern Africa, who speak a range of related languages and traditionally had a predominantly (but often not exclusively) hunter-gatherer lifestyle. In Namibia these groups include the Hai//Om[9], Khoe and others (Sullivan, 2001, pp. 179–181). In general, the San peoples are recognized as the most marginalized of all groups in Namibia, in which they are now a very small minority. The 2011 Census recorded less than one per cent of Namibians spoke a San language at home (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2011, p. 68) although some San may no longer have access to their ancestral languages. They have been widely dispossessed of land, often lack full ownership rights to the land on which they live, and are often less visible in, and have less power to influence, official national discourses than do either white Namibians or Bantu-language-speaking black Namibians (Sullivan, 2001). Government efforts to provide services and affirmative action programs for the San communities have so far had mixed results at best (Khaxas, 2007; Women's Leadership Centre, 2013).

Interacting with San-language-speaking people (who were part of the Women's Leadership Centre group I worked with) shone an interesting light on my own relationship with various black groups as a white Namibian. I speak a Bantu language, Oshiwambo[10], and have basic understanding of others such as Otjiherero and Silozi, but no San language to any degree. I found that it did not take the San members of the group long to realize this. I realized they often spoke among themselves in their own languages during the breaks, and sometimes did this during workshop sessions, for example to confirm they had understood a

[9] The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols !, /, //, and # are used to indicate the various click consonants in these languages.

[10] More specifically the Oshikwanyama dialect. The dialects of Oshiwambo such as Oshikwanyama, Oshindonga and Oshikwambi are sometimes considered to each be languages in their own right.

question I has asked. During the workshop sessions I observed that some of the Bantu-speaking members of the group were asking the San members about their cultures and for the meaning of certain words in their languages. Generally speaking, I did not do this. I am not sure why I did not do so. It may have been a lingering resentment that I had made the effort to learn about certain black languages, and that I was now being required, in a sense, to start that learning all over again. Whichever way one interprets these matters, it is clearly a danger that white facilitators of these kinds of workshops (or similar interventions) will in all likelihood be more familiar with Bantu-language-speaking black cultures and languages than San ones, and this is likely to be equally true of many Bantu-speaking facilitators.

Nevertheless, despite these issues, the San women provided many valuable insights for the workshops into the nature of photography as a socially constructed medium in Namibia. One of these was that, although the San are one of the most photographed ethnic groups in the world, San people themselves almost never take these photos. Emily, a young San woman who grew up at a village near the small town of Tsumkwe, related how almost all her childhood photos were not taken by grandparents or uncles or aunts (as was often the case for other people who took part in this study), but by foreign tourists who came to see 'Bushmen' engaged in the traditional lifestyle, and who afterwards printed out and sent back their pictures, or transferred them electronically to a computer at a nearby school ('Angela' and 'Emily', 2014). About using digital cameras for a photo shoot in Windhoek town center during one of the workshops, Angela said:

> Using a camera, not a cellphone camera, it was so cool: I felt like a tourist or something. Also, sometimes, it was good to be more in control of the picture. Like first I didn't notice, how to, if you see the picture and there is too much light. I didn't know what was the cause of that, I just thought that is how the picture is supposed to be but now I can differentiate this is why the picture is looking like that.

These perspectives are discussed in more detail in my chapter on how photography works as a medium in post-colonial Namibia. But here it is important to note that clearly the workshops did serve to, at least symbolically, challenge a long-standing power dynamic in this young woman's life (she was the one taking the pictures with a relatively fancy camera now; not the white foreign tourists). It can also be said that she feels that the technical knowledge she gained, however limited, has changed her from an observer into an actor, or at least into an informed rather than an uninformed observer.

Another interesting perspective that the San women brought to the workshops was that they felt their traditional gender roles were more towards 50-50[11] than some Bantu-speakers'

[11] Following the ruling Swapo Party's decision in the 2014 parliamentary elections to field a party list featuring 50 per cent female representation, the phrase '50-50' has been widely used

traditions, which they felt were more patriarchal. However it was felt that outsiders' representations of San communities, including photographic ones, did not reflect this. Also, the San participants discussed the possibility of combining photography with drama as a tool to 'educate communities', for example about alcohol abuse ('Angela' and 'Emily', 2014). This possible combination of drama and photography was not mentioned much, if at all, at any of my other workshops. These perspectives allowed the San contingent to contribute different perspectives to the workshops, which may otherwise have gone unmentioned.

A key aspect that I think the presence of San-speaking people in the workshops illustrates is the need for an intersectional response to questions of power. The term 'intersectionality' means an awareness that power is intersectional: that it operates over many axes. A person may be oppressed when considering one axis of power (for example, gender) but privileged when considering another (for example, race). Also, the oppression of a person who is affected by several axes of power (for example, a working class black disabled women) cannot be fully understood when looking through the lens of analyzing only one of these oppressions (Brah and Phoenix, 2013, pp. 75-76; Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242; Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006, pp. 190-191). In popular discourse describing the situation of black Namibians, the special oppressions suffered by San people are often left out (Sullivan, 2001). My photo workshops suggest that many of the positive contributions they could make to a socially empowering Namibian discourse are ignored as well. These included, in this instance, an awareness of the intersectionality of black Namibia itself, as well as questioning the idea of patriarchy as traditional or cultural, and of the nature of popular photography to discriminate even against those it claims to highly value (most postcards, photo essays, etc. featuring the San are overwhelmingly 'positive', after all). The presence of the San at the workshops, however challenging to me, encouraged me as facilitator to take intersectionality seriously.

My experience of conducting and analyzing these workshops was both heartening and sobering. One of the most disconcerting aspects was having to watch and listen to my own performance as a facilitator, on video and audio recordings, as well as reflect on each workshop day via writing field notes. This made me aware of a lot of the problematic aspects of the interactions at the workshops, which I might have not otherwise been aware of. McIntosh (2012) suggests that one of the most insidious effects of white privilege is that whites *don't have to think about* how they are privileged unless they choose to deliberately bring it to their own attention. She describes writing a list of ways in which she was privileged, and repeatedly forgetting items on it. I found the watching of video material in

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in Namibia to connote policies advocating gender equality and pro-women affirmative action in general.

particular a way in which I was forced to confront problematic aspects: I could not ignore the times when I talked when clearly I should have been quiet, when I interrupted marginalized people telling their life stories, the awkward body language when at times I reverted to the role of teacher, giving a lecture to students. This may be a good discomfort, because privilege cannot be challenged as long as we are unaware of it. It could thus be argued that, however uncomfortable, the humble video camera, and video footage, may be a valuable tool in enabling a privileged facilitator to be more self-reflexive.

Based on my experiences as outlined in this chapter, I would recommend a number of important best practices for future photography as empowerment projects in similar contexts. First, and most critically, people working as facilitators in these projects need a basic awareness of what social privilege is, and possible mechanisms to guard against the worst of its effects, before going into the facilitation environment. This awareness should include knowledge of how privilege works intersectionally, including, for example, the effects of gender, age and ethnicity below the level of race (for example the marginalization of San-speaking Africans).

Second, because social privilege is so difficult for the privileged to see and analyze, even at the best of times, it is important that socially marginalized people are heavily involved in the management structure of empowering photography projects. Third, projects should have a clear social goal and should not just be 'to show our life' (which may not have very much effect) but should actually seek to protest and even to change how things are. I will speak more about this in later chapters. Fourth, and finally, wherever possible, facilitators should record and analyze their own work, to help them become aware of when they are unconsciously fitting back into conventional power dynamics.

CHAPTER 5: THE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

Each of the participants came to the workshops with an established long relationship with photographic images, which related closely to struggles around such questions as identity and belonging. The widespread liminality, the feeling of being *in between* identities, that the participants reported was reflected in both their experiences of photography growing up, and, as we shall see, in some of the images they captured during my photographic workshops. Photography as a medium had a complex meaning in the experiences of the group of participants as a whole. In some cases this included the positive use of photos to cement their family and individual identity, and give them a degree of power when facing an often deeply unjust society. This power included the psychic freedom to define their own identities, as well as to resist dominant meanings being imposed on their lives by people with power. Sometimes, it merely allowed them to stay sane or cope in intolerable situations. For others, however, photography was a largely negative experience of *being photographed* by people with sometimes-questionable motives. For all these people, the experience of attending the workshops fitted into and expanded these existing experiences, and often allowed them to see their experiences through different frames. In this chapter I examine the interviews and focus–group discussions I conducted with the participants. I do this in order to highlight their relationships with photographic images, and I describe how this relationship was often a (more-or-less) problematic one for most of the participants, and how this was often related to experiences of being inside and outside structures of power within Namibian society.

Participants' backgrounds and experiences with social disadvantage

The participants were generally from socioeconomically and historically disadvantaged areas of Windhoek, and had other common experiences of social disadvantage such as belonging to sexual minorities. Social disadvantage is a complex matter. As some theorists have stated, it revolves around the experience of being excluded, both from material goods and services given arbitrarily to others but denied to oneself, and from the psychological reassurance of being listened to or mattering to those with power. Importantly, social disadvantage is not just about *individual* prejudice and discrimination, but being discriminated against because you are *part of a group* that has been systemically viewed as lower status over a period of time. In many societies, the social disadvantage of class is closely tied to disadvantage relating to ethnic discrimination. Campbell and McLean (2002) state that the lack of participation of individuals from marginalized communities relates to a large number of interrelated factors such as poverty, institutional racism, informal ethnic and cultural

discrimination, health inequalities, lack of inter-communal solidarity and invisibility to broader society. In total these factors constitute a lack of social capital, which limits potential life chances for even individually successful members of these communities. Terms such as 'deep poverty' (McLoyd, 1998, pp. 185–186) are sometimes used to describe this poverty which exists at a confluence of economic, historical, social and psychological factors, and which can prove stubbornly hard to eradicate.

As might be expected, the participants raised this disadvantage in the interviews, and often tried to relate it to their experiences with photography. Jeanette said:

> When we were growing up, I can say we were really, really poor. No one in my family owned a camera or anything like that. Maybe one uncle had a cellphone with a really bad camera. And some people at school. But I can say that life was hard… very hard for us. Often for our parents it was just a matter of getting enough food for our survival. I don't think I read newspapers much in high school. I think I thought the whole politics they reported on was corrupt… and so had nothing for people like me. I only became interested in the media and that… representation… much later, when I got that bursary to go to college.

From this we can see a number of themes. These themes concerning what societal disadvantage is were raised in many interviews. First, poverty in terms of lack of material goods is referenced as the paramount understanding of what it means to be disadvantaged. Second, survival is seen as a heroic quest. Third, the social disadvantage of the participants, or people they knew, is linked to the corruption of the political system and/ or the political class.

On the other hand, the majority of the interviewees had a nuanced view of social disadvantage, and often shared experiences of being on 'both sides of the fence' with regard to various kinds of institutional oppression in Namibian society. Rita, a youth development worker and former policewoman, shared this account:

> Before I started this work, I used to be a police officer. What caused me to give up being a police officer is, uh, a lot of things, a lot of small things led up to it. Ok, the use of the gun – I didn't want to have to use a gun, because it's something meant to kill people. You never know when you might be placed in a situation when you have to use it. And then, there was all this patriarchy, which I didn't like at all. And unfair treatment and corruption and things like that. I thought I got in to help people, but actually it was more about corrupting people. I was there for three years.

From this quotation we can see that the participant, as was typical, referenced social wrongs as a function of 'corruption' and 'unfair treatment' within existing systems of social services. She indicates her own opting out of this system as a form of protest. She also tries to distance herself and her motives from the bad aspects within the system: 'I thought I got in to help people.'

In a similar way, Johnny, a worker in a large corporation, said:

> I can say I am doing well at this business thing, and that I'm moving up in the ranks. I sometimes feel bad that I left people behind in Katutura, but I try to help out when I can. I also know that I'm making a lot more money than those on the ground floor, you know. And I can say I don't work any harder than them. Also, I know I have to be a bit quiet about my sexuality, because you never know who will take offence to that, who will see that and think 'I need to block this guy's progress'. So, yeah. I guess I have to balance all that. I'd like to do a photography project that shows all that, but I don't know how possible it would be.

We can see in this extract that Johnny tries to legitimate his own participation in a capitalist enterprise that is not treating those on the ground floor very well, by stressing his own humble origins, and that he 'helps out where he can.' He also stresses how he has to be careful about his own sexual orientation, which means that he is indeed oppressed, thereby further distancing himself from the oppressive system that he also admits to being part of.

It is interesting that in both quotations, the respondents do not necessarily question the *existence* of the somewhat-survivable-and-also-somewhat repressive institutions they are part of, or used to be part of. Neither called directly for radical change, such as worker-owned businesses, or a radically redefined community-based police force, either. In Johnny's case, he admits that his progress in the business gives him the ability to 'help out' the most disadvantaged people, meaning he cannot describe it as completely negative. In this way, these participants, to some extent, discursively position themselves as both oppressor and oppressed.

With the San group based at the Women's Leadership Centre, there was sometimes a feeling of being caught between white Namibians and Bantu-language-speaking black Namibians, neither of whom, it was felt, had San people's best interests at heart. Le-Ann said:

> At college the black people, or Oshiwambo or Otjiherero speaking people, maybe you should say… they poke fun at 'Bushmen' sometimes. You want to get angry at that, but sometimes you keep quiet because you know these people could be useful allies if you find yourself mistreated by the white people, who, you know, sometimes have more power than both of you put together.

The fact that many San groups of people in independent Namibia are placed in a precarious position has been acknowledged in literature on the country's socioeconomic development for some time (Sullivan, 2001). However they often still face a degree of invisibility in national and official discourses (Sullivan, 2001, pp. 180-182). It is interesting that Le-Ann identified herself as separate from others she regarded as black, seeming to imply that at least part of the exclusion of the San from national dialogues was them not being identified with being black, even though they are of African descent, whereas Oshiwambo or Otjiherero speakers could be seen in that way. However, it is also key here that, as San youth have identified in other places (Sullivan, 2001; Tomaselli, 2002, 2014) whiteness is no more

their friend than the predations of Bantu-language-speaking Africans. However, another theme in this quotation that has echoes in other studies of San communities and their media reception, that the San have to negotiate these things carefully, that they 'have to use their own heads' (Tomaselli, 2002, p. 204).

Often, the most pressing site of institutional oppression the participants said they had to deal with in their daily lives was that of gender. Feminist perspectives were commonly held to be widely disseminated in Namibian society, but because of their personal and family situations, many of the women interviewed could not embrace them fully. They mentioned non-governmental institutions like Women's Solidarity, which had a key mission to protect rape survivors, and the feminist NGO Sister Namibia, as well as the ruling Swapo Party's 50-50 candidate list for Parliament in the last election, as examples of this dissemination. However, at home, as opposed to 'out there' or in society, some of them still felt themselves to be second-class citizens.

In some feminist theories, the distinguishing between the work or public, and domestic, spheres of human activity has been seen as one of the ways in which women's life chances are limited. A group of women's movements that Hayden (1982, pp. 6-9) refers to as 'material feminists' have noted how the restricting of the domestic sphere as a purely feminine space limits women's chances to, for example, be seen as equals in the public sphere, or even get enough time off from childcare and domestic work to attend to the professional or political worlds. This theme has found many adherents in different stands of feminism. The idea that society's fencing off of a domestic sphere and its imbuing of that sphere with supposedly feminine characteristics is limiting and repressive has become widespread in society more generally (Kerber, 1988, pp. 9-11).

The participants in this study, however, especially women and LGBTQA+ people, many of whom self-identified as feminists, frequently found that religious fundamentalisms limited how liberated they could actually be in changing how they navigated their domestic spheres. Maria, who works at an organisation for LGBTQA+ people in Windhoek and was raised by her mother in a small rural town, related a not untypical story:

> I was not raised in that [patriarchal] line of thinking. My mother dressed me as a boy. She didn't tell me a woman's place is in the kitchen. She didn't tell me a woman is supposed to do this and that. It was always a thing of 'do what you want to do, how you want to do it'. But that's changed in the last few years. She became born again, so… so now she thinks in the line of 'girls are supposed to do this, girls are supposed to do that'. So I think it's a flip now, of how she raised me. Now she wants to do it this way, but I'm 23 now…

Interviewer: How does she feel about you working at Outright Namibia?[12]

> She doesn't know! Because of what Outright Namibia is, so… [Laughing] oh, gosh, she'd kill me… 'Cause ever since I came out of the closet it has been an issue. So I needed to go back into the closet somewhat, for her sake… her peace of mind, and my sanity.

To interpret this quotation we need to note that gender and sexuality act as intersecting axes of oppression, and that these also interact with image making in various ways. Also, we need to understand the ambiguous role of Pentecostal churches in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years. The years since the early 1990s have seen the rise of so-called charismatic, Pentecostal, or born-again churches all over sub-Saharan Africa (Gusman, 2009; Marshall, 1991; Maxwell, 1998; Meyer, 2004). These have attracted members from, and often eclipsed, both traditional Western and African Independent churches (Meyer, 2004, pp. 447-448). Combining aspects of traditional African interpretations of Christianity and more right-wing viewpoints common to Pentecostal churches in the West, these churches have often been seen as a way towards modernity by young people (Meyer, 2004, pp. 459–460). Far from being only religious bodies, their preaching has had extensive social impacts in countries from Zimbabwe (Maxwell, 1998) to Uganda (Gusman, 2009) to Nigeria (Ibrahim, 1991). Particular features which academics have noted, that may impact on the participants in this study include the preaching of the so-called Prosperity Gospel, which sees riches as a blessing from God (Meyer, 2004, p. 459) and a conservative attitude to sex and sexuality, which in several countries has been behind church campaigns to reduce HIV prevalence by encouraging young people to abstain from sex outside (heterosexual) marriage (Gusman, 2009). While these churches and their projects have often given especially young people a sense of meaning and identity, separate from what they see as corrupt older generations (Gusman, 2009, pp. 74-77), their conservative outlook on social issues was cause for concern for the people I interviewed. In particular, the alienation that participants like Maria, who is both Christian and Lesbian, felt when discussing these matters, was clear.

Another way in which participants constructed their identity as *in-between* was that they felt that commonly-held ethnic identities that were more certain for older generations did not completely apply to them, either because of ethnic mixing or because the hallowed traditional practices or things considered typical no longer had meaning for them. Maria said:

> I usually just say I am a Namibian cocktail, because as much as my mother tongue is Oshiwambo, I sometimes don't fit into all those boxes – the whole 'typical Owambo-ness'. I can't even do my traditional dances, the whole pounding of mahangu [pearl

[12] Outright Namibia is an organization representing LGBTQA+ Namibians and which aims to press for their human rights and equal recognition before the law.

> millet], I can't prepare traditional beer, like, some of these things Owambos are so proud of doing. I've never worn any of those traditional beads around my waist. Yeah. It's one of those things.

This rejection of an all-encompassing ethnic identity should not surprise us. It is well documented that South Africa's and Namibia's (then South West Africa's) policy of creating Bantustans during apartheid times involved disrupting otherwise fluid black ethnic identities and putting them into strictly defined tribal boxes (Katjavivi, 1988, pp. 72-85). This also sometimes involved the wholesale inventing of traditions, chiefly lineages and tribal authorities, which were imposed on people without their consent (Katjavivi, 1988, pp. 72-91; Seidman, 1999, pp. 426-429). It should therefore not be surprising that post-Apartheid Namibian youth appear to be trying to make these identities fluid again, and that they don't easily find themselves at home in the midst of older, more strictly-defined identities.

Liminality – the state of being in between two conflicting poles, or seeing oneself as this, has been seen by social theorists to operate in multiple ways among Southern African people. Spaces as varied as immigration queues, sexual abuse survivor shelters, and universities have been seen as sites in which social liminality operates (Arnzen, 2014; Eliastam, 2015; Kamsteeg, 2011). Speaking about post-apartheid South Africa, Motha (2010) states that liminality in media texts suggests a possible movement from colonial longing – the longing for a better world than what the colonial system could ever achieve for people of color – towards postcolonial possibility. He states that, on behalf of privileged or semi-privileged postcolonial elites, moving into a liminal space could entail taking on the vulnerability of oppressed classes. For the oppressed, liminality can be a state one is forced into through possessing multiple discriminated-against identities, or one that a person choses to embrace as a way to occupy a positioning more meaningful than one that is forced on a person by society.

The taking on a liminal identity through telling stories – narratives – of potentially traumatic experiences related to oppression can serve as part of the process of healing from that trauma (Arnzen, 2014, pp. 7-9; Campbell and MacPhail, 2002, pp. 7-8). The idea that liminality could work to aid healing was a central theme surrounding the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in immediate post-apartheid South Africa and similar processes in Haiti (Arnzen, 2014, pp. 7-8). The concept was that by taking on liminal identities – the perpetrator putting him or herself imaginatively in the victim's shoes and the victim seeing telling his or her story from a more neutral, third-person position – both perpetrators and victims would be able to see previously suppressed narratives, and, by working through these narratives, find healing. These claims have been criticized. For example, questions of compensation for those traumatized by social injustice, of sites for the expression of outrage being limited to legalistic settings, and around the truth of these traumatic narratives themselves, have all been raised (Arnzen, 2014, p. 10).

What is more, liminality, and teasing out the liminality one has to live with through narratives, does not always have positive outcomes. Clients of one South African community center for domestic violence survivors, for example, reported being 'stuck in a trauma story' – stuck in the liminal space between being a victim and continuing with their lives, as they kept having to repeat the story of their trauma to multiple professionals and overseas volunteers staffing the center (Arnzen, 2014, pp. 58-60). For the purposes of this thesis, it is therefore important to investigate how far the photos taken by the workshop participants express a narrative liminality, given the liminal nature of their existence expressed in the interviews, and whether this is expressed as a positive or a negative experience.

It is also interesting that some participants described how they and their friends/ associates were creating their own counter-identities and subaltern groups of belonging, which often did not fit in with mainstream southern African notions of, for example, femininity and masculinity, or of mainstream black identities. Lionel, a young gay black man, described his membership in a group of young men who call themselves the 'young divas':

> If we, like, have an argument we just say no, we don't want to fight. Let's just go to the battle and dance, that's our way of fighting. Whereas as other guys would fight, we have dance battles in the street. Most of us wear women's clothes when we go out. It's just only me who dresses like a man. They dress like women so they want me to fit in as well, so I told them not yet, because I must first finish my school. If I were known to be sometimes dressing like that, it could cause problems at school.

Social identities are commonly built around group membership, and it has been said that such group memberships are associated with various 'recipes for living' (Campbell and MacPhail, 2002, p. 335). By associating with certain social groupings, one accepts a degree of this recipe for living, and one's behaviors may be constrained by it. However, this identity conferred by various groupings is always negotiated, and an individual will likely have to negotiate his or her membership of various social groupings with different ideas as to appropriate behaviors, discourses and ideologies (Campbell and MacPhail, 2002, pp. 335-337). Social empowerment, which is associated with critical thinking and greater awareness of power structures and the levers of change, may require one to disassociate oneself from, or fight for change in, the social identities one has grown up in, or to form new, subaltern counter-cultural group identities. This appears to be what Lionel and his friends have done, and it may impact on the photographs that such people took.

The experience of being itinerant – of moving around the country, having no central place to call home - was also a central theme that a number of participants chose to highlight in their life stories. In a story on the more extreme end of the movement spectrum, but not untypical of the manner in which these stories were told, Rita said:

> I was born in Omaheke region, a place called Leonardville. I don't even know it that well, but I was born there. I was taken to Khorixas, then to Usakos, Karibib, and then to the South, Stampriet, and then to Outjo, in the Northwest. I was sent around because I didn't grow up with my parents. My father died while I was very young, so everybody was just taking me. This year, someone; the next year, someone else.

The concept of home is a socially constructed one. It refers not just to a physical place, but to emotional security, to understanding what goes on there and being identified by one's self and other as being from there, or, in a context of migration, from somewhere else (Kamwangamalu, 1999; Van Blerk and Ansell, 2006; Wright, 1995). The fact that many participants highlighted this is striking and also suggests another layer of liminality in their everyday experience. As is discussed elsewhere in this chapter, this also points to the fact that, as young people, the participants tended to reject sharply defined ethnic identities, which previous apartheid governments of Namibia often tied to a fixed, but in fact illusory and often manufactured, sense of place.

Photography as an empowering influence

Against this background of being included and excluded, empowered and disempowered by society, photography often, but by no means always, stood out as an affirming experience. Often this experience started in childhood. Maria explained:

> My uncle had a camera and a video camera. He took pictures of everything. He basically documented our whole childhood. And then, another uncle had a photography studio back in Usakos. I grew up watching him take photos of people. Like if people wanted studio images, which was his main business. Everyone used to come in. I remember members of my community, like, sitting on the little stools in his studio, the backdrops, those really old-time backdrops. He would take images, family portraits, portraits of individual people. When someone was announcing a wedding. Passport photos as well.

Taylor said:

> My uncle in Windhoek had a camera he took basically everywhere. In the house, he'd take pictures. If we were doing something. We'd stroll down Independence Avenue, and he would take the camera with. We always took pictures of the WIKA (Windhoek Carnival) as well. Maybe that's why I'm more inclined to take images of happenings and not posing for social-media-post pictures, I get that from him.

Generally, the taking of pictures for family bonding was a key theme in many of the interviewees' experiences of photography growing up. They often said that these photos became a source of identity preservation. In other words, the photos reminded them of who they were and gave them psychological strength to face incidents and institutions in their lives that challenged the positive aspects of their identities. These participants held on to certain prints and digital images on their phones to help them survive hard times later in life. Several

participants also said that the fact that they had these pictures showed them they were not the bad people that racist or sexist or homophobic society might want to portray them as. Johnny said:

> I grew up in a very normal home; I can say we did very normal kind of everyday things. And we have photos of these things. Christmas time, or going to church. Or arbitrary outings to Zoo Park. Um, those kinds of things. So when some politicians were going on about how 'queer people are from Satan', or some story like that, I used those old family photos to keep me sane.

Samantha said:

> I have photos of my lover on my phone. I worked in a very white-dominated and male-dominated space for a while, and I used to look at her photo every weekday at work to relax me. To remind me that black women are still queens, you know…

All this suggests that for these participants photos formed a critical part of their identities and childhoods. In these cases, photos served to shore up an often-marginal sense of identity, culture and self-worth. This shoring up of identities that are often marginal or contested is commonly a purpose that young people worldwide use photographs for, and this phenomenon especially been noted on social media (DiMicco and Millen, 2007; Hum et al., 2011; Zhao et al., 2008). However, by no means did all the participants have such a positive or empowering early experience with photography.

Photography as disempowering experience

Whereas some interviewees found photography empowering in their childhood years, others did not. In contrast to many of the Bantu-language-speaking Namibians, most of the San participants' early experiences with photography were disempowering, sometimes quite significantly so. A significant number of the San group revealed that their first experience of photography in childhood was being photographed by tourists. Emily shared her experiences of going to school at a foreign NGO-funded development centre, which provided schooling for children and also allowed adults a facility to sell and market handicrafts.

> The tourists used to come and take pictures of us. Sometimes randomly in the villages, but more often at the school, they would be allowed to take pictures of us, or of the adults working at their crafts, if they made a donation to the school...
>
> Interviewer: And how did their taking pictures make you feel?
>
> Oh I felt good. At that time I was very young; I didn't know what was going on. I didn't understand what they were going to do with the picture; I just liked pictures. I stood there in front of the camera, posed and then yeah. But for the adults, they just sit there with their crafts and then people take pictures. At the time I didn't really

> understand that, how they could just be unaffected, because sometimes the tourists were a bit in their faces. Not all of them, but some were just there and kept taking pictures.

Some of the San women also linked these experiences to how the San were often portrayed in photo exhibitions in Namibia, and in the media. Le-Ann said:

> There have been exhibitions in town about San communities. Some have been good and some not so much. Some just want to show, you know, they are based – funded – by NGOs from outside, who only want to show how they are helping the people. To say, yes 'this is Maria, thanks to a donation from what what she has water to drink now'. If we as a San NGO, could make our own exhibitions, I think we would show things in a different way.

Jill, another San women, said:

> I like that there are pictures of us in so many books, and in so many galleries. But I don't like that we are never making the pictures ourselves.

Some of the Bantu-speaking women also expressed their misgivings about how photos were used of them, but more especially in the news media. Maria said that she once attended a march to mark International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT, an international day marked on May 17) and was pictured in that context. The picture was published in a newspaper, but Maria was angry because she felt the way the caption was written implied she was a Lesbian. She had asked the photographer to portray her rather as a straight ally, because she was not 'out' with all of her family at home. Although technically a lie, she felt it was the ethical duty of the photojournalist to indeed tell this small lie so that she could be safe from victimization at home, or alternatively not to use the picture at all.

This dispute over the photograph at the IDAHOT march relates to an oft-repeated idea within theoretical conceptualizations of photography, that the meaning of a photograph is intrinsically related to, and cannot easily be separated from, the context in which it is published (see Barthes, 2003; Sontag, 2003). The meanings that may be deduced from a photograph have, in turn, relationships with people's cultural and economic understandings of the world and with how they stand in terms of structures of power.

In the San women's understanding of the pictures taken of them by Westerners, we can also see how the experiences of taking a photograph and being photographed cannot be divorced from the economic and societal power in those relationships. The taking of such photographs may have served to reinforce that power as well as being produced by it. By taking and (presumably reproducing back home) these photos, the tourists may end up showing people's poverty and or the ways they were helped to get out of it (or be more comfortable within in) more as a point of discussion or something exotic to show than

something that should evoke emotions and humane concern for the San people. In her book, Regarding the Pain of Others, which mainly examines war photojournalism, Sontag (2003b, p. 6) states that 'no "we" should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain.' What she means is that our class, gender and other positioning may limit the extent to which we can 'feel' the other's pain from looking a picture, the degree that we can empathize with it.

Photography and identity

It should not surprise us to find that photography played several roles in, and interacted with, people's identity formation and sense of self. Research around the world has shown that photographs often play a central role in these processes, and often act as a contested space in the formation of different identities (Blomgren, 1999; Chung et al., 2006; Van Dijck, 2008; Wigoder, 2001) and this may be even more so now that cheap digital cameras are available and the posting of selfies on digital media has become fashionable.

As well as being a tool of family identity formation and fixing a family identity, photographs are increasing being adopted as a tool of individual identity formation, and being used by young people to, at least to some extent, take control of their own identity formation. Van Dijck (2008, p. 57) states:

> Taking photographs seems no longer primarily an act of memory intended to safeguard family's pictorial heritage, but is increasingly becoming a tool for an individual's identity formation and communication. Digital cameras, camera phones, photo blogs and other multipurpose devices seem to promote the use of images as the preferred idiom of a new generation of users.

Iqani (2015, p. 3714) states that, perhaps more than any other form of portraiture, 'digital selfies present a record of a moment of extreme self-involvement'. Freed from having another person - the photographer - making decisions about various aspects of the picture, the semiotic power is in the hands of the subject, at least as far as the photograph itself as an object is concerned. The photographed individual is not only the 'image-object' but also the 'active image maker' (Iqani, 2015, p. 3709). It is also true that popular photography tends to follow trends established by, for example, celebrities and mass-market magazines. Nevertheless, digital selfies can be said to carry more of a modicum of control for the subject of the photo than many other kinds of image-making.

If this is so, then the San children, teenagers and young adults growing up in the villages, as detailed by these interviews, seem to have faced a situation that is decidedly different from this global norm. These children and young adults seemingly grew up without much of the identity-creating power, however marginal it may actually be, that could come from the use of social media and/ or cheaply available cameras. In this regard it is important to emphasise the

digital divide that still exists both within and between countries, and which relates to photography as much as other digital media. A recent study for the Pew Research Center (Poushter, 2016), for example, showed that despite a dramatic global increase in smartphone use since about 2013, smartphones are still much more common in the US and Europe than in Africa and most of Asia. Only 11 per cent of Tanzanian adults, 4 per cent of Ethiopians and 37 per cent of South Africans reported owning a smartphone, as opposed to 72 per cent of US and 68 per cent of UK adults. Namibia was not surveyed, but there is little doubt that it follows similar trends. Furthermore, the study found that gender and class disparities in smartphone and camera-phone ownership are much greater in Africa than in other parts of the world. We can safely assume that the majority of San girl children growing up in rural villages in Namibia would suffer from these global inequalities, perhaps even magnified at local level.

On the other hand, the young San students that I spoke to did, as students in Windhoek, currently participate in the lifestyle of actively taking selfies and similar pictures, posting them on social media and using them as a meaning-making device, despite not being able to do so in their childhood or their teens. In fact, some were using cellphones, even poor quality ones, to take basic pictures of themselves and their friends in a range of locations. Angela said:

> If something is interesting then yeah I want to take a picture of it, or my picture with it, but not just like that. Not just a random thing.
>
> Interviewer: When you say something that interests you, what kind of things?
>
> For example, if a child is doing something, maybe dancing or just talking, like just standing there with maybe something funny on her. Or just, then I capture a picture there or if there is meeting or conference - I like taking pictures – selfies - there. To show I was there, I guess. When there is a very nice craft that is there I take pictures of that if the craftsperson gives me permission. Creative things. I like taking pictures of creative things.

In fact, this meaning-making activity the San young women take on now in Windhoek, may be related to the fact that, as younger people, they were used by others, for others' meaning-making using pictures and social media. That is to say, the tourists who visited the San villages and development centre were, in a sense, using the San for their own self-definition purposes, and for their construction of more independent and empowering identities, by posting their tourist selfies and portraits of poor indigenous people from Africa, on their social media accounts and in similar spaces.

Balkian, Copley and Finlay (2012) argue that a degree of othering has been common in both media representations of and academic encounters with the San. They trace their own naivety and increasing complexity of their ideas about the San, through their encounters with

San groups in Botswana, and suggest that dialog and self-reflection are critical to any researcher working with the San who has only hitherto studied them through the prism of the Western academy. Similarly, Tomaselli (2014) states that a holistic approach that could lead to better dissemination of indigenous San perspectives is lacking in much of contemporary southern African academe. He states the San experience and the discriminations they face are often absent from much contemporary critical race/ blackness/ whiteness studies. At the same time, documentary filmmakers, academics and others are increasingly offering multiple avenues of speaking for the San, especially in Botswana and South Africa. However, the San are also increasingly engaging the historical record (formed largely from the experiences of outsiders) with their own perspectives and knowledge, and in some places taking a greater role in negotiating the experiences of outsiders such as tourists who visit their communities (Tomaselli, 2002).

Participants' views on possibilities and limits of photography for change

Many of the participants saw photographic projects as a possible way to help turn around their communities, but were unsure how such a project could work in practice, or how effective it could be. Asked if photography could change anything in her area of the township of Katutura, a relatively poor district, although built-up and not an informal settlement, Rita said:

> I think it, er, not maybe immediately, but I think it can tell a story. About people. Like, in the street where I live, there are four or five tombo (traditional beer) houses, and you see people there from 7 o'clock till 10 o'clock at night. People are just sitting, lying around in the street. Maybe they are too drunk, and they're always asking for food. So me and my friends were thinking, if we could make documentaries about that, maybe we could change something. Get people thinking of alternatives.

Concerning the San and photography exhibitions, Le-Ann, said:

> We could make an exhibition that goes across Namibia. Though I don't know where we will find money to do that. I don't know if we put an exhibition going round our villages if anyone would look at it. Maybe if they see their relatives, friends, but otherwise? The thing is, we'd want to see how these things could change - basic things in the villages; help people meet our basic needs. Um… just looking good might not be enough for us.

The following exchange took place between learners in the PAY focus group:

> James: We have a problem of crime where I live. And sometimes trouble starts in the shebeens. If we could capture pictures showing what goes on in the shebeens, maybe we could change people's attitudes to all this alcohol abuse…

> Lilly: But how are you going to get inside the shebeens with a camera? They will kick you out! Beat you down… You know how those guys can be.
>
> James: I don't know. Yeah… I don't… maybe we can sneak cameras in… or we can make friends with an alcohol addict, somehow…

Many, nevertheless, saw it as important to use the photographic tools that they had acquired in recent years, which they may not have had access to before (such as smartphones with cameras), use them for something more than selfies and family photos, and try to put them to use to better their communities or for social change. It was felt that there was a still a distance between themselves and professional photographers, but that workshops like those I conducted could contribute to a narrowing of that difference, or at least, narrow how big that gulf was perceived as. Rita said:

> I thought [after the workshop] that okay, maybe serious photography is not only for, like, *professional* photographers, but also for us. Like, I could also be a photographer, or make video documentaries or something like that.

This distinction between 'professional' or 'serious' photographers on the one hand, and amateurs or community-based citizen photojournalists on the other, may be significant. Bourdieu (1999, pp. 176–178) calls photography a 'middle brow' art form: one that is always struggling to be recognized as high art, as something more than just a hobby of the middle classes, in a similar way to the way that other lower arts (such as contemporary dance as compared to ballet, or jazz as compared to classical music) don't get complete recognition from bourgeois society.

If amateur or citizen photography has this status in Africa, it raises worrying parallels with what Bhabha (1999) and Fanon (1961), among others, have seen as the widespread suppression of indigenous creative expression, something they regard as an indispensable part of the colonial project. Photography, unlike some other art forms, was not indigenous to Africa and Asia at the time colonists took control, but indigenous people's attempts to use the medium for their own purposes were suppressed, or turned around to serve white needs. As mentioned in my conceptual background chapter, this can be linked to detrimental psychological effects on colonized peoples, and a general undervaluing by such peoples of their contribution to world culture and artistic/ cultural advancement. This is, obviously, very useful for a colonizing, or neo-colonial, power.

Artistic photographers, as opposed to photojournalists, were more often presented by the participants as photographic role models. Among these most mentioned, the South African photographer Zanele Muholi was often referenced, and her work was often seen as a positive example. This was true among the Lesbian photographers group, but also among several of the Sister Namibia participants. However, her photos, which often feature Lesbian couples,

and sometimes nudes, were felt to be an approach that would have to be 'carefully worked out' in the words of one of the Namibian participants, if it were to be tried in Namibia. This was that it might be necessary to protect the identities of those in the pictures, in case they could be exposed, for example, as being a member of a sexual minority. However, often it was her activism as a form of positioning, rather than her actual subject matter, which was seen as praiseworthy and worth emulating. It was seen that her photography, as art managed to get in to galleries and other public, upper class spaces, so that LGBTQ+ women could no longer be ignored at high levels. It was also felt that her photographic subjects were able to retain their dignity. Maria, for example said:

> I like what Zanele Muholi did, because you can see the dignity of the women in her pictures, and their beauty. So the people are seeing us as beautiful, strong women, but also, that they can't ignore us. It's art, it's beautiful, er, but surely it's also a very direct, political message.

This contrasts notably with the attitude some participants had towards photojournalists, especially those currently practicing in Namibia. The San group and the Lesbian photographers, as well as some of the PAY members, raised examples of what they thought were Namibian photojournalists not representing them or their communities well. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate all these allegations. However, the fact that they were quite frequent seems to indicate that a state of distrust exists between some of Namibia's most marginalized communities and the photojournalistic profession. One of the San women, for example, referenced a newspaper article that portrayed bad conditions in a school hostel in a San area. A picture of some dirty-looking children accompanied the story, which in view of the widespread stereotypes about San people, she felt was inappropriate.

Obviously if a newspaper photographer does arrive at such a school hostel and finds dirty-looking children there, he or she may be placed in a dilemma. Indeed, the general understanding that journalism should not take sides or manipulate a situation they find at a site of news coverage, can lead to problems for the photojournalist, especially where race and class inequalities are in play. Being neutral in the face of a major injustice may play into the hands of an oppressor by making him or her seem to have a reasonable point, and claiming to be objective may actually serve to hide your own biases and preclude them from further examination. For these reasons, many media theorists have critiqued, and even rejected, the journalism industry's self-definition of its practice as an essentially objective one (see Rosen, 1993; Schudson, 2001; Schudson & Anderson, 2009; Soffer, 2009). Objectivity is especially difficult in photojournalism as work of a photographer inevitably involves selection – of camera angles, points of view, of main and secondary subjects – and making these choices necessarily precludes others (Åker, 2012; Schudson & Anderson, 2009). Further choices, which necessarily limit the possibilities of seeing 'everyone's point of view' are made by

picture editors and similar professionals in choosing the exact photo that is published (Bissell, 2000). However, photographers completely rejecting objectivity and taking on an overly activist role may limit their credibility in the eyes of the public, as well as limit their access to sites of news such as briefings, press conference, zones where access is controlled by police forces, and others (Waller, 2000, pp. 192–202). Whatever position one takes in this debate, the fact that the San participants in workshop raised these concerns indicates they possessed a degree of awareness media processes, and a certain ability to critique them. It shows that these participants did not, as some journalists and media consumers do, see photographic news as a mere happenstance.

Limitations of donor-funded projects

The community-based organizations under whose auspices this project was conducted - PAY, the Women's Leadership Centre and Sister Namibia – are, to a lesser or greater extent, funded by donor organizations based in industrialized nations. These include the Open Society Institute for Southern Africa (OSISA), funded by billionaire George Soros; the Heinrich Boll Foundation, a German non-governmental organization linked to the German Green Party; Oxfam Canada; the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and a Swedish NGO, The Olaf Palme International Center. All three organizations are also supported to some extent by donations from wealthy Namibians (Physically Active Youth, 2013; Sister Namibia, 2017; Women's Leadership Centre, 2017). While this is an essential part of the way community-based organizations throughout the global South survive in real-world conditions, especially where their own members tend to be poor, it also poses certain challenges. The danger that managers of these organizations can end up running them for the satisfaction of donors rather than beneficiaries, and questions of sustainability beyond the one, two or three year funding cycles of many donor bodies, are among central areas of concern in this relationship (Bennell and Furlong, 1997; Lewis and Sobhan, 1999).

In interviews, participants who were involved with the leadership of their organizations (to a limited extent) spoke about these tensions, and how they might manifest in the future. Rita said:

> I think we could change my community by exposing what goes on in some of the tombo (home-brewed beer) houses in my street; what leads people to get addicted, and the kind of abuse of women that you usually get around there. But I don't know if our donors would support a project like that – it might be too dangerous for them. Like, what if one of the shebeen owners is violent towards us? Will the donors pay – you know, heaven forbid it, but – for our hospital bill, or for a court case? They might not like their name in the paper associating with that kind of conflict.

Taylor said:

> The one thing is, we should not just take photos of good things in our communities. Some NGOs, you see that. They only take pictures of the positive things, so their donors can put these pictures in their Annual Report. So if we made a Namibian community photographic organization, then we shouldn't just do that. We should try to show the good as well as the bad.

These responses seem to indicate a very practical concern for the nuts-and-bolts of what their organizations might be able to get funding for. Below the surface, there also seems a concern that they wanted their photographs to be useful to themselves, for social change and for having a conversation with their fellow community members about the good and the bad, but that such photos could also be useful for donors' public relations, in ways they, as community members did not seem entirely comfortable with.

What the participants felt they gained from the workshop experience

I conducted interviews mid-way through and again towards the end of the workshop process. I did this to establish what, if anything, the participants thought were the biggest gains they made during the experience. The interaction about the San children in the hostel described above did come at the workshop-end interview stage, so it may indicate an increased awareness of such issues for that particular participant. However, others expressed similar concerns even during the mid-point interviews.

Virtually all participants said they knew basic technical camera operation beforehand, but appreciate guidance on more technical matters that they had previously been unaware of, such as the use of different exposure modes, adjusting exposure values according to lighting and taking pictures using selective focus (where the main subject is in focus but the background is blurred, for example). This is clearly closely linked with, firstly, the perception of some participants of a gulf existing or needing to be closed between community based and professional photographers, and secondly, with the desire one group of participants expressed (discussed in an earlier chapter) to learn Photoshop and basic image manipulation.

Lauryn, one of the Lesbian photographers group, said:

> It was good to learn the modes on the camera. I've always seen those buttons but never known what they did. And that we could do that thing with the focus and blurring the background, I guess I've always seen that done in books and newspapers, but never saw how it was possible for us, with just our little cameras. So in future I would like to do more advanced stuff, even do shoots like they do for magazines. It would be cool to be able to take those kind of glamorous shots. But make those pictures of us, not the celebrities.

It is clear that participants already were aware of socioeconomic and cultural challenges in their communities, but wanted to both gain technical skills and, in some cases, strategize about how to fit photography into their activism.

Having said this, some participants felt that having discussions about the power of images, and about representation, was also relevant. Taylor said:

> It was good that we talked about the power of images, and how they image the black female body. I liked having those discussions. You know, I've had these kinds of thoughts, but I didn't know if I wasn't being a bit harsh, or how… you know, how to express them. I would still like to talk about how we can make pictures that are really different from that, that show a new kind of black female body, if that makes any sense. It's a pity we had such little time to talk about it, really.

Kim, one of the members of the PAY group said:

> We need to have a session, another session, where we look at how the youths has been pictured in the media, what that's about. I think as a youth that the media ignores us somehow. I don't know what 10 young people with cameras can do about that really, I mean really DO about it. Kinda, to get our, somehow, own faces in the media all the time. Or most of the time. I don't know, um, how we can achieve that. But we should at least talk about it.

Some participants referred to the act of photography as 'taking pictures', others as 'making pictures'. Also, perhaps influenced by the use of this term in the language of the internet, the majority of the PAY participants referred to the 'capturing' or occasionally 'catching' of pictures. This may be significant in that, one 'makes' something using a process, from which one's own intentions and creativity cannot be divorced. Whereas, 'taking' or 'capturing' suggests more simply preserving something that is already going on in the world out there, which has its own independent existence. It has been widely suggested that the capturing of a happenstance with an objective reality behind it is not a reliable – and at best a simplistic – description of how media, especially photographic media, operate. However, the fact is that 'taking' of pictures is the commonest way to speak about the photographic act in the English language (Bourdieu, 1999; Desnoes, 2003; Waller, 2000, pp. 100–110).

One way of thinking about these different uses of language to describe the photographic act is to envisage photography as most importantly the performance of a power to make something visible (Frosh, 2001, p. 43). What this power involves depends on context. The participants seemed to be saying that they saw this power in different ways. The participants seemed to be suggesting that photography can be something like a laboratory experiment, where what happens is unrelated to the experimenter, but it can also be more like painting, where the agency and sensibilities of the artist are all important. It can also, as suggested by the word 'capture', be something like a hunt, whereby the hunter makes selections as to what animals to capture (or kill), but the nature of the animal is not dependent upon which one the hunter chooses or whether the hunter chooses to capture the animal or not.

This is related to photography's relationship to power and social activism: the photographer who is a neutral observer may not see his or her role as being to challenge

injustice, except perhaps indirectly by 'exposing' it. Conversely, a photographer who is actively involved in meaning making can choose to challenge injustice in more ways, including making it the very essence of his or her photographic practice. It could be argued that the middle role, the 'capturer' could be seen as a middle way: a photographer who appears to think that there is an objective essence to a picture, but who places a high degree of importance upon his or her own action in selecting, chasing after, and recording the moment. Although seeing the photographer mainly as a selector rather than a constructor of images, as these participants did, may be seen within some media theories as an incomplete understanding, it nevertheless opens up more possibilities for the use of images for activism than a view of the photographer as a mainly dispassionate observer.

Conclusions

To summarize, the relationship with photography that most of the participants described to me was one, in different ways, of contestation and of being both empowered and disempowered by the medium. This empowerment and/ or disempowerment often related to ways in which the participants participated in and simultaneously stood outside of, various sites of power in Namibian society. These sites include those relating to gender, race and Bantu/San speaking ethnic divisions. While photos within the family generally served to give a positive sense of security and identity, there were also several cases where the participants came from profoundly disempowering childhood backgrounds. In these cases, photos served to conceal problems and fears, rather than provide positive identity-building material based on truth and acceptance. As we will see in the next chapter, this complex positioning of many of the participants was reflected in their photos, even photos of what might seem fairly innocuous subjects like portraits of each other, and photos of lecture halls, tourist shops and cultural dances.

CHAPTER 6: THE PHOTOGRAPHS

This chapter analyses the photos that were taken by participants in the photo workshops I conducted with groups of participant photographers at Sister Namibia, the Women's Leadership Centre (WLC) and Physically Active Youth (PAY). I have explained in Chapter 3 (Conceptual Background) how the ownership of images is vital for the postcolonial project of empowering marginalized people to take ownership of their stories and identities. I have also shown in Chapter 4 (concerning being a reflexive facilitator) how issues of privilege and social positioning often affect the teaching and learning about images and image making. In chapter 5 (The Interviews) we saw how the participants in this study explained how photographs are powerful, and problematic, resources for identity formation and political identification for them at an individual level. This confirmed and added nuance to much of what has been predicted by theory about the potential power of photography in postcolonial spaces. All these considerations share one central message: images matter. Because images matter, it was necessary that I also analyze the images produced by the participants in this study, to determine what their pictures said about some of the broad themes of the political project of owning the image. This analysis was also driven by what the participants themselves had said in the interviews about why they took the kinds of pictures they did, and about what kinds of photographs and kinds of photography were important to them. Many of them had said that social transformation was an important consideration for themselves as photographers, so I was interested in determining the visions of social transformation- or social stasis – presented in the pictures. Identities as women, or as indigenous or sexual minorities, were also important to many of the participants, as was the idea, expressed directly or indirectly, of liminality in one's identity. Therefore, I was interested in the ways in which the images might reflect new ways of women and minorities, for example, seeing themselves in the sociopolitical space, and how this was conceptualized pictorially. It was important to establish in what ways the pictures may have shown a taking back of 'African' identities from the way colonization imaged them to be, something that, once again, several of the interviewees said they thought was important. A large number of the participants identified themselves in the interviews as being 'queer' or 'working class' or both. I was interested in the extent to which the showed queer or working class Namibians picturing themselves and their environments in new ways, and if so, what those ways were. A key question, considering both what was said in the interviews, and the broader questions asked by this thesis, was: what did the photos imply about the possibilities and limits of photographic protest against injustices?

Sampling and analysis

I used purposive sampling to select the photos for analysis according to emerging themes and commonalities, both within each set of photos from each organization, and when considering the photos as a whole body of work, bearing in mind how these themes appeared to relate to broader themes developed in this thesis as a whole, and to themes which the interviewees said they had covered in their pictures, or which were important to them as photographers. Semiotic techniques were used to analyze these chosen photographs. Semiotic analysis involves, in this conception, the reading of media 'texts' for symbolic meaning, both at the level of the text itself as well as its contribution to power in society, for example by contributing to widely held narratives and social myths (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004, p. 137-8). The analysis starts by looking at typical codes the photographer has employed, for example the portrayal of people in close up or from a distance, in profile or standing square-on to the camera, or the differential portrayal of men and women. A further stage may be discussing how these codes defy or conform to certain societal and artistic conventions, such as photographers avoiding close ups of authority figures like politicians, or portraying women in soft-focus. Finally, a semiotic analyst examines what these choices say about societal power, for example, how never portraying a politician's flaws in detail may say something about deference to governmental power in that society, or how the fetishisation of the 'flawless' female form may suggest certain aspects of the treatment of women in society (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004, p. 138-141; Penn, 2000, p. 227).

A sample of typical photos, illustrating the key themes shown in the pictures as a whole and issues identified by the participants as being worthy of being photographed, will be presented in this chapter. It should be stressed, however, that these simply show typical photos that illustrate each theme, and were not the only ones selected for analysis.

In total, the participants in the workshops took about 600 photos. Of these 600-odd pictures, 60 photos were chosen for close examination, about 10 per cent of the total. The process of selecting and analyzing the sample was conducted as follows:

1. Those photos that were indistinct or so dark or out of focus a subject could not be discerned were removed.

2. Duplicates, for example, pictures taken of the same subject at a very slightly different angle, or a one-stop darker exposure setting, were removed. If there were two of such duplicates, only one was chosen, unless, for example, making a picture of the same subject slightly darker seemed to significantly change its meaning.

3. From the remaining photos, 60 pictures were chosen for analysis, 20 from each of the three organizations (Sister Namibia, Physically Active Youth and the Women's Leadership Centre) under whose auspices the photo workshops took place.

The photos thus chosen as a sample for analysis were then examined in more depth, with notes being written on camera angles, exposure/ lighting, topics portrayed, symbolic objects

in the pictures, gender/ race/ class/ ethnicity dynamics and other aspects that may have presented themselves. A process of categorizing was also undertaken, which involved the photos being defined in three ways:

1. Classifying according to the main content – essentially, who and what were in each picture. This was based upon those that appeared, at first glance, to either confirm or contradict the main themes revealed by the participant interviews, as discussed in the previous chapter, including:

- Participants' experience with multiple layers/ axes of social disadvantage,
- Liminality and lack of rootedness in participants' lives,
- Itinerant-ness and a multiple constriction of the idea of 'home',
- Images as an empowering way of making meaning out of life,
- Images as a way of forming and solidifying one's identity,
- Images as disempowering, a way for people with power to 'other' the participants.
- Images as activism for political change at a neighborhood level.

2. Classifying according to potentially analytically valuable deviations in photographic form – for example, the use of unusual lighting, composition or visual effects. Obviously, the categories in points 2 and 3 are not totally separate; rather, the one informs and contextualizes the other.

3. Categorizing the selection based upon the themes represented by the kinds of subjects in the photos, and those that participants said in interviews were the kinds of photos they saw as important.

This chapter is divided into sections representing the kinds of subjects that the photographers took pictures of. When asked in the interviews what kind of pictures they mostly took during the workshops, the participants' responses tended to fall, very clearly, into a few categories, an aspect that was also confirmed by my own survey of the pictures:

1. Participants took portraits of themselves and each other, often, but by no means always, with a glamorous or fashionable look.

2. Some participants also took photos of themselves and each other from unusual angles and perspectives, perhaps in a bid to challenge the usual glamorous selfie poses seen on the Internet and elsewhere.

3. Participants sometimes took symbolic photos, which seemed to illustrate their daily struggles using cultural and religious symbols and objects. These were objects or people in certain poses, which stood for much bigger connotations and myths than just what these people or objects represent on the surface. Such symbols included the

Christian cross and hands making sign language gestures. These symbols often seemed to relate to participants' senses of identity, e.g. as oppressed people, as students, as sexual minorities, or as rags-to-riches success stories.

4. Participants took cityscape pictures of their and others' neighborhoods, often seemingly to illustrate the extreme gulf between rich and poor in Namibia.

5. Some participants took pictures of poor people in their struggle to survive daily life, including homeless people and manual workers.

6. Participants took landscapes and other pictures of natural objects (for example: flowers, stones, birds' nests, trees).

7. Participants took pictures of cultural traditions, especially their artistic expressions in music, dance, and other performing arts.

Self-portraits and portraits of others

When asked what sort of pictures they took as a result of the photographic workshops, one of the commonest answers was 'selfies', 'self-portraits', 'portraits', 'faces' or 'pictures of people'. Undoubtedly portraits and self-portraits are common subjects or practice for photographers and students of photography especially. But also, some participants said that portraits and self-portraits especially were about presenting 'who they were'. Anna explained:

> You know, selfies are pictures we just always take as young people. Pictures of ourselves and our friends… showing you around our daily lives… But I don't think you older people get it. I'm always being asked, 'why are guys taking so many photos of yourselves, what is it *for*, why are you so *vain*?' You know? And for us, I think, it's just like something we do. To show our own beauty, yes, we all want to be like Kim Kardashian I suppose, but also to show *who* we are. It's about showing our culture also, showing we're proud of where we're from.

The tension in this quotation, between Western-world celebrity, 'beauty' and glamour on the one hand (being like Kim Kardashian), and a radical commitment to one's own, potentially marginalized world and identity ('showing our culture also, showing we're proud of where we're from') as well as to youth culture, is, I will argue, crucial to the understanding of the selfies and portraits of each other that the participants took. Many have agued that these tensions are critical to an understanding of the culture underlying selfies globally.

Iqani (2015, pp. 3319–3336) states that taking of glamorous self-portraits and posting them online has been an increasingly visible trend among elite young women (and some men) in the global South. This trend of celebrities, especially women, posing 'selfies' has been correlated with similar postings by less privileged people who, in one way or another, aspire to these celebrities' lifestyles and preferences. This posting of selfies has been used to

indicate preferences about such socially contested issues as beauty, race, feminism, and femininity, among others (see Iqani, 2015, pp. 3319, 3336, 3377).

In general, these celebrity selfies have shown a glamorous image, including celebrities showing off their bodies and striking what might be said to be conventionally sexy or attractive poses. The same could be said of a large proportion of the selfies and portraits that the participants in the workshops in this research project took. This does not necessarily mean that the participants took everything from celebrity selfie culture or from traditional glamour photography, or that they did not use elements from these visual cultures for their own purposes. As we shall see, however, these pictures can still be described as heavily influenced by celebrity culture and it's glamorous, conventionally fashionable bodily poses, facial expressions, and outfits.

As Millard (2009) states, beauty, especially feminine beauty, in the conventional hegemonic understanding, involves not just possessing something but working at it. Beauty, like gender in general, is performative (Bartky, 2014, pp. 94-96; Butler, 2011, pp. 18-22). Some writers (see Bartky, 2014; Duncan, 1994; Van Krieken, 1990) have analyzed this performance of gender and the costs it imposes on female bodies in terms of Foucault's theories of discipline. These argue that modernity, at the same time as offering certain freedoms, has been marked by an immense focus on controlling and ordering people's everyday lives, especially those of marginalized people, and requiring people to order and discipline their own lives, not only their actions but also their inner selves and feelings. In the case of gender, this discipline has involved exhortations in much of the mass media to diet and/ or lose weight, gendered differences in what is considered appropriate posture and the taking up of space (with women expected to take up less), the application of make-up and hair removal and many others (Bartky, 2014, pp. 95-98). Some of these disciplines may be enforced directly (for example by employers who insist that women wear makeup in a prescribed way), but most others are rather enforced indirectly by custom, the media, word-of-mouth, and censorship of alternative visions of woman- or manhood.

Images of feminine beauty in the media have been shown to impose psychological costs on women and girls who are exhorted to maintain this impossible standard, while at the same time due to digital retouching, expert control of lighting and other aspects, this standard is impossible in real life. While many women rebel against this ideal to some extent, social norms are enforced that make a complete rejection of these ideals of beauty difficult (Duncan, 1994; Kilbourne, 2013). Even media campaigns that have promoted alternative ideals of female beauty – such as a Dove advertising campaign that featured elegantly taken (high resolution, carefully controlled lighting, etc.) photos of women that might be seen by the conventional fashion industry as flawed, for example having freckles, or a bit of a fat stomach, or small breasts - have been criticized as deferring too much to the conventional norms and

scripts of beauty in advertising photography (Millard, 2009, pp. 146-148). However, reception of media texts is always more complicated than a total acceptance by audiences of these images or the ideologies that underlie them. Also, how these media images are partially replicated by girls and women with cameras themselves and/or posted on social media, cannot be entirely predicted by the nature of the images themselves (Millard, 2009, pp. 157-161; Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2012, p. 70).

Nevertheless, many of the portraits taken by the participants in my study did portray female beauty as conventionally defined, and in a way that mimics much female celebrity photography in the media. In the pictures in figure 1 below we see two similar looking young light-skinned slim black women in two different modes of dress.

In the photo on the left, a woman is facing the camera smiling, wearing a sleeveless top and medium-length skirt. In the photo on the right, a woman is in three-quarter pose, somewhat with her back facing the camera, wearing leggings and a denim top, and posing with one her hand on a tree stump. The pictures are both taken in bright sunlight, using a wide-angle lens.



Figure 1: Portraits of young women on the NUST campus. Photos: Sister Namibia

In another example of this type of photography, the photo in figure 2 below, pictures a middle-aged, conventionally attractive white woman is behind a set of bars enclosing a doorway. She is holding on to the bars with both hands, one raised above her head. She wears a white dress and a string of white pearl-like beads around her neck. Her eyes are half closed, looking slightly above the level of the camera. This photo could be said to represent an intersection point between conventional ‘glamorous’ or ‘beauty’ poses and more nuanced work on the part of the photographer. Poses similar to this one, representing conventional

beauty, have been repeated in many glamorous pictures of celebrities and of women deemed conventionally attractive in the mass media, for example in celebrity magazines and posters. However, the pose might also be considered a 'relaxed', 'calm' or 'natural' one. Another aspect of the image is the bars in front of her, which suggest a degree of constraint in popular culture. However, the smile, the relaxed pose, the cues to conventional beauty, all suggest that this idea of constraint suggested by the bars is being played with. She is 'locked up' but the open door and pretty clothes suggest this is not to be taken too seriously. She is conventionally pretty, but that she is an older woman in such a pose indicates some defying of the conventions underlying much glamour, beauty and magazine portraiture. The fact that this picture comes from the body of work of a group of mainly black women (the Sister Namibia group), including some queer women, suggests that its playful use of conventions may be indicative of broader sociological dynamics. It may indicate that the marginalized group, by taking ownership of a certain conventional mode of photographic representation, and playing with its possible nuances, are claiming entry into a photographic space, which was denied to them in the past. In effect, they are saying, 'I belong here, too. I can take part in, and even subtly modify, the white, male, upper-class world of beauty photography, as well as any white male photographer can.' Indeed, the act of a black woman, who happened to be a queer woman, controlling the look of a white woman in a photo by being photographer, may in itself be considered a subversive act. It reverses the positioning I discussed in the chapter on 'The context: photography, the media and marginalization', whereby through much of the history of photography in Southern Africa, white people have been the photographers (and art directors, picture editors and similar professionals), whereas black people have been the photographed.



Figure 2: Portrait of a photography group member. Photo: Sister Namibia

As well as the portrayal of conventional beauty, though, celebrity selfies have been used to claim other identities and to make political statements: to show photographers as confident young women making statements, being provocative, and defying social convention. Iqani (2015) shows through a number of examples of African celebrities, how the posting of selfies on social media, allowed them to express ideas about female beauty that are different from racially elitist global norms, which in fact partially challenge and disrupt the dominant notion of what many people thank a woman or an African women should look like. This directly or indirectly subversive style of selfie-taking can also be seen in the participants work in my study. Participants frequently took pictures that showed them defying the traditional sexy/ feminine or motherly visions of African womanhood.

This finding is important because the use of self-portraits as potentially subversive images, especially by women, is not unique to Namibia or southern Africa.

It has, in fact become a practice among some women of marginalized groups around the world (Iqani, 2015, p. 3319). A prominent example has been the use of the selfie by bloggers, fashion writers and political critics among women of Muslim background in various localities. These have often used dressing in the hijab, or indeed refusing to do so, or photographing themselves nude, to make various sociopolitical statements linking a woman's right to dress as she chooses with political emancipation and exposing Western stereotypes about Arab and Muslim women (Franklin, 2016; Ibrahimi et al., 2015; Waninger, 2015). Other examples include Tibetan women, a minority in China, using the selfie to undermine discriminatory mainstream Chinese representations of Tibetans (Grant, 2016).

A good example of this potentially subaltern use of selfies can be seen in the two pictures below. They show a young black woman, the photographer herself (this can be seen by the fact that her right hand, clearly holding the camera, is just outside the frame), looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression on her face, and wearing a bright-colored slogan t-shirt featuring letters with a blocky design. In the second picture, she turns her face to the side to reveal a number of cornrow style braids. The rest of her hair is unbraided and combed upwards. The pictures are taken with a mid-focal-length lens in shaded conditions. The close cropping of the picture, the positioning of the woman's face in almost the middle of the frame, and the fact that the picture features little in terms of background detail, serve to highlight the woman's face, her facial expression and hair as central features of the picture. She appears to have a stocky build, and wears a slightly baggy t-shirt. These images show a different style of self-portraiture, in which the photographer appears to define beauty on her own terms. While she could be said to be in some ways conventionally attractive, the photographer shuns some photographic conventions when portraying herself: she does not smile, she portrays herself in profile, she does not wear conventionally sexually attractive attire, her hair, although clearly braided with effort, does not show a traditionally feminine style. She is

looking straight into the camera and her body takes up much space within the picture. The picture is taken using a wide-angle lens, which tends to exaggerate facial features (any object towards the edge of wide-angle picture will appear more dramatically curved than it actually is). As will also be discussed in the next section of this chapter, these codes have conventionally been used more by photographers in male portraiture than in portraits of women.



Figure 3: Self-portraits. Photos: Sister Namibia

Frosh (2015, pp. 1609-1610, 1612-1619) states that selfies as a form are gestural – they imply the photographer showing the viewer something, using his or her photographed body, usually as part of an online conversation. This strikes an interesting parallel with Anna's comment mentioned earlier, that selfies were about 'showing you around our daily lives'. This showing commonly makes use of a number of key compositional strategies, which are widely recognized by participants who have been socialized in the etiquette of these online discussions. These strategies include the subject/ photographer posing as if in a mirror, with his or her outstretched arms featured prominently in the picture, indicating that he/ she is the one taking the photograph. They also include: the photographer, in effect, taking the viewer for a walk, or introducing the viewer to a third person or persons (or animal or landscape) with the photographer on the side of the frame taking on the role of introducer. In the photographs taken by the participants in this study, the first of these options predominates, with the occasional use of the second.

The fact that participants made use of these widely recognized codes of selfie composition might indicate a willingness to use the relatively banal norms of the selfie to give voice to their own meaningful concerns, which may or may not be subversive. That is to say, a

standardized composition (such as the various forms/codes of the selfie) can still contain subversive subject matter. In fact, it can even work to allow this subversive subject matter to be appreciated by those who might not see it if it were presented in a less conventional way. However, as we shall see in the section below on 'unusual angles, styling, and photographic codes in portraits', a number of photos were taken without reference to the dominant modes of selfie, and more broadly, portrait, composition, which suggest a different set of gestures and a possibly a different set of suggestions being made to the viewer about how those photographs should be viewed. However, before we do that, it is necessary to examine the participants' portraits through the lens of gender.

Portraits of men compared to those of women

Men were the subjects of portraits less often than women. When they were the subjects, they trended to be portrayed differently. The pictures tended to be more closely cropped, with men's heads and bodies filling up more of the frame than women. They also were more likely to be pictured looking directly into the camera, and facing straight towards it. These types of formatting are culturally seen to connote power, the ability to be in control of a situation, and the taking up of space itself. These personality traits have commonly been associated with masculinity in the patriarchal imagination (Adelman, 2009; Keating, 2006). These are much more common in male than female portraiture, with women being shot in this way exceptional enough to be noticed. In general, a number of conventions have been formed about male versus female portraiture over the course of photographic history. These have included the use of harsher lighting, the use of less makeup or airbrushing of blemishes, the portraying of subject directly facing the camera, the commoner portrayal of characteristics suggesting strength (for example, big muscles); although these have not been universally followed, they do suggest conventions and norms in male photography (Ibsen, 2006; Keating, 2006). This has been true even in some photography projects intended to subversive, such as photo essays portraying queer men in positive ways (Ibsen, 2006).

In the photos of men and boys that the participants in this study took, qualities like strength and power were more likely to be stressed, for example by showing muscular men in tight t-shirts. The photo in figure 4 below is typical of how a lot of men were portrayed. In this picture we see three men, wearing similar, well-fitted navy and white t-shirts, looking directly at the camera with a neutral facial expression, not smiling nor frowning. They each have one arm around another's shoulders in a friendly, if somewhat awkward, gesture, and are standing in a shaded outside area. The picture is not purely a suggestion of masculine power, though. The similar t-shirts suggest a masculine sociability, and the fact that one had dreadlocks suggests a degree of difference (sadly, since dreadlocks in Namibia are still often not seen as a mainstream hairstyle). However, the tight t-shirts, neutral expressions and close-

but-not-very-close embraces, that one of them has made a fist with his free hand, suggest 'typical' hegemonic masculinity.



Figure 4: Picture of three young men. Photo: Sister Namibia

Although its hegemonic masculinity may be tempered by such factors as the relative unconventionality of the one man's longish dreadlocks and the sociability of the shared t-shirts, this photo is not untypical of how men are often portrayed in the media, especially in such genres as magazine features, fashion, cinema and movie stills, and advertising (Kilbourne, 2013; Langa, 2008). As mentioned in the previous section, it is important to stress here too, that gender, including the construction of masculinities as well as femininities, is performative. Perceived gender identities do not exist on their own, but rather are reinforced each day by people behaving, speaking and representing themselves in certain ways (Butler, 2011, pp. 18-22). As Butler (2011, pp. 33-34), puts it, becoming a man or woman is an ongoing discursive practice, that cannot be said to have a beginning or end. This discursive practice involves performance –actually doing and thinking things – and this doing or thinking has power to create certain norms, assumptions, and taken-for-granted identities. For men, such performances may include demonstrations of strength, engaging in risky activities, having monetary and physical power over the women in their lives (or claiming to have this power) and intimidating or using violence against other men (Connell, 2005, pp. 76–86; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, pp. 832-835). These behaviors fit into what has been called hegemonic masculinity. It is important to note, however, that hegemonic masculinity is not the only possible sort of masculinity, but it is the one that has been encouraged and rewarded by most societies. Another way to put it is that differences in the performance of masculinity result in masculinities that may challenge, rather than support, the assumptions and power relationships that are inherent within hegemonic masculinity (Connell,

2005, pp. 76-80). Individuals performing counter-hegemonic gender roles include, for instance, men displaying interest in areas such as cooking and fashion, which may be seen as feminine. However, hegemonic gender roles are enforced by powerful forces such as school, much of the mass media, male and female peer groups and state authorities (Langa, 2008, pp. 6–8; Millard, 2009, pp. 154–157).

Investigating masculinities among young black urban men in South Africa, Langa (2008, 2015) reports that although these young men and boys accepted some aspects of hegemonic masculinity, they also opposed them in some ways, by signaling their willingness to do some tasks traditionally regarded as women's work (such as cooking, baby-sitting), or by establishing a preference for study and diplomacy, over drinking or partying and solving disputes through violence. This partial questioning of hegemonic masculinities appears in several of the interviews I conducted with male, and some female, participants in the workshops, particularly those who expressed their identities as queer or 'woke'[13] males, and wanted to differentiate themselves from the rest of the male population.

James said:

> As queer men I know we don't fit in. We don't 'look right' at braais, or at the soccer. If people suspect you're homosexual or bisexual, they'll be waiting to expose you. So if you wear too much pink, or flick your arms around too much, they'll be like, 'yes, we know what you all are like!' So I guess I would like to make a safe space for us queers, where we can act extra, and dress differently, and all that, as there is in other countries, I think. Maybe photos can be used to do that, but I don't know. People in the community would resist that; they wouldn't support photographers who did that, that's the problem.

This quotation shows that, despite the desire to do 'something different' with regard to photos depicting men, James felt constrained, and felt his photographic subjects would be constrained, by societal expectation of what men should do, including even how they should be photographed. Indeed, awareness among some of the participants of a differentiation between the hegemonic idea of 'how a man should look' and other possibilities of 'how men could look', does not appear to have made a significant difference to the actual appearance of men in most of the photos that were taken. The men in the photos tend to follow the ideals of hegemonic masculinity in that they appear strong and powerful, take up space, and often do hegemonically masculine things like exercising in gyms or taking part in athletic competitions.

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[13] The word 'woke' has come to signify one who is aware of injustice in society, especially racism and sexism ('Woke,' 2017), and one who tried to purge the results of such ideologies, such as discrimination and prejudice, from his or her habits (Zappavigna, 2012, pp. 127–128). As the past tense of the verb 'wake', the original connotation appeared to be of one who was 'asleep' to injustice, but has now 'woken up'. However, a view has also developed among some social media users that, for from the implied reflexive stance, many people claiming to be 'woke' are in fact self-righteous in their condemnation of others (Zappavigna, 2012, pp. 128–130).

The absence of more queer or 'feminine' or non-hegemonic masculinities in the participants' photos may be partly due to widespread homophobia in Namibia (as discussed in previous chapters), so that, for example more 'effeminate' looking men may not have been willing to be photographed or queer men may not have been willing to be photographed outside of non-hegemonic-looking poses. Lauryn, one of the participants, had this to say about the difficulties of photographing men in non-hegemonic spaces:

> You know, men didn't really want us to make pictures of them during the workshops, or afterwards, for that matter. Or they wanted very macho-type pictures. Like, I knew a guy who works in the kitchens at the school hostels, but he said, 'if you put this photo [of the man at his workplace in the kitchen] in an exhibition, people will think I am a "moffie" [homosexual]'. So he point-blank refused. Or another guy, he's a painter in his spare time, an artist, but he says people misunderstand his art, they don't think it's a very manly thing to do, so he, like, underplays it. So, he said, I must take a picture at his office job, in his suit, rather, so his family doesn't see him as, you know, not providing for his kids and stuff. That's the way it is in this town sometimes.

However, it may also be that the photographers, and also those they took pictures of, did not see, or think through, how to represent various less hegemonic, and in fact vulnerable, masculinities in pictures. Sarah, expressing the relationship between men and women's attitudes to being photographed, said:

> I think, I took pictures of those who want to be taken pictures of. And most men don't want to have pictures taken of them. Or just one, straightforward picture, if they do. I think it's just natural that women are more comfortable being looked at. It's, we are the 'fairer sex'. But you know, us ladies just want to look beautiful, even when we're making a political point. So I guess that's just the way it is. Photographers have to work with that.

In other words Sarah seems to indicate that, at least in the case of gender, there may be limits to the emancipatory potential of photography, or social barriers that the photographer may have to struggle against.

Then again, it also seems that she does not think this struggle worth pursuing personally, but others did, deliberately taking pictures of both men and women from unique angles and seemingly doing so to ask questions of their audiences, as we shall see in the next section. Two questions, therefore, then need to be asked: 'under what conditions would the photographers who did not significantly break gender barriers with their pictures possible decide to do so?' and 'how could conditions for as diverse gender representation as possible be created in the photography workshop or community-based organization space?'

Unusual angles, styling, and photographic codes in portraits

Despite the use of relatively commonplace or even stereotypical poses and angles for portraits presented in the above two sections (not that commonplace of stereotypical or partially

stereotypical photos are necessarily to be rejected), several participants also took some portraits from unconventional angles, such as the two shown below. While many of the posed photographs follow to a degree accepted conventions of both male and female beauty, even while they play with and undermine them to an extent or use them for subversive ends, the photos taken from unusual angles seem to outright reject such conventions. This may be especially true where these are photographs of women: photographers have traditionally avoided unconventional angles and harsh lighting, indeed often anything that may be seen as unflattering, when it comes to photographing women (Di Certo, 2006; Ferreira, 2012; Millard, 2009). As discussed in the previous section, some of the workshop participants also took a similar route of their pictures following established gendered photographic codes; it is significant that these other photographers discussed below tried out alternative approaches.

In Figure 5, the photographer has used a wide-angle lens to take a picture of a woman from about knee-height looking up. The woman's shape is quite dark, but the outlines of her stomach, breasts and face are visible. Her twisted African natural hair is prominent in the middle of the frame, and constitutes much of the visual interest of the picture. In the background, dark rainclouds are prominent with buildings on the very edges of the frame.

The picture works because it draws upon visual discourses often associated with strength, power and mysteriousness. A portrait where a person's face is in relative darkness has connotations of power and authority. Many portraits of political and military leaders have been taken in this way, and the trope is, indeed, widely used in painting as well as photography. Lighting a face more harshly, creating patterns of dark and light, as opposed to a more even lighting, has often been used as a convention to suggest masculinity of the hegemonic type in photography generally (Keating, 2006). Furthermore, the positioning of the camera below the majority of the subject's body suggests powerfulness, and unavoidable taking up of space.

In a social world where women are increasingly encouraged to take up less space, this speaks volumes. The way her locked hair is silhouetted against the sky, in the middle of the frame, also draws viewers to that aspect of the subject. The curve of her stomach is visible, which may be significant, again, in a social and media space that often only recognizes female thin-ness. The extreme nature of the picture – people, especially women, are not usually portrayed this way, with a number of unusual, and usually masculine visual devices used all at the same time – almost certainly forces the viewer to take notice and leads his or her gaze into photo.

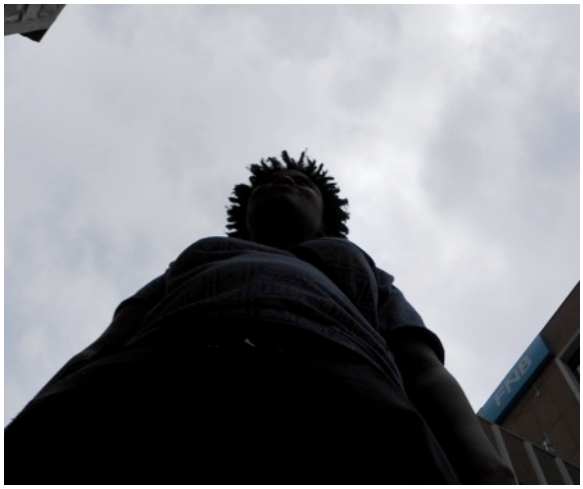


Figure 5: Portrait of a photography group member. Photo: WLC

In figure 6 below, two people's feet and lower legs are prominently shown. They take up about two thirds of the black-and-white picture, with paving bricks taking up much of the rest of the space. A few other feet can be made out in the background. The one person (having seen the photo taken, I can confirm they are women, although one might not make this out from the photograph itself) wears a pair of Converse All-Star sneakers, the other a pair of sandals, with a leather or fabric thong between the toes connecting foot to shoe sole. Both have their feet slightly apart, and the one person's left foot is touching the other's right. Both are wearing long trousers. The picture appears to be taken with a standard length or medium telephoto lens. The difference in the footwear in the photo may serve to suggest differences in the two people's personalities. The photo may also suggest the comradeship between the two women.

Converse All Stars, the brand of shoe which the one woman wears, has associations with urban-ness, edginess, frankness and unpretentiousness, and has been recognized as a brand that, not uncontroversially, has built a cultural phenomenon around itself (Peterson, 2007). They and similar-looking shoes have been widely adopted as footwear of choice by young black tertiary students in Namibia, especially by men but also to a lesser extent by women.

What both these pictures suggest is that certain types of portraiture can be subversive, because these types of photos put themselves outside the norm of beauty/glamour-focused facial portraits and selfies, the sort that could be seen on the front page of a fashion magazine. One obvious way to do this that is to change the camera angle or focus on body parts other than the face, which is what the participants did in these two examples. Another way to be subversive could have been playing in different ways with the gendered beauty conventions of the selfie, as we have seen on the section of selfies. Still other ways in which photographers internationally have used portraiture of others in subversive ways include

dramatic divergences in terms of make-up, with it used more to exaggerate and be grotesque than to beautify – this was not seen among the participants' photos here. Another common method of subversion is the use of lighting, making areas of the face excessively dark for example (Keating, 2006; Szarkowski, 2003). This is, in fact, what was done in the first photo of this section. In portraiture of women in particular, a more conventional approach in mass media would involve showing the face in full, using lighting that is soft but which makes the woman clearly visible, and taking the picture in a way that would emphasize the curves of the body and stereotypically feminine bodily features. This has not always been the case with men, where power, forcefulness and mysteriousness as personality traits are often emphasized, through, for example, the use of darker lighting, taking photos from vantage points other than eye-level, and making sure the subject fills the frame (see Duncan, 1990; Krassas, Blauwkamp & Wesselink, 2003; Hardin et al, 2009; Rothblum, 1994, p. 84). These photos can be said to counter, to some degree, that conventional mass media view of women.



Figure 6: Picture of people's feet/shoes. Photo: WLC

Symbolic/thematic photos

Participants took many photos that can be said to be symbolic, in that elements within them appeared to have been chosen for their meaning beyond themselves within the culture. Oxford Dictionaries Online defines a symbol as 'an object, person or artifact that represents or stands for something else, especially a material object representing something abstract' ("Symbolism," 2016). Recognizable visual symbols were widely used by participants in this study, possibly as a way to counter the Western, hegemonic gaze often seen in photography of Namibia and Africa more generally. Not only were these symbols widely used, they were often quite powerfully used to make counter-hegemonic claims about selfhood, citizenship and people's rights to belong. More often than not, these photos served to allow marginalized

people to make claims of belonging to spaces that would like to exclude them (such as queer people belonging to churches for example) or to problematize certain identities (for example, being Namibian) that all are considered to belong to, but which are in fact, contested. Rita spoke about the use of symbols like currency, flags, and Christian symbols in her work:

> Rita: Me, I don't always have a lot of space to take grand pictures. You know like *Vogue* covers and so on. And much of what happens to us, you can't make pictures of it the time it is happening…
> Interviewer: Like getting kicked out of church?
> Rita: Like getting kicked out of church. Or kicked out of school because you have no money. So you try and – how can I say? – to recreate pictures that have that kind of feeling indirectly. You use some things, like coins maybe or a flag, that show what we want to be or to have but can't get there.

Some of the symbolic objects used in this to make these and similar points in the participants' photos generally include Christian crosses, the Namibian sign-language code for 'Namibia' (consisting of a right hand with the fingers pointing downwards, the index finger partially curled back and the thumb stuck out to the side, representing the shape of the country on a map), stylized rock paintings as supposedly (and problematically) emblematic of San cultural heritage, various sorts of traditional dress, the rainbow flag as associated with the LGBTQ+ equal rights movement, identity documents, money in the form of banknotes and coins, and many others.

A good example of the way symbols were used photographically to problematize the question of identity can be seen in figure 7. A woman is pictured, looking directly ahead and slightly above the level of the camera. She is wearing a light pink blouse and blue jacket. Behind her is the advertising sign of a curio/tourist shop called 'Bushman Art'. Stylized representations of typical Namibian ancient rock paintings, as supposedly emblematic of San or 'Bushman' culture, are visible as part of the sign and are also painted on the wall behind it. The woman pictured is a member of one of Namibia's San communities, and is active in several organizations representing the San as a collective. The picture thus seems to suggest a disconnect, between what San people were seen to be in the past and what they are now, as well as between representations of San people offered to foreign visitors and the characteristics of living Namibian San people in reality.



Figure 7: Photo of a young San woman outside 'Bushman Art',
a curio store, Independence Avenue, Windhoek. Photo: WLC

Some of the participants' photographs also indicate, by way of symbolism, the liminality that many said in the interviews that they felt regarding their national, regional, gendered, ethnic and other identities. In figure 8 we see a picture taken though a shop window. The shop is a curio shop, selling artifacts supposedly representing Namibia, chiefly to tourists. The reflection of a market trader on the street outside can be seen in the window. More clearly seen in reflection is a hand making the sign language symbol for Namibia, consisting of a right hand shaped so it resembles a map of the country. On the inside of the window, a sculpture of a Himba woman and child wearing traditional dress can be seen, as well as what appear to be a pink necklace and a carved sculpture of an elephant. The picture seems to suggest that there are many ways of being Namibian, and that the image given to foreign visitors of what Namibia is (represented by the Himba women and child and the other curios) is only partially correct, only part of the story.



Figure 8: Shop-window displays and reflections at 'Bushman Art'
a curio store, Independence Avenue, Windhoek. Photo: WLC

In figure 9 below, a woman is pictured against the background of a black cross, painted on a white wall. In the close-cropped picture, she wears a rainbow-colored flag, symbolic of the LGBTQ+ equal rights movement, over her shoulders, as well as a bead necklace with a white cross on the end. She also wears a headband, with a thin piece of thorn tree branch wedged into it. The headband evokes Christ's crown of thorns, and seems to suggest that the suffering of LGBTQ+ people in Namibia is as severe as Christ's suffering on the cross. Given that Namibian Christians, both pastors and lay people, have often had ambivalent attitudes towards homosexuality and other queer sexualities, and at times have been openly hostile towards them (Heita, 2016; Shapwanale, 2016), the picture clearly symbolizes the complex and emotionally wrenching struggles that queer Christian believers in the country face. By associating queer people with Christian symbolism, it also appears to stake a claim for ownership by queer Christian people of the church on terms equal to straight believers. In other words, it seems to be challenging the church establishment that LGBTQ+ believers are present among them, and will not go away.

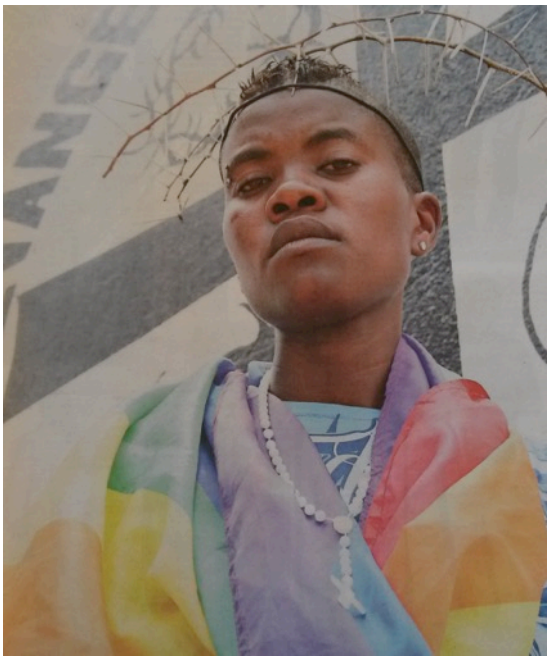


Figure 9: Portrait of a photography group member outside a church. Photo: WLC

Cityscapes – the rich and the poor

By practically all accepted measures, Namibia is one of the world's most unequal economies and societies, a legacy of apartheid-style economic planning and social thinking. Despite efforts aimed at addressing the gaps between the living standards of the rich and the poor, this inequality has persisted in the decades since independence (Sherbourne, 2016, pp. 98-104). It is therefore not surprising that several participants in this project took pictures illustrating Namibia's inequalities. These pictures often concentrated on the quality of housing the rich and poor live in, as a visible manifestation of the inequality in Namibian society.

Housing and the character of neighborhoods have often been seen as indicators of relative deprivation, inequality and their society's history. The built environment of the city and the suburb can in many ways be seen as microcosms of a nation's societal development and class conflicts. Bauman (2003) notes that the rise of suburbia has been linked to cultures of fear, as well as aspiration, among those living there. The culture of fear that Bauman identifies as a suburban norm can be seen in the walls and electric fences in the picture of Windhoek suburbia in figure 11. These cultures of fear seem to be linked to the constant change embodied in modern city life. As Soja (2000, p. XII) states, 'nearly all the world's major (and minor) metropolitan regions have been experiencing dramatic changes, in some cases so intense that what existed thirty years ago is almost unrecognizable today.' Part of this rapid change in Windhoek and other Namibian towns since independence has been the development of vast informal settlements, each settlement with rapidly developing and fluctuating subcultures and populations. People moving in and moving out, and a constantly developing subculture, has often been part and parcel of the Southern African informal

settlement. While seen by white and bourgeois society as a scary and undifferentiated mass of poverty, informal settlements (the photo I will discuss as figure 10 portrays a typical Namibian example) are far more complex in reality (Ballard, 2004).

Despite this, however, the participants' photographic focus on housing and neighborhoods could also be said to leave unacknowledged other signs of inequality not visible through the built environment, such as unequal access to cultural spaces, government, the media, and services promoting gender equality. This may have required more in-depth discussions around these issues in the workshops themselves and brainstorming on how to cover them. Since this did not take place, it is perhaps not surprising that participants concentrated on the built environment as one of the most direct and easily accessible manifestations of social injustice.

Figures 10 and 11 show two photographs taken by a member of the Physically Active Youth (PAY) workshop group. They were taken as part of the same project in the same week, and are clearly intended to be seen together. Both are taken from a similar perspective, with the photographer's vantage point raised on a hill, looking down upon the urban landscape. Both are relatively wide-angle shots in a landscape orientation (longer on the horizontal than the vertical side). Figure 10 is a picture of the informal settlement of Okahandja Park, one of the poorest areas of Windhoek, home to few permanent structures and an area where poor sanitation is the norm. The picture is taken from a hill housing a mobile phone signal-broadcasting tower, one of the high points in the settlement. It is believed by some that the settlement area was given its name in ironic humor by its residents, referencing the nearest neighboring town to Windhoek, Okahandja, about 70 kilometers to the north, as a way of indicating how far from the center of Windhoek Okahandja Park was, the only place where municipal officials would let landless people settle at that time. Figure 11 is a photo of the Klein Windhoek and Ludwigsdorf suburbs of Windhoek, two of the capital's oldest and richest. These suburbs have good amenities, feature the homes of prominent people, including some Cabinet Ministers, and are among those where a large proportion of the residents are of above average income (City of Windhoek, 2014). Although the city does not collect statistics that are disaggregated by race, it is widely understood that Klein Windhoek, Ludwigsdorf and other wealthier suburbs have a higher proportion of white Namibians, even though Klein Windhoek was one of the sites of pre-colonial settlement in the Windhoek area, with the pre-colonial inhabitants moved out by successive apartheid governments.

In Figure 10, we see an overview of part of the Okahandja Park settlement. In the foreground a number of roughly built shacks can be seen: details such as washing lines and zinc roofs weighed down by large stones can be clearly seen. Further shacks cover the valley below and the slopes of the next hill. Un-built-up hills and mountains can be seen in the

distance. The valley floor is partially covered with what appears to be smoke, fog, dust, or a combination of these. The picture appears to have been taken early in the just after dawn.



Figure 10: Okahandja Park informal settlement, seen from the MTC tower hill.
Photo: Physically Active Youth (PAY)

Figure 11 shows an overview of parts of the Klein Windhoek and Ludwigsdorf suburbs. In the foreground are what appears to be upmarket townhouse or apartment complexes. At least one has a tennis court attached. Other large houses can be seen in the background. The suburb appears leafy and verdant, with trees covering many of the rooftops. Houses seem a fair distance from each other. As in figure 11, un-built-upon hills and mountains are seen in the distance. The branches of a thorn tree partially frame the picture on the right side. The photographer confirmed taking the picture from the restaurant of Hotel Thule, an upmarket establishment on a hill overlooking part of Klein Windhoek. The picture appears to have been taken in the morning.



Figure 11: Klein Windhoek and Ludwigsdorf suburbs, seen from Hotel Thule. Photo: PAY

The similar composition of both pictures, with mountains in the background, the horizon only just visible at the top of the top of the frame, the picturing of both kinds of suburbs from

a similar overview perspective, and the taking of the pictures with a similar focal-length lens at a similar time of day, all serve as linking devices, forcing the viewer who see the two images side by side to make a mental comparison between them, and between the different sets of living conditions they represent. It thus seems probable that the photographer is choosing to make a statement by taking and presenting the two photos together in this way.

Southern African cities, of course, remain sharply divided along racial and class lines. In fact, some have argued that these cities have in fact become more sharply divided, with expanding informal settlements on the one end of the class (and, for the most part, race) divide, and new gated communities on the other, signifying the city's continued separation into enclaves (Ballard, 2005). At the same time, it has become common in middle-class circles for this not to be discussed, and for those who do discuss it to be accused of not acknowledging what government has done to improve situations. Photographic images could serve as a way of reminding a denialist middle-class public that the immense gap between the urban rich and poor remains in place. The two pictures shown here illustrate this distressing divide.

But what statement, precisely, are the two pictures making? Are they saying that this inequality is unacceptable and intolerable? Or are they suggesting that this is just the way things are? As we have seen in the conceptual background chapter, authors such as Sontag (2003, pp. 1-7) and Barthes (2003) have suggested that the precise meaning of a photograph is difficult to pin down, and often depends upon the context of publication and reception and the positioning of the viewer. Nevertheless, what a picture of a social outrage (and it is hard to argue that the level of inequality shown in these two pictures is not a social outrage) does do is mark something out as reality – in Sontag's words, to say 'this happened' or 'this situation exists' (Sontag, 2003, pp. 10, 12, 33).

Another aspect to consider about the two photographs is the absence of clear images of people in either one. It is clear that our photographer is intent on showing how things are in terms of inequality, proving that inequality is a fact. But could it be that he or she finds difficulty in showing us the people - the actual living human bodies - responsible for, benefiting from or suffering because of this inequality? The fact is that it could have been difficult for the photographer to get either a poor or a rich person to agree to be photographed in their environment – the danger is that such a person may feel like a museum exhibit.

Participants also occasionally described the city's wealth gap in other ways, such as through the use of symbolism. Sometimes this appeared to hint at the perceived corrupting nature of wealth. A good example is the photo in figure 12. In this photo a hand is seen in the front holding out several banknotes or low denomination, worth 10 and 20 Namibia

Dollars[14]. Large houses in a posh Windhoek suburb as well as a road leading to them can be seen about 100 meters away. Walls and fences of some of these properties are also visible. Dark grey storm clouds in the sky make up a significant proportion of the upper half of the picture. Dark clouds have been widely used in artistic compositions worldwide as a metaphor for coming conflict, trouble, reckoning and so on (Cupchik et al., 1994; Yu, 2003) and it appears that this photographer adopted this widely available trope to make a point through her photograph.

It appears, that through a wide variety of symbols, the photographer is suggesting that the world of wealth is something that is unmistakable, and even pushed into her gaze, yet she is excluded from it, that she is continually holding out money to this world of wealth, which itself inevitably faces (or brings) challenges and conflict in future times. At the same time, as with other photographs, a finite meaning cannot be pinned down by the use of these images, but a range of meanings can be hinted at. However, the themes of proximity to, yet exclusion from wealth, and of wealth leading to or being the harbinger of conflict, cannot be excluded from the overall meaning of this picture.

The picture can be understood in terms of the deprivations which contemporary urban life regularly exposes people to. Constantly changing ways of production, earning money, relating to relatives and friends, acceptable modes of communication, and others leave the urban dweller in a constant state of flux. Bauman (2005, p. 2) relates this to a state of social existence he calls 'liquid modernity', and writes that:

> Liquid life is a precarious life, lived under conditions of constant uncertainty. The most acute and stubborn worries that haunt such a life are the fears of being caught napping, of failing to catch up with fast-moving events, of being left behind, of overlooking 'use-by' dates, of being saddled with possessions that are no longer desirable, of missing the moment that calls for a change of tack before crossing the point of no return.

The photograph in figure 12 seems to represent some of these concerns. In the picture, the dark skies and changeable weather, as well as the centering of the impersonal force of money and its handing over, seem to indicate the photographer wants us as audience to know that she lives in a precarious, uncertain, rapidly-changing world.

[14] One Namibia Dollar (N$ or NAD) is worth one South African Rand. At the time of writing about 11.86 Rand or Namibia Dollars bought one US Dollar.



Figure 12: A symbolic picture featuring suburban houses and currency. Photo: WLC

It should come as no surprise that living in liquid modernity is extremely taxing for both the poor and the middle classes, and that a few of the WLC lesbian photography group members are to an extent 'middle class' (or more correctly members of the lower middle class or petty bourgeoisie) should not imply they are immune from its threats. In fact, a key feature of much of liquid modernity, is the fear among the middle class, particularly in cities, that they may soon be no longer 'middle' but joining the ranks of the poor (Bauman, 2003, pp. 5–6). In the context of Southern Africa, this is especially true of the black, female middle classes, and of aspirational poor people who use business as a way to attempt to climb the economic ladder (Popke and Ballard, 2004). The small businessperson is constantly in a state of flux, never knowing if he or she is doing enough to survive, keeping ahead of trends, about to be swallowed by big business or shut down by capricious government officials.

Also, being in precarious state is fairly the norm for young lesbian women in Namibia. In interviews, the members of this group frequently described having to hide their sexuality from some people, at the same time that it was known elsewhere, while being part of, and at the same time having strong opposing views about, various patriarchal institutions. This kind of precarious lifestyle would seem to lend itself to photographs that, in one or another way – sexually, financially, personally – showed the precariousness and perceived corruptness of urban life.

Working class survival, street encounters

While many participants expressed their sympathy for Namibia's poor and working classes (of which many were part) through the use of cityscapes and symbolic photographic commentary, a few also took pictures, in a broadly sympathetic light, of low-level workers or

homeless people they met on the street. From discussions with these photographers, these photos seem more to have been the result of chance encounters with these members of the Namibian working class, or occasionally candid photographs, where the subject was not necessarily aware that his or her public activities were being pictured, rather than being planned shoots with a definite end goal in mind. Nevertheless, these photos do show sensitivity for the working class and the individual struggles of its members. Michael stated in an interview:

> We are all working classes [members of the working class]. Me, I would always identify as a working-class. So I think working class people I saw, they didn't have any problem with me taking photos of them. Not that I went looking for working classes to make pictures of. But I think, you see, rich people maybe they don't see us working-classes, working right under their noses. So for us, I just happen to pass a working guy, I see him, I take his picture…

This seems to suggest that participants saw themselves as having a natural affinity with the working class, and saw their position as fellow members of that class giving them the opportunity to see activities and people that more privileged people almost literally *did not see* in their daily lives, and thus photograph them.

Figure 13 is a picture of a worker on a building site. He appears to be walking towards the camera and towards a metal drum which has some other tools or materials on it. Although his face is in shadow and cannot be very clearly seen, he appears to be smiling broadly. He is wearing overalls, gloves, and a protective headgear with a beanie underneath. Two rough metal drums are seen in the front of the picture, with the gravel and exposed concrete of the building site in the background. The picture of the worker in such a jocular pose serves to humanize him, as well as make known the actual human bodies of laborers, which are often hidden from view throughout the global capitalist economy and society in which we live (Crang, 2010; Margolis, 2004; Ngai, 2005, pp. 77-80, 135-6).



Figure 13: A building worker on site in Windhoek West. Photo: Sister Namibia

Figure 14 shows a man, later identified by the photographer as a homeless man, sitting on the lawn in a public park in the Windhoek city center. He is wearing dirty grey clothes and has a roughly made sack with him. He is using two twigs to tap out a rhythm on an empty Coca-Cola bottle. He is sitting cross-legged and the one sole of his shoe, which appears to have a hole in it, is visible, all apparent signs of poverty. While the man is in focus, the office blocks, pedestrians and traffic are blurred, suggesting a kind of disconnect between the man and the bustling city life around him. The man's back is to the camera; his face is not shown.

Although it appears the photograph was taken without his knowledge, the man is in several ways portrayed quite humanely. First, by not showing his face, the man's privacy is preserved. Second, the fact that he is in sharp focus while his surroundings are blurred serves to center him, while the affluence around him is de-centered. It perhaps suggests he is a kind of calm center in the chaos going around him. This centering is rare in that homeless people are often portrayed by news media as an aberration to a city's goodness and cleanliness. The man in figure 14 is pictured doing a harmless activity (playing an improvised drum). This is quite different from common portrayals of homeless people – and other urban poor such as squatters - in the news media, which often involve them portrayed as doing things that would inconvenience or threaten others, such as aggressive begging, littering, drug use, petty crime and similar activities (Hodgetts et al., 2006; Huchzermeyer, 2003; Min, 1999, pp. 1, 121-5).

Two black homeless people were also pictured in similar humane ways by participants in the study. However, this white homeless person, and another photographed, make white homeless people a much higher proportion of the participants' work than they are of the homeless population in Namibia in general. There have been a number of high-profile stories on white homeless and extremely poor people in Namibia in recent years. Generally, the

central message of these articles, which often feature pictures, is that such white poverty was almost unheard-of before Independence in 1990 (see, for example Kahiurika, 2016). These articles have been criticized by some for humanizing the still relatively rare cases of white poverty while the media pay relatively little attention to the mass of poor black people. It has also been noted that such articles often ignore the way white privilege may serve to benefit even the white homeless person over his or her black counterparts, and how white privilege ensures a white person is still less likely than a black one to end up on the street in the first place (Mushaanja, 2016). While the fact remains that rare events are more newsworthy than commonplace ones, the easy humanizing of white poverty does reveal a blind spot on behalf of some in the media, one that may not be easy for individuals to recognize. As far as the workshops in this study go, it may be that issues around the depiction of white (and male) poverty constituted an opportunity for discussion that was left unexplored. It may be that the narrative of white poverty as the exception has been internalized by the participants, and they took pictures like this just because they were noteworthy and interesting to them because they were relatively unique. It could suggest that white poverty is somehow seen as more noteworthy than 'normal' black poverty. The danger of this, of course, is that aspects of black poverty could go unrecorded, because it is almost the unspoken norm. The overall motive for taking these types of pictures cannot be deduced from looking at the pictures alone, but the context of white poverty suggests that there may be problematic as well as positive aspects for white poor people being photographed in this way.



Figure 14: A homeless man in Windhoek's city center. Photo: WLC

Universities and colleges

Participants took pictures on a number of university or college campuses. This is partly due to the fact that three of the workshop sessions were held on the premises of a Namibian university and an arts college. Also, a number of participants were students at Namibian colleges. However, the photos are of interest to the conceptual concerns of this thesis because they appear overwhelmingly positive: they appear to show the Namibian college/university as a place of hope. In a few cases, participants made this link specific in the interviews, even occasionally hinting at the university as a place where structural inequalities can be removed. Lionel said:

> I would like to publish, or to exhibit, some of my pictures I took at Unam [the University of Namibia], to promote to the youth the importance of studying and improving oneself. I think that, always the youth get depressed these days; we don't see any way we can improve our situation. But we can improve our lives through studying.
> Interviewer: [provocatively] And get land…
> Lionel: Well, I think if you study you can have the land, in time. But some who are having land and did not study can lose it easily.

In the pictures on college and university campuses, most people pictured are smiling; there is a sense that industrious work is being completed. People are not pictured in a rush or hurry; people are shown in study groups or moving about on campus, sometimes carrying books. Generally people in the pictures appear relaxed (for example, there are no hunched shoulders or obvious angry gestures).

The photo in figure 15 was taken at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST, my own university). It shows two people, one male and one female, about 30 centimeters or so away from each other. The woman is laughing, the man smiling. He is making a motion to hand over a folder or document to the person behind the camera, in this clearly pre-arranged shot. The big widows of a hall (an exam hall, as it happens, which is fairly well known at NUST) can be seen behind the two people. The windows also reflect trees in the quadrangle behind the photographer and columns of the façade of the building behind that. The expressions on their faces and their relaxed closeness to each other suggest an atmosphere of happy comradeship. The presence of the folder and the large bag being carried seem to signify aspects of student life such as the need to carry books and hand in assignments. Generally, it seems to present a relaxed and positive outlook on student life.

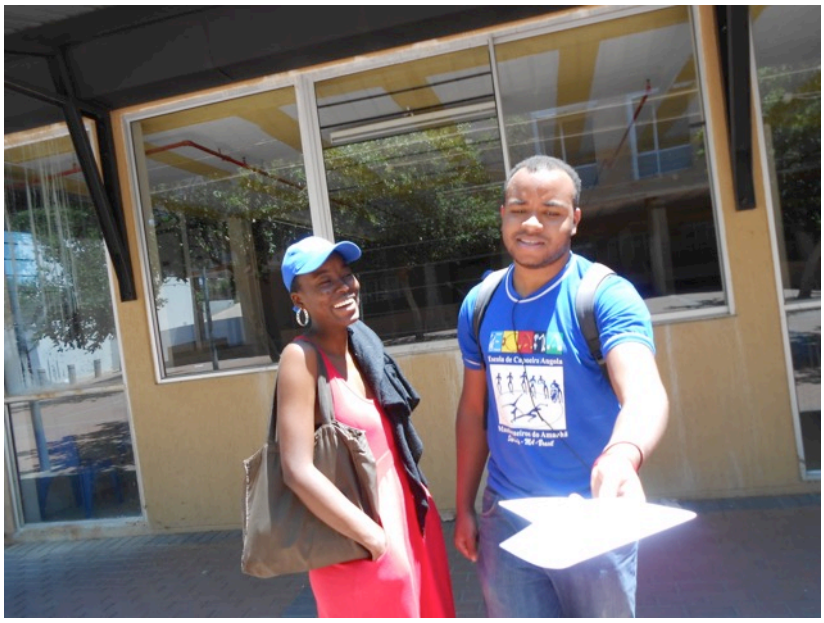


Figure 15: Two students outside the engineering building of the Namibia University of Science and Technology. Photo: Sister Namibia

Figure 16 pictures the inside of a lecture hall at a Namibian college. Two women, friends of the photographer, are pictured in the foreground, sitting in seats in the lecture hall, looking towards the camera in a three-quarter facial orientation. A number of other students are in the background, either facing the front or momentarily noticing and facing the photographer. It appears (or perhaps is meant to appear) that a lecture is in progress and the two students in the foreground are only temporarily looking away to pose for a quick photo.

Both photos shown here show a fairly positive image of the university, and their imagery of students happy, at ease with each other, and enjoying productive work can be said to mimic many of the photographs used in university publicity pictures around the world, which tend to contain all these elements (Armstrong and Lumsden, 2000; Klassen, 2001). Alternative, less positive images of the university could also have been shown. The Fees Must Fall movement in South Africa for example, has, in writing, speech and pictures, often imagined the university as a place of occasional violence and routine financial difficulty and cultural alienation (Disemelo, 2015; Waghid, 2016). Some have, in fact, said that the protests made visible hidden narratives of the lives of especially poor, black and female South African students, which were absent from official accounts of what university life means (Msimang, 2015). The participants in my study chose to picture the university in a more hopeful way. This may mean they have neglected certain facts, such as that Namibian colleges do sometimes charge relatively high fees, and not all students feel culturally at home there. However, it could be that the pictures taken by participants reveal they see the university's role as aspirational: that they a perceive university as a way, despite all its difficulties, to rise

above the hardships that one's family may have had to endure, and achieve material and psychological improvement through becoming educated.



Figure 16: Two photo project participants seated in a college lecture hall in Windhoek. Photo: WLC

This positioning of the African university as an aspirational space, however, is not totally surprising. It has been argued that, whatever the situation on the ground on campuses, the core idea of the African public university is an aspirational one, aimed at development, the building up co capacities and national independence (Imenda, 2005). Of course, these are only some of the hopes that an African university *might* aspire to though the goals are often not clear (Imenda, 2005; Leibowitz et al., 2005). Often students and university personnel aspire to different things. A university of technology, a category into which NUST broadly fits, often aspires both to be a leader in both boosting capitalist production in the nation through science and technology, and a contributor to more socialist societal critique, ambitions which may contradict each other in both theory and practice.

The aspirations of the youth in southern African society are an extremely important facet of sub-Saharan African life, especially among the historically dispossessed. Unregulated capitalism has fanned the flames of desire for a better life among young people, but often has been seen to fail to deliver the goods. Often aspiration to certain lifestyles among African youth has been shown to be linked to global brands and global media and their promotion of a lavish lifestyle (Hammett, 2009). Also, the cult of the brave, entrepreneurial, educated youngster taking on the capitalist system through his or her hard work and winning though personal achievement, is prominent. At the same time, there are slippages in this, where many hopeful young Africans now seem to doubt the narrative that education, innovation and entrepreneurship are really their tickets to happiness and wealth (Strong, 2017).

How does this relate to my photo project? Definitely, the majority of the participants were young people, who had significant hopes and dreams not to continue in the forced poverty

that had encumbered their forebears. Education was most certainly seen as a way to do that, despite the difficulties and uncertainties that the African university faces. Perhaps the preponderance of those photos suggests that the sometimes-questioned narrative, of education, knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship leading to success for impoverished but plucky Africans, is still alive in the Namibian context.

Nature/landscape photos

A number of the participants took nature or landscape photographs. It is especially to be noted that the majority of photographers who took landscape photos were women, mostly from the Sister Namibia and WLC groups. Many of the landscape photos were not necessarily broad, wide-angle landscape shots encompassing the whole of landscape, but rather focused on specific details of the natural world: the pattern of some decaying leaves, for example, or grass shoots growing out of a pavement, or a bird's nest, or a flower on a cactus plant.

Many artists and theorists have viewed women's involvement in landscape photography as not merely expressing their own emotions or recording geographical details, but rather as a project with socio-political implications (Kinsman, 1995; Nash, 1993). Landscape photography in colonial times in colonized countries tended to be dominated by men of the colonizing ethnicity (whites in sub-Saharan Africa, Englishmen in Ireland and so on), and often served explicitly to imply the male photographer's overlordship of the landscape being pictured, which was often denuded of people. In landscape photography and writing about landscapes generally in such societies, the idea of the geography of a place was often specifically linked to race – the landscape of a particular place was seen as being for a particular people associated with it, with others who lived there too but who were not seen as the main owners of the landscape, often excluded (Kinsman, 1995, pp. 302, 304). In recent years, some female photographers and other artists, especially women of color, have devised their own projects to reclaim landscape art, including ways to put previously excluded female and black concerns and female and black bodies *back into* the landscape, and in so doing, questioning the national, racial and gender-based mythologies that had been build up around the landscape (Nash, 1993, pp. 39–40).

It is hard to say that such a specific ideology was behind the female participants in my study taking landscape and nature photographs. However, several of them did express in the interviews that taking photos of natural subjects and landscapes served to represent things that gave them a source of solace in an increasingly difficult and unmanageable world. Some of these difficulties did seem to link to the gender positioning in particular. Christina, one of the WLC photographers' group members, said in her interview:

> I enjoyed making pictures of small things in nature – small pleasures, you know. Life seems so difficult for a queer woman these days. I just want to be left alone, you know? Sometimes… So focusing on one thing, like a tree or a leaf, just on that, gives me some kind of simple pleasure.

She also seemed to imply that moving into taking pictures of nature was not something she had previously much considered, and had something to do with her positioning within various marginalized groups:

> I mean, it's like I'd thought of nature photography as something that rich white men with fancy cameras do. I began to realize that I could do it too by looking at the small things. I didn't have to be picturing cheetahs with those massive… lenses… zoom lenses. I could also, you know, record the landscape, the nature, I lived with, just by observing. Just by recording the details.

Christina appears to be saying that the recording of small details in her immediate landscape was in some ways, similar to the more specific acts of established female photographers who have been taking up landscape photography, in that it was an act of personal empowerment in claiming an artistic space that she had formerly felt excluded from.

Some examples of the typical sort of photograph that women landscape photographers took, appear below. In figure 17, we see a close-up photo of decaying leaves of various colors, from light green, through various shades of brown, to black. The photo is tightly cropped – all the viewer can see is the leaves and a few pieces of bare soil.

The photo is composed according to the rule of thirds, with visually interesting elements, such as interestingly shaped leaves, placed about one third of the way from each edge of the frame. This is widely used technique in traditional styles of photo composition (Langford and Bilissi, 2011, pp. 324, 343–344). This technique, the so-called 'rule of thirds' was discussed in the workshops, albeit as one common method of composition among several and not, in fact a fixed rule at all. Therefore, it may not be surprising that it was used, especially for a nature picture, where the photographer has more time than when photographing people, to compose a shot artistically.



Figure 17: Autumn leaves in a garden in Windhoek. Photo: WLC

In figure 18 we see a weaver bird's nest against the background of a bright blue sky. The weaver is a very common bird in central Namibia. The nest, in more or less the center of the frame, is in focus, while some out-of-focus leaves and branches can also be seen towards the photograph's edges. The structure of the nest, with twigs and grasses forming a latticework, is visible, though to some extent it is covered in shadow.



Figure 18: A weaver bird's nest. Photo: WLC

The photos are interesting in that they show aspects of nature not commonly chosen for natural beauty shots, such as mountain landscapes or flowers or exotic wildlife (Jenkins, 2003; Kinsman, 1995; Nash, 1993; Taylor, 1994, pp. 5-10). This may relate to what Christina said about no longer seeing only exotic aspects of the natural landscape as being worthy of photography. Christina made the point that these aspects (such as cheetahs for example) may

only be easily captured by privileged people with expensive photographic equipment. Thus, accepting that ordinary natural objects and plants are also worthy of photography may be a way for working class women like Christina and others to empower themselves in the area of landscape photography. It could also be a way of saying the ordinary people and ordinary things are worthy of attention. She is saying, directly or indirectly, that the landscape she, a queer African woman, lives in is as worthy of attention as what (mainly Western and white) tourists see and photograph in game parks and nature reserves.

Photos of the performing arts and cultural traditions

Photos of the performing arts, and traditional cultural dances and songs and indigenous types of performance poetry especially, make up a significant proportion of the participants' photos. It is obvious that these art forms are important to the majority of the participants, as is the need to document them through photography. Given that many participants spoke in the interviews about occupying various liminal spaces in between traditions and cultural groups, different areas of the country, progressive and reactionary views of life, and so on, it is logical that participants saw the arts, and cultural arts especially, as something to adhere to, something that photography can be used to retain, even in these uncertain times. In one of the interviews, Anna said:

> I feel like taking pictures of my culture is a way to say *I am* a part of this culture, even if people are always trying to shut me out of it. Like, in a women's movement, people are saying 'you are part of Western things, white people's things'. But this is a way to say no, I am me: these dances and songs and clothes are mine, too.

In a similar vein, but with slightly different emphasis, Lauryn, taking about taking pictures during a traditional music show, said:

> It was so nice to be at that performance. Just to be part of it and clicking away, you know… Somehow art grounds me. I can't explain it. And nothing much grounds me, these days, as I said, everything is always moving. So, being in that space, reconnecting with me, and with the performers, that felt good.

Also, while these motivations are valid, we must insert a note of caution in that these traditional artistic performances may also have been chosen party because they are physically accessible. Traditional cultural performances are very common in urban Namibia, with performances often being staged for free as part of public events, or at a relatively low cost compared to some other forms of performance art, such as rock music, theatre plays or ballet.

The photo in figure 19 is typical of many of the pictures of traditional performing arts that were taken. In the photo a number of women are pictured performing a traditional dance from Namibia's Kavango region in a public park in Windhoek. In this black-and-white photo (the camera was set to black-and-white when the picture was taken, this is not an afterthought using Photoshop) two women are seen taking the main roles in the dance, whereas others act

as a choir or backing group clapping and stamping out the rhythm while standing in a semi-circle. One of the two lead dancers is pictured facing the camera, the other with her back to the photographer. The dance involves a certain amount of movement of the hips, which is perhaps why the photographer captured the women in this pose. Through a slight blur and the movement of their clothes, the photo is able to convey the movements of the dance to some extent. The women are wearing traditional dress, involving tasseled skirts and tops, headscarves, bracelets and ankle jewelry, among others. The movement of hips, dancing in bare feet, the use of one's feet and items of clothing such as beads as de-facto percussion instruments are common features of Namibian traditional dances, and by capturing these aspects, the photographer seems to be placing what is going on in a familiar categorical space.

The expression on the one woman's face (at the font on the left) suggests being lost in and enjoyment of the dance. The photographing of one of the dancers from behind, but with her face still partially visible suggests a kind of sexiness and sassiness, as well as a certain positioning between photographer and performer – almost as if the performer is saying 'I'm enjoying my body and allowing you to photograph me like this, but I'm still in control'. The photo also suggests a familiar relationship between the two female dancers in the foreground, suggesting perhaps the feminist ideals of female comradeship.



Figure 19: A traditional dance performance in a public park in Windhoek. Photo: WLC

Figure 20 is one of the rarer performing arts photos that was produced. Rather than relatively unknown cultural performers, it features two well-known Namibian musicians, Miss H (left) and Shishani (right) and rather than performing traditional Namibian music, they are musicians in the rock and rhythm and blues genres respectively. While they both claim Namibian traditional music as an influence, it is nevertheless the case that Miss H's and Shishani's music would be seen by most Namibians as not fitting into the 'African traditional

music' genre. Another difference to most of the picture is that it shows the two musicians tuning their guitars before a performance, not during the performance, as in figure 19 and in most of the participants' performing arts photographs. The close cropping of the photograph, its relative darkness, and the positioning of the two women close to each other suggest a certain intimacy between the two performers, and that the photographer (and thus, the audience) has been allowed into a special moment between the musicians.

However, despite the differences, figure 20 may be considered similar to the photos of traditional musicians and dancers in several important ways. The two musicians were performing at event open to the public and free-of-charge, an anniversary of the founding of the Women's Leadership Centre, of which the photographer is a member. Therefore, it is a continuation of the trend of photographing public, accessible, performing arts. Also, both musicians are supporters of the work of the Centre, which leads to a similar dynamic as with many of the traditional performers photographed: the musicians were members of a group of people with common interests, performing for that same group of people in a celebration of what that group had achieved, or to state what the group hope to achieve in future. In this sense, the performance of Shishani and Miss H can be seen as a kind of building by the WLC members of a new traditional music, responsive to and a part of the new community its members wish to build. This is significant especially since many participants (not least among the WLC photographers' group) spoke in interviews about having been alienated from, or unsure about their true membership of, the ethnic or geographical communities they supposedly came from. The photo suggests female intimacy in the pose of the two musicians close together, as well as female artistry, in that their action of tuning the guitars suggests a mastery of their instruments. The African prints on the dress guitar strap of one the musicians and the dreadlocks of the other, are symbols of African-ness (however stereotypical), and the pairing of them with more modern instruments like guitars could suggest the development of new African musical traditions.



Figure 20: Namibian musicians Miss H and Shishani tune their guitars before a performance for the WLC anniversary. Photo: WLC

Conclusions: what the photos signify for participatory photography projects

The photos shown here offer important conclusions for what the participatory photography project in this thesis may have done right, as well as what it may have failed to achieve.

Participants' self-portraiture sometimes showed a willingness to make sociopolitical statements, and to do so while playing with the conventions of glamorous, celebrity-style selfies. However, some of it seemed also to simply replicate glamorous selfies and other photographs seen in the media, without much further thinking on what such photos or photographic practices might mean. At times, participants took photos that seemed to actively question female or 'feminine' gender roles as depicted in their photographs, a consideration since two out of the three workshop groups took places under the auspices of actively feminist organizations, but this was far less so with male or 'masculine' gender roles.

Participants took thematic and symbolic photos that wrestled with a number of issues in Namibian society, and this may be a productive theme for further participatory photography projects and research initiatives to explore in more depth. Participants also attempted to expose and challenge Namibia's severe wealth disparities. The cityscape photo provided a means for them to do this, and this should be explored further and deepened in future photography workshops and projects of this type. While there are other ways of depicting poverty and inequality, the fact remains that the character of the built environment in cities in southern Africa remains indicative of poverty and inequality, and the role of apartheid and colonialism in planning those cities and in setting up the psychological dynamics that characterize the suburbs and the townships. However, the taking of cityscape photos could be more situated in a discourse critiquing Namibia's urban planning and the lack of attempts to unify Namibian cities and towns. This could be something facilitated by cross-disciplinary work by Namibia's academics. The critique would, of course, also require direct interaction with marginalized Namibians and their ways of survival.

The fact that many participants took photographs at universities and colleges suggests an opportunity for academia to engage further with participatory photography projects, not least since many photographers saw the university as a place of hope and growth. For such photography to be successful as an emancipatory project, photographers would doubtless have to confront the sides of college life that need to be challenged and transformed, as well as the aspects of aspirational politics in Africa which are, in fact, somewhat disempowering and may be based more in capitalist rhetoric than lived realities.

Nature and landscape photography is another area that future photography projects should explore, as it holds surprising potential to challenge, albeit indirectly, patriarchal and racist norms about the nature of a country, state, region or tribe. This may be especially true of landscape photography by women of color. While some participants in this study discovered

landscape photography without any direct input from the facilitator or the group as a whole, future projects could make transforming or decolonizing landscape and nature photography, or making it more feminist, into their central aim.

Finally, the arts, especially performing arts, featured surprisingly prominently among the subjects of the participants' work. Based on the evidence from this study, a focus on arts and culture photography in a participatory photographic project may work best if such photography is part of a wider movement aimed at creating and solidifying new identities and cultural spaces for marginalized people, which may be allied to certain participatory art forms and performances.

In the next chapter I will discuss how the conclusions drawn from these and other chapters could be operationalized to improve the emancipatory possibilities of future participatory photography projects in Namibia, and, to a certain extent, elsewhere in southern Africa. I will also suggest practical ways forward for such projects, given the constraints that many community-based and non-governmental organizations face at present. The photos shown in this chapter, I suggest, demonstrate that pictures of potentially great thought-provoking power, as well as a degree of aesthetic beauty, can emerge from photographic projects like the one conducted in this study. What is needed are ways to intensify that thought-provoking ability and at the same time provide a structure within which these photographic projects and their photographers can thrive.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS: THE FUTURE OF NAMIBIAN PARTICIPATORY PHOTOGRAPHY

Throughout this thesis I have shown how photography cannot be seen as a medium in isolation, without ramifications on the social, economic and psychological status of the communities, countries, individuals and structures it operates through and within. I have also shown, through data I gathered from Namibian participatory photography projects, how these projects display both intriguing possibilities and at times dispiriting limitations. In this final chapter, I bring these strands together, in order to argue that certain directions and decisions are necessary in the future development of what might be called the Namibian participatory photography movement.

The fieldwork I undertook for this thesis has highlighted a range of concerns, which need to be brought together if one is to have a coherent understanding of the possible future of participatory photography movements in Namibia. These concerns include the need to problematize the likely differentials in social privilege between teachers and learners in any informal educational setting where photography is taught; the need to re-define the processes of teaching and learning in community organizations, especially those that deal with the media, public imagery, and photography; the need to move away from the top-down, teacher-centered models of education predominant in much of Namibian public discourse; a recognition that participants in participatory projects are likely to come from a variety of backgrounds, and that these backgrounds contain multiple points of both privilege and deprivation, and that this could be used creatively to enhance these initiatives, or could be a source of weakness and tension within them.

Another key fact the thesis illustrates is the ability of participants in these projects to produce the kinds of images of their communities that do indeed highlight social issues in these places, and the fact that these images are often radically different in subject matter to the typical pictures of these places in the Namibian public domain. Nevertheless, the interplay between the images participants tended to take and established and often limiting genres and tropes of photography in the public domain (especially in the news and on social media), which is complex and may serve to limit what is actually captured by members of participatory photography groups, and aspects of the lives of marginalized people remain outside the camera's view. These movements would also be affected by sociopolitical aspects such as the limitations of donor funding and the paucity of other sources of funds for social empowerment projects in the developing world, and Namibia's political situation as it relates to making the possibility of meaningful social action difficult, especially among the youth.

Limitations in the existing literature and previous research

Much of the literature on photography has concentrated on its ability to engender humane concern for the people it makes visible, on the one hand, versus its ability to promote fetishism, voyeurism, and other unhelpful psychological traits, on the other. Susan Sontag's seminal book 'Regarding The Pain Of Others' (2003a) is often cited by those who would argue that much media imagery and the way it is consumed lead to the latter situation rather than the former. My research argues that unless the subjects of photography, particularly those in painful conditions, have a say in the making of their own images, and therefore an ownership of them, voyeuristic imaging is always likely to be a concern.

At the same time, the predations and possibilities of celebrity culture and public spectacularity need to be taken into account. It has been noted that people around the world, both celebrities and less famous and privileged people have used photography, especially the selfie, to promote progressive causes and empower some marginalized groups (Iqani, 2015, p. 3709). However, the fact remains that the selfie has prevailed over other, less limiting, and less individualistic means of photographic expression. Some authors (e.g. Van Dijck, 2008, p. 57; Rutledge, 2013; McCain et al, 2016) note the celebrity-style selfie's narcissism and sometimes-scant regard for visual truth means it can only have limited possibilities in empowering marginalized people. It has also been observed how image making has taken on a bigger and bigger role in state spectacularity throughout much of the world, which has disempowered marginalized people and reduced them to mere onlookers in the affairs of their governments. These developments depend on image-making response from marginalized people, and their allies, that embodies humanism rather than voyeurism and objectification, but that takes where necessary from positive aspects of global photographic culture, including, for example, some aspects of the glamorous selfie, and of honest picturing of poverty.

The thesis often grappled with this dynamic: to what extent can one establish a photography project that does not reproduce some of the disempowering aspect of global photographic popular culture? It also grappled with the role of allies to a photographic movement for marginalized people, and how we allies (I am positioned as more an ally than a marginalized person) can both help and harm such a movement. In several ways, the thesis answers these questions with 'yes, but…' Allies can have a significant role in projects and movements aiming to empower marginalized people, and in such projects where they involves media and photography in particular. However, care must be taken in building in safeguards to these projects so that advantaged allies' potential blind spots and unintentional prejudices are taken into account and (for lack of a better phrase) compensated for. It may also be, as I detail in my earlier section on 'being honest about differentials in privilege' that a workshop group led by a reflexively aware facilitator may be able, like a martial arts master, to turn the weaknesses of being led by a privileged ally into advantages, through exploring the

impact of privilege on the gaze and on visual representation in ways that might otherwise not have been explored in the same way. However, as a starting point, this process must be *intentional*. An ally must directly acknowledge his or her privilege and its limitations, as a starting point. There must be an intentional commitment by the workshop group/ teaching and learning group that the impact of privilege on how and what we see (and thus, how and what we photograph) will be explored.

Why this thesis is relevant to the global critical study of photography

The critical study of photography is receiving more and more attention worldwide at the moment, after languishing behind written and filmic/ televisual texts for some time (Hariman and Lucaites, 2007, pp. 25–30; Sontag, 2003b). In part this is due to the increased availability of camera and the popularization of digital photography as a – not unproblematic – 'citizen' medium (Lister, 2009, pp. 8-12). A significant current within this movement is the study of photography as participatory practice (Kurgan and Murinik, 2015, pp. 24, 50, 52). Another involves examining the photographic representation of minorities and other marginalized groups in more mainstream photography and the mainstream media (Hartmann et al., 1998; Tomaselli, 2002). This stream has identified problematic areas that generally affect the (poor) representation of most marginalized groups, and which need to be watched out for whenever one is critiquing the representation of such groups of people. These critiques have looked at the representation of many marginalized groups, but two areas that have increasingly frequently been focused upon (and which I investigated in a degree of depth when researching literature to inform this thesis) are the representation of LGBTQ+ people (Kuhn, 2013, pp. 9-18; Landau, 2009; Whatley, 1988) and of indigenous minorities (see Tomaselli, 2014).

Yet a third stream is the pioneering of the in-depth semiotic study of media photographs as conveyers of ideologies and worldviews as much as, though in different ways than, written texts (Duncan, 1994; Sontag, 2003b; Taylor, 1998). This strand has tested the application of semiotic analysis techniques to media images, in order to develop methods of unpacking the meanings and ideologies behind them.

This thesis tries to combine approaches found in these currents to look for a way forward in critically conscious activism to make sure photography fulfills its potential as a democratic medium. Its findings give empirically rich data about a range of concerns relating to the confluence of these important theoretical streams.

Being honest about differentials in privilege

The fieldwork for this project was undertaken knowing there were likely going to be differentials on privilege between myself as lead facilitator and most, if not all, of the participants in the photo workshops. Part of the rationale was to test how this played out in the context of a participatory teaching and learning situation like a photography workshop. It is important to note that these privilege differentials played out in unexpected ways, many which depended upon the composition of the learning group itself. One of the most important findings is that these differentials did not necessarily impede the work of the workshop groups, and sometimes even enhanced it, *where these differentials were acknowledged.* I examined several examples in Chapter 4 of how acknowledgement of the different social positionings of the participants served to advance the workshops' pedagogical goals. For example, in a discussion about photos of the black female body the acknowledging of the participants' positioning as black women, as lesbians, as African-American and as San-speaking Namibians provided a much more nuanced discussion of photographic meaning than would have otherwise been possible. At other times, it was crucial that I directly acknowledged my positioning as a white Namibian, and the privilege that came with that, to advance the agenda of the workshops, by furthering the idea that I possibly could see – and thus photograph – things in a limited way, because I am not directly affected by, say racism sexism and homophobia in the way that many of my participants were. These discussions are more widely explained in Chapter 4 where I describe the pedagogical implications of the workshops and the importance of a reflexive facilitator.

As I argued in my conceptual background chapter, these differentials in social privilege will need to be exposed and problematized before these kinds of insights can truly be had. There are different levels of privilege between Namibia's largely male, often white professional photographer corps, and the largely black, female and working class participants in social empowerment projects (Hartmann et al., 1998; Khaxas, 2007; Republikein, 2013; Smith, 2013). These differences, unfortunately, are often seen as not a significant factor in these projects' work. Projects and their leaders often do not wish to deal with the consequences of these differentials in privilege and the somewhat unsettling conversations that an appraisal of the said differentials would require. What is more, the role of the San as an extremely oppressed group within the black Namibian community is often not fully acknowledged and unpacked in public discourse (see Sullivan 2001). While their underprivileged position is acknowledged to a degree by educators wanting to 'help them out', these educators often fail to notice their own privilege in comparison. In this way, the whiteness or middle classness of the educators remains invisible. The very fact of these patronizing urges to education suggests in some way an acknowledgment of difference, but it is an acknowledgement of difference that privileged people leave *themselves* out of. Thus,

the critical link that certain Namibian are privileged partly *because* the San are underprivileged is left out of these educational discussions and plans.

It has been observed that differentials in social privilege endure partly by remaining unnoticed, or glossed over as unimportant, by both privileged and marginalized alike, and this affects whose stories are told in the mainstream public realm, and how they are told (see Blum, 2011; Gardiner, 2009; Hill Collins, 1991, pp. 110-115; Hook, 2002; McIntosh, 2012). In particular, the assumption that the effects of social privileges are somehow negated, because both privileged and marginalized are working together for a social cause, is a very common and dangerous oversight. People decide that difference is irrelevant, wiped out by good intentions. The danger of this approach was borne out in my study. These very differentials that people chose not to acknowledge, and the different lived experiences that these differentials bring about, could be useful in the learning process, if they are acknowledged and integrated appropriately. An example of integrating knowledge of these differentials in lived social experience into teaching and learning might be that a workshop group discusses why people from different socioeconomic spaces take different photos of the same subject, and continues from there to ask how an individual photographer can take steps to broaden his/ her socioeconomic understanding. This could be practically demonstrated by, say, having a photographer take pictures before reading about a marginalized group he or she is not from, then take photos of the same people after having learned more and having reflected upon it. Comparison of the resulting images could prove instructive in alerting participants, in a very practical way, to the dangers of being represented solely by outsiders, and the need for outsider-photographers to educate themselves before entering a marginalized environment.

Another important thread within these arguments relates to relative privilege *within* underprivilege, and how some of these intersections can both support and be damaging towards what a participatory photography project wants to achieve. As such, the project can be considered a contribution to studies of intersectionality, of the understanding that people marginalized by one system may be relatively empowered by another. In particular, an acknowledgement of the power of intersectional relative privilege was helpful to some of the photo projects' aims. This can be seen though, for example, allowing discussions in workshops to highlight the differences in gazes between the participants, and myself, and how these related to our differences in privilege. Another example would be how the San participants especially sought to present 'the world as they saw it', that is, the world as bound up with the particular intersecting marginalizations of being a San woman in modern-day Namibia.

Such acknowledgement of difference in privilege between members of a photographers group could also be useful in another way. It may allow productive strategizing about how to

gain access to spaces, both geographical and conceptual, for taking photographs and for displaying them. For example, an acknowledgement of even passing privilege such as being a member of a law enforcement agency, passing for heterosexual under some circumstances, could be used in planning how to circumvent social threats, take photographs in areas one might otherwise be excused from, and show photos in places otherwise denied to a marginalized photographers' group.

For the purposes of a Namibian participatory movement, it may therefore be required to set up mechanisms within the structures of empowering photography groups to (a) identify the various positions of social privilege within each group, including of teachers and experts brought in to build specific photographic skills and (b) consider how these various positions of privilege may enable or disable the group's ambitions for the body of photographic work it may like to produce.

Teaching and learning processes

One key finding of this thesis is that, for a truly emancipatory photographic project to emerge, teaching and learning need to move away from established norms. This is especially true in the Namibian context, where observations during the workshops, as well as interview data, showed that prevalent discourses within the Namibian formal education system were carried over into the workshops and proved problematic. These discourses included those concerning the perceived proper relationship between teachers and learners. This relationship, where teachers are seen as the sole purveyors of knowledge and as in charge of a learning situation, has been described in many Namibian schoolrooms (see O'Sullivan, 2004). At times this scenario in schools has even been seen by teachers and learners as the default, normal or disciplined way of conducting education (Nyambe & Willamot, 2015; O'Sullivan, 2004).

Some, but not all, of these discourses of education were also observed during my workshops, during interviews, and particularly in the focus group discussion I had with the Physically Active Youth learners after their series of workshops. However, the workshops also gave the participants a chance to explore newer ways of educations, following more discussion-based methods. Nevertheless, it was observed that more traditional teacher-centered methods formed a kind of default that both teachers and learners could revert to if there was not a conscious effort to prevent this.

As they are based very much on the transfer of what are seen as finite portions of information, rather than the construction of new forms of consciousness by learners, I argue that the old or formal way of Namibian education that a number of learners referenced fits into what Freire (1970) and others have called a banking view of education. This is limited because, among other reasons, it relies on the teacher as sole transferor of information, gives

the learner little recourse when information becomes out-of-date, and does not empower the learner to be the owner and controller of his or her own learning experience.

Various alternatives, aimed at promoting discussion and getting the participants to be owners of their own learning experiences, were followed. As detailed in Chapter 4, these often focused on beginning learning sessions with discussions on how current photographic practice – for example in the media – is limited when it comes to portraying groups they may belong to (women, sexual minorities, the youth, San people, etc.). There are still problems with this approach, in that it assumes something is wrong as the participants see it, and may engender the idea that a correct sort of response if required from learner to teacher.

For the establishment of a Namibian participatory photography movement, there would have to be conscious institutional efforts to promote a more learner-centered approach and make it a norm. The danger of reverting to a situation where photography teachers in an intentionally empowering workshop or movement are seen as 'Sir' or 'Ma'am' (and one's fellow learners are not) should be avoided wherever possible. It must be stressed, that for such dangers not to manifest themselves, at bare minimum, participatory photography movements must be set up and led, not by privileged teachers/ professionals, but by marginalized people with interests in photography, art, representation, and activism. However, even where this is the case, it is possible for privileged teachers, brought into an organization by organizational leaders who are themselves marginalized people, to become almost 'celebrities' in the movement. It is possible for these teachers to exhibit limited and privileged ways of thinking (and both media and teaching and learning) for their privileged ways of thinking not to be adequately challenged. I would argue that, unless movements express the direct intentions to be led chiefly by the marginalized, and to require their privileged facilitators to interrogate their privilege, neither is likely to happen. And if these two considerations are not present, the usefulness of the movement in producing emancipatory, non-stereotypical representations (e.g. photographs) of marginalized people may be limited.

Bearing the above in mind, a key finding of this thesis is that relatively privileged members of a workshop group may be more willing to use the self-confidence their privilege brings to question the authority of the facilitator. In a number of situations, this challenging led to fruitful discussions and brought up new photographic topics. A very deliberate unearthing and explaining of differences in privilege among the groups may be required, before all participants can challenge the facilitator in a more-or-less equal manner. At other times, my virtually excusing myself as facilitator seemed to be critical in getting valuable discussions going. At yet other times, it became necessary to remind participants of my own privilege when this was unacknowledged by them. A flexible approach is needed, because it is unlikely to be knowable in advance which approach may be required.

Some further ways to ensure learner centered discourses prevail in learning situations within photographic movements could include having learners rather than teachers set the agenda for each workshop or class, by literally planning what is to be taught; have learners start a workshop by taking photos without any training and then having the teacher advise on starting points for their refinement; the centering in discussions of the images (not even actually photos necessarily but visual impressions) that learners see of their own communities; conducting discussion primarily in the learners' mother language rather than the teacher's; and critiquing established photographers' work from the point of view of the learners as marginalized people (for instance, critiquing a white suburban-dwelling photographer's photo essay on a township). These are just some of the strategies that could be adopted; others along these same lines will occur to participants, teachers and planners in photographic learning situations, as appropriate to each project. These may guard against the possibility of re-creating, however subtly, discourses from a paradigm of command and control of people of color, women, sexual minorities, and the like by powerful outsiders, which would be contrary to the very existence of a photography project that aims to be emancipatory.

Backgrounds of the participants: San, gender, sexual minority issues

Interviews with the participants in the workshops held under the auspices of this research project revealed that they came from incredibly diverse backgrounds, and although all marginalized in one way or another, some of them openly revealed they occupied mixed positions of both privilege and disadvantage, and that they could see, however clearly or unclearly, that this both helped them lead their lives as normally as possible, but also led to certain contradictions. As I explained in my chapter on methodology, the participants were drawn from previously-existing community based social empowerment organizations. Therefore, one can expect their positions with regard to privilege and marginalization to mirror the sort of people we might find in larger-scale projects that make use of photography for empowerment.

In this regard, this research suggests that the position of San persons vis-à-vis other persons of black heritage, as well as questions of sexual orientation, need to be considered.

The San participants in the workshops often expressed an awareness of disadvantage in relation to both Namibia's white population and to Bantu-speaking Namibians, and to being caught between these two groups – recognizing their marginalization both as black people and as San speaking people specifically, noting, sometimes quite eloquently, that both white Namibians and Bantu-speakers could be agents of oppression, intentionally and unintentionally, and that San people could be used as pawns and played by one group against the other. In addition, some of the San interviews highlighted points of contestation in their communities of their own making such as issues relating to gender and children's rights.

These complicated positionings need to be thought through in the planning of teaching events, the strategizing of photo projects, and in the taking and selecting of photographs themselves. If this is not done, it is probable that the particular complex of oppressions that San Namibians face would not be fully appreciated by audiences of their photo projects; these messages, if present at all, could easily pass over audience members' heads. Discourses of the marginalization of the San community are not as familiar in the Namibian public sphere as discourses of marginalization of black Namibians in general (see Sullivan, 2001; Tomaselli, 2014).

There is no reason, of course, to claim that these conceptualizations are not equally relevant for other marginalized groups in other spaces, as well. Examples would include African foreigners in South Africa, Middle-Eastern refugees in Europe, people disadvantaged by class systems around the world, and numerous others. This, in fact, suggests that the conceptualizations in this thesis have important implications for photography as a device for empowerment in many diverse cases of marginalization.

With regard to the specific marginalization suffered by people of sexual minorities, the presence of a lesbian photographers group among the participants in the workshops allowed issues relating to homophobia, heterosexism and discrimination to be discussed in depth, in interviews and in the workshops themselves. This was one of the areas where the participants frequently felt conflicted, as they had to hide their sexual orientation, or even work for homophobic organizations, just to get by. The living of multiple lives in order to accommodate conservative employers, places of worship, or relatives was by no means uncommon. Photos showing this in very creative ways were often produced, as has been explained in the preceding chapter, and will be recapped in the next section. Participatory photography projects thus need to consider always the totally of lives of their LGBTQ+ participants, and the fact that current widespread social constructed categories (such as 'queer' or 'women having sex with women') created to accommodate them may not do so, or may represent only a section of the day-to-day lives they have to live. They often felt their status as, say, Christian believers, or employees, was put in doubt by others whenever they adopted one of these labels, and were strongly opposed to these false choices they felt they were being presented with.

An insider's look at social issues

In some ways, a central part of the data produced by this research project, the photos themselves, answered in the affirmative one of the main theoretical concerns of this thesis: whether participatory photography projects can produce images which represent a radically different gaze and engender different feelings in audiences than the often-default white, male, bourgeois gaze

that is, with good intentions and bad, *applied to* marginalized people. The answer appears, at least some of the time, to be yes.

The use of symbolic objects: rainbow flags, crosses, symbolic representations of rock art, African natural hairstyles and other cultural artifacts, has been shown in this thesis to be a common way in which photographers undertake such insider-driven meaning-making. This use of images for their symbolic power relates directly to the first two research questions of the thesis, which, respectively, deal with the ways in which photography could function as a medium that empowers members of historically disadvantaged communities, and address the possibilities of photography encouraging people from such historically disadvantaged communities to challenge patterns of privilege. The importance of this is that it shows one way in which that challenge to power could easily be articulated in photographs.

It is important for leaders of participatory photographic projects to note the limitations of that approach, which may include that symbols sometimes only have their full range of meaning within a certain group. In other words these symbols may only have their full meaning to those who share the marginalization (e.g. the rainbow flag) and/or privileges (e.g. the cross in a majority-Christian country) of belonging to that particular group. On the other hand, the use of symbolic objects is also powerful because it works as a kind of 'shorthand' through which extremely complex ideas can be expressed very succinctly (see Barthes, 2013, pp. 116-118; Jewitt & Oyama 2004, pp. 138-139).

Also, even if only a certain group fully understands the meaning of the symbol, it retains a great power of instant recognition for those within the group. The juxtaposition of symbols that may not, in people's minds, belong together (e.g. Christian symbols such as crosses and rosaries together with LGBTIQ+ symbols such as the rainbow flag) may serve as a powerful way of generating a flash of insight among audiences, who may not have thought about a certain issue in a certain way before. Tellingly, the use of symbolic objects to create crude stereotypes about marginalized peoples was a central, defining feature of colonial imagery (Bhabha, 1999, pp. 371-2). The use of such visual symbolism as the participants in this project employed could be a powerful antidote to the wounds inflicted by such crude stereotypes. The fact that, for example, an African woman could be proud to be Christian, lesbian and black at the same time, would simply not have occurred to a certain type of colonial photographer. The use of symbolic objects by the participants in this project showed one way to prove the colonial photographer wrong.

Evidence from the discussions held during the workshops also suggests that the power of being an insider to social issues, having experienced them yourself in different ways, is key to the pedagogical process of teaching about photography and representation. This evidence also suggests that the role of the pedagogue should mainly be to bring people with different insider positions together in an atmosphere of respectful discussion, rather than to lead that

process. It is important to note that this process more often than not centered around the discussion of images directly, rather than just words, which suggests the key role images can play in making visible the importance of this inside knowledge.

In the regard also, the fact that some participants chose to take landscape images and images of nature proved interesting, especially as the participants who did so were queer women. The way that landscapes taken by women and sexual minorities may reflect different themes than those taken (as most landscape and nature photography is) by straight white men, and how the taking of those photo may represent a revolutionary appropriation of the genre by those with less societal power, may be a promising area for both further research and further photographic activism.

Participants' images and mass media tropes

Despite the fact that there was considerable production of insider images as described above which tried to refine common visual imagery in the participants' own terms, a number of other images came out of the workshops which showed deference to common commercial and social media-based ways of taking pictures. These included references to the glamorous celebrity selfie, as well as seemingly deliberate deviations from it. These deviations included playing with ideas of masculine and feminine poses, and with the very idea of what an acceptable portrait (in terms of lighting, angles, being 'flattering') might be. Having said that, many the photos simply followed the convention of being beautiful, glamorous, feminine and conventionally attractive self-portraits.

It has been noted that even these conventional self-portraits can be used to share sometimes-subversive messages about feminism, womanhood, Africanism and other issues (Iqani, 2015, p. 1300). However, the fact remains that they follow certain social and partriachial norms and in subtle ways, reinforce them. This interplay between playing with and subtly subverting societal norms as far as the visual is concerned, on the one hand, and agreeing with and enforcing it, including its problematic parts, on the other, was quite common and is an important finding of this thesis. The possibilities of members of marginalized communities taking ownership of the selfie (and other commoditized forms of photographic expression) could be explored further in standalone photographic and research projects.

Youth activism in Namibia

Since achieving independence and the end of white minority rule in 1990, Namibia has had only limited success in addressing inequality and achieving a life of dignity for the majority of its black inhabitants (Melber, 2017). Economic and political analysts are concerned about the continuing dominance of white minority capital in key sectors of the Namibian economy (Amupanda, 2017). At the same time, the power of a growing class of black middlemen, often believed to be doing the bidding of white capital while forming a very limited and secondary layer of black elite privilege, has been called into question (Melber, 2017). These developments, in that they demonstrate the ongoing power of capitalists with links to former colonizers, and the rise of a local exploitative merchant class within the postcolony, are typical problems in a large number of postcolonial states (for studies of some specific countries, see Boone, 2006; Nyiri 2011; Lowe & Lloyd 1997; De Oliveira 2007; Agbonifo 2002. Many other studies have, of course, examined these phenomena).

Youth unemployment in Namibia is at increasing and worrying levels (Melber, 2017; Sherbourne, 2016, pp. 87–91). A recent report by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, which critiques African leadership, stated that Namibian youth face increasingly bleak economic prospects. Namibian youth between 20 and 24 have to deal with the third-highest unemployment rate in Africa, with nearly 50 per cent of this age group outside formal employment. The report stated that, emotionally speaking, many Namibian youth feel the same way as their counterparts in other African states, that they are robbed of their future on their own continent (Heita, 2017; Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2017). The Namibian National Planning Commission responded upon publications of this report that they have constructed several strategies to address the plight of Namibian young people (Heita, 2017). Whether these strategies are effective or not, what cannot be denied is that the question of how the Namibian youth may be empowered forms an increasingly large part of national discourse. This is a critical part of the political backdrop of this thesis. The majority of the participants considered themselves to be youths, and had the idea of being left out in one or other way, either because of youth or because of gender, race, or ethnicity. But the feeling that the youth faced different, and in some ways possibly even more severe, hardships then their parents' generation was palpable. If a photo project for marginalized Namibians is to have any meaning, therefore, it needs to be situated within the project of empowering the youth and ending this marginalization.

Another consideration in this regard is the increasing politicization and political mobilization of the Namibian youth, where established political alliances can no longer be counted upon and where issues previous considered somewhat settled – such as the land question – are increasingly being put up for contestation once again by Namibian youths.

Namibian youth movements may thus be increasingly likely to be politicized rather than seen as operating on a more apolitical or NGO or basic needs model. This thesis was very much based in movements funded by donor funding, who, beyond the general emancipation of certain groups, such as San people or women, do not have a political with a capital P agenda. How a photography project would function in, say, a land redistribution movement (a movement such as Namibia's Affirmative Repositioning organization, for example, which has threatened to occupy urban land on behalf of poor shack dwellers) is an intriguing question.

The research questions

This thesis posed the following research questions:

1. How can photography function as a medium that empowers members of historically disadvantaged communities, especially women and youth?
2. In what ways can it serve to encourage people from such historically disadvantaged communities to challenge patterns of privilege?
3. How can teaching and learning processes facilitate the acquisition of knowledge about photography in such communities, without replicating structures of dominance within the broader society?
4. In what ways can practicing photography allow students to become aware of the socially constructed nature of the photographic medium?

With regard to question 1 above, this thesis has shown that, in the Namibian context, photography can be empowering by allowing especially women, youth and members of sexual and indigenous ethnic minorities, an outlet to express opinions and show social conditions in ways that are not widely articulated anywhere else. Also, the photography workshops I was involved in allowed discussions between people that grappled with issues such as diversity and shared and divergent experiences of oppression and how oppressions could be combatted. These sort of discussions, and giving people the chance to express the realities of their oppression, have been widely seen as vital for oppressed and colonized peoples in their efforts to rid themselves of their suffering, and even as a precondition for more revolutionary material changes (see Fanon, 1961, pp. 182-3, 219-20; Lal, 2012; Mbembe, 2015). What especially the interviews with the participants revealed is some skepticism about the idea of photography movements as sole change-makers by themselves, outside of any broader political or social movement. Some of these responses are represented in my findings chapters, but it may be illustrative to quote one. A good example of the kinds of reservations expressed in this regard (more detail can be found in my chapter on the

participants and their backgrounds) is Lionel, a young gay Namibian, who had the following to say:

> I think we gay people… LGBTs… must be totally empowered. We must use anything that we can get out hands on to do that, and not just stop at one thing. So if taking pictures can make people think again, then good, but, uh, we will have to use the radio as well, to use demonstrations as well, maybe I shouldn't say it but to fight as well, if our lives are threatened. So, yeah. The nice thing with pictures is they can see it through our eyes, but still some people will not be convinced.

In answering questions 1 and 2, it was also seen by many that pictures provided a way to connect with people on an emotional level, to bypass the social conditioning that otherwise stopped more privileged Namibians from seeing the participants as equals. One of the interviewees, Maria, said: that she hoped 'my photos strike people in the heart. Because when you talk about lesbianism, bisexuality, all that, they're just abstract concepts to people. But when they see a human being, a whole living woman, in a picture, they can't ignore it.' This seems to be a good example of a very practical way in which way in which photography can serve as a medium that empowers marginalized people by forcing others to humanize them, or at least, to see them as human faces, rather than statistics or abstract arguments.

Maria's quotation above seems to indicate that at least part of photography's empowering potential is due to it being a medium that makes things visible (Hayes, 2010), in the sense that it makes visible the effect of abstract ideologies on real human bodies and the landscapes these bodies inhabit.

Also, it was seen that photographs that worked by subverting established genres and symbolic codes could be one way of doing this representative work. Indeed this emerged as a key way in which participants chose to visually narrate their experiences. This is an important finding within this thesis's research, and should be a critical contribution this thesis makes towards informing similar research in other contexts as well.

The use of the cityscape as a key mode of challenging privilege and inequality within urban areas also needs to be explored further. As I have stated in my chapter on the images produced in the project, this can be limited as a way of expressing inequalities in the city. However, the fact that the cityscape can powerfully illustrate, at a glance, the way cities and towns in Namibia were planned with inequality as their intended state, mean they cannot be ruled out as a medium to express outrage at injustice. They also may show, at a very quick glance, how patterns of inequality found in Namibia may be found all over the global South.

This use and subversion of established genres and symbols, as well as some of the in-depth discussions that took places during the workshops on issues of representation, suggest that participants were aware, or became aware, of the social constructed nature of photography, the essence of research question 4. As well as being a window on the world, the

camera can actually limit what we see of the world, showing some things and not others, capturing some moments in time and excluding others (Branston and Stafford, 2000, p. 100; Christopher, 2015; Waller, 2000, pp. 190-194).

Question 3 relates to privilege and pedagogy. This thesis showed the dangers inherent, as well as the productive possibilities that can nevertheless emerge, from a participatory photography movement that includes both established photographers who are often from privileged backgrounds, and more marginalized people who may have less technical experience with cameras. This is not without its dangers. I discovered personally that at times there were conversations where it was best for me to stand aside and let participants' own experience, of being denied both material goods and media representation, to take precedence. At others, being privileged was useful in allowing me to speak to various forms of denial of the existence of privilege. Also, my privilege has allowed access to spaces that many marginalized people do not have access to, such as those of professional media-based photojournalism and the University/College environment. However, this thesis clearly underlines that considering the effects of one's privilege and considering when the conversation is not about oneself should be cardinal commandments for all privileged facilitators in photographic projects that seek to empower the marginalized. Indeed it also implored that the main drivers, initiators and organizers of participatory photography projects should, as I have argued, be marginalized people themselves, rather than privileged facilitators and professionals.

The involvement of San participants in some of the workshops impacted on all the research questions. With regard to questions 1 and 2, the workshops hopefully were a small part of a long process for San people, in Namibian and elsewhere in southern Africa, reclaiming their visual identity. Further research and much social action will be necessary for the San as a collective to reach this goal. The image of the San has been portrayed and interpreted over the years by many, many people – but rarely by San people themselves (Waller, 2000, pp. 201–206). This is equally true for much academic discourse around the San (Tomaselli, 2005, 2014). The photos produced from the workshops showed that San students in Windhoek were able to subvert and reconstruct imagery commonly associated with the San to construct new photographic identities for themselves. The San participants in the WLC workshops often led discussions on (and raised in interviews) how their communities face multiple layers of exploitation, seeing both real threats and potential allies in both white and Bantu-language-speaking black Namibian communities.

With regard to research question 3, it was observed that a pedagogy that does not take into account that the San communities' special marginalized status is doomed to fail them. With regard to question 4, the San students tended to be more aware than most of the socially constructed nature of photography, and became more so as the workshops progressed. This

may be the result of the lack of San self-representation, and their widespread misrepresentation (or at least representation by others) in Namibian media and public discourse. In that way, it may be that San members of participatory photographic projects may have a valuable role to play in reminding others in these projects of the contradictory and intersectional nature of societal privilege. However, the fact that San participants face a particularly difficult kind of social disadvantages, with particular intersections in the case of San women, youth or queer people, must be born in mind by project facilitators, at least some of whom, ideally, should be San people themselves.

In speaking about my conclusions with regard to San people, it should be borne in mind that students in urban areas are a small minority of the total number of San people in Namibia, and may be considered to be much more advantaged (even as a result of being chosen by Government programs designed to assist them) than most of those who share their ethnicity. Therefore the applicability of the findings with regard to the San participants to Namibian San people as a whole cannot be guaranteed.

Ways forward for postcolonial participatory photography

It would be beyond the remit of this thesis to dictate one way forward to civic organizations, movements and individuals who wish to use photography to empower themselves and their communities. However, the research does suggest directions such a project could take, especially among residents of the Global South and within marginalized groups in particular, which is where my research project was situated. Furthermore, the lessons learned from it can offer a number of warnings for potential pitfalls on the road to truly empowering participatory photography movements in the Global South.

For one, the data strongly indicates that community-based organizations pay attention to the processes of teaching and learning in any photographic projects they set up, so as not to replicate structures of domination by teachers and limitation of learners prevalent in much popular discourse about education in the Global South in general and Namibia in particular. In this regard, it will be particularly important for privileged photographers who would like to contribute to empowering photography movements to consider their own privilege deeply, and evaluate the way it may affect any possible roles and teacher or mentor of inexperienced photographers that they may undertake. This is not to say they should not undertake such roles, but that such roles will inevitably require a constant evaluation of when to get involved in discussions to share knowledge that marginalized people are often excluded from, and when to avoid getting involved so that marginalized people can determine their own representation in their own space.

Photographic projects should consider how privilege works at multiple levels in postcolonial visual culture, especially how this affects the representation especially

marginalized groups, which in the Namibian context includes San and queer people, among others. Photographic projects should consider carefully their interaction with existing genres of photography, and be deliberate in challenging norms when it comes to visual representation in these genres. The importance of symbolism and symbolic objects in postcolonial visual culture seems to be an important factor that participatory photo projects should take note of. The symbolism of landscape, whether of cities or the natural landscape, should not be excluded from this. Indeed as many residents of the Global South migrate to cities, and the informal settlement becomes a key battleground in and symbol of the fight against economic inequality, the photography of the cityscape may be an important (though also limited) way of participating in these battles.

Finally, photography projects in the Global South clearly have to consider carefully how they position themselves politically and in terms of donor support. Like much of civil society in postcolonial states, they will need to consider how they can tread multiple fine lines. They should aim to involve themselves in the political projects of youth emancipation and overturning harmful political structures, and while at the same time avoiding being supporters of partisan groupings and candidates for political office. They need to access necessary funds from donor and development partner organizations, but will often need to take the difficult decision to avoid following such organizations' often neoliberal agendas, rather than the agendas of their members and beneficiaries.

Suggestions for further research

Further research could be conducted as to the effects of participatory photography projects could have on different genres, for example, by trying to reclaim self-portraiture, cityscape, or landscape photography in the Namibian context. San people reclaiming the photography of their own traditions and landscape could be one very fruitful area that future researchers, especially those of a San background, should explore in greater detail. This sort of research project could also be fruitful in different contexts that also have tension between different types of marginalized people. These could include, for example, where white and black homeless people live in the same urban space, or with where people with disabilities aim to claim their own visual identity, bearing in mind that, obviously, people with disabilities are affected by varying levels of economic privilege and marginalization.

Research should also be conducted into alternative models of funding participatory photographic projects, since the current donor-funded model seems to offer limited choices should the project function in an area or at a time or cover a topic where there is a high level of political contestation. At the very least, a participatory project should have multiple funding options, in case relations with benefactors go sour. Critical research can help ensure

that these alternatives receive due consideration ahead of time, and can promote a fair assessment of their plausibility.

While my research has clearly indicated that there are links between photography and privilege in the Namibian context, especially when seen through the lenses of whiteness, gender, and ethnicity, there is need for further studies that could take this conversation forward. In particular, research about how deep privilege extends among Namibian professional photographers, and how this has changed over the years would help to unite the often-fragmentary data on this topic and could look for further ways, beyond community-based media, in which this situation of inequality could be transformed. Also, research in which the effects of this privilege, among others in terms of photographic content in the media, are investigated and made visible is to be encouraged.

It is an old adage in academia that PhD candidates should not find their life's work in their theses, but I feel that this might have indeed been the case with my research for this thesis. I have been a photographer of some description since my grandparents bought me my first camera when I was 11 years old. Questions about the decolonization of photography, photographic education and the photographic gaze in a postcolonial state have thus seemed hard to separate from my own being as a contemporary Namibian photographer. They have also wider implications. One of the participants at one of the photographic workshops I conducted recently found employment as a photographer at a major national newspaper in Namibia. Others, as I have discussed, have positions at NGOs or hope to one day become activists in some form or another. It is to be hoped that they shoulder the burden of taking a nascent participatory photography movement forward.

I said in my introduction that photography, as a medium, cannot be separated from modernity and modern life (Evans and Hall, 1999; Thompson, 1995). Part of that reality has involved photography being bound with the inequities and oppressions of modernity. If these oppressions are to be challenged, photography itself, as well as other media, needs to be radically transformed. I hope this thesis and the findings contained herein will go a small way towards beginning discussions around that necessary transformation process.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

The interview guidelines reproduced on the following pages were developed for the semi-structured interviews that I conducted with the participants in the photography workshops, as well as the focus group discussion I conducted with learners for Physically Active Youth (PAY). Since these were *semi-structured* interviews and discussions, I, as the interviewer/ facilitator, was allowed to modify the questions, and ask other ones if necessary, depending on the direction in which each interview or discussion progressed.

Interview schedule for interview with workshop participants

Sister Namibia/ Women's Leadership Center

To be conducted **mid-way through the workshop series**

Note to interviewer: because this is a qualitative interview, one does not have to stick rigidly to the questions contained in this schedule, but should vary questions and look for new topics of discussion as the conversation proceeds organically.

1. Explain to the interviewee that this interview is for academic research purposes, that it will not be published 'as is', but that it may be quoted in a thesis. Explain the basic purpose of the research. Explain that where interview data is quoted, names may be changed to protect interviewees' privacy. Make it clear that this is not in any way an 'oral exam'-type interview, and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

2. Personal details:

A. Name?

B. Address?

C. Age?

D. Place of work or occupation (if any)?

E. Parents' occupations?

F. Nationality?

G. Sex?

H. Mother language/ first language?

I. What race do you consider yourself (if any)?

J. What ethnic group do you consider yourself to belong to (if any)?

K. (It should be stressed that answering this question is entirely optional) How, if at all, would you define your sexuality?

3. General socio-economic questions:

A. Where did you grow up? Describe your upbringing for us?

B. How do you see your future? What are your future plans?

C. Would you say you belong to a certain class, such as working class or middle class? Why?

D. Do you see yourself as disadvantaged because, for example, of your race or sex?

4. Questions about interviewee's relationship with images/ media:

A. Did anyone in your household own a camera when you were growing up? If so, what kind of things did they mostly take pictures of?

B. What kind of family events (e.g. weddings) were photographed? Who took these pictures? How were they distributed afterwards?

C. When did you first use a camera (including cellphone cameras and disposable film cameras)? Whose camera was it? Can you remember anything about the occasion, or what the pictures looked like?

D. Can you remember any occasions where someone took a picture of you without your consent, or that you did not like? How did you handle the matter?

E. Do you have a favorite personal picture? Who/ what is in the picture? Why is it important to you?

F. Do you keep any photos on your house walls, or in your handbag or wallet? Who/ what is in these pictures?

G. What newspapers/ magazines do you read at least once a week? Do you admire the pictures in any of these?

H. Has anything changed in your view of their pictures since you began the workshops?

5. Questions about interviewee's experience of the workshops:

A. What was the most enjoyable aspect of the workshops so far, for you?

B. What was the worst/ most difficult thing you have had to deal with in the workshops?

C. Was there anything about the workshops that you found surprising? That you did not expect to be there?

D. How was using a camera for you? Easy or hard? Why do you think this is?

E. Has anything changed in your view of photography in general since you began the workshops?

F. When you see pictures in newspapers or magazines, or on billboards, do you think of them differently, now? How so?

G. What (if anything) do you think needs to change in your community, your neighborhood?

H. Can photography be part of this process of change? How?

6. Ask if interviewee has anything else (additional information or opinions) to add?

Interview schedule for interview with workshop participants

Sister Namibia/ Women's Leadership Center

To be conducted **at the end of the workshop series**

Note to interviewer: because this is a qualitative interview, one does not have to stick rigidly to the questions contained in this schedule, but should vary questions and look for new topics of discussion as the conversation proceeds organically.

1. Explain to the interviewee that this interview is for academic research purposes, that it will not be published 'as is', but that it may be quoted in a thesis. Explain the basic purpose of the research. Explain that where interview data is quoted, names may be changed to protect interviewees' privacy. Make it clear that this is not in any way an 'oral exam'-type interview, and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

2. Confirm a few personal details:

A. Name?

B. Address?

C. Age?

3. Questions about the workshop:

A. Now that the workshop has finished, how do you feel it has changed your understanding of photography?

B. What most surprised you about the workshops? What, if anything, was the most unsettling thing you learned?

C. Do you think the workshop was useful? Why or why not?

D. What would you teach about photography, if you were to run your own workshop?

E. How was the workshop facilitator? Where was he lacking? What could he have done better?

F. If the workshop facilitator were black, or a woman, would the workshops have been different for you? In what ways?

G. How would the workshops have been different if they were conducted solely in your first language?

4. Questions about the exhibition of photos:

A. How did it feel to see your photos in an exhibition?

B. Of all the photos that were exhibited, other than yours, which did you like the best? Why?

C. Was there anything strange for you about having your work in an exhibition?

5. Questions about the socio-economic relevance of photography:

A. When you see pictures in newspapers or magazines, or on billboards, do you think of them differently, now?

B. What (if anything) do you think needs to change urgently in your community, your neighborhood?

C. Can photography be part of this process of change? How?

D. Can photography be personally useful to you?

E. What pictures do you think it is important to show your children? Or children you might have in the future? How would you teach them about photography (if at all)?

F. Do you think the workshops have changed your views on the previous question?

6. Ask if interviewee has anything he/she would like to add?

Guide for group discussion with youth workshop participants

PAY Namibia

To be conducted **at the end of the workshop series**

Note to interviewer: because this is a qualitative group discussion, one does not have to stick rigidly to the questions contained in this schedule, but should vary questions and look for new topics of discussion as the conversation proceeds organically.

This is a simplified schedule of discussion questions for use in the interviews with members of Physically Active Youth (PAY), bearing in mind that most of them are young people (average age 16-20). Therefore it is slightly simplified and designed to be concluded slightly more quickly, but covers more-or-less the same material as the 'main' interview schedules which were designed for members of Sister Namibia and the Women's Leadership Centre.

1. Explain to the group that this discussion is for academic research purposes, that it will not be published 'as is', but that it may be quoted in a thesis. Explain if necessary that a thesis is a book that contains the results of research work done at a university. Explain the basic purpose of the research. Explain that where interview data is quoted, names may be changed to protect interviewees' privacy. Make it clear that this is not in any way an 'oral exam'-type interview, and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

2. Confirm personal details of each participant before the discussion begins:

A. Name?

B. Address?

C. Age?

D. School?

3. Questions about the workshop:

A. Now that the workshop has finished, how do you feel it has changed your understanding of photography?

B. What most surprised you about the workshops? What, if anything, was the strangest thing you learned?

C. Did anything seem boring or pointless? What and why?

D. Do you think the workshop was useful? Why or why not?

E. What would you teach about photography, if you were to run your own workshop?

F. How was the workshop facilitator? What could he have done better?

G. If the workshop facilitator were black, or a woman, or someone from Katutura, would the workshops have been different for you? In what ways?

H. How would the workshops have been different if they were conducted in your first language?

4. Questions about the exhibition of photos:

A. How did it feel to see your photos in an exhibition?

B. Of all the photos that were exhibited, other than yours, which did you like the best? Why?

C. Was there anything strange for you about having your work in an exhibition?

5. Questions about the socio-economic relevance of photography:

A. When you see pictures in newspapers or magazines, or on billboards, do you think of them differently, now?

B. What (if anything) do you think needs to change urgently in your community, your neighborhood?

C. Can photography be part of this change? How?

E. If you have children of your own one day, what pictures do you think it will be important to show them? How would you teach them about photography (if at all)?

6. Ask if members of the discussion group have anything else (additional information or opinions) to add?

APPENDIX 2: SAMPLE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Below is a sample of an information sheet that was given to all participants, explaining the goals, aims and logistical details of the research project. A slightly simplified version was given to participants under the age of 18.



Taking part in the 'Owning The Image' research project

Participant Information Sheet

For members of the Women's Leadership Center and Sister Namibia

Dear potential participant,

My name is **Hugh Ellis**. I am a lecturer in journalism at the Polytechnic of Namibia and a part-time student of media studies at Wits University in Johannesburg, South Africa. My chief area of teaching is in photojournalism, and I am conducting a research project as part of my doctorate at Wits, which will look at how the teaching of photography could empower Namibians to work for change in their communities.

You were selected to be offered a chance to participate in this project by the Women's Leadership Centre or Sister Namibia, based on your interest in photography or media-related projects, and/ or your participation with them in several similar projects previously.

Should you agree to be part of the research project, you will:

- Take part in 3 to 4 **practical photo workshops**, each to take place for one-and-a-half days over a weekend,
- Submit a small number of photos for a public **exhibition** of participants' work, and

- Take part in **two interviews** with me, separate from the workshops, in which you will be asked to talk about your experiences in the workshops, your relationship with pictures and photography in general, and your social and economic circumstances. One interview will take place about half way through the series of workshops, while the other will take place at the end, once the exhibition has been completed. Each interview will last about an hour.

You will not be paid for taking part in this workshop or the interviews. However, transport costs may be covered to a reasonable extent, and a meal will be provided during each workshop day.

Participation is voluntary. I feel you and I will both benefit from taking part in the project. But should you choose not to participate, your decision will involve no loss of benefits from your organization, nor will it prevent you from participating in other projects organized by either Wits University or the Polytechnic of Namibia.

During the interviews, you may refuse to answer questions about which you feel uncomfortable. You may also withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits from your organization, Wits University or the Polytechnic of Namibia.

The interviews will take place at the WLC or Sister Namibia offices. Each interview will be a bit different. But, in general, will start by talking a bit about your upbringing, the circumstances in which you grew up, and who you are now. We will then talk about your relationship with images and with the media, what photos mean to you, which media photos you think are good or not good. We will then speak about how you found the workshops, what (if anything) you think you gained from them, and how you might make use of photography in your life and your community in future.

I would like to conduct the interview in English if possible. If, however, you feel you are not proficient enough in English, I will arrange for a translator to be present.

The interviews will be recorded on a digital audio recorder.

Recordings and transcriptions of those recordings (text written by someone who has listened to the recordings) will be stored on a safe, password-protected computer. No one except

myself will have access to this computer. It will not be possible for members of the public to read, or listen to, the whole recorded interview.

The study will be reported in a book, called a *thesis,* which has to be submitted to Wits University as part of the requirements for my doctorate. This book will be available at the University library and on the Internet. Also, a summary of my work may be published in academic journals, and I may present the work at conferences attended by researchers who study the media. Also, a summary of the study, in more straightforward English, will be made available to all participants.

If you do not want to be identified by your real name in these books/ media, a pseudonym (a fictitious name) will be used instead to protect your privacy.

It will be a great honor for you to join me on this important and exciting project!

You can contact me at:

Room 2.79, Science and Technology Building, Polytechnic of Namibia

(The same building as the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate Business School)

Private Bag 13388, Windhoek

Office telephone: (061) 207 2893

Mobile phone: 085 554 6282

Email: hellis@polytechnic.edu.na or hughellis@gmail.com

My supervisor, based at Wits University in Johannesburg, will supervise and assist me on this project. She is **Nicky Falkof**, and you can contact her at:

Office telephone: +27 11 717 4165

Email: nicky.falkof@wits.ac.za

Department web page: http://wits.ac.za/sllm/mediastudies

APPENDIX 3: SAMPLE CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

As indicated in Chapter 3 of this thesis, all participants were required to give their informed consent to be part of this research project. On the following pages are samples of the consent forms. Each adult was asked to sign a consent form on his or her own behalf. Those under 18 were asked to sign assent forms, while their parents were also asked to sign consent forms on their child's behalf.



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

'Owning the Image: photography as a means of empowerment in contemporary Namibia?'

By signing the form below, you indicate your agreement to participate in the research project as outlined in the Participant Information Sheet.

I hereby agree to participate in research on 'Owning the Image: photography as a means of empowerment in contemporary Namibia?' This will include participation in a series of photographic workshops, a photo exhibition and two interviews. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

……..

Signature of participant **Date**:……..

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

I hereby agree to the audio recording of my participation in interviews related to the study.

……..

Signature of participant **Date**:……..

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically on password-protected devices and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage in the next two years.

……..

Signature of participant **Date**:……..



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

ASSENT FORM (AGREEMENT FORM) FOR RESEARCH PROJECT
(For participants under the age of 18)

'Owning the Image: photography as a means of empowerment in contemporary Namibia?'

By signing the form below, you indicate that you agree to participate in the research project that was explained to you in the Participant Information Sheet. If you are under 18, a parent or guardian must also sign a form similar to this, which I will give to them.

I agree to participate in the research project on 'Owning the Image: photography as a means of empowerment in contemporary Namibia?' this means I agree to participate in four photographic workshops, a photo exhibition and two interviews. I understand that I am not being forced to take part in any way. I also understand that I can leave the project at any time. If I decide to leave, I understand this will not harm me in any way.

I understand that this project will not earn me money, and I may not benefit immediately. I understand that my what I say in while taking part in the project will not be published without my permission, or without steps being taken to protect my privacy.

……..

Signature **Date**:……..

AGREEMENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

I hereby agree to the recording of my voice in interviews related to the study.

……..

Signature **Date**:……..

I understand that the information that I provide will be stored on computers and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage in the next two years.

……..

Signature **Date**:……..



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

PARENT'S/ GUARDIAN'S CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PROJECT
(For parents or guardians of participants under the age of 18)

'Owning the Image: photography as a means of empowerment in contemporary Namibia?'

By signing the form below, you indicate that you agree for your child to participate in the research project as outlined in the Participant Information Sheet.

I hereby agree to allow my child .....(please insert his/ her full names) to participate in research on 'Owning the Image: photography as a means of empowerment in contemporary Namibia?' This will include taking part in in a series of photographic workshops, a photo exhibition and two interviews. I understand that I am allowing my child to participate freely and without being forced in any way to do so.

I also understand that he/ she can stop participating at any point should he/ she not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way him/ her negatively. In the same way, I understand I can withdraw permission for him/ her to participate at any time without any repercussions on myself of my child. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me, or a child under my care, personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my child's participation will remain confidential.

……..

Signature of parent/ guardian **Date**:……..

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

I hereby agree to the audio recording of my child's participation in interviews related to the study.

……..

Signature of parent/ guardian **Date**:……..

I understand that the information my child provides will be stored electronically on password-protected devices and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage in the next two years.

……..

Signature of parent/ guardian **Date**:……..