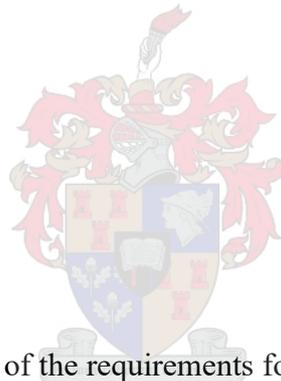


**An ethnographic study on OutRight Namibia and their work on
advancing gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia.**

By Christa Suretha Engelbrecht



Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social
Anthropology in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, at Stellenbosch University

Supervisor: Professor Dennis Francis

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Date: March 2020

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Abstract

This ethnographic study is based on a LGBT NGO, OutRight Namibia (ORN), in Windhoek, Namibia. This study draws on a Queer theory framework and follows a qualitative approach informed by an ethnography and participant observation. This study addresses the following: (1) how ORN navigates themselves as advocates for gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia, (2) how does the social, cultural and political context of Namibia enable/constrain the advocacy work of ORN, (3) what does ORN say they need for the strengthening of their work on gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia, and (4) what are the implications of conducting ethnographic research in a context of adversity. This study followed purposive sampling to identify six staff members of ORN with whom in-depth interviews were conducted. Where after thematic analysis was used to analyze the in-depth interview transcripts. The main themes that emerged from this study were: (1) the utilization of Western LGBT terminology and Identity work, (2) the adverse social, cultural and political context of Namibia as it relates to gender and sexuality diverse persons, and (3) the dependency and reliance of ORN on foreign funding.

Opsomming

Hierdie etnografiese studie is gebaseer op 'n LGBT-NGO, OutRight Namibia (ORN), in Windhoek, Namibië. Hierdie studie is ingelig deur Queer teorie en volg 'n kwalitatiewe benadering wat gebaseer is op 'n etnografie en observasie van deelnemers. Hierdie studie poog om die volgende navorsings vrae te beantwoord: (1) hoe ORN hulself navigeer as voorstanders van geslags en seksualiteit diversiteit in Namibië, (2) hoe die sosiale, kulturele en politieke konteks van Namibië die werk van ORN moontlik maak of beperk, (3) wat sê ORN het hul nodig om hul werk op die gebied van geslag en seksualiteit in Namibië te versterk, en (4) wat is die implikasies daarvan om etnografiese navorsing in 'n konteks van teenspoed te doen. Hierdie studie het doelgerigte steekproefneming gevolg om ses personeellede van ORN te identifiseer met wie in-diepte onderhoude gevoer was. Waarna tematiese analise gebruik was om die in-diepte onderhoudstranskripsies te analiseer. Die hoofemas wat uit hierdie studie navore gekom het, was: (1) die gebruik van Westerse LGBT-terminologie en identiteitswerk, (2) die ongunstige sosiale, kulturele en politieke konteks van Namibië, soos dit verband hou met geslags en seksualiteit diverse persone, en (3) die afhanklikheid van ORN op buitelandse finansiering.

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Dedication

This piece is dedicated to Ouma Sanna and Ouma Toutous. Rest in Peace & Power.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Namibia, a country in south-western Africa, with a population of roughly two million people was formerly colonized by Germany during the nineteenth century (Currier, 2010:113). Thereafter, it was administered under South African apartheid rule from 1910 to 1990 (Currier, 2010:113). The South West Peoples Organization (SWAPO), the national liberation movement, liberated Namibia from South African apartheid rule and Namibia at long last became independent in 1990. Thereafter, SWAPO, the national liberation movement, became the ruling political party in Namibia. According, to Stander (2015:7) gender and sexual minority groups, assumed that the promises from SWAPO of equality for all Namibian citizens regardless of race, class, and gender would include them. However, these expectations soon lessened as SWAPO leaders made no effort to do away with anti-LGBT legislation, which criminalizes sodomy, and instead spearheaded a campaign of political homophobia against the developing LGBT movement in 1995, causing some LGBT individuals to flee the country (Stander, 2015:8). According to Currier (2012:441) gender and sexuality diverse persons in the global South have become “contested subjects in nationalist discourses of cultural and racial authenticity” and for some state leaders in the global South gender and sexuality diverse persons “disrupts the continuity of national progress” (Currier, 2012:441).

The 1995 political homophobia campaign spearheaded by SWAPO leaders has resulted in beliefs from SWAPO leaders that defined: “Namibian gender and sexual dissidents as foreign, un-African, Western, un-Christian, and evidence of ongoing colonialism” (Stander, 2015:1). However, Currier (2012:441) argues that gender and sexuality diverse persons “introduce alternative ways of configuring gender and sexual arrangements in their post-independence societies”, and their (gender and sexuality diverse persons) cultural and political organizing

contests some state leaders in the global Souths control over nationalist discourses. As such, some state leaders in the global South have interpreted the organizing of post-independence social movements as threatening to their political power and their control over decolonization and democratization efforts. Consequently, the political homophobia campaign spearheaded by SWAPO leaders has made socio-political environments unfavorable to LGBT activists (Stander, 2015:1). Furthermore, Stander (2015:1-2) states that “the Namibian government has contributed towards a climate of prevalent public prejudice, social discrimination, and stigma directed at its LGBT citizens”. Despite these difficulties and the Namibian government trying to force the LGBT community into invisibility, Stander (2015:2) states that “LGBT rights-based organizations have consistently challenged and resisted misrepresentations of gender and sexual dissidence by SWAPO leaders”.

What is more, following Roman-Dutch common law, sodomy is a crime in Namibia. The sodomy law only applies to only to “intentional sexual relations per anum between men”, while excluding intentional sexual relations per anum between heterosexual couples and women (Stander, 2015:8). Although, sodomy is punishable by imprisonment these provisions are presently not actively implemented by the Namibian government and/or law enforcement. In a post-independence society, like Namibia, some political leaders have deployed a national antagonistic and homophobic rhetoric towards gender and sexuality diverse persons. Currier (2012:441) argues, “Gender and sexuality dissidents introduce alternative ways of forming gender and sexual arrangements in their post-independence societies”. As such, their cultural and political organizing and -mobilizing contests the ruling political elites control over nationalist discourse, and they deem the development and mobilizing of post-independence social movements as threatening to their political power and control over decolonization efforts (Currier, 2012:441). Therefore, it can be argued that organized gender and sexuality diverse movements are part of a developing decolonization movement that has developed in

post-independence nations in the global South to contest the direction and objectives of decolonization (Currier, 2012:441).

Aims and Objectives of Study

My research study is based on the only operational LGBT organization in Namibia, OutRight Namibia (ORN) (note that there are various other gender and sexuality organizations in Namibia each advocating for a particular gender and sexuality identity). As established in the introductory chapter, the conservative social, cultural and political context of Namibia does not allow for/ assist in the advancement of social movement organizations, like OutRight Namibia, and their work on gender and sexuality diversity. Therefore, this study will aim to explore, through an ethnographic study, how OutRight Namibia navigates themselves as gender and sexuality diversity advocates in a politically, socially and culturally adverse context like Namibia.

Research Questions

The critical (CRQ) and subsidiary (SRQ) research questions for this study are as follows:

CRQ1- How does ORN, a LGBT NGO, navigate themselves as gender and sexuality diversity advocates in Namibia?

CRQ2- How does the social, cultural and political context of Namibia enable/constrain the advocacy work of ORN, on gender and sexuality diversity?

SRQ1- What steps do ORN have in place to overcome/navigate the social, cultural and political context in Namibia that may enable/constrain their advocacy work?

SRQ2- How does ORN view the Namibian government?

SRQ3- How does the Namibian government view ORN, according to ORN?

CRQ3- What does ORN say they need for the strengthening/deepening of their work on gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia?

SRQ1- What, according to ORN, would assist in strengthening/deepening their advocacy work?

SRQ2- Who, according to ORN, are the stakeholders who can assist to strengthen/deepen their advocacy work on gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia?

CRQ4- What are the implications of conducting ethnographic research in a context of adversity (Namibia)?

Significance of study

Although there is no shortage of research on gender and sexuality in Namibia there is, however, a shortage of research done on movements that address gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia. As such, the findings from my study will advance the theorization of social movements by highlighting the significance and relevance of studying social movements in the global South. Moreover, my study will also illustrate how gender and sexuality diversity minorities in post-independence Namibia use public visibility, organizing and advocacy as a means to argue for democratic inclusion and the acquiring of human rights.

In this chapter, I have presented a contextual overview of the social, political and cultural landscape of Namibia as it relates to gender and sexuality diverse persons. I have also outlined the research questions that guide this study. In the following chapter, I will present the theoretical framework and literature review that framed my study.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Preliminary Literature Review

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework and the preliminary literature review that guides this study. I have divided this chapter into three sub-sections; the social-cultural-political context of Namibia, homosexuality as ‘un-African’ discourse, and the emergence and history of LGBT social movement organizations in Namibia.

My research study draws on a Queer theory framework. Queer theory sets out to “challenge the normative social constructions of identities and subjectivities along a heterosexual/homosexual binary and disrupts the privileging of heterosexuality as ‘natural’ and homosexuality as its deviant and abhorrent ‘other’” (Browne, 2010:5). This study aims to explore, through an ethnographic study, how OutRight Namibia, an LGBT NGO, navigates themselves as gender and sexuality diversity advocates in a politically, culturally and socially adverse context like Namibia.

1.1 The social-cultural-political context of Namibia

I refer to Namibia as a politically, culturally and socially adverse context due to the national antagonistic and homophobic rhetoric regarding gender and sexuality diverse persons. In the past, the first President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, and the Minister of Home Affairs have publicly communicated their antagonistic attitudes towards the LGBT community (Avery, Clemons and Matthews, 2017:287), which led to the 1995 public campaign of ‘political homophobia’ spearheaded by SWAPO leaders (Currier, 2010:110). In the Namibian context, political homophobia is defined as the “gendered strategy SWAPO leaders utilized to maintain and defend their masculinist control of the state” (Currier, 2010:111). The phenomenon of ‘political homophobia’ has received unbalanced scholarly attention, however, Currier (2010:111) identifies two lines of research that speak to this phenomenon. The first line of research pays attention to the historical roots of political homophobia (Currier,

2010:111). The aforementioned identifies “the roots of postcolonial homophobia in colonialist, apartheid, and Christian discourses and practices, suggesting continuity between colonial, apartheid, and postcolonial homophobias” (Currier, 2010:111). Thus, establishing a continued discourse founded on the premise that “only whites are homosexual and that all Africans have always been heterosexual” (Currier, 2010:111). The second line of research regards “the emergence of western ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ identities as instigating political homophobia” and considers how “political homophobia produces African nationalism and new articulations of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’” (Currier, 2010:111). As such, Stander (2015:9) states that the roots of political homophobia in Namibia can be found in colonialist, Christian and apartheid discourses.

Moreover, Stander (2015:9) citing the work of Morell (1998) and Epprecht (2010) states that apartheid and colonial discourses have led to assumptions about African sexuality. That oftentimes lead to the exaggeration of the heterosexuality of African men “as being deviant and aberrant, and believed to oppress and degrade women, engender laziness and stultify intellectual growth in men, threaten public health and safety and impoverish culture and the arts” (Stander, 2015:9). As such, African sexuality was defined as “incapable of love or higher emotions and merely abdicated to lustful and brutish transactions” (Stander, 2015:9). Furthermore, by disregarding same-sex relationships between African men, homophobia was the trademark of white/European masculinity and used as a method by colonialists and enforcers of apartheid regimes to implement strict gender, racial and sexual regulations (Stander, 2015:9). All of this in an attempt to monitor and ensure the sexual and racial purity of white/European settlers. Consequentially, homophobia became the domain of white/European masculinity which later made its way into the repertoires of African nationalist movement leaders as a means to emasculate white Western men and nations (Stander, 2015:10).

In Namibia, gender and sexual arrangements differ amongst ethnic groups. According to Stander (2015:10) citing the work of Talavera (2002) the Herero, Himba, and Damara ethnic groups took moderate positions on same-sex relationships, and, although the Herero and Himba ethnic groups did not promote the ‘practice’ of same-sex sexuality it was still acknowledged in their communities (Standar, 2015:10). Contrastingly, Stander (2015:10) citing Khaxas (2005) states that in the Damara ethnic group gender norms were not as strongly implemented as in most other cultures in Namibia. Moreover, Stander (2015:10) citing Isaacks (2005) states that the Ovambo ethnic group makes up the majority of the Namibian population, and in the Ovambo ethnic group heteronormative gender roles/norms are strongly enforced and practiced, as men are fundamentally seen as “holding all the power” (Standar, 2015:10). As Christianity came to Namibia under German colonial rule, many Ovambo people converted to Christianity, which further led to more essentialist ideas/norms about gender and sex. The abovementioned led to strict cultural prohibitions on gender and sexuality and a growing bigotry for same-sex sexuality in Namibia, as the Ovambo people also formed the majority of the SWAPO party (Standar, 2015:10).

In former research conducted on political homophobia in Namibia, Stander (2015:11) citing La Font (2007) & Melber (2007) states, that political homophobia, as a strategy, was an indication of the growing authoritarianism of SWAPO, which attempted to divert attention away from the unsatisfactory attempts of democratization by SWAPO. However, Stander (2015:11) citing Currier (2010) critiques the above-mentioned view for not recognizing “the gendered and sexual contours of this SWAPO strategy and emphasizes the material consequences that homophobic abuse has for sexual minorities”. What is more, political homophobia in Namibia has been utilized by SWAPO leaders as gendered strategy to silence objection from political opposition, and to deepen the masculinist position and legacy of SWAPO as the country’s liberators, by excluding gender and sexual diverse persons from the

historical accounts of the liberation struggle (Stander, 2015:11). Moreover, any resistance, objection or political criticism was considered as undemocratic and unpatriotic, and Namibians have been made aware that the liberation and the independence of Namibia would never have been accomplished had it not been for the sacrifices and efforts of SWAPO (Stander, 2015:11). The aforementioned is evidenced through SWAPO leaders who have used political homophobia, not only to silence gender and sexuality minority groups but also other political opposition parties and -individuals. According, to Stander (2015:11) former President Sam Nujoma had often “discredited a leading political opponent, Ben Ulenga, by insinuating that Ulenga was gay in response to his [Ulenga] fierce criticism of Nujoma’s intolerance of dissent”.

Like many other African countries, SWAPO claimed that homosexuality never existed in Namibia i.e. homosexuality is un-African, a conversation I unpack later on in this paper. Namibians were reminded by former President Sam Nujoma that SWAPO did not liberate Namibia from colonial and apartheid rule so that same-sex sexuality would be legalized. According, to Stander (2015:11) Nujoma vocalized his disdain at the “emerging marginalized groups who demanded access to equality and who supposedly never participated in the liberation struggle”. Thus, by excluding gender and sexuality minority groups, from the historical narratives of Namibia’s liberation struggle, SWAPO was able to express a narrower version of Namibian history (Stander, 2015:11).

Even though the use of explicit anti-LGBT rhetoric coincidentally ended with the reign of former President Sam Nujoma, Stander (2015:12) states that state-sanctioned discrimination still endured in Namibia as was apparent in the country’s perception of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. HIV/AIDS was depicted as only affecting heterosexuals and entirely disregarded the Namibian LGBT population in the writing up of the National HIV/AIDS policy in 2007. According, to Stander (2015:12) despite “solid epidemiological grounds for their [LGBT

Namibians] inclusion” LGBT Namibians were excluded from the HIV/AIDS policy. Furthermore, Stander (2015:12) states that the aforementioned was a significant move by the Namibian government as the exclusion of LGBT Namibians from the National HIV/AIDS policy occurred “after a series of national consultative meetings where stakeholders endorsed their support for the inclusion of this particular group in a progressive draft of the policy” (Stander, 2015:12). Thus, state-sanctioned discrimination had led to the denial of health rights for LGBT Namibians in the National HIV/AIDS policy. Furthermore, Stander (2015:12) states that the Namibian government's “unofficial policy of denial and silence on this matter was reproduced in and by state-owned media”. However, in the National Strategic Framework for the period of 2010- 2016 LGBT Namibians were included as a vulnerable group in need of outreach. Nonetheless, Stander (2015:12) states that HIV/AIDS health services for the LGBT Namibian population remained limited as the Namibian government had been reluctant to provide LGBT specific HIV/AIDS treatments and interventions, which led to several LGBT Namibian citizens struggling to access health services in fear of homophobia and discrimination.

Continuing the discussion on political homophobia and the exclusion and repression of gender and sexuality minorities in Namibia, Currier (2015), in an article titled *‘decolonizing the law: LGBT organizing in Namibia and South Africa’*, presents another significant theme: ‘sexual colonialism’. According, to Currier (2015:17) ‘sexual colonialism’ relates to “post-independence state leaders appropriation of colonial homophobic discourses and practices”, and it is a challenge that Namibian- and South African LGBT activists have branded as hindering their demands to gender and sexual minority rights. Moreover, Currier (2015:18) states that Namibian- and South African LGBT activists have criticized state leaders’ use of political homophobia as a defense for decolonization. In this instance, decolonization can be defined as “the dismantling, removal, and/or transformation of laws, practices, ideologies,

and institutions associated with foreign occupation and domination” (Currier, 2015:18). According, to Currier (2015:18) state leaders in various African countries who condemn same-sex sexualities, also condemn colonialism. Moreover, these African state leaders view same-sex sexual identities and -practices as colonial residue in the present, which they [African state leaders] assert did not exist in pre-colonial African societies (Currier, 2015:18). Thus, African state leaders are of the opinion that their national culture is in need of decolonization due to the presence of homosexuality (Currier, 2015:18). The aforementioned is evidenced by an official statement from SWAPO in 1997 wherein it was claimed that LGBT activists “were not only appropriating foreign ideas in our society but also destroying the local culture by hiding behind the facade of the very democracy and human rights we have created” (Currier, 2015:18). As such, some African state leaders regard the perseverance of ‘foreign’ same-sex sexual identities and -practices to the continuous intervention of Western donors and LGBT activists. The aforementioned, has encouraged and strengthened the ‘homosexuality is un-African’ discourse’ in Africa and the defense of apartheid- and colonial laws, such as the anti-sodomy law (Currier, 2015:18). Paradoxically, LGBT activists have argued that it is these very laws that are in need of decolonization.

Interestingly, LGBT activists are of the opinion that Namibians and South Africans did not classify heteronormativity in pre-colonial African societies. In this instance, Currier (2015:18) defines heteronormativity as “the structural favoring of opposite-gender sexual pairings and gender conformity and the assumption that social gender corresponds in biological sex”. Rather, LGBT activists argue that colonialism implemented and formalized prohibitions on same-sex identities and -practices, and introduced homophobia to African societies (Currier, 2015:18). As such, a discourse on decolonization provides LGBT activists a means to advocate for law reform in their respective countries. Moreover, Currier (2015:18) argues that the use of a decolonization discourse by LGBT activists, not only provides alternative ways

of understanding decolonization as continuing the work of anti-colonial national liberation movements but also challenges anti-LGBT state leaders “monopoly on decolonization discourses and practices” (Currier, 2015:18).

Moreover, Namibian- and South African LGBT activists have also named national liberation as a cultural opportunity to change social attitudes towards gender and sexuality diversity, and as a political opportunity to acquire equal rights for gender and sexuality diverse individuals (Currier, 2015:18-19). As such, LGBT movements in Namibia and South Africa have strategically framed decolonization as a contested cultural and political outcome. Nonetheless, although national liberation movements have “ousted white, racist governments in Namibia and South Africa, decolonization did not stop with Africans seizing control over the state” (Currier, 2015:19). As such, Currier (2015:19) states that LGBT activists are of the opinion that much has remained the same in their post-independence societies, as state leaders still exclude and repress gender and sexuality diverse persons.

Therefore, the law has been identified as an area in need of reform and the legal route is one way to try to advocate for equal rights for gender and sexual minorities. However, law reform in Namibia and South Africa have proceeded differently. After the national liberation movements, SWAPO and the ANC came into power as the ruling political parties in Namibia and South Africa, they [SWAPO and the ANC] had the task of decolonizing the social, political and economic institutions of their respective countries (Currier, 2015:21). However, the Namibian and South African governments had taken on diverse approaches to decolonizing the law. According, to Currier (2015:22) the South African government had eradicated apartheid and colonial laws due to the efforts made by LGBT social movement organizations. This resulted in South Africa legalizing same-sex marriage in 2006. In contrast, SWAPO, the ruling party in Namibia, had refused to abolish similar apartheid and colonial

laws and chose instead to “leverage these statutes against vocal gender and sexual diversity activists” (Currier, 2015:22).

In doing so, SWAPO leaders have threatened to arrest, deport and imprison gender and sexuality diverse persons, and to increase punishment for same-sex sexuality. Consequentially, the call for increased penalties against LGBT Namibians had deterred Namibian LGBT activists from “engaging in a national campaign to decolonize laws pertaining to gender and sexual diversity” (Currier, 2015:22). As such, the refusal of Namibian lawmakers and state leaders to reform laws and statutes that exclude and repress gender and sexuality diverse persons is indicative of their commitment to “a vision of decolonization that excludes gender and sexual minorities” (Currier, 2015:22). According to Currier (2015:24) LGBT organizing in Namibia, only appeared after independence (to be discussed later). As such, Namibian LGBT activists have only been able to view national liberation as an opportunity in retrospect. Although national liberation, which is concerned with freeing a colonized country from colonial/foreign rule, differs from decolonization, the two certainly do intersect as an ideology and practice. Furthermore, Currier (2015:24) states that “decolonization also implies more thorough change than that accompanying national liberation”, and that national liberation in Namibia has not resulted in satisfactory changes.

Although the Namibian national liberation movement had succeeded in liberating itself from white rule, the movement had “replaced white rule with another form of dysfunctional governance”, and in this instance, decolonization did not result in the democracy as promised by national liberation movement leaders (Currier, 2015:24). As a result, two different approaches to decolonization had emerged in Namibia. The first approach is a selective approach to decolonization, by which the ruling party only supported cultural- and political decolonization projects that “help consolidate their rule and reject that those that lie outside the masculinist, heteronormative national imaginary” (Currier, 2015:24). The aforementioned

is evidenced through the state-initiated campaign of political homophobia and the continued discourse that homosexuality is un-African.

As stated earlier, the Namibian state and lawmakers have rejected the repeal of apartheid- and colonial laws that criminalize homosexuality and sodomy and threatened to increase punishments for same-sex conduct. However, what Namibian state leaders have failed to recognize is that the very laws that they are refusing to repeal and/or reform are a part of a colonial legacy that they fought to overcome, thus indicating a selective approach by Namibian state leaders to decolonization. Hence, Currier (2015:24) argues that Namibian state leaders have something in common with the colonialist and apartheid regimes they fought to overthrow: repressing gender and sexuality diverse persons. The second approach to decolonization competing in Namibia is that of LGBT activists, that have framed decolonization in such a manner as to counter the selective approach taken by Namibian national liberation movement leaders. According, to Currier (2015:24-25) LGBT movements in southern Africa have taken the ideologies and goals of decolonization as established by national liberation movements and have tailored it to their advantage. In so doing, LGBT movements have sought to change heterosexist legal, social, and political institutions inherited from colonialism, and have named law reform as a means to decolonization (Currier, 2015:25). As such, LGBT activists have named anti-sodomy laws and statutes as evidence of colonialism in the present, which contests the ruling party's acceptance of colonial- and anti-sodomy laws. Therefore, post-colonial discourses on sexuality in Namibia have taken on two variations. Firstly, SWAPO leaders have defended and refused to repeal colonial-era anti-LGBT legislation, and, secondly, LGBT activists in Namibia have framed the reform of the law as continuing the decolonization project (Currier, 2015:26).

Oddly, after independence, Namibia was one of the first African countries to pass pro-gay legislation (Currier, 2015:26). According, to Currier (2015:26) Namibian lawmakers signed

into law the Labor Act, which “prohibited workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation”. However, Namibian lawmakers removed this provision from the Labor Act, in 2004, and had received little public resistance from LGBT activists. Although organizations like the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) petitioned the for reinstatement of the provision, which prohibits workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, the National Assembly denied this petition (The Other Foundation, 2017:9). Despite the 12year existence of pro-LGBT legislation, other anti-LGBT laws, including the anti-sodomy law, remained (Currier, 2015:26). Much remained the same during the 12 year period of signing into pro-LGBT legislation. In 1998, the former Minister of Home Affairs, Jerry Ekandjo, revealed a plan to increase penalties for same-sex sexuality. Ekandjo declared that: “It is my considered opinion that the so-called gay rights can never qualify as human rights. They are wrongly claimed because it is inimical to true Namibian culture, African culture and religion. They should be classified as human wrongs which must rank as a sin against society and God” (Currier, 2015:27). According, to Currier (2015:27), Ekandjo declares LGBT rights as ‘human wrongs’, and in the process “simplifying what is at stake for LGBT activists in reforming the law”. Simultaneously, Ekandjo also invoked ‘homosexuality is un-African’ discourse and in the process declared the Namibian culture and -society as heterosexual. Furthermore, in the course of racializing heterosexuality as African and homosexuality as white/Western, Ekandjo reverts back to what Currier (2015:27) citing Franke (2004) terms “crude nativism”, “a deviation from African nationalism in that state leaders reduce post-colonial citizenship to African heterosexuality” (Currier, 2015:27).

Furthermore, SWAPO leaders have defined the demands made by LGBT citizens for equal rights, as colonialist, and in so doing SWAPO leaders have claimed cultural and political decolonization as their exclusive field (Currier, 2015:27). In 2001, former President Sam Nujoma said that: “the Constitution [was] being misinterpreted by colonialists who are

confused. They are using the constitution to protect homosexuals and lesbians in an irresponsible way” (Currier, 2015:27).

By figuratively excluding LGBT activists and citizens from Namibia, former President Sam Nujoma “replayed a familiar nationalist refrain that positioned SWAPO as the arbiter of decolonization and gender and sexual minorities non-national subjects” (Currier, 2015:27). Similarly, in 2002 former President Sam Nujoma, speaking at a labor union event, compared decolonization to the exiling of LGBT Namibians. Nujoma declared that: “In Namibia, we will not allow these lesbian and gays. We fought the liberation struggle without [them]” (Currier, 2015:27). By excluding LGBT Namibians from the national liberation struggle former President Sam Nujoma consequently prevented LGBT Namibians from making claims on the post-independent Namibian society.

It seems that the SWAPO government at the time had mixed opinions towards the LGBT community. After former President Sam Nujoma made his antagonistic and homophobic sentiments clear, the LGBT activists of Namibia publicly demanded an explanation about their legal standing in the country (Currier, 2015:28). Then, Prime Minister Hage Geingob (current Namibian president) stated that SWAPO would maintain the human rights they had sworn to protect. Geingob declared that: “although laws against sodomy were in place in Namibia these had not been used for the sake of human rights” (Currier, 2015:28), and that: “no homosexuals or lesbians have ever been prosecuted, intimidated, arrested or denied employment” (Currier, 2015:28). Liz Frank and Elizabeth Khaxas, lesbian feminist activists from Namibia, confirmed Geingob’s claim: “No one we have asked, including the State Attorney, can remember a single case of legal prosecution of lesbians or gay men in this country” (Currier, 2015:28).

While Geingob's position on the LGBT community stopped short of committing SWAPO to decolonizing the anti-sodomy statute, it varied from other SWAPO leaders' public antagonistic and homophobic sentiments on same-sex sexuality. Currier (2015:28), citing one of her participants, states that there is a contrast between LGBT Namibians exclusion from the national liberation movement and the inclusion of LGBT South Africans in the anti-apartheid movement. It is speculated that the difference between the two countries is how state leaders treat LGBT activists in their respective countries. The treatment of LGBT activists in Namibia and South Africa is based on the way in which these two countries understand human rights. According, to Currier (2015:28) citing her participant "the first founding president [in each country] after independence set the tone for sexual minority rights". In the case of South Africa, the first President Nelson Mandela had a refined and all-inclusive perspective on human rights, whereas the founding President Sam Nujoma did not share this perspective. Consequentially, one might wonder what would have happened had this not been the case. Had Thabo Mbeki been the first president of South Africa, during the transition from apartheid, South Africa might have failed to prioritize gender and sexual minority rights and had Hifikipunye Pohamba or Hage Geingob been the founding president of Namibia, gender and sexual minority groups might have been viewed more favorably.

1.2 Homosexuality as 'unAfrican' Discourse

More often than not African state leaders have invoked the 'homosexuality is un-African' discourse to advance their political agenda and to withhold gender and sexuality diverse persons access to equal- and inclusive rights in legislation, such as the right to marry, jointly adopt and protection under the domestic violence act, as in the Namibian context.

Homosexuality is believed to be non-existent among Africans, in spite of the amount of available evidence to substantiate the contrary. Dlamini (2006:128) states that Mokhobo (1989) is one of the thinkers that holds the perception that homosexuality is un-African.

According to Dlamini (2006:128), Mokhobo (1989) argues that the concept of homosexuality is ‘abhorrent’. Moreover, Dlamini (2006:128) argues that if Mokhobo “means that homosexuality is not something one often hears people talking about, to such an extent that there is no known term directly referring to it, then I agree with her”. However, Dlamini (2006:128) is in disagreement with Mokhobo (1989) if she argues that since the ‘concept is abhorrent’, it means that there are no homosexuals in Africa. A “‘concept’ and the concrete reality of people’s lives are different things entirely” (Dlamini, 2006:128).

Furthermore, Thabo Msibi (2011:55) writes, in an article titled *The lies we have been told: On (homo) sexuality in Africa*, that homosexuality has become more denounced, opposed and contested, by African leaders, as unAfrican and with the prospect to ruin heterosexual ‘family values’ and African traditions. Citing Reddy (2015), Msibi (2011:55) states that such disputation is not new, and the efforts by African leaders to denounce same-sex sexuality as unAfrican represents a “facade that conceals neo-conservatism and a resurgence of patriarchy, coated in the constructs of religion, nationalism and law”. Msibi (2011:55) argues that it is ‘anxious masculinities’ that drive the homosexuality is unAfrican discourse and support the concepts of the ‘homosexual’ as ‘personified’. ‘Anxious masculinities’ in this instance refer to the way in which masculinity is reconstituted because of various social changes that question its patriarchal authority (Msibi, 2011:55).

In addition, Msibi (2011:55) argues that historically African societies have never had a pathologized ‘homosexual’ category and/or a ‘gay’ identity. That is not to say that same-sex sexuality had never existed in African societies, but rather that they were hidden but culturally accepted. Moreover, since human rights have become a site of contention in Africa, many Africans have come out and claimed a ‘gay’ identity, which “aggravated the already heightened fear of the ‘anxious’ man” (Msibi, 2011:55). The aforementioned resulted in

antagonistic and homophobic responses towards individuals who claimed gender and sexual counter normative identities.

Interestingly, Msibi (2011:56) states that it is imperative to clarify what is meant when one uses the terms ‘homosexual’ and ‘gay’, as he argues that these two terms are often used unreflectively to label individuals who engage in same-sex relations. The terms ‘gay’ and ‘homosexual’ are often used with no attempt as to what they mean and their contextual relevance, as these terms could mean various things to different people in different contexts, and at various times. Similarly, Msibi (2011:56) argues that the terms ‘gay’ and ‘homosexual’ had developed out of a specific cultural history and that these two terms “cannot be assumed to mean the same thing to everyone in the same way”. Msibi (2011:56) further states that homosexuality as a concept did not originate from Africa. According, to Msibi (2011:56) the ‘homosexual role’ developed in the 19th century in the global West “to denote a kind of sickness for those attracted to the same-sex: the creation of a specialized, despised, and punished role of the homosexual keeps the bulk of society pure in rather the same way that the similar treatment of some kind of criminals helps keep the rest of society law-abiding”.

As such, the term ‘homosexuality’ originated in the West and was used to control social relations and at the same time labeling individuals who engaged in same-sex relations as deviant (Msibi, 2011:56). On the other hand, the term ‘gay’ also originates from a specific cultural and political history. The term ‘gay’ is a political identity which originated in the West during the struggle for civil rights in the 1960s (Msibi, 2011:56). Msibi (2011:56) states that it was a movement for a ‘public collective identity’ and that the ‘gay’ movement “had its own cultural and political institutions, festivals, neighborhoods, and even its own flag”. As such, the ‘gay’ identity focused on a visible and identifiable individual that engaged in same-sex relations (Msibi, 2011:56). Interestingly, Msibi (2011:56) states that the ‘gay’ identity

had not always existed in the West and that it is “a product of history and has come to existence in a specific historical era”.

Consequently, the terms ‘gay’ and ‘homosexual’ have no significance in Africa, as they both originated from a specific political and historical Western experience (Msibi, 2011:57). However, Msibi (2011:57) citing Foucault (1980) argues that sexuality and/or sexual activity, regardless of the society, are intimately linked to the exercise of power. Sexuality and sexual activity remains to be highly policed and controlled in many societies across the world. Msibi (2011:57) attributes the aforementioned to the fact that sexuality is a “highly value laden terrain”, and this is apparent in many African countries where same-sex sex and sexuality are highly controlled, policed and silenced.

It is not uncommon that various African leaders assert that homosexuality is un-African and a Western import/colonial residue. So much so that African leaders are determined to free their countries from this ‘Western disease’. Msibi (2011:62) states that the aforementioned views have been legitimized by state leaders from Zambia, Namibia, and Kenya, but that it is never clarified by state leaders how exactly homosexuality was enforced on Africa, and when such an imposition took place. According, to Msibi (2011:63) “African men do have, and have always had, sex with one another, the same can be said about women”. This is substantiated by several studies that have found that same-sex desire has always been present in African societies and that the belief that same-sex desire is a ‘Western disease’ is false. Therefore, homosexuality in Africa is not random, incidental or a Western import, rather Msibi (2011:63) argues that African homosexuality “is a consistent logical feature of African societies and belief systems”.

Furthermore, Msibi (2011:63) argues that it was European ethnographers that affirmed homosexuality as un-African by arguing that Africa was a sodomite-free area. Msibi

(2011:63) states that the aforementioned argument was “useful in preparing public opinion for abolition of [the] slave trade...and [buttressing] negative attitudes towards homosexuality in Europe”. Anecdotal records of African societies propose that the Bantu groups were extremely patriarchal and gerontocratic, and structured themselves on principles of seniority that existed before colonialism (Msibi, 2011:64). What is more, a man’s sexual identity was narrowly linked to his ability to reproduce, but this Msibi (2011:64) argues does not indicate that same-sex relations never took place in Africa. Early Bushmen paintings of what seems like African men engaged in same-sex practices, is a further suggestion of same-sex relations in Southern Africa (Msibi, 2011:64).

Additionally, Dlamini (2006:128) states that the mine compounds have proven, and continue to prove, evidence of homosexuality and same-sex practices. What is more, Dlamini (2006:129) citing Parrinder (1980) states that homosexuality has always existed in traditional Africa and that it is the condemnation of homosexuality that is deemed unAfrican.

Furthermore, Dlamini (2006:129) states that colonialism posed “direct challenges to indigenous religions and social relations, as well as indigenous political and economic activities”. As Africans converted to Christianity, under colonial rule, they also accepted a tradition “that did not see a special religious role for people who engaged in homosexuals relations” (Dlamini, 2006:129). Furthermore, Dlamini (2006:129) contends the belief that Africans all of a sudden learned of homosexuality under colonial rule, and were able to develop unique forms of same-sex practice only when faced with the mine compounds and prison cells. Rather Dlamini (2006:129) infers that the “well developed and unique patterns of homosexuality in Africa is evidence that homosexuality has always been part of African culture, cosmology and spirituality”. Moreover, in some cases, same-sex relations express religious and spiritual significance, “as in the case of izangoma, izinyanga, and other

traditional healers” (Dlamini, 2006:129). Indications of “same-sex relations can also be found in customary practices, cures, and punishments” (Msibi, 2011:64).

However, the aforementioned is not to propose that same-sex relations were publicly accepted, but rather it serves to contradict the homosexuality is un-African discourse (Msibi, 2011:64). According, to Dlamini (2006:129) citing Swidler (1993) a ‘new type’ of homosexuality, developed in the mine compounds, due to male migrant labor where men were not allowed to bring their wives. As such, senior miners would take new miners as ‘wives’, and “teach them the ways of the mine and the nature of its work, and offer them protection in exchange for cooking and sexual favours” (Dlamini, 2006:130). Consequently, the threat of physical violence convinced some new miners into entering compound marriages, it should be noted that the senior miners often had to pay bride price (*ilobolo*) for the new miners they wished to marry (Dlamini, 2006:130). Ironically, the ‘boy-wives’ from the mine compounds often saved the *ilobolo* they received to pay *ilobolo* for women in the rural areas whom they wished to marry. Therefore, Dlamini (2006:130) states that the sexual relationships between men in the mine compounds were encouraged by social customs not to have permanent effects. Additionally, Dlamini (2006:130), citing Swidler (1993), notes that it seems like “neither anal sex nor oral sex was socially acceptable in such mine compound relationships, rather the active partner rather placed his penis between the thighs of his more passive partner and reached orgasm through genital friction”. This method is referred to as *ukusoma* in *isiZulu*, and “is the same sexual technique used by bachelors to avoid impregnating girls during courtship in the rural areas “(Dlamini, 2006:130).

Additionally, Dlamini (2006:130), cites Riddinger (1995), who is of the opinion that in Africa “sexual expression is considered a spectrum of activity spanning an individual’s entire life, rather than the hallmark of distinct and separate lifestyles or identities, as is the case in the west”. Furthermore, Dlamini (2006:130) argues that “a key tenet of imperialist ideology was

to view indigenous cultures and people as possessing no values of their own worth perpetuating, thus rendering them prime candidates for the civilizing mission of Europeans”. As such, Christian missionaries introduced Christian values and standards of behavior on Africans, including prohibitions against homosexuality (Dlamini, 2006:131). Additionally, sexuality was viewed as “as a natural and positive drive present in all human beings”, and great emphasis was placed on heterosexual marriage, which was believed to be a “foretaste of the eternal joys of paradise” (Dlamini, 2006:131). In contrast, homosexuality was viewed as “a form of adultery and a revolt against the divinely ordered social plan” (Dlamini, 2006:131). Moreover, contrary to the claims that homosexuality is un-African and a colonial by-product, Dlamini (2006:131), citing De Vos (1996), states that “homoeroticism was not always viewed in a negative light by South African indigenous people”, and that it was colonialism that brought with it the criminalization of homosexuality. What is more, for Europeans, Africans “epitomized ‘primitive man’, and since primitive man was perceived to be close to nature, ruled by instincts, and culturally unsophisticated, he had to be heterosexual; his sexual energies and outlets devoted exclusively to their ‘natural’ purpose- biological reproduction” (Dlamini. 2006:132). Therefore, colonialism “did not introduce homosexuality to Africa, but rather intolerance of it and systems of surveillance and regulation for expressing it” (Dlamini, 2006:135).

Furthermore, Msibi (2011:64) argues that the political economy of heterosexuality had in fact suppressed indigenous homosexualities, as African societies had placed great importance on “maintaining a proper outward appearance”. As such, same-sex sexualities and practices were treated with a ‘do not-ask-do not-tell’ attitude. More often than not the institution of marriage was used to hide same-sex desires. Msibi (2011:64) states that “men who felt sexually attracted to males did not need to fear that this feeling would compromise the socially-necessary performance of heterosexual virility, as they would simply marry”. Thus, it can be

deduced that same-sex desire was and always will be a part of African societies, is not a Western import or colonial residue, but rather same-sex desire was hidden and silenced through compulsory heteronormativity.

Furthermore, Msibi (2011:65) writes that same-sex identity construction among black men in South Africa was understood through gendered terms. Msibi (2011:65) notes that effeminate men were considered a third sex (a mixture between a man and a woman). According to Msibi (2011:65) these effeminate men were referred to as *skesanas*. The *skesanas* would sleep with other men who were considered “real men”. Msibi (2011:65) further states that the men who had sexual relations with the *skesanas* still considered themselves as “real men”. As such, sexuality in this instance was characterized according to one’s sexual role within a sexual engagement. The men who had the penetrative role were considered “real men” while the men who had the receptive role were considered to be “women” (Msibi, 2011:65). As such, Msibi (2011:65) states that it can be deduced that a ‘gay’ and/or ‘lesbian’ identity, as understood in Western terms, never existed in Africa. Msibi (2011:65) argues, therefore, that “It seems to me that Africans have always seen sexuality in highly complex ways, which cannot readily be translated into the predominant Western sexual categories”. Furthermore, Dlamini (2006:130) citing Summers (1995) states that “while there does not seem to have been a name suggesting a distinct category called ‘homosexual’, the type of behavior now commonly known by that term was always present”. As such, it could be a suggestion that “Africans would rather speak of acts and emotions than to categorize people” (Dlamini, 2006:130). Moreover, Dlamini (2006:130) citing Summers (1995) states that “because human sexuality, human behavior and emotions, are fluid and various rather than static or exclusive, others have argued that the terms homosexual and heterosexual should more properly be used as adjectives rather than nouns, referring to acts and emotions but not to people”.

Given that all of this is proof that same-sex sexuality has always existed in Africa, how is it then possible that African state leaders still declare that homosexuality is un-African? Msibi (2011:68) argues that the answer to the aforementioned question is twofold. Firstly, Msibi (2011:68) argues that the purpose of colonialism in Africa aided in eroding the truth by imposing Western norms on African cultures. Msibi (2011:68) states that “the fact that religion is so frequently used in condemning homosexuality is proof of this point”. As such, “religion has both served to deny, and question the morality of same-sex relations” (Msibi, 2011:68). According, to Msibi (2011:68) “God becomes a perfect tool to silence indigenous same-sex practices, and, after all, who wants to go against God?” The second part of the answer relates to the issue of understanding same-sex desire in Africa. To this Msibi (2011:69) argues that homosexuality is indeed unAfrican, however, by this he means that: “the word homosexuality, notably, suggests a clarity arising from a specific history of scientific enquiry, social relations, and political struggle that did not historically exist in Africa and still does not very accurately describe the majority of men who have sex with men or women who have sex with women in Africa”. Consequently, same-sex desire in Africa is complex and has not “historically been ‘personified’ in the way they have in the West” (Msibi, 2011:69). Therefore, the antagonistic and homophobic responses from some African state leaders is due to the ‘personification’ of a ‘gay’ identity. According, to Msibi (2011:69) it seems that “being gay” (personifying and/or visibly claiming a gay identity) puts an individual at risk of being condemned or harassed. Moreover, Msibi (2011:69) argues that “it is in part this visibility or ‘personification’ that has contributed to the reactionary responses we witness in Africa today”.

To come back to the issue of religion as a means to oppose/deny homosexuality, Msibi (2011:69) states that African leaders often use religion as means to oppose homosexuality and laws as reasons to justify their (African leaders) opposition of homosexuality. However,

while certain passages in the Bible can be interpreted in such a way that it condemns certain homosexual acts, the Bible itself is a foreign text in much of Africa (Msibi, 2011:69). The aforementioned creates a dilemma and a contradictory one at that. According, to Msibi (2011:69) “If Africa rejects ideologies brought from the West, then surely religion brought from the West cannot be used to reject something that is being rejected for its foreign roots”. Furthermore, the laws that are used to oppose same-sex practices in Africa originated during colonialism, through penal codes. Msibi (2011:69) argues that “It stands as an inherent contradiction that African leaders who challenged the colonial laws continue to use these laws, often in reformulated ways to oppress others”. Therefore, if Africa leaders are determined to liberate Africa from Western and/or colonial impositions, then surely Western and/or colonial laws still existent in Africa should also be revisited and repealed.

Given the weaknesses in the discourse of homosexuality as un-African, Msibi (2011:70) argues that there are greater forces at work in the furtherance of homophobia among African leaders. According, to Msibi (2011:70) homophobia, has afforded currency to several of these African leaders in winning popular support: “it seems quite easy to oppress minority groups in contexts where even questioning such oppression many effectively send one to prison”. As such, Msibi (2011:70) is of the opinion that the spread of homophobia in Africa is motivated by neo-conservatism that seeks to create and promote patriarchy. Especially, given that the human rights agenda has prioritized gender equality and in effect challenged the role and definition of manhood (Msibi, 2011:70). As such, men’s superiority and position in patriarchal African societies have been threatened and questioned. Furthermore, the position of men in patriarchal African societies has been threatened by the emancipation of women (Msibi, 2011:70). Similarly, Msibi (2011:70) argues that “a visible ‘gay’ identity destabilizes men’s position in society, creating the need for men to reassert themselves”. Therefore, it can be deduced that increased “expressions of homophobia in Africa are not only reactions to the

‘personified’ and visible homosexual identity, but also a tool for sexism, an attempt to solidify men’s position in society” (Msibi, 2011:70-71).

Furthermore, it is, thus, important to take into account and to understand the constructions of masculinities as it pertains to men’s roles in society that have been challenged by gender equality and homosexuality. Msibi (2011:71) citing the work of Connell (1994) states that gender and masculinities are socially constructed. As such, Msibi (2011:71) states that “identities are fluid and changing depending on space, time, context and other factors”. Furthermore, Msibi (2011:71) citing Morrell (1998) states that “masculinity is a [form of] gender [identification] and not a natural attribute”. Similarly, Msibi (2011:71) argues for a conceptual understanding of hegemonic masculinities. In this instance hegemonic masculinities can be understood as masculinities that are framed in such a manner as to “regulate, silence, subvert, and police other forms of masculinity; to hold hegemonic masculinities in place, deviance is punished” (Msibi, 2011:71). Furthermore, hegemonic masculinities are kept in place through compulsory heterosexuality. Msibi (2011:71) citing Kimmel (2000) states that: “men are under the constant scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us; grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men’s approval”. As such, the visibility, and personification of the “homosexual” category troubles the conception of masculinity, and in part troubles heterosexuality as well (Msibi, 2011:71). As such, the emancipation of women, and the visibility of same-sex sexuality troubles the legitimacy of patriarchy in African societies. Therefore, Msibi (2011:71) holds the opinion that the attempts of African leaders to free Africa from homosexuality and their resistance to counter-normative sexualities represents an increase in conservative attitudes that attempt to legitimize patriarchy in African societies. Thus, “If homosexuality is discredited, then heterosexuality- and thus patriarchy -remains intact”, and “When men’s

status and heteronormativity are threatened, women and “gay” men become targets” (Msibi, 2011:71).

1.3 Emergence & History of LGBT social movement organizations in Namibia

Namibian LGBT social movement organizations have battled to uphold their public visibility in a socio-political environment in which the state has used political homophobia. The South African state has acted positively to LGBT social movement organizations (SMO), whereas the Namibian state has verbally condemned LGBT organizing and threatened to arrest sexual and gender minorities (Currier, 2007:1). Furthermore, Finn Reygan, writing for The Other Foundation (2017:3), argues that the legislative environment of Namibia is not conducive to living openly and freely as a self-identified LGBTI person. However, the Office of the Ombudsman is working actively to pursue an inclusive human rights agenda that includes the right of LGBTI persons (Finn Reygan/The Other Foundation, 2017:3).

The history of LGBT rights-based organizations in Namibia has been fairly brief as the movement only began to surface after the independence of Namibia. It is during this time that SWAPO spearheaded its public and national political homophobia campaign, which defined same-sex sexuality as unAfrican (Currier, 2010:112). Unintentionally, it seems that the SWAPO led government had handed the LGBT population a politicized collective identity in terms of which the LGBT community could rally and unite, and it is during this time that the LGBT rights-based organizations really started emerging (Stander, 2015:13). Amid the Namibian states antagonistic response to LGBT organizing, ORN remains one of the only operational LGBT NGO’s in Namibia. The aforementioned raises the issue of how and why a Namibian LGBT NGO becomes publicly visible or withdraws from visibility. According to Currier (2007: IV), LGBT social movement organizations face “strategic dilemmas of visibility and invisibility when they decide whether and how to become visible, modify their public profile, or forgo political opportunities”. Therefore, to understand the micro political

dynamics of how ORN negotiates strategic dilemmas of visibility and invisibility I engaged in an ethnographic observation of ORN. According to Reygan (The Other Foundation, 2017:17) “ORN is a LGBTI, MSM and WSW human rights organization formed by LGBTI activists in 2010”. The organization advocates for LGBTI rights and works to address, redress homophobic rhetoric (Reygan/The Other Foundation, 2017:17). I chose ORN as the organization of focus for this research study as it is one of the only organizations that focuses on all the groups in LGBTI acronym. Several other gender and sexuality social movement organizations also operate in Namibia, such as; Sister Namibia(feminist and women’s organization), Wings to Transcend (transgender organization), The Young Feminist Movement (lesbian and feminist organization), TULINAM (faith-based organization focused on LGBTI issues), Rights not Rescued Trust (sex workers organizations with a specific focus on MSM, lesbians and transgender persons) (Reygan/The Other Foundation, 2017: 17-18).

Furthermore, Stander (2015:1-2) argues that the Namibian government has used antagonistic and homophobic discourses to render the socio-political environments adverse to LGBT activists. “The Namibian government contributed towards a climate of prevalent public prejudice, social discrimination and stigma oriented at its LGBT citizens” (Stander, 2015:1-2). However, instead of coercing the local LGBT community into invisibility, LGBT rights-based organizations have continuously challenged and opposed misrepresentations of gender and sexual diversity by SWAPO leaders. Moreover, with the shutting of several LGBT rights-based organizations in Namibia over the years, such as the Gay and Lesbian Organization of Namibia (GLON), The Rainbow Project (TRP) and, more recently, LGBTI Namibia and Mr. Gay Namibia it is imperative for future and remaining LGBT organizations to be researched and advocated for to ensure a healthy, fair and just future for the Namibian LGBT population.

The history of LGBT organizations in Namibia has been fairly brief as LGBT organizing only appeared after the independence of Namibia in 1990. According, to Stander (2015:13) the first form of LGBT organizing in Namibia started with the establishment of the Social Committee of Gays and Lesbians (SCOG), which was established by a group of white and colored gay men and lesbians. The SCOG had organized social activities for the local Namibian LGBT community. It was during and after the political homophobia campaign by SWAPO that LGBT organizations really started forming, and the organizers of SCOG launched the Gay and Lesbian Organization of Namibia (GLON) and also the establishment of The Rainbow Project (TRP) soon thereafter (Stander, 2015:13). According, to Stander (2015:13) the organization GLON had dissolved soon after it was launched due to internal conflicts about the organizations' direction. Some of the members of GLON had pushed for LGBT rights whilst others had a greater desire to organize activities involving LGBT safe spaces. The Rainbow Project (TRP) was formed in late 1996 with an emphasis on opposing and challenging anti-LGBT statements made by SWAPO leaders (Stander, 2015:13). Moreover, the founding members of TRP were predominantly white, middle-class and urban gay and lesbian individuals who were “safe enough to come out and identify as lesbian or gay and fight for their rights” (Stander, 2015:13). However, TRP did not want to exclude or alienate black and colored people and set out to establish a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and class diverse organization to better reflect post-independence Namibia.

New concerns arose within TRP, which shifted the organizations' attention towards concerns pertaining to poverty, HIV/Aids, lack of employment and education, and homophobia in the broader community (Stander, 2015:13-14). TRP working narrowly with Sister Namibia, a feminist organization for women's rights founded in 1989, wanted greater support and visibility from national and international audiences by establishing ties with independently owned media and human rights NGO's (Stander, 2015:13). The two organizations, TRP and

Sister Namibia, worked closely together and consistently challenged and opposed the Namibian government's campaign of political homophobia. They also organized and held the first public LGBT movement event in Namibia with the hopes of dispelling misconceptions about same-sex sexuality (Stander, 2015:14).

Furthermore, Stander (2015:14) citing Currier (2012) states that TRP had been the only LGBT rights-based organization in Namibia from 1996 to 2010, and had gone through stages of 'unintended invisibility' due to lack of funding. Moreover, Stander (2015:14) notes that accepting funding from the West created a dilemma for TRP: "funding contributed to resource-rich organizations with staff and volunteers able to devote more resources to its management, it also led to unAfrican and neo-colonial perceptions of the organization". Unfortunately, TRP dissolved in 2010 due to rumored financial mismanagement (Stander, 2015:14). Three new organizations have been established, since TRP dissolved, to advocate for LGBT rights in the country. OutRight Namibia (ORN), comprising of previous TRP staff and constituents, was established in March 2010 and aimed to address issues of marginalization and non-recognition of LGBT people by the government and social communities (Stander, 2015:14).

In April 2010, the LGBT Network Namibia was established, which was later renamed to LGBTI Namibia, with the expectation of advocating for LGBTI rights in Namibia. Mr. Gay Namibia was also established later in 2011 and focused on LGBTI rights through organizing a countrywide contest to select a confident spokesperson to represent the Namibian LGBTI community locally and overseas (Stander, 2015:14-15). However, both LGBTI Namibia and Mr. Gay Namibia closed down in early 2014. According to Stander (2015:15), the LGBTI Namibia founding member Chris De Villiers stated "individual work pressures in the professional lives of volunteers and constituents for the inability of the organization to continue and move forward".

Even though Sister Namibia advocates and speaks on behalf of LGBT rights issues in Namibia, the organization is mainly a feminist and women's rights organization (Stander, 2015:15). As such, ORN is presently the only operational rights-based organization in Namibia (Stander, 2015:15). With the shutting of several LGBT rights-based organizations such as the Gay and Lesbian Organization of Namibia (GLON), TRP and more recently, LGBTI Namibia, partly due to internal challenges to control resources, it is imperative for future and remaining LGBT organizations to be researched and advocated for to ensure a healthy, fair and just future for the Namibian LGBT population.

In a human rights report on Namibia issued by the United States Department of State (2013), the Office of the Ombudsman stated that Namibian LGBT people were often "subject to ridicule as well as verbal and physical abuse and reported that many cases of human rights violations against LGBT persons in the country go unrecorded" (Stander, 2015:15). Therefore, advocacy and the work by LGBT organizations are imperative to the advancement and education of LGBT related issues, particularly in a society defined by social discrimination, and where state leaders still publicly declare their resistance to inclusive legislation, which specifically includes the protection of LGBT rights (Stander, 2015:15-16). Furthermore, Stander (2015:16) states that scholars have agreed that "the passing of pro-LGBT laws are partially dependent upon advocacy by such organizations and although such law reforms cannot eliminate discrimination as a whole, their passing have favorable effects for their intended beneficiaries".

In this chapter, I have discussed the social-cultural and political context of Namibia with an emphasis on political homophobia. I have also presented and discussed the discourse of homosexuality as un-African, and the emergence and history of LGBT social movements in Namibia. In the following chapter, I will be outlining and discussing the research methodology that guided this study.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

In the previous chapter, Theoretical Framework and Literature Review, I discussed the utilization of political homophobia by Namibian state leaders and the repercussions it has had on gender and sexuality diversity movements. I also discussed the history of gender and sexuality diversity movements in Namibia as well as the ‘homosexuality as un-African’ discourse that political leaders in Africa frequently use to deny gender and sexuality diverse persons equal- and inclusive rights in national legislation. In the following chapter, I will discuss the methodology and research approach that frames my study. My study followed a qualitative research approach to address how OutRight Namibia (ORN), a LGBT NGO based in Windhoek, navigate themselves as advocates for gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia.

Sampling and Recruitment

I applied for ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Stellenbosch University, however, the REC had not granted me ethical clearance as the REC deemed it necessary for me to acquire in-country ethical clearance before I could commence with my study. I was fortunate enough to have my supervisor, Professor Dennis Francis, who co-lead the UNESCO FIVE Country Study on Gender, Sexuality and Schooling in Southern Africa (Francis, D. & Brown, A. 2017 and Francis, D, D., Reygan, F., Brown, A., Dlamini, B., McAllister, J., Nogela, L., Mosime, S., Muller, M., et al. 2018). He put me in contact with Professor Anthony Brown, who served as the country researcher in Namibia as part of the UNESCO study. Professor Brown is a highly published scholar on gender, sexuality diversity and schooling in Namibia. Professor Brown directed me as to where to go and whom I had to speak to gain in-country clearance.

I learned that I had to apply for ethical clearance from the Ministry of Health and Social Services of Namibia as “any research done on human subjects” had to be cleared by the

Ministry of Health and Social Services. It still confuses me why I had to apply for ethical clearance from a government institution when my research was based on a non-governmental organization. Nonetheless, I filled out the forms and handed it in at the offices of the Ministry of Health and Social Services. The secretary told me that I should expect an answer within the next month, which would have been August 2018. My patience grew thin and I called the Ministry after about three weeks to enquire about my application. Worryingly, the secretary told me that she could not find my application and that it seems to have been lost. I had to re-apply. I finally gained in-country clearance on November 30th, 2018 after struggling for several months. After gaining institutional permission from OutRight Namibia, fieldwork for this study was conducted between November 2018 and February 2019 in the city of Windhoek, Namibia.

My criteria for inclusion in the research study were four to five leadership members and four to five active members of OutRight Namibia. I had initially planned to use purposive sampling to identify four to five leadership members of ORN and four to five active members of ORN with whom I would have liked to conduct in-depth interviews with. However, that had not gone as planned and I only managed to conduct interviews with six leadership members of OutRight Namibia. I had great difficulty setting up interviews as some of my participants would either not show up for scheduled meetings or would postpone them. I also had planned to interview four to five active members of the organization, however, during my time at the organization I had not seen any members at the offices of the organization. I make this statement with due diligence as it might be that members of the organization would come to the offices at a time when I was not there. Nonetheless, I only managed to conduct interviews with six leadership members.

Purposive sampling involves choosing participants who could provide the most accurate and reliable information regarding the research topic (Singh, 2017:627). Therefore, purposive

sampling “ensures that only those respondents who can make a meaningful contribution to the research are included in the study” (Singh, 2017:627). I had initiated contact with potential participants during my time at the offices of OutRight Namibia by telling them about my research interests and -plans and asked if they would be willing to participate in in-depth interviews at a later stage of the fieldwork period. During the months of January 2019 and February 2019, I had spent approximately an hour to an hour and a half conducting in-depth interviews, which were based on the gender and sexuality diversity advocacy work of the organization. I chose not to conduct the in-depth interviews during the first few months at ORN, as I wanted to get to know the participants first and give them the opportunity to get to know me and to become comfortable with having me around the office. It was important for me that my participants were familiar and comfortable with me. Thus I only started conducting the -in-depth interviews in January 2019.

Data Collection Methods

I had used two methods of data collection. Firstly, data was collected by conducting an ethnography, informed by participant observation on OutRight Namibia (ORN). An ethnography or an ethnographic study is a method of qualitative research that wishes to best describe and/or articulate how people live their everyday lives. According, to Dariusz Galasiński (2011:255), in an article titled *‘The patients world: discourse analysis and ethnography’*, an ethnographic study is based on social scientific research “Which is carried out in situ, grounded on the specific cultural, historical and other contexts. It involves the researcher’s submergence in the community/institution he/she explores”. Thus, an ethnographic study focuses on every day/’natural’ context of the research site and is greatly dependent on participant observation as the primary source of data collection. As such, Galasiński (2011:255) states that the outcome of an ethnography is the knowledge that the researcher has acquired on the world in which others live. Yet, whose description and/or

knowledge is portrayed in the ethnographic study? It thus becomes a question of the research perspective. Galasiński (2011:255) asks, “To what extent can a person without disabilities understand a person with them?” Put in other terms more suited for my research study, how could I, a cis-gendered heterosexual woman, understand a context/experiences/struggles, etc. (LGBT NGO with self-identified LGBT persons) that is so far removed from me? Thus, Galasiński (2011:255) states that “it is unclear how an ethnographer might overcome precisely the same criticism.” and that “the results of an ethnographic study can and are seen as charged, ambivalent or questionable.”

Secondly, data was collected through in-depth interviews with six leadership members of ORN. Furthermore, in-depth interviews are a research strategy used to “enable the researcher to gain insights into the participants own interpretations of their environments and enables the researcher’s ability to understand underlying or latent issues” (Cadogan & Diamantopolous, 1996:25). By having conducted in-depth interviews with my participants, I had the liberty of asking interview questions that are aligned with and focused on my research questions. Furthermore, it had allowed me to have an one-on-one conversation with my participants, which created a comfortable and safe environment for myself and my participants. An in-depth interview had also afforded my participants the opportunity to express their thoughts, opinions, and views, which they might not have done when given a survey or when interviewed in a group setting.

The interviews ranged from an hour to an hour and a half. Before conducting the in-depth interviews, I approached each participant individually to ask whether they would be interested in participating in the in-depth interviews. I also made sure to assure them that the interview would be private and that the interview questions were focused on the organization and its advocacy work. I set up an interview schedule with interview questions that spoke to my research questions to ensure that the data I collected speaks to my research questions. The

interviews were conducted at a time that suited my participants and the interviews were held either in their respective offices or in the boardroom. Before the interviews commenced I gave my participants an opportunity to read the consent form and to ask me questions if anything seemed unclear. Furthermore, I asked them if they would be comfortable if I recorded the interviews to which they all agreed. I also asked my participants what their requested pronouns are so that I could address them accordingly throughout the interviews. After concluding the in-depth interviews, I transcribed the data and read the transcripts to search for themes and identifying words and/or phrases that construct an idea in relation to the research questions. The interviews were predominantly conducted in English however, I did switch over to Afrikaans when needed as English is not the first language of my participants. All the interviews were translated and transcribed by me.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the one-on-one in-depth interviews, with six leadership members of OutRight Namibia, was translated, transcribed and analyzed, by myself, using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis can be described as “the construction of an index of central themes and subthemes. The themes and subthemes are essentially recurring motifs in the text that are the product of a thorough reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts or field notes that make up the data” (Bryman, 2008:579). Furthermore, Bryman (2008:580) defines a theme as “a category identified by the analyst through his/her data that relates to his/her research focus and that provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of his/her data”. Thematic analysis allows the removal of or the addition of new themes and/or subthemes as the research develops. Prior to the in-depth interviews, my interview questions were organized according to the themes and the research questions I wished to answer. Furthermore, how the researcher interprets the themes will normally be grounded on the theories, concepts, and literature that has guided the research study (Bryman, 2012). By

conducting a preliminary literature review prior to this study assisted me in structuring themes. After doing a thorough read of the data, I found similarities between my data and the prior literature I had read and this assisted in constructing and building themes from my data. As such, the discussion and construction of the identified themes will simultaneously be in relation to the literature I had read, and the ideas/themes emerging from the data. Therefore, thematic analysis requires one to be acquainted with the data to identify themes, ideas, and patterns (Bryman, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

For this research study, the following ethical considerations were considered: informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. I drafted a consent form that was given to all my participants, which conveyed to them all the information they needed to make an informed decision regarding their participation in this research study. I ensured confidentiality by making sure that all data was kept safe and was only accessible to myself. I stored hard copies in safe whilst electronic copies were stored on my personal computer that is password protected. Lastly, I ensured anonymity by using pseudonyms to protect the identity of my participants.

Chapter 4

Introducing you to ORN: an ethnography

I present this chapter as an introductory/contextual chapter rather than an analysis chapter. I have chosen to do so because when conducting an ethnography it involves more than just observing and reporting on the macro-dynamics at play. It is imperative to understand and have a sense of the micro-dynamics at play. ORN is not an independent entity rather it consists of various social actors whom each bring their personal histories, backgrounds, personalities, thoughts, and opinions to the organization. I hope that by reading this chapter you come to understand and appreciate the diverse and peculiar personalities that makeup OutRight Namibia through my eyes.

Monday, 16 June 2018

Initiating contact with OutRight Namibia (Windhoek Namibia)

In the month of June 2018, I embarked on a research journey. Scared and excited at the same time not knowing what I was getting myself into. As I have never conducted an ethnographic study before, and even more so an ethnographic study on a LGBT NGO. Would the people at ORN accept me or would they ask ‘what is a straight person, like myself, doing in a queer space like theirs’? I flew down to Windhoek Namibia and started the grueling process of gaining access and institutional permission. I googled ORN and their Facebook page, as well as their location and contact details, popped up on my phone. I called the offices to set up a meeting and that is when the receptionist (at the time) put me through to the Director (at the time), Frank*, of the organization and we set up a meeting for 10 am later the week. In the days leading up to my ‘big’ meeting with Frank* I threw out my suitcase trying to put together my most ‘professional’ looking attire. As I walked in I was greeted by the receptionist and Megaman* who was seated at one of two computers in the entrance area. I told the receptionist I was there to see Frank*, but she said that he had not yet come into the

office that morning...so I waited. Megaman* had misplaced his earphones and asked the receptionist “*wie het tog my earphones gevat?*” to which she responded that she does not know to which Megaman* said, “*die organisasie moet hoeka vir ons earphones koop ons het nie verniet vir die moffieskap baklei nie*”. The receptionist sighed and said, “*Megaman* jy weet dan die organisasie het nie geld nie*”.

I was taken aback, not by the fact that the organization does not have money...that is the norm for most NGO's I presume, but by the fact that phrases like “*moffie*” and “*moffieskap*” was being used in a LGBT friendly space. To me, these words represent derogatory connotations but I soon learned in my time at the organization that that was just the way the people spoke there. At this point, I had been waiting for more than half an hour for Frank* to show up for our meeting but he was a no show. The receptionist decided to call him but he was not answering his phone. After a while, a tall slender man dressed in a slim-fitting grey suit waltzed into the office. For the purposes of this study, I shall name him Barry*. Barry* was the finance officer at the time. I learned that he had been fired from ORN and rumor has it that there was foul play involved but nobody really spoke openly about it. He too tried to get a hold of Frank* which he did and they decided that Barry* would meet with me in the meantime. My meeting with Frank* was rescheduled.

Thursday, 01 November 2018

Arriving with a bang! (ORN Offices)

As I walked into the front door of the ORN offices, I was greeted by silence and an empty reception desk. Fortunately, for me, I stumbled over the little step as one walks into the offices which caused quite a noise. That is when Zee* appeared from one of the offices. We greeted and I asked if Frank* was in. She said yes he was, but he was in a meeting. This was not my first time here but I still had a great sense of fear and anxiety. In retrospect, I suspect these unpleasant feelings were as a result of just not knowing what to look for or what to

expect from my time at ORN. And when I dig even deeper I realize that more than anything these unpleasant feelings are a result of my gender and sexual identity. I mean what was a straight woman like me doing in a place like this? What did I have to contribute here? What did I know about the LGBTQ community and their experiences etc.? Would I be treated differently or would I be taken seriously? Oh, what a huge ego I have! I walked into this space and instantaneously made it all about me.

Frank* emerged from his office and welcomed me and another intern (a young American woman from the Global Education office) that had also started at ORN that day. I thought to myself silently, ‘thank goodness I am not alone’. Frank* had introduced us to each other and he handed us over to Zee* and Steven*. Zee* had worked in the data office and Steven* had worked in the finance office. Initially, Zee* and Steven* were quite reluctant to take us but alas off we went. We had found ourselves outside where Frank* and Steven* were busy sharing a smoke. The two of us (myself & the intern) stood around awkwardly not knowing whether to sit or stand. Frank* stood up and left for his meeting. I quickly walked over to take his seat on the little wall and the intern joined me shortly after. I unzipped my bag and took out a cigarette as well thinking that maybe I will look less awkward if I smoked as well. The three of us had sat in silence. Thankfully, Zee* reappeared and had asked the intern and me what we needed (Wi-Fi, computer access, seating, etc.). I had told her, while casually holding my cigarette, that I will be moving around the offices to observe. That is when Zee* asked the intern to come with her because she had work for her, which had left me alone with Steven*, and the dreadful silence. Thoughts were rushing through my mind as I desperately thought of a topic of conversation. After a few seconds, I blabbed “*is Barry ook of verlof?*” Steven* said, “*no he is not with us anymore*”. Completely shocked by this revelation I had to tread carefully. Does Steven* mean that Barry* is dead or that he just left for another job? So I had decided to act shocked and replied with “*oh, where is he?*” to which Steven* had

responded with “*he has not been with us for a month now*”. Left even more confused I had decided to rather drop this conversation as I did not want to jump to conclusions. Steven* had gotten up and left. I sat outside with half a cigarette left and I quickly pulled out my little notebook and frantically started making notes. *‘Is Barry dead???’* I wrote.

I took my bag and went to join the intern in the health office. A space that the intern was supposed to work in and I tagged along. At that point in time, the office was empty as the staff were only going to come in later.

ORN had a health office on site which had a counselor (on leave) and a nurse (Sister M). The nurse was in charge of the drop-in office which offers free HIV/Aids testing. Sister M and Claus*, who both worked in the health office, arrived at the office. As Claus* had walked in Zee* had shouted “*More, moffie!*”. Zee* had introduced us (myself and the intern) to sister M and Claus*. Zee* jokingly had said “*these are our two new lesbians. We are recruiting*” and everyone had burst out laughing.

I sat in the office with the intern in silence as we both were busy working. I needed to use the bathroom. Which I had noticed was labeled as ‘All Gender Bathroom’. I had overheard Zee* and Steven* talking about Barry*. Zee* asked Steven* when last he spoke to Barry*. Steven* had responded by saying that Barry’s* phone was off and that he was not answering their calls, which clearly meant that Barry* was not dead after all. The office had become very quiet and I called it a day. Frank* called me on a Friday morning (02/11/18) to tell me that I did not have to come into the office because the junior staff are on leave on Friday’s.

Monday, 05 November 2018

Settling in at ORN (ORN Offices)

It was a Monday morning and I showed up at the ORN offices at 9 am. The office was very quiet. As I had walked in Claus* from the health office was sitting at the reception desk. We

said good morning and I asked if Frank* was in. Claus* said yes and I walked through to the offices, but Frank* was in a meeting. After about five minutes Frank* appeared and called me to his office. As I had walked in I saw a new face and Frank* introduced me to Tommy* the programs manager (at the time). Thereafter, Tommy* had showed me around and introduced me to more people. Tommy* and I walked back to his office where I would share the office with himself and Zee*.

Frank* came into the shared office and said that there would be a staff meeting at 12 pm and that I should sit in. Frank* had dashed off to another meeting in his office with a middle-aged colored woman that we all shortly learned was the new finance officer. She had replaced Barry*.

It was around 09:30 am that Missy* (counselor) arrived at the offices after being on leave for some time. It was nice to put a face to the voice as I had only communicated with Missy* over the phone whilst going through the university ethical process. Missy* walked into the programs office where I was seated and asked who this lady with the pretty face was. Tommy* introduced me and I said: *“it’s me, Christa, the one who was bugging you about a letter.”* she said *“oh, while I was in Katima”* and we laughed.

Tommy* and I continued to sit in his office in silence. After a while, he asked me why I decided to study Anthropology and I told him the very juicy story! I learned that he had studied Political Science but that party politics was not for him. He told that *“people are so hyped up and mad saying that Hage’s (current Namibian president) era is the era of moffies and that Hage himself could also be a moffie”*. He had also told me that he is a part of the youth league and although Namibian party politics is not for him he still partakes to push his own agenda. We both agreed that in Namibia it’s all about knowing the right people in the right places.

Zee* arrived at the office and walked into the office that Tommy*, Zee* and myself would be sharing. Unaware that Zee* and I had already met Tommy continued to introduce me to Zee*. Zee* said “*Ons ken mekaar. Dis my toekomstige vrou*” (Everyone laughed). The time went by quite quickly and before we knew it was 12 pm and Frank* went around the office shouting “*staff meeting!*” The staff meeting was held in the health office.

I had noticed immediately that the staff meeting was very informal, and not what you would typically expect from a staff meeting, but then again...Everyone had been chatting and laughing away. Some of them were on their phones. Missy* even had earphones in her ears. The meeting I had gathered was going to be led by Frank*.

Frank* asked who would be taking meeting minutes and everyone looked to Zee*, but she was not having it. That day she decided that she would not be responsible for taking minutes. It had to be someone else's turn. That's when the attention shifted to Claus*, but he too was reluctant, which led to a back and forth bickering between Zee* and Claus*. Eventually, Claus* ended up taking the meeting minutes. The staff meeting started and Frank* said: “*ai, let's start things the right way*”. Immediately, I thought ‘*shit, are we going to pray now?*’ What does the right way mean? Luckily, Frank* explained that everyone has a turn to say how they were feeling that day and how others could help or assist them if necessary. The meeting had ended with everyone having to share their three priorities for that week.

Tuesday, 06 November 2018

Barry* and his aftermath (ORN Offices)

I had arrived at the offices of ORN and continued down the passage to the office I shared with Zee* and Tommy*. I had put my bag down and took my coffee mug and went to sit outside. After a while, Frank*, Claus* and Tommy* came outside and I heard them talking about opening a case of theft against Barry*. Barry* had the organization's laptop and cell

phone which he had yet to return. Tommy* was so riled up and ready to report Barry* for theft, but Frank* calmed him down and said that they should not be too hasty and that Tommy* should rather continue to send Barry* messages and calls every morning and evening. By doing that they would have sufficient evidence if and when they decide to open a case of theft against Barry*.

The rest of that morning went as most other mornings that I have been there. The office was quiet and everyone was busy doing their own thing. As I sat in the office I heard voices and something that sounded like the moving of furniture. I got up and peeked out the door. Most of the staff were in the finance office rearranging the furniture. The new finance lady had started that day. Tommy*, Steven*, Claus* and Frank* joked around about who had the biggest muscles. They were speaking in Damara but I could piece the puzzles together by observing their body language. One thing that I had noticed since day one is that the staff got along very well. They seemed more like friends than colleagues. I guess it makes for a good working environment. I had yet to see any conflict amongst staff members. They mostly joked around even in serious instances like staff meetings.

I went back into the office and as I sat down again I overheard Frank* and the new finance lady speaking in the passage. It seemed like ORN was going through an audit. Frank* mentioned that he had found out that payments had been made without invoices. It seemed like Barry* left things in quite a mess and that the new finance lady had to come in and clean things up, figuratively and literally.

Later that afternoon, Tommy* and Alice*, from an organization called Positive Vibes, had been chatting in the office whilst waiting to have a meeting with Frank* about funds for that years Windhoek Pride. From what I could gather it seemed like there were minimal funds for

the Windhoek Pride that year. Alice* annoyingly said “*ons kan nie weer alleen pride hou nie. Dis die goed wat my spils maak*”.

Wednesday, 07 November 2018

Don't shoot the messenger (ORN Offices)

I arrived at the offices at around 08:30am and found an anxious Tommy* in the reception area. He was waiting for Frank* to go to a meeting that they had with a British organization. I went to put down my bag and walked outside to sit with Claus* and Ted* as they were talking about funds for pride. Zee* arrived at the office and said “*more, oulik*”. I greeted back. Steven* mentioned to Ted* that the organization has U\$5000 to spend which was approximately N\$ 50 000. I sat outside with Trent* and Zee*. Just listening while they were chatting away about all sorts of things. I had noticed that these two have a good relationship. They seemed like friends as Trent* asked Zee* if she had listened to the song he sent her on WhatsApp the night before. Tommy* was sitting in the boardroom. I knew this because the boardroom window was right opposite the smoking spot. Tommy* shouted through the window to Zee*, and asked her to please relay the message to Missy* and Claus* to be on time for the programs meeting that was at 9 am. Tommy* said that it was important that they were on time because he had other engagements that he had to get to. While Zee*, Trent* and myself were sitting outside she sent the message on the staff WhatsApp group. As both Zee* and Trent's* phones were buzzing from the messages on the WhatsApp group Zee* grew more upset. Apparently Missy* was going off on Zee* about the early meeting time. Zee* had said, “*why is she going off on me I am just the messenger*”. It was 9 am and everyone moved inside. I went in as well and had slipped into the boardroom. I asked Tommy* “*do you mind if I sit in on the meeting?*” He looked at me with a rather irritated facial expression and said: “*no, not today*”.

Monday, 12 November 2018

Just another day at ORN (ORN Offices)

I arrived at the ORN offices at my usual time, which was between 8 am and 9 am. I walked through to the office where I found Tommy* sitting at his desk. We said our good mornings and I went to sit down at my little desk space. We sat in silence each doing their own thing. Frank* was also in his office busy talking to someone but I could not see who he was talking to as this person was sitting on the chair behind the office door. Tommy*, Frank* and the lady from the finance office went into a meeting in the bedroom. I presumed it was a management meeting because Steven*, Missy*, Claus* and the others were not in that meeting either. I left the office at around 1 pm.

Tuesday, 13 November 2018

Conflict over the MAC (ORN Offices)

I walked into the ORN premises at around 08:40 am as Frank* was leaving the premises. I walked in and found Trent* behind the reception desk. The finance lady stood at the printer and Zee* was seated on one of the three blush pink chairs in the reception area. Everyone was at the office that morning. The office was still relatively quiet but that was understandable as it was the end of the year. The only activity left for the year was the Windhoek- and Swakopmund Prides. I had decided to station myself at the reception area that day. Tommy* came to the reception area where Trent* was seated. They had somewhat of a verbal disagreement about the Mac computer that was in the programs office. I recalled that Trent* had complained the previous day to everyone, except to Tommy*, about his use of the Mac. The Mac was reserved for designing posters and graphics etc. But Tommy* had been using the MAC for his own work and even asked the IT guy to create a profile on the Mac for him. Nonetheless, Tommy* said *“So if I did not ask you, you would not have said anything? Because I am using the MAC”*. Trent* did not respond. That was the first form of conflict

that I had witnessed. Missy* and Sister M were seated next to me in the reception area. Claus* walked into the reception area and Missy* shouted “*madam!*” where after Missy* and Sister M broke out into laughter. Claus* just looked at them and continued on his way. Missy* turned to me and said “*that walk is just for Windhoek. When he goes to the North his walk will change. He will walk like a man*”.

At around 12:25 pm Tommy* shouted “*staff meeting in 2minutes in the boardroom*”. In the boardroom, everyone was seated and present except the American intern and Megaman*. Frank* left the boardroom to go looking for Megaman* whilst Claus *, who had the task of taking minutes from last week’s staff meeting, was frantically running around trying to print out the minutes from last week’s meeting. But the irony was that Claus* never typed out the meeting minutes so I was not sure what he was trying to do. Frank*, disappointed and annoyed, told Claus* that it was fine if there was no minutes because at this point we had all been sitting in the boardroom for about 10minutes waiting on Claus* and the minutes. During which Steven* had been taking a few selfies.

Wednesday, 14 November 2018

Who is the boss now? (ORN Offices)

As I had walked to the front door of the office Zee* came out and shouted “*whooo*”. I was taken aback by the Zee’s*enthusiasm to see me. She laughingly said, “*as die kat weg is dan is die muis baas*”. The management staff had been away that morning at various meetings. We sat outside and chatted a bit about work and life. I asked what she thought after yesterday’s staff meeting and from what I could gather it seems like most of the staff were rubbed up the wrong way. It was during this meeting that the new finance lady laid down some ground rules. They felt like they had been threatened. Megaman* arrived at the office around 8:45 am whilst Zee* and myself were still sitting outside. Trent* jokingly says “*Megaman* jy is laat*”. We laughed because in yesterday’s staff meeting the new finance

lady had said that *“people should be on time. You are not being paid for free”*. Megaman* clearly did not find the humor in Trent’s* remark and said that he had to walk to work every day and that the organization had not given him any transport money.

Zee* and I were sitting in the boardroom each working on their own thing when Brandon* (a self-identified gay man) walked in and asked Zee* how to insert the staples into the stapler. Zee* told him that those particular staples were not the right size for that stapler. Apparently, Frank* and Claus* had bought the stapler without the right size staples. Brandon asked *“Did Frank* buy it?”* to which Zee* answered, *“yes Frank* and Claus*”*. Brandon* said, *“Ohhh....if there is a moffie involved...”* Zee* laughed and said, *“yeah it is better to be a lesbian”*.

Tuesday, 27 November 2018

Traditional Leaders Engagement (ORN Offices)

It was the week leading up to the Windhoek Pride and I had no idea that I would be this excited. Probably the most excited I had been since I started at ORN almost 4 weeks ago. This would be my first time participating in a Pride. Everyone in the office was in good spirits and I heard a few conversations about what each one would be wearing. I did not realize I had to dress up and what would be appropriate to wear? During a conversation, I had with Zee* and Trent*, he (Trent*) asked me what I was planning to wear. Not wanting to show that I had absolutely no idea I just laughed and said *“something very colorful”*. He also asked me if I was coming to the Bonfire on Friday night before the pride. Initially, I had not been very keen. I asked him what happens at the Bonfire and he explained that it was more of a get together to get everyone hyped up for the Pride march the next morning. People would be decorating the Pride truck as well as making banners and posters. They would be making a fire to braai and just socialize.

The traditional leaders' engagement was a two-day affair with traditional leaders from all over the country coming together at the offices of ORN. The organization hoped to sensitize various traditional leaders from across Namibia on SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity). That year Pride and all the related activities were held during the period of 10 days of activism and would end on human rights day. The Windhoek Pride was held on the 1st of December 2018 and the Swakopmund Pride on the 8th of December 2018.

It was about 09:15 am when Steven* had been busy handing out name cards to everyone as well as the agenda for that day. The event was opened by Frank* with a welcoming and introducing everyone present. Frank* then handed over to a Pastor, who was in attendance, and he opened the event with a short sermon and a prayer. The Pastor highlighted how important it was for all of us to have love, tolerance, and acceptance for all regardless of how different they are, with a particular emphasis on the concept of 'love'.

To kick off the event Frank* passed around three different colored cards. Green for 'what are you hoping to gain from this event', Orange for 'what are your fears coming into this event' and blue for 'what can we do to ensure that the fears do not happen'. I was surprised that Frank* had handed me the three colored cards as well. I assumed that I would just sit in the corner and observe the event. Nonetheless, I took the cards and wrote down my thoughts. I looked around and everyone had their heads down and were writing down their thoughts. The woman who had been seated next to me came in late and had a very disinterested attitude since she arrived. From what I could gather she was not a traditional leader but worked for one. Whilst everyone was busy doing the activity and writing down their thoughts she had her phone out and was busy watching videos instead of doing the activity. When she eventually decided to put her phone down and participate everyone had been done and we had to sit and wait for her to complete her cards. Frank* gathered all the cards and pasted them up on a whiteboard. He then continued to go through each card individually, unpacking and

discussing each card as he went on. Not everyone was comfortable with English and some preferred to write and speak in Afrikaans and other indigenous languages. Luckily we had a few people who would translate for the rest of us when someone spoke a language that we did not understand.

Frank* held up the Namibian Constitution and said that this book excites him and that he reads it every day. He read the Preamble of the Namibian Constitution to us and said that it is one of the most beautiful things he has ever read. Just a pity that the promises and declarations made in the Preamble of the Namibian Constitution do not reflect the reality of the Namibian society especially as it relates to gender and sexuality diverse populations.

We broke for a tea break. As we moved back into the venue a community activist from the Kharas region came up to me and we had quite an interesting chat. I could gather that he was relatively open-minded but that he had a lot of misconceptions around what it means to identify as LGBT. To him, it seemed like it could be something that one could unlearn. Nonetheless, I entertained the conversation.

Once everyone was seated the session started. During this session, Frank* took us through what and who ORN is. I found this particularly important as most of the people present had no idea what the organization was or what it did. Even more interesting is the fact that most people I have come into contact with in Windhoek, whether it was family, friends or even taxi drivers, no one knew what ORN was or even where the organization was located. Frank* explained to us that ORN is an NGO and more importantly a community-based organization that was established in 2010 to ensure that sexual and gender diverse minority groups in Namibia were not “second class citizens”. He also mentioned that the organization was currently working with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Justice and various religious institutions. He had also stated that the organization hopes to

establish a relationship with traditional authorities, through hosting workshops like these, as well as other civil society organizations. One of the chiefs present, which I learned was the Zambezi chief stated that he welcomes ORN to visit their region and to host similar workshops there to disseminate information on LGBTI issues to the people in that region.

Frank* had printed a stack of papers and handed us each one. The booklet was labeled '*Understanding Sexuality, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression*'. In this booklet, we could find brief descriptions and definitions to all these terms and their relevant sub-terms. It was shocking to learn that most of the people present had no idea what these concepts meant and even more shocking some of them have never heard of it. The focus of this two-day engagement was to sensitize traditional leaders on LGBTI issues. Frank* took a marker and proceeded to write down every concept one at a time and talked us through what each concept meant. It was very beautiful to see how these grown, and very patriarchal men were paying attention and writing down everything they could to the point where Frank* had to pause and allow them to copy down everything he wrote down on the whiteboard. To me, it showed an eagerness and willingness to learn. But as beautiful as this display of eagerness and willingness was I had hoped that it would not end there. I hoped that they would take this information back to their various regions and disseminate and educate even more people with the information that ORN had given them. But I guess little progress is better than no progress at all and as Zee* once told me "*Rome was not built in one day*".

A lot of confusion arose when Frank* discussed and explained what it meant to be a transgender or intersex person. It is during this discussion that the room got very loud and people were shaking their heads and asking a lot of questions. Some expressed that they have never heard of this or even knew that something like this existed and questioned how this could be biologically possible. Frank* continued to explain what it means to be intersex and this confused the traditional leaders even more. And when Frank* explained gender

reassignment surgery to them they gasped in shock! The traditional leader from the Keetmanshoop area asked: “*are we still Christian?*” According to him, an “*intersex person is not a Christian*” even after Frank* explained that intersex people were born that way and that many LGBTI people are Christians. We broke for lunch.

After about 30-45 minutes, we reconvened for the last session of day one. At this point, it had been a long day and it started to show. Frank* decided that for the last session we needed to play a game just to get everyone moving. For this game, Frank* pasted three different labels -yes, no or neutral on three different tables. He then proceeded to write down three different statements on the whiteboard. As he read out the statements one by one, we had to go stand at the various tables if we agreed, disagreed or if we were neutral about the statement he wrote down. The first statement was “a gay boy should be beaten by his father until he is no longer gay”. Everyone disagreed with this statement and went to stand at the corresponding table. The second statement caused quite a controversy amongst those present. The statement was that “a lesbian woman should be raped until she no longer is lesbian”. Everyone disagreed with the statement except the traditional leader from Keetmanshoop - the same man who said intersex people are not Christians. I wondered how the same man could condemn child abuse but could agree with sexual- and physical abuse against a woman. The first day of the traditional leaders’ engagement came to an end.

I sadly could not attend the second day of the traditional leaders’ engagement as I had other personal errands to attend to.

Thursday, 29 November 2018

Tracy* & Tommy* go head to head (ORN Offices)

I returned to the office on Thursday the 29th of November 2018. The day before the infamous ‘Bonfire’ which was held on the Friday before the Windhoek Pride. Today the office was not

its usual quiet self. Staff was running around trying to make the last few arrangements for the weekend. I walked into the boardroom and found Zee* sitting in there. Missy*, Megaman* and Juanita* (a self-identified transwoman) who helps Megaman* clean and maintain the office) were busy raiding the storeroom in search of LGBT flags and any other colorful decorations that could be used to decorate the truck. I decided to break the silence in the boardroom and I asked Zee* what time the Bonfire starts and what exactly happens at this event. Zee* told me the event starts at 6 pm at the office and that it was just a fun night where everyone can socialize, make posters and decorate the truck. Both Zee* and Trent* egged me on and told me I had to come it would be fun. I agreed and told them I would come much to their delight. I had grown particularly close to Zee* and Trent* during my time at ORN. They had always been friendly and helpful and we seemed like we could be close in age. They promised to take me out one night after they learned that I had never been out in Windhoek. I hesitantly agreed as I was worried about how this would affect my research and what the ethical implications thereof would be. I tried to maintain a professional, yet friendly approach at the office. Tracy* (the coordinator of the Windhoek and Swakopmund Prides) showed up and in seemingly better spirits than she was the previous time. I recall that there had been a previous instance where she came to the offices of ORN but left in tears.

As mentioned before the Pride fell within the period of the 10 days of activism and organizations were responsible for creating, marketing and organizing their own events for the Pride week. Organizations were also responsible for informing Tracy* about their events so that she could post the necessary information on the “We Are One” Facebook page. However, it had not been plain sailing and the poor Tracy* had been sleep-deprived and in tears for most of the part. Trent* who was responsible for all things social media at ORN had been helping Tracy* which required him to be out of the office for a few hours. And this did

not sit well with Tommy* and his annoyance ultimately led to the heated argument between Tommy* and Tracy*, which I had the unfortunate privilege of witnessing:

It was just another quiet day at the office nothing out of the ordinary happened. Zee* and I were seated in the boardroom each with a laptop in front of us. Trent* came into the boardroom and told Zee* that he was going to leave the office with Tracy* because they had to sort out the venue. Zee* seemingly had no problem with Trent* helping Tracy* but Tommy* did not share the same sentiment. He emerged from his office and asked Trent* who gave him permission to work on Pride stuff during office hours. Trent* just stood there seemingly in shock by the question posed to him. Tommy* told him that he did not give him permission to work on Pride things and that Tracy* is not paying him and that he had to work on ORN things. Tracy* showed up at the office still under the impression that she was there to pick up Trent* to go to the venue. She came into the boardroom and greeted Zee* and me. She sat down and they chatted about the events of the Pride week. That was when Tommy* came into the boardroom and the mood quickly went downhill. He basically told Tracy* that she had no right to use ORN staff during office hours for Pride arrangements. The conversation got heated really quickly and the rest of us sat there quietly and uncomfortably as these two went for each other with some rather unsavory words.

Tracy* got quite emotional and told us that she has not been sleeping and that no one was helping her. She had been so close to dropping everything because none of the organizations were cooperating or helping her. She also said that she was not doing this for her and if it were up to her she would just cancel everything. *"It's not a Tracy* show"* she said. Tommy* told her to calm down and that it seemed like there had been a misunderstanding and lack of communication because he was not aware that the organizations had to help with the Pride activities and arrangements. I felt so sorry for her.

Everyone calmed down and Tommy* asked how they could help her. All was well again. Tommy* and I were standing outside the office as Tracy* drove away and he turned to me and laughed, seemingly making fun of her for her outburst. This behavior that Tommy* had displayed was not new to me as I had learned during my time at ORN that he has dictatorial tendencies if I could call it that. He enjoyed making people aware of his superior position as the programs manager and he had this tendency to reprimand the office staff in front of others as to humiliate them, I am not sure.

Friday, 30 November 2018

Bonfire (ORN offices)

Friday, the 30th of November 2018, the day of the Bonfire finally arrived. The festivities were set to kick off at 6 pm Friday night and everyone was encouraged through Facebook posts to come for a night of fun to build up to Saturdays Windhoek Pride. I had managed to convince my younger brother, who had also been in Windhoek at the time, to accompany me to the Bonfire. We had arrived at the premises of ORN just after 6 pm. I had expected to find a crowd when I arrived but there had only been a few people most of whom were the staff of ORN. We sat down outside on the steps in front of the office and behind us was a big black speaker blasting music. I decided to show my brother around the office and introduced him to some of the staff members. People were slowly trickling in. Tracy* and her partner also showed up. A white truck was parked next to the office and the few of us present were invited to help decorate the truck. They were sipping on some beers whilst decorating the truck. A photographer friend of Tracy* arrived and she started snapping pictures of everyone decorating the truck.

I had felt so awkward walking around with my pen and little notebook at a social event where everyone was drinking, dancing and just having a good time. Not too far from us Megaman* and Trent* had started the fire. The security gate opened and two young women, who I shall

name Lynne* and Kate*, walked in and joined us at the truck. We all greeted and Kate* asked me where Trent* was. I told her that he is right over there busy starting the fire. She called him and he came running. He introduced us to each other (so I presume it's his friends). They asked him if there was a bottle store close by because they did not bring any alcohol with, however, I could smell alcohol on them. He directed them to the nearest bottle store in the area. The big security gate had opened and Zee* walked in. I had not seen her all day. I quickly leaned in and whispered in my brother's ear and told him "*that is Zee**". He knew exactly who I was speaking about because I spoke about Zee* and Trent* almost every day. I introduced Zee* and my brother to each other. She saw that I had a pen and notebook in my hand and she exclaimed "*oh my god! Really... look at this child*" and showed Trent* that I had a pen and notebook with me. To which I just laughed and said: "*this is work*". They just shook their heads and Zee* disappeared into the office after a few minutes she reappeared with a beer in her hand. As she was walking past she asked me if we were not drinking I told her that we did not bring any alcohol with us and she said "*ek sal julle nou uit sort*". After a few minutes, she brought my brother and me each a beer. My brother was delighted!

Kate* and Lynne* had also returned and they were seated not too far from us with a bunch of other people. They called us over to come to sit with them. My brother and I are both equally socially awkward people so that invitation to join a group of complete strangers was quite daunting but we saw it through. One thing that this journey had taught me was to overcome so many of my fears and insecurities. I was truly pushed out of my comfort zone in those few months.

The crowd had grown significantly bigger and people were sitting in circles. Some just chatting and laughing others drinking and smoking hookah pipe. Trent* and a friend of his had a hookah pipe so I joined them and we smoked a pipe together. Tommy* had also arrived in the meantime. He was dressed in SWAPO colors and carrying a rather big framed picture

of his mother. He was very drunk and told anyone that would listen that his mother had gotten a street named after her in Rehoboth - a small town about 90kms south of Windhoek. It had been the first time that I interacted with the staff outside of the office, and even though we were still on office premises, it was a social event and the staff were drinking and dancing, which was very different from our everyday interactions at the office. I looked around and I realized that everyone was having a good time and their behavior was perfectly normal for the context that we were in. I was the only one sticking out like a sore thumb. I had been so fixated on constantly making notes that I had not been fully present in the moment. I decided to put away the pen and paper and to interact fully with those around me.

It is only after I did that that I noticed that Lynne* had a particular interest in my brother and me. She was wearing mid-length denim shorts with white sneakers and a white vest. Her hair was cut very short and she had presented a very masculine appearance with the way she dressed, walked and talked. She had been following my brother and me the entire time we were there. I could not turn without her standing there. My brother told me that she had repeatedly asked him and others if we really were related and according to my brother she said: "*sy is oulik*". I remember that at some point during the evening I was busy chatting to someone when I felt someone's hand on my lower back. I immediately turned around to see who it was and it was none other than Lynne* who might I add was very drunk at that point. At that point, I started to become very annoyed actually borderline angry. She had no right to lay her hands on me without my permission and I also did not want the nuisance of having a drunk person following me around all night. My brother and I tried to escape by going to stand against the fence under the cover of some trees but alas Lynne* and Kate* found us! They asked if we would like some Gin and my brother and I both said no thank you. But Lynne* insisted and she dragged my brother into the office to get the drinks. Kate* sat next to me on the pavement and right in our view Tracy* was sitting between her partners' legs,

whilst laughing and chatting with other people. Kate* told me that she and Tracy* had a history and that until recently they were still in contact and that Trent* had told her that Tracy* would be here tonight. Kate* said the only reason why she came to this event was that she was told Tracy* would be here, but she clearly wasted her time because she (Tracy*) had already moved on. Shocked by this sudden revelation and not knowing how to console her I just smiled and nodded sympathetically.

Thankfully, my brother and Lynne* emerged each carrying two white plastic cups. Lynne* handed me a cup and I looked her stern in the eyes and annoyingly said: *"I told you I don't want any alcohol"*. My response clearly did not faze her as she still jokingly tried to get me to take the cup. I honestly did not know whether she genuinely could not recognize the annoyance in my voice and in my body language or if she did recognize it and chose to ignore it. Nonetheless, I had enough and I told my brother that we were going to leave after I quickly spoke to Zee*.

I found Zee* somewhere close to the office and I told her that I was going to leave now but that I just needed some clarifications on the Pride arrangements. Whilst Zee* and I were chatting Tommy* emerged from the office and without any apology interrupted Zee* and I. He asked Zee*, quite rudely, who had taken the extension cord from his office to which Zee* answered that she did because they needed an extension cord outside. Tommy* gave Zee* one of the ugliest looks I have ever seen and proceeded to tell her in front of everyone present that he knows exactly what she is trying to. He told her that if she thinks she is going to get his job then she is sorely mistaken because it won't happen. Zee* and I were both equally stunned at what just transpired. I asked her what on earth just happened and she just shrugged her shoulders and said she does not know.

Trent* came up to us with a very shocked facial expression and asked what is his (Tommy*) problem. Apparently, there had been an incident between Trent* and Tommy* earlier the night. According to Trent* he had been in Tommy's* office to fetch something and as he was locking up Tommy* came up to him and asked him why he was in his office and demanded that Trent* give him the keys to office. To which Trent* refused. Apparently, this was not the first time that Tommy* came to the office drunk and he had been told that he is not allowed to enter the office when he is intoxicated. He (Tommy*) then resorted to grabbing Trent* by his shirt and pushed him up against the wall. Thankfully, Trent* pushed back and left. As I was wrapping up my conversation with Zee* I felt a hand on my lower back again and you guessed it...it was Lynne*! At this point, I was really annoyed and I slapped her hand off. I told my brother to say his goodbyes because we were leaving now. As we walked to the big gate I turned to look back and Lynne* had been following us. Even after we told her we are going home she still continued to follow us. We waited for a few minutes for our brother in law to pick us up and we left for home. I had never been more relieved to go home and it was only 8 pm! It was probably the most eventful two hours of my time at ORN.

Saturday, 01 December 2018

Windhoek Pride (Windhoek CBD)

It was Saturday, the 1st of December 2018, the day of the Windhoek Pride. I had been looking forward to this day ever since I learned about the date. The event and all the details regarding the pride had been posted on Facebook and other social media platforms. The arrangement was that everyone would meet at the Theatre School, in Robert Mugabe Avenue, at 9 am and the pride march would officially kick off at 10 am from the Theatre School. My brother and I arrived at the Theatre School at about 08:40 am. I knew we were at the right place when I recognized the truck draped in the LGBT flag, which had been decorated the previous day, standing outside in the street. We walked in to find a small crowd of people

already gathered there. Everyone had been dressed in the most colorful outfits. Some people even went the extra mile and had sequin headpieces and colorful balloons tied to their clothing. I felt quite underdressed in my jeans and t-shirt. There had been a coffee stand on the premises of the Theatre school where free coffee was being served. Who says no to free coffee? We grabbed a cup and went to go sit down on the steps in front of the building.

The plan was for everyone to gather at the Theatre school from 9 am onwards as the march was to kick off at 10 am down Robert Mugabe Avenue ending at the FNCC (Franco Namibian Cultural Centre). I had not given the significance of the route much thought until I overheard people asking why we are marching down Robert Mugabe Avenue and not Independence Avenue, which is the main road that runs right through the Windhoek CBD. It is only then that it dawned on me that the route was so important for visibility and exposure.

The premises of the Theatre school filled up with more people dressed in all colors of the rainbow. As I was sitting on the steps drinking my coffee and staring at out this sea of color in front of me I got overwhelmed with a feeling of sadness. As I looked around I saw people laughing, chatting and being filled with so much excitement and joy. It saddened me that they had to face so much stigma, discrimination, and trauma on a daily basis just because of their gender and sexual identity. I whispered to myself “*where has humanity gone?*” After all, we are all humans before we are anything else. In that moment I just realized, again, how extremely privileged I was. I noticed Zee* in the crowd and she came up to my brother and me. She looked very tired and I asked her jokingly if the Bonfire was so much fun that she neglected to sleep. She told me that they had barely slept.

The Bonfire ended quite late and she had to be up early to organize things at the office before they headed this way. She said she had a small gift for me and handed me a beautiful colorful beaded bracelet. It was a beautiful gesture and I thanked her as she helped me put it around

my wrist. Thinking back now she probably noticed my lack of color and thought that I needed a pop of color! She also handed me a colorful umbrella and a Namibian flag to my brother. The crowd grew bigger and the music blasted from big speaker boxes on top of the Pride truck. I was not sure who all the people were who were going to ride on the truck, but most of them were contestants of the Mr. Gay Namibia competition dressed in white tutus. I recognized the face of the very first Mr. Gay Namibia in the crowd. It was such a pleasant experience to finally see him in person as I have only read about and seen pictures of him in newspaper articles. It was a case of being star struck!

It was finally time to march and everyone gathered in the street right behind the pride truck. I was lucky enough to receive a huge LGBT flag from Frank* which I draped around my shoulders. I was beyond excited. Everyone was cheering, whistling and chanting “*We are one! We are here! Gay rights are human rights!*” People of all races, ages, and sexualities came through to participate in the Windhoek Pride for one common purpose; marching for LGBTQI+ rights. We were escorted by traffic officers and the march commenced down Robert Mugabe Avenue. I too was chanting “*gay rights are human rights!*” as I was waving and dancing with the LGBT flag. Much to the delight and surprise of Trent* who shouted to Zee*, who was across the street snapping pictures, “*look at her!*” He said that he has never seen this side of me (fun and carefree) and that I was always so serious and professional at the office. I believe that we were met relatively well by the public. Some people just stared while others hooted from their cars and waved at us. There was only one scheduled stop in the route which was in front of a prominent national monument of founding President Sam Nujoma. We gathered on the steps on this monument and stood for a picture where after Frank* asked us to observe a moment of silence for all those who have lost their lives and who are suffering across the globe because they identify as LGBTQI+. I got very emotional during this moment and had to try very hard to keep back the tears.

We arrived at the FNCC, which was the endpoint for the march, at about 10:40 am. Tracy* had organized a market day at the FNCC where there were various stalls selling food and drinks. The market day was scheduled to end at 3 pm. I left at about 12 pm. It had been one of the most fulfilling and beautiful days I ever had the privilege of witnessing.

Chapter Five

Findings and Analysis – In-depth Interviews

After thoroughly reading the data from the in-depth interviews with six staff members of ORN, I had identified the following themes, which I will be discussing over two chapters. Firstly, I will be discussing the socio-political and cultural context of Namibia, with an emphasis on political homophobia, and the implications it has on the gender and sexuality diversity advocacy work of ORN. Secondly, I will be discussing how my participants use Western LGBT terminology as personal, as well as collective, identities and what the implications thereof are in an African context where such terms are not commonly known or used. Lastly, I will be discussing how donor oriented and dependent ORN is, and what implication this has on the implementation of advocacy strategies and programs.

In presenting this chapter, I have opted to present the findings and analysis simultaneously. As discussed in chapter three (Research Methodology), I used thematic analysis to analyze the data. I argue, citing Bryman (2012), that the manner in which the researcher interprets the data and constructs themes will be informed by the theories, literature, and concepts that have guided the research study. As such, conducting a preliminary literature review prior to this study, as well as having conducted the in-depth interviews, assisted me in constructing themes. Therefore, the discussion and construction of the identified themes will simultaneously be in relation to the literature I have read and the ideas/themes emerging from the data. In saying this, I have decided to present the findings and the analysis simultaneously. By embedding the findings from my research study within the analysis, I hope to illustrate how the data and the literature speak to one another.

1. The socio-political and cultural context of Namibia

Similar to xenophobia and racism, homophobia is not an uncommon theme in debates on gender and sexuality diversity and human rights. According to Reddy (2001:83), homophobia has “a very detailed history as a form of social prejudice in the lives of people who have a different sexual orientation from heterosexuality”. Moreover, Reddy (2001:83) argues that in numerous countries the social pressure to conform is “covert and subtle”, however, in most African countries it has taken on the form of “a direct and often virulent attack on homosexuality”. As such, the homophobic discourses, as invoked by various African state leaders, illustrate that it is a form of hate speech that “claims to recuperate a ‘natural’ heterosexual order for society” (Reddy, 2001:83). Additionally, the legitimization of these homophobic discourses and remarks by African state leaders is assembled as a message that the deviance from traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity, associated with African patriarchy, is not tolerable.

Furthermore, Currier (2010:113) states that European colonizers formulated discourses in southern African countries that highlighted Africans’ gender, sexual and racial variance from that of white Europeans, frequently through signifiers of perversity. Accordingly, these discourses strengthened the European colonial dominance of Namibia. What is more, Currier (2010:113), citing Epprecht (2004, 2008) states that colonialists and apartheid stalwarts declared racist, sexist and heterosexist beliefs about African women and men. Accordingly, these beliefs and discourses embroidered African men’s heterosexual masculinities, and at the same time by disregarding same-sex relationships between African men, colonialist and apartheid regimes considered homosexuality mainly as a problem for white men, which in the process racialized and gendered same-sex sexuality as a problem of white masculinity (Currier, 2010:113).

Consequently, SWAPO, like many other southern African national liberation movements, “produced gender and sexual ideologies to overturn stigmatizing colonialist and apartheid discourses about African gender and sexual practices” (Currier, 2010:113). As such, southern African national liberation movements adjusted colonialist pathologies of African ‘male virility’ into African nationalist masculinities (Currier, 2010:113). In addition, the depiction of nationalist virility had two dominant elements. Firstly, Currier (2010:113) argues that it involved some African men exercising control over African women, at times through violent methods. By controlling African women it gave some African men the means to overcome what they “perceived as emasculation at the hands of colonialist and apartheid authorities” (Currier, 2010:113). Secondly, Currier (2010:113), citing Epprecht (2004), argues that by overpowering “white men who defended racist rule it helped produce nationalist masculinities and a ‘hyper-heterosexism’”. As such, Currier (2010:113) argues that African men who cast out white men from their nation reclaimed not only control over their countries but also succeeded by overturning a racialized and gendered pecking order that favored white men.

Therefore, “African nationalist masculinity came to be defined in opposition to white, apartheid masculinities within racialized, masculinist and heterosexist parameters that glorified virility” and belittled unmasculine characteristics related to homosexuality (Currier, 2010:113). Ironically, Currier (2010:114), citing Epprecht (2005), states that although homophobia seemed to be a strategy for colonialist and apartheid regimes in southern Africa to police white settlers’ racial and sexual purity, it, however, made its way into African national liberation movements’ cultural and political repertoires. As such, there is some continuousness in the content of colonial, apartheid, and postcolonial homophobias. Post-colonial homophobia varied from colonial and apartheid ideologies in that African nationalist leaders used it to emasculate white, western men and nations (Currier, 2010:114).

The Namibian Case:

Namibia acquired independence in 1990 after a long national liberation struggle against South African apartheid rule. After independence, SWAPO, the national liberation movement, came into power as the ruling political party in Namibia and has been the ruling party ever since. According to Currier (2010:110), SWAPO leaders spearheaded a campaign of political homophobia in 1995. Between 1995 and 2006, SWAPO leaders used homophobic rhetoric that varied in intensity, content, and scope, exemplifying political homophobia's mutability. According to Currier (2010:112), "homophobic discourse was illogical and unstable in this period". Furthermore, SWAPO leaders declared that homosexuality was "unnatural, evil, a threat to the nation, western, unchristian, un African, colonial residue and evidence of the ongoing need to decolonize Namibia and that homosexuality should be eradicated or at a minimum rendered publicly invisible" (Currier, 2010:112).

Namibia's developing LGBT movement was the exclusive target of SWAPOs disdain, however, closer examination illustrates that SWAPO leaders did not reserve political homophobia only for LGBT activists; SWAPO leaders also used political homophobia more generally to silence political opponents (Currier, 2010:110). As such, SWAPO leaders used political homophobia to control political resistance and pre-empted judgment of their leadership. Hence, Currier (2010:111) argues that SWAPO leaders used political homophobia as a gendered strategy to maintain and protect their masculinist control over the Namibian nation. One can argue that Namibia is a socially conservative country with a strong Christian presence. Although Namibia is not as outspoken and violent towards gender and sexuality diverse people presently, one cannot ignore the lived realities of gender and sexuality diverse people, and it would be irresponsible to say that the condition is 'not as bad as in other African countries'. The Office of the Ombudsman states that "the LGBTI community is reportedly experiencing widespread social exclusion and rejection but there are regrettably no

known documentary evidence” (The Office of the Ombudsman, 2013:3). Furthermore, the Ombudsman states that there has not been any extensive research done on the LGBTI human rights condition in Namibia (The Office of the Ombudsman, 2013:3). In responding to a question on whether the social, cultural and political context of Namibia was conducive to the work of the organization, Missy* and Zee* had the following remarks:

Missy* “I would say it is kind of difficult especially the cultural aspect because people have this belief like it is not right for you to be gay...and also the political given the speech of the founding president where he mentioned that they must be banned also it makes it difficult to penetrate through the political sphere and the cultural sphere as well.”

Zee* “So are we as an organization saying that we are approaching sensitization in a wrong way or should we ask the people ‘how do you want us to speak?’ That same language to prevent that feeling that the country is homophobic or this or people do not accept...society do not accept that for sure we know because we have seen with the advocacy events that we have...the prides and how people would reply on social media. It is their right because we need to know how they feel because if one day Namibia decides same-sex marriage is allowed or the sodomy act has been taken off. It is a lawmaker that decides that which means that we could be having a brewing of violence towards LGBT people in the country. Imagine if people can say that it is not Namibian then where does homosexuality come from...from the Western areas.”

Furthermore, Currier (2010:111) states that the phenomenon of political homophobia has received unbalanced scholarly attention. According to Currier (2010:111), one line of research emphasizes the historical roots of political homophobia. This line of research pinpoints the roots of post-colonial homophobia in colonialist, apartheid, and Christian discourses and practices, and proposes that there is continuity between colonial, apartheid, and post-colonial homophobias (Currier, 2010:111). As such, Currier (2010:111), citing Epprecht (2008), states that this line of research is of the opinion, “that only whites are homosexual and that all Africans have always been heterosexual”. The latter is evidence of the remark that Zee* made where she states that Namibians have the belief that homosexuality came from the West. The second line of research exemplifies the “emergence of western ‘lesbian’ and ‘gay’ identities as instigating political homophobia” (Currier, 2010:111). Additionally, this line of research also considers how “political homophobia

produces African nationalism and new articulations of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’” (Currier, 2010:111).

Furthermore, Currier (2010:111) states that while both lines of research pay attention to the durability of political homophobia, they do not “systematically analyze the targets, content, and consequences of political homophobia”. What is more, Currier (2010:111) claims that political homophobia in Namibia is an indication of SWAPO leaders’ ever-growing authoritarianism. According to Currier (2010:111), “scholars’ criticism of undemocratic developments in countries, like Namibia and Zimbabwe, stems in part from the failure of national liberation movements to follow through on their promises to deliver equality”. Without a doubt, there is plenty to criticize. Currier (2010:111), citing Lorway (2008), states that political homophobia tainted independence for many LGBT Namibians, and compelled some to run off to other countries. What is more, Currier (2010:111) is of the opinion that the problem with only considering political homophobia as an indication of authoritarian rule or of failing democratization attempts is that it is incomplete. When political homophobia is only viewed in this manner it fails to recognize the gendered and sexualized contours of political homophobia and ignores how it strengthens phallic masculinity (Currier, 2010:111). Additionally, considering political homophobia under other measures also fails to recognize the material consequences of homophobic discourse for gender and sexual diverse persons in southern Africa. As an example, Currier (2010:112), citing Lorway (2008), states that political homophobia has added to “the invisibility of LGBT Namibians in HIV/AIDS prevention, education and treatment campaigns, especially those administered by state agencies”.

Furthermore, political homophobia has been used by some Namibian state leaders as a gendered strategy to target LGBT activists explicitly, and political opponents more generally. Currier (2010:112), citing Boellstorff (2004), uses ‘homophobia’ instead of ‘heterosexism’ or

'heteronormativity' to understand some Namibian state leaders' masculinist practices and discourses. According to Currier (2010:112), "heterosexism and heteronormativity reproduce the structural preference for heterosexuality, gender conformity, and masculinity and the marginalization of non heterosexualities, gender nonconformity and femininity". Moreover, social institutions and cultural imaginaries are important sites for the upkeep and defense of heterosexism and heteronormativity (Currier, 2010:112). One such social institution is marriage. Within the Namibia context same-sex marriages are not allowed. La Font & Hubbard (2007:88), writing on the 'Frank vs Chairperson of the Immigration Selection Board' case, state that the Namibian "Supreme Court rejected the argument that the Immigration Board violated the applicants fundamental rights to equality by failing to accord their lesbian relationship equal status" with those of men and women who are legally married. Furthermore, the court found that the Namibian Constitution made no provision to recognize same-sex relationships as equal to marriage, and that the term 'family' within the Namibian Constitution did not contemplate that a "homosexual relationship could be regarded as a 'natural' or 'fundamental' group unit" (La Font & Hubbard, 2007:89).

On the other hand, at the level of social practice and discourse, homophobia is an important means through which heterosexism and heteronormativity are accomplished and sustained (Currier, 2010:112). As a result, homophobia is a belief and strategy used to police gender and sexuality. As a political strategy, SWAPO leaders used political homophobia for more than just policing gender and sexuality. They also used political homophobia to fortify their masculinist control over the state by silencing political opponents (Currier, 2010:112).

In responding to a question on what the challenges are that the organization faces in relation to the social, cultural and political context, Missy* relates that most people are unwilling to engage in conversation about LGBT issues due to conservative social norms and the

homophobic remarks made by former President Sam Nujoma. Similarly, Claus* and Rose* reiterated the lack of engagement that Missy* had pointed out. Claus* and Rose* relate that:

Claus* “The political parties in Namibia does not really say anything when it comes to the LGBTI community their genders or their sexualities. They turn a blind eye on that they do not really say anything about it. They just look at it I guess and keep quiet...but like let me say for instance we have a pride march or something. We go request for escort for police officers from the Ministry of Safety...they will give us that safety but then when it comes to like dialogue. Like we want to talk in general to discuss what is the way forward...what does Namibia have to say about the LGBTI community...their rights and whatever but then they do not have a say and they will not say anything.”

Rose* “...when it comes to the government you know mos it is a topic that they do not want to talk about or a subject they do not want to touch upon when it comes to LGBTI people in our Namibian society...it is something that people find hard to understand like if you say ORN...that is where they all are like this place for gays and lesbians. They do not see a positive thing coming out of ORN. They will just say it is a gay and lesbian community together so they just have to talk about sex and have sex.”

Cruz and Currier (2017), writing on the politics of pre-emption, argue that, “developments in gender and sexual diversity organizing in different nations have prompted promising advances in social movement theorizing, particularly in the area of movement-counter movement dynamics”. Citing the work of Dugan (2004), Cruz and Currier (2017:3) prefer to use the term ‘opposing movements’ to describe “originating movements and counter movements as locked in a punch-counter punch causal chain of activity”. Moreover, Cruz and Currier (2017:3) argue that by using the term ‘opposing movements’ it prevents scholars from making “unproductive arguments about whether counter movements oppose social change in general or whether they challenge a specific social movement”. Furthermore, Cruz and Currier (2017:4), citing Weiss (2013), have theorized a “specific form of anti-queer mobilization in the guise of an ‘anticipatory movement’ which involves anti-queer groups organizing preemptively against them, deeming an eventual advocacy threat both teleologically unavoidable and an existential threat”. The aforementioned is evidence of the politics of pre-emption that characterizes the dynamics related to anti- and pro-LGBT organizing in various countries in the global South. As an example, Cruz and Currier (2017:4) state that such a pre-emption led to the 2014 passage of the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition

Act in Nigeria. According to Cruz and Currier (2017:4), “there was and is no movement calling for state recognition of same-sex marriage, and the anti-same-sex marriage law is thus aimed at phenomena that, for the most part, don’t exist and that some politicians wanted to prevent from taking root in the country”.

As such, the future, or temporality more generally, worries social movement actors who use pre-emptive strategies (Cruz & Currier, 2017:4). Moreover, Cruz and Currier (2017:4) state that “both pre-emptive action and its counterpart, prefigurative action, highlight the temporality of opposing social movements, confirming Dugans’ (2014) point that the concept of a countermovement is temporal, as counter movements (or opposing movements) respond to demands made by a preceding movement”. While pre-emptive action works to evade some forms of cultural, political or social change from taking place, ‘prefigurative politics’ can consist of cultural, political and social practices, such as joint governance within movement circles, which activists hope will lead to a democratic future (Cruz & Currier, 2017:4). Furthermore, anti-LGBT pre-emptive collective action, taking the form of an ‘anticipatory countermovement’, was planned to prevent the increase of LGBT activism and LGBT rights legislation in African countries (Cruz & Currier, 2017:4). As such, Cruz and Currier (2017:4) argue that “pre-emptive organizing responds to a nebulous threat lingering on the horizon”. Whether this threat may be local or foreign in nature does not matter particularly to those embroiled in anti-LGBT pre-emptive action (Currier & Cruz, 2017:4). As they believe themselves to be “defending local cultures and national political priorities from misleading global influences” (Cruz & Currier, 2017:4).

Furthermore, depending on the methods used, an opposing movement can have a repressive effect on a gender and sexuality movement. Alternating from the discursive threats related to ‘soft repression’ to violent ‘vigilantism’, an opposing movement can prompt forms of non-state soft repression that discourage gender and sexuality diversity organizing (Cruz &

Currier, 2017:3). As a result of such threats, LGBT individuals may be less inclined to take part in LGBT movements, which spectators might understand as proof of their gender and/or sexual nonconformity. According to Cruz and Currier (2017:4), threats of violence against people assumed to be gender or sexual nonconformists represents soft repression. Case in point, in 2001, former Namibian President Sam Nujoma declared that he would deport lesbian and gay Namibians, a threat that compelled some LGBT Namibians to seek asylum in Western nations. Furthermore, this use of soft repression developed into non-state hard repression when some Namibians, encouraged by the president's virulent anti-LGBT position, directed anti-homosexual violence at LGBT family members (Cruz & Currier, 2017:4).

Moreover, Currier (2010:114) states that SWAPO leaders in exile in Angola and Zambia punitively stifled internal opposition. It is said that in the mid-1970s "they detained and allegedly tortured those involved in a supposed plot to dethrone SWAPO leaders" (Currier, 2010:114). What is more, SWAPOs internal repression is an example of what Currier (2010:114), citing Ferree (2004), terms 'hard repression'. Differentiating between gendered types of repression, Currier (2010:114), citing Ferree (2004), offers the term "'soft repression' as a consciously gendered image of the forms that repression frequently takes in civil society, in contrast to the more conventional, male-gendered imagery of hard repression in which states more typically engage". Additionally, Currier (2010:114) claims, "forms of hard repression, such as violence and detention, are intended to provoke immediate, profound consequences, such as demobilization and withdrawal, whereas soft repression, in the guise of discursive threats aims to silence or eradicate oppositional ideas".

While SWAPO leaders preferred hard repression to uproot the seeds of political discontentment within the national liberation movement when trying to liberate Namibia, they developed a liking for soft repression to control political opponents after independence (Currier, 2010:114). Political consolidation bolstered SWAPO leaders to contain opposition

internally, actions that encouraged their position of phallic agency (Currier, 2010:115). According to Currier (2010:115), citing Phelan (1999), phallic agency can be theorized as “a position available to state leaders and as one compatible with masculinist ideologies of imperviousness”. Moreover, in the discourse of phallic agency, “agency is equated with initiative as opposed to receptivity or transmission, with invulnerability as opposed to ‘being a victim’” (Currier, 2010:115). For the phallic agent, there are ‘actors’ and those ‘acted upon’. Furthermore, the purpose of political homophobia as a political strategy for SWAPO leaders was to maintain their control of the state, and because of SWAPOs consolidation of power, state leaders “did not have to rely merely on hard repression as a means to guarantee their continued rule; discursive threats in the guise of soft repression bolstered their authority” (Currier, 2010:115).

Political homophobia may be instrumental to state leaders in at least three ways. Firstly, political homophobia is a means to suppress opposition. According to Currier (2010:115), political homophobia can suppress gender and sexuality diversity activists, and at the same time, it can silence political opponents. Secondly, political homophobia provides a means for state leaders to deflect attention away from matters that state leaders believe to be sensitive (Currier, 2010:115). Lastly, political homophobia affords SWAPO leaders the opportunity to rewrite Namibian history from their perspective (Currier, 2010:116). Pretentious revisions of national history advances the national liberation movement to the disadvantage of other political players in the past and present (Currier, 2010:116). SWAPO leaders selectively conjured up specific aspects of history that revered past masculinist achievements during the national liberation struggle to remind Namibian citizens who liberated the nation (Currier, 2010:116). What is more, SWAPO leaders at times mentioned their time spent at Robben Island, the prison at which Namibian and South African political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, were confined (Currier, 2010:116). SWAPO leaders also neglected to mention

references to political opposition, a way of silencing opposition and withheld historical subjectivity to gender and sexual nonconformists by arguing that homosexuality had never existed in Namibia. These actions reinforced SWAPO leaders' masculinist authority over the Namibian state (Currier, 2010:116).

Furthermore, the 'homosexuality as un-African' discourse that African state leaders oftentimes invoke(d) proposes a 'moral and sex panic' that Reddy (2001:83) characterizes as "an acute psychiatric and security emergency" similar to the 'moral panics' which described the AIDS crisis, and diseases such as syphilis in the 19th century. As such, Reddy (2001:83), citing Bristow (1996), states that "same-sex desire can be threatening to those institutions of power, such as the family and the state that assumes that heterosexuality is a natural, as opposed to a cultural phenomenon". Furthermore, Reddy (2001:83) argues that there are five issues that arise from the homophobic "fear of the other". Firstly, the most frequent and widest is the fear of difference, change, and variation. Secondly, when homosexuality is assumed a disorder; the 'discomfort' becomes hatred, which leads to "irrational acts of violence and exclusion" (Reddy, 2001:83). Thirdly, it could also lead to the issue of internalized homophobia. Reddy (2001:83) argues that if "Alfred Kinsey was correct and the majority of people have some same-sex desire, then homophobia stands as a double fear of the other and the fear of oneself being the other". As such, it becomes possible to argue that homophobic violence may have a component of "expiation in it, of cleansing, for which corrective measures need to be found" (Reddy, 2001:83). Fourthly, homophobic discourse constructs the homosexual as an outcast, who needs to be controlled, policed and harassed (Reddy, 2001:83). Lastly, Reddy (2001:83) states that it can be argued that homophobia is a form of gender violence and therefore gender oppression. Therefore, it can be argued that homosexuality is a threat to hegemonic masculinity.

Historically, homosexuality in Africa was treated as a private issue, however, in recent years the “self-identification of gays and lesbians with a group identity has ironically been met with hatred and criminalization that compares with that under colonial rule” (Reddy, 2001:84). Furthermore, Reddy (2001:84) claims that homophobia in Africa has been a vicious and symbolic reflection of intolerance. To the extent that some African state leaders contend that human rights cannot be extended to gender and sexuality diverse persons. Moreover, Reddy (2001:84) argues that the exclusion of gender and sexuality diverse persons from human rights is not simply an emotional response, from some African state leaders, to the “growing activism of gay and lesbian lobbying in Africa”, but also a “political, social and cultural response to the increasing visibility of homosexuality as a real and lived experience of African gays and lesbians”. As illustrated by a speech made by former President Sam Nujoma:

“the most ardent supporters of these perverts are Europeans who imagine themselves to be the bulwark of civilization and enlightenment...we made sacrifices for the liberation of this country and we are not going to allow individuals with alien practices such as homosexuality to destroy the social fabric of our society. We are convinced that homosexuality is not a natural and objective form of moral history but a hideous deviation of decrepit and inhuman sordid behavior. In reality lessons learned from the morals of our Namibian culture demonstrate that our morals are far more superior and acceptable to the vast majority of our people who adhered to Christianity...homosexuality deserves a severe contempt and disdain from the Namibian people and should be uprooted totally as a practice.” (Reddy, 2001:84)

Furthermore, Reddy (2001:85) is of the opinion that discrimination, of any kind, does not exist in a vacuum, but rather that “it comes with distinctive and distinguishing historical peculiarities, and often at a price”. As such, homophobic discourses and the prosecution of gender and sexuality diverse persons is based on a mythology with the purpose to demonstrate the ‘unAfricaness’ of homosexuality, and in turn creating panic and fear which neither “explains nor bears any relation to evidence of any danger to the state or the people” (Reddy, 2001:85). As such, sexuality becomes prominent in mainstream politics and in the context of human rights. Not only do African state leaders invoke homophobic discourses to

argue that homosexuality is ‘un-African’, to invoke fear and danger but also to pathologize homosexuality. As evidenced by the following excerpt from Steve*:

Steve* “...it is a taboo. It is something like where does it come from. It never happened like 50 years ago why is it happening now. Like how can a man and a man sleep together. How can women sleep together...it is not normal. They do not tolerate it because they do not know it and for them it is not natural.”

Therefore, Reddy (2001:85) argues that by contesting homosexuality as a form of sexual practice and identity that does not deserve any rights, African state leaders withheld citizenship rights based on a preferred gender and sexual identity. Thus, the struggle for political recognition of gender and sexuality diverse identities exemplifies that gender and sexual identities are never experienced in isolation from race, class, gender, location, and broader social values (Reddy, 2001:85). Additionally, citizenship becomes a symbol of transformation in the sphere of personal life, and for gender and sexuality diverse persons “this has often meant that identity is closely linked to the function of the state” (Reddy, 2001:85).

Ironically, this has meant that in most African countries gender and sexuality diverse persons are criminalized even before they begin to make a case for equal rights (Reddy, 2001:86). Furthermore, Reddy (2001:86), citing Jeffrey Weeks (1999), states that there are two important moments. Firstly, the ‘moment of citizenship’ (which is a strategy for acceptance), which can be defined as a moment for making claims for inclusion in society, and secondly, the ‘moment of transgression’ (which is a political strategy to challenge the status quo) (Reddy, 2001:86). As such, Reddy (2001:86) argues that it is the second moment that defines the lines of struggle. Moreover, Reddy (2001:86) states that transgression and citizenship are contrasting facets of the same moment of challenge. In the case of Namibia, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, the ‘moment of citizenship’ has been coupled with the development of LGBT organizations by activists in these countries, oftentimes with financial support by foreign donors (Reddy, 2001:86). According to Reddy (2001:86), “the moment of

transgression in these countries (as seen by the state) is the visibility that gay and lesbian associations have raised in relation to a rights based culture”. Furthermore, Reddy (2001:86) claims that while the systemic defamation of gender and sexuality diverse persons in Africa is irrefutably connected to the psychological basis (instead of a cultural basis) for explaining homosexuality, at the same time reminds us about the gendered basis of this form of cultural harassment and violence. While some argue that the modality of demanding citizenship is about furthering a democratic project – “because the notion of citizenship is central to the sexual rights of the individual within a human rights framework” – it is the case that a human rights culture is itself missing in these countries (Reddy, 2001:86).

Similarly, Epprecht (2001:1090) states that “associations lobbying for legal reforms that would better protect the human rights of LGBT persons have now sprung up in many countries, including some with notably poor general human rights records”, however, they have been met with a significant anti-LGBT rights response in some African countries. Furthermore, Epprecht (2001:1091) argues that “ethnographies from around sub-Saharan Africa suggest that pre-modern African societies tended to accommodate human sexual diversity in relatively humane ways”. Moreover, Epprecht (2001:1091) argues that ‘homosexual behavior’ was permitted to take place as long as strict taboos on publicly discussing or practicing it was adhered to. Furthermore, Epprecht (2001:1091) states that certain rituals and/or institutions in pre-modern African countries restricted “same-sex sexual behaviors to youth or to the mysterious margins of society”. For example, among the Shona and Ndebele people of Zimbabwe, the “youth could ‘play’ up to a point, in the certainty that they would mature to become adults who married and had children” (Epprecht, 2001:1091). Furthermore, different kinds of spiritual healers or ‘guardians’ could cross-dress and/or marry the same-sex “in the knowledge that their physical bodies were home to metaphysical spirits of the opposite sex” (Epprecht, 2001:1091). Similarly, warriors and chiefs “could take boys

as ‘wives’ in the knowledge that the ritual transgression of heterosexual norms could generate ‘magic’ that ultimately strengthened those norms” (Epprecht, 2001:1091).

Consequently, colonialism, capitalism and Christian missionary activity resulted in powerfully disruptive forces upon Africa. According to Epprecht (2001:1092), sexuality has been fundamental to this process of modernization. Colonialism, capitalism and Christian missionary activities established institutions (prisons, hostels, boarding schools, labor camps, and convents), that isolated African men and women from each other for long periods. Thus, if colonialism, capitalism and Christian missionary activities encouraged the development of new forms of same-sex erotic behavior among Africans, it also produced powerful and lasting reactions against them (Epprecht, 2001:1092). The disciplinary power of the colonial state in some cases fell rather heavily on Africans who were caught deviating from repressive ideals of sexual decency, including the death penalty for sodomy, long after this punishment had been abandoned in the metropolises (Epprecht, 2001:1092). According to Epprecht (2001:1092), colonial and missionary propaganda meanwhile fabricated “notions of individual sexual sin or perversion by which Africans were hectored, in the name of civilization, toward an explicit and dogmatic lack of tolerance for same-sex erotic behavior”.

Furthermore, Epprecht (2001:1092) states that in the rural African areas ‘traditions’ were codified and chiefs were bolstered to police the most restrictively conceived gender roles. As such, “customs that had allowed or even honored same-sex sexual behaviors died in the face of such structured hostility” (Epprecht, 2001:1092). Ironically, colonialism also created unintended incentives “for Africans to police themselves against both traditional and modern expressions of same-sex sexuality” (Epprecht, 2001:1092). Since the beginning, Europeans used discourses on African immorality and/or perversion in order to argue for a racial and class hierarchy that positioned themselves at the top and “natives” at the bottom (Epprecht, 2001:1092). Additionally, Epprecht (2001:1092) states that while these discourses commonly

focused on matters of “black peril” or “loose women”, Europeans also at times alluded to the apparent lack of stability of African men’s sexual objects as evidence of Africans’ need for continued European guidance.

Therefore, for Africans to “escape stultifying, repressive, hypocritical European domination they had to perform ‘respectability’ according to bourgeois European standards” (Epprecht, 2001:1093). As such, early expressions of African nationalism had a propensity to exemplify qualities that ‘proved’ African humanity on Eurocentric terms (Epprecht, 2001:1093). The repudiation of same-sex desire among ‘real’ Africans and the celebration of exclusive heterosexual virility by African state leaders developed as a means to declare dignity before an audience that otherwise so insidiously refused it (Epprecht, 2001:1093). Contrastingly, the “counter discourse that emerged in Europe and America in the 1920s and 1930s which destigmatized homosexuality in scientific and psychological terms made little headway in Africa” (Epprecht, 2001:1093).

The argument made in this chapter is that homophobia is not an uncommon theme in debates on gender and sexuality diversity and human rights. As such, homophobia is a form of social prejudice in the lives of those who do not conform to heterosexuality. The homophobic discourses as invoked by various African state leaders exemplify that it is a form of hate speech that claims to strengthen and sustain a ‘natural’ heterosexual order for society. SWAPO leaders spearheaded a campaign of political homophobia in 1995 that claimed, amongst others, that homosexuality was unnatural and unAfrican. The adverse social, political and cultural context of Namibia, as it relates to gender and sexuality diverse people, created significant challenges for LGBT social movements. Staff members from ORN reiterated that the social, political and cultural context of Namibia was not conducive to the work of the organization. Various stakeholders within the private and public sphere were

unwilling to engage in conversation about LGBT issues due to conservative social norms and the homophobic remarks made by former President Sam Nujoma.

To conclude, when I asked my participants to describe some of the steps and measures that ORN had put in place to overcome the social, cultural and political challenges, they mentioned that the organization was in the process of strengthening ties with traditional leaders across Namibia, and sensitizing them to issues regarding LGBT people in their various communities. Further, it aimed at strengthening ties with partner organizations in the hopes of creating a united front and strengthening their advocacy strategies. The organization also wishes to strengthen their ties with various media outlets/houses to ensure that their message and their agenda to fight for fair, equal and inclusive rights and treatment are disseminated across the country.

Chapter Six

Findings and Analysis

As mentioned previously, in this chapter I will discuss the following themes: (1) how my participants use Western LGBT terminology as personal, as well as collective, identities and what the implications thereof are in an African context where such terms are not commonly known or used, and (2) how donor oriented and dependent ORN is, and what implication this has on the implementation of advocacy strategies and programs.

1. The utilization of Western LGBT terminology in the African context and Identity Work

I conducted interviews with six staff members of ORN and when I asked what ORN does to navigate themselves as advocates for gender and sexuality in Namibia, these were some of their responses. Missy*, who has been the Health and Well-being officer at ORN for two years, described how:

“They mostly do advocacy work with the community...get the community to understand themselves and give sessions to the community like the LILOs (looking in looking out) for those ones who still don’t understand their sexuality.”

Claus* who has been a Regional and Community Coordinator at ORN for two years and who self identifies as a gay man stated the following:

“Basically ORN we bring out leaflets and a lot of information to give to people who do not know what is gender and sexuality in Namibia...we basically like host meetings with politicians and traditional leaders...public health people so that the people can understand what is gender and what is sexuality of the community of the LGBTI community in Namibia...for them to at least be understood...for them not to be judged...for them to be respected...for them to be treated the same as other people of other different genders.”

Zee*, a self-identified lesbian woman, who is the Monitoring and Evaluations officer at ORN, had the following to say:

“The mandate of the organization is to cater for equality...let me just revert back to the mission statement which is to be the leading organization that creates pathway for equality and equity of gender diverse people within the country and the mandate being working for the community...the LGBT community whether it be by existing programs through HIV/AIDS

intervention or the human rights intervention whereby the equality agenda is being pushed forward.”

As such, OutRight Namibia is a social movement organization that advocates for the fair and equal treatment of LGBTI Namibian citizens. It is also the only operational LGBTI organization in Namibia. Do take note that there are various other gender and sexuality diversity organizations in the country each focusing on a particular gender and sexuality diverse group of people (e.g., transgender organizations, lesbian, etc.). The mandate of the organization is to create equality and equity for gender and sexuality diverse people in the country. Throughout the above-mentioned quotes, one can deduce that these staff members all invoked Western LGBT terminologies in their responses. According to Currier (2012:458), “Sexual decolonization becomes more complicated in a transnational context if gender and sexual dissidents use terminology or organizing strategies that seem to be imported from the global North”, and they can run into considerable challenges locally where such terminologies are not known or used. As such, Namibian activists’ use of Western LGBT terminology complicated their campaigns and advocacy strategies on gender and sexuality minority rights and protections.

Therefore, leaders from the ruling political party, SWAPO, had inferred Namibian gender and sexuality diversity activists’ use of Western LGBT collective identities in their local endeavors as grounds for gender and sexuality diverse persons cultural, racial and national inauthenticity. Furthermore, Currier (2012:458) states, “their supposed inauthenticity disqualified them from national belonging, according to SWAPO leaders”, and thus rendering gender and sexuality diverse persons as second-class Namibian citizens. One criticism gender and sexuality diverse persons often heard was that they were ‘gay for pay’, which implied that Namibian citizens only engaged in same-sex sex for money or claimed to be LGBT only to acquire money from Northern donors (Currier, 2012:458). In her study, Currier (2012:458-459) states that one of her participants had contested SWAPOs equation of same-sex

sexualities with Western interaction, but she also states that her participants had not considered how LGBT Namibians' encounters with "Western cultural artefacts may overtly or subtly influence[d] their sexual subjectivities". The latter can be seen below by the following quote from Megaman*:

Megaman*: "die trans goede het nou eers ingekom. Daai tyd van ons wat ons met Liz en Elizabeth Khaxas hierdie organisasie daai jare begin het, het ons net geweet...dis twee vroumense. Nou wat die mense die ding gegoogel het hulle daar by trans besigheid uitgekom, maar daai tyd het ons net geweet van twee vroumense."

[These trans things only came in now. Those years when we started this organization with Liz and Elizabeth Khaxas we only knew about two women. Now that people have googled this thing they came to this trans issue but that time we only knew about two women.]

Megaman*: "Ek word nie juis geïmpress van trans mense nie. Nou dat ek eers gelees het verstaan ek...ohhh is dit hierdie storie, maar ek is nie juis 'n mens van trans nie. So ek is 'n straight lesbian, want trans mense se storie is...ek het baie trans vriende. My hele mense was lesbian gewees, maar nou wat hulle hierdie ding verstaan en lees skyf hulle na trans mense toe."

[I am not really impressed by trans people. Now that I have read about it now I understand...oh it is this thing but I am not really impressed by trans people. So I am a straight lesbian because trans people's story is...I have a lot of trans friends. All my people were lesbians but now that they understand and read about this thing (transgender) now they all changed to being trans people.]

Furthermore, some Namibian gender and sexuality diverse persons were unacquainted with the Western LGBT acronym until they became involved with local gender and sexuality social movements. This is evidenced through the various local/vernacular terms that are used in Namibia to refer to gender and sexual diverse individuals, such as *eshenge*, which is an Oshivambo term that equates with the Western term 'gay':

Megaman*: "...mense wat nuut in die proses is...jy sal nog woorde kry...so ons moet maar net aanpaas en is elke dag se roetine. Meestal is ons in daai lokasies...*Wamboe* lokasie dan sal die mense vir ons in hulle taal sê *eshenge* en daai snaakse woorde. *Eshenge* is die *moffies*...daar is nog paar woorde wat hulle altyd sê."

[...people that are new in this process...you will get words...so we just have to adapt and it is a daily routine. We are mostly in those locations/townships...*Wamboe* location/township then they will call us *eshenge* and those funny words. *Eshenge* means gay...there are still some other words that they also say.]

Zee*: "...I do not have to understand Oshivambo to hear people are talking about this...I just have to hear *eshenge*...it is very important that you know that conversation...you think there is a conversation stirred up because of this...there is change. People have an understanding to say that...that there is no LGBT people but is just our English is very...they maybe know

them as *moffies* or traditional vernacular and they have been with these people for years and ages.”

Moreover, Currier (2012:459) argues that although gender and sexuality diverse persons acknowledged that their sexual desires and gender expressions did not necessarily fit the heteronormative constructions preferred by most Namibian ethnic groups, they may have lacked access to terms that described their sexual desires and/or gender expressions. As such, gender and sexuality workshops, funded by transnational and international donors, familiarized and exposed gender and sexuality diverse persons to Western LGBT terminologies. Exemplifying this is the LILO sessions, hosted by OutRight Namibia, that Missy* had reported on. Currier (2012:459) reported a similar instance where one of her participants had stated that TRP (The Rainbow Project) would invite individuals who were confused about their sexual orientation to gender and sexuality workshops.

Similarly, Lorway (2008:25) is of the opinion that gender and sexuality diverse persons utilize an array of techniques to increase ‘self-awareness’ through their active participation in programs hosted by local LGBT social movement organizations. Lorway (2008:25) refers to two interconnected technologies used to develop self-knowledge for political mobilization: “sexual identity categories” and “the coming out narrative”. Furthermore, Lorway (2008:25) states that he regards these two interconnected technologies as ‘technologies of the self’. Additionally, Lorway (2008:25), citing the work of Foucault (1997), argues that these ‘technologies of the self’ “permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain sense of liberation”.

Consequentially, these gender and sexuality identity workshops run the risk of being understood by outsiders as ORN being in the business of Westernizing gender and sexuality diverse Namibians. As is the case of SWAPOs rhetoric on homosexuality where sexual desire stands in opposition to morality, so much so that it needs to be inhibited for the ‘greater good’

of the nation, as well as in Namibia's AIDS campaign where sexual desire must be self-regulated and controlled for the welfare of public health (Lorway, 2008:27). As such, Lorway (2008:27) argues that desire is conceptualized in well-known Freudian libidinal terms. As it is that which "threatens the individual's moral aspirations toward social responsibility, and by contrast, sexual desire within the context of Namibia's gay and lesbian rights social movement is a moral practice for young 'queer' Namibians" (Lorway, 2008:27).

Paradoxically, a momentous effort is put into programs to deepen consciousness around and encourage acceptance and expression of gender and sexual desire/identity/expression, such as the gender and sexuality identity workshops offered by LGBT social movement organizations. However, Lorway (2008:27) argues that these gender and sexuality identity workshops are undergirded by a contrasting moral logic, namely that "embracing one's inner sexual desires will lead to greater self-possession and enable the individual to demand social justice" for themselves and their community. Moreover, gender and sexuality diversity social movements have the ability to alter and inform how LGBT activists and members, of such gender and sexuality social movements, understand their gender and sexuality identities. A process that Currier (2015) terms as 'identity work'. According to Currier (2015:94), 'collective identities' commonly develop naturally from the experiences, desires, emotions, and beliefs of LGBT activists.

As such, when LGBT activists consider whether collective action is achievable, they "bond over their common experiences and shared social and political critiques", and over time LGBT activists reinforce collective understandings of 'we-ness' often by distinguishing outsider/insider boundaries (Currier, 2015:94). Consequentially, these collective negotiations by LGBT activists sometimes result in identity convergence, which Currier (2015:94) defines as "the correlation of personal and collective identities".

Drawing from lesbian and gay organizing in the United States, Currier (2015:94) argues that, before joining a lesbian and gay movement, many lesbians and gay men named and vocalized their same-sex sexual desires, sometimes in a cautious manner. However, after becoming members of a lesbian and gay movement organization, these new members were encouraged to declare their personal sexual identity in an act of collective solidarity, which led to the convergence of their personal and collective identities. Currier (2015), citing the work of Snow and McAdam (2000), terms the process of an individual's modification of their personal identities, so that they correspond with the movement's collective identities, as "identity transformation". Comparable to identity convergence, identity transformation falls under a larger umbrella of identity work, which Currier (2015:94) defines as the deliberate meaning-making in which movement members participate.

Nonetheless, a different kind of identity work was developing in the context of Namibian and South African LGBT movements. According to Currier (2015:94), LGBT activists in these countries encouraged gender and sexually diverse members to embrace LGBT collective identities as their personal identities. Ironically, Currier (2015:94) states that the form of identity work developing in Namibian and South African LGBT social movements was not purely 'identity transformation', as the latter required that individual members and activists normally initiate and execute identity realignment in a bottom-up process. Paradoxically, within Namibian and South African LGBT social movement organizations, the more senior activists encouraged the realignment of new member's personal identities with collective identities, a process that developed in a top-down manner within the LGBT social movement organization. In a sense, senior activists contributed to 'manufacturing' LGBT members (Currier, 2015:94).

Nevertheless, the success of Namibian and South African LGBT social movement organizations in convincing gender and sexuality diverse individuals to embrace collective

identities, as personal identities were uneven. According to Currier (2015:94), gender and sexuality diverse individual's acceptance of Western LGBT collective identities as personal identities in Namibia and SA was not homogeneous for various reasons.

Firstly, for many gender and sexuality diverse individuals, English was not their first or second language, and as such, they did not use or have knowledge of Western LGBT identity terms. For that reason, some LGBT social movement organizations supported and hosted 'sexuality training' workshops, in which they taught individuals about Western LGBT identity terms, often in combination with discussions of indigenous/local sexuality terms to encourage gender and sexuality diverse individuals to embrace Western LGBT identity terms (Currier, 2015:94).

Secondly, in these sexuality training workshops and other movement programs, Namibian and South African LGBT activists assumed the distinctiveness and separability of LGBT identity terms from one another; one was either lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (Currier, 2015:94). Seldom would LGBT social movement organizations allow individuals to take on a combination of LGBT identity terms, such as a transgender lesbian or a transgender bisexual person. However, I did not find this to be the case during my time at OutRight Namibia:

Megaman*: "...maar ek is nie juis 'n mens van trans nie so ek is 'n straight lesbian..."

And "...ek het ook daai tyd toe ek 'n jong laaitie was gesê..."

[...but I am not a trans person so I am a straight lesbian...] and [...that time when I was a young boy I also said...]

Lastly, as Western identity terms gained traction among gender and sexuality diverse individuals and cultural recognition within the Namibian and South African context, bisexual and transgender identity terms were consigned to secondary positions within LGBT social movement organizations (Currier, 2015:95). When Currier (2015) asked a participant in her study "whom LGBT activists had labeled as a 'female transgender', if they identified as transgender, the respondent stated that he was not 'transgender' but a 'lesbian' who preferred

masculine pronouns”. I found a similar case during my interview with Megaman* when he said that he is not a transgender person but rather a ‘straight lesbian’. Thus, the related appropriation of Western LGBT identity categories in the Namibian and South African context confounds the logic that LGBT identities are separable and mutually exclusive (Currier, 2015:95). Currier (2015:95), citing Reid’s (2013) study, states that “Black South African gay communities understood themselves as ladies, not as gay or men. Similarly, some female-bodied, masculine lesbians in Namibia who belong to the Damara ethnic group identified as men though not transgender; their lesbian identity reinforced their claims to masculinity”.

Similar conflation between gender and sexuality categories and identification can also be seen in South African research with gender and sexuality counter normative individuals (Francis, 2014; Monakali, 2017; Msibi & Rudwick, 2015). The emergence of ‘global gay’ identity constructions has been the subject of much disapproval, according to Currier (2015:95). According to Currier (2015:95), the ‘global gay-identity model’ refers to the transnational diffusion of Western gay identities and culture. Furthermore, the supremacy that global gay identity constructions are afforded through the transnational prominence of Western LGBT terminology, in particular, threatens to homogenize gender and sexual minority experiences in the global North and the global South (Currier, 2015:95). This, unavoidably, decimates indigenous/local sexualities and desires by rendering them into culturally interchangeable LGBT identity terms (Currier, 2015:95). As such, Currier (2015:96) states that feminist and queer theorists “urge caution about applying western categories that may be incomplete, inapplicable or even offensive, depending on contexts and histories, to non-heteronormative gender and sexual practices in the global South”.

Although these concerns voiced by sexuality studies scholars are well-grounded, “they neither reflect how identity diffusion and reception occurs in nations in the global South nor

explain how local LGBT movements activate these identity processes” (Currier, 2015:96). Rather, it should be noted and recognized how identity strategies develop differently in gender and sexuality movements across the globe, and should also be noted how LGBT activists across the globe exercise agency in deciding whether they will use or modify Western LGBT terms, and resist monolithic assumptions about how LGBT activists should pursue identity work (Currier, 2015:96). Continuous use of the LGBT acronym conditioned activists to regard identity categories as separable and mutually exclusive (Currier, 2015:96). Namibian and South African LGBT activists have thus far pursued identity work, usually, in English, a language of (neo) colonialism (Msibi & Rudwick, 2015). One can infer that Namibian and South African LGBT activists have utilized and assumed the use of Western LGBT identities to strengthen their access to donors, international LGBT NGOs, and funding from Northern donors. The dependency of OutRight Namibia on donors will be discussed in the next section.

To conclude, I highlighted in the text how my participants invoked Western LGBT terminologies in their responses. As such, gender and sexuality workshops, funded by transnational and international donors, familiarized and exposed gender and sexuality diverse individuals to Western LGBT terminologies, such as the LILO (Looking in Looking Out) sessions, hosted by ORN. Consequentially, these gender and sexuality identity workshops run the risk of being understood by outsiders as ORN being in the business of Westernizing gender and sexuality diverse Namibians. Moreover, the utilization of Western LGBT terminology in an African context, where these terms are not commonly known or used, runs the risk of being seen as imported from the West, which in turn poses momentous difficulties on the advocacy work of LGBT social movement organizations. As such, leaders from the ruling political party, SWAPO, had understood Namibian gender and sexual diversity

activist's use of Western LGBT collective identities in their local endeavors as grounds for gender and sexual diverse individual's cultural, racial and national in-authenticity.

Furthermore, some Namibian gender and sexuality diverse persons were unacquainted with the Western LGBT acronym until they became involved with local gender and sexuality social movements. This is evidenced through the various local/vernacular terms that are used in Namibia to refer to gender and sexual diverse persons, such as, *moffie* and *eshenge*, which is an Oshivambo term that equates with the Western term 'gay'. Within these sexuality training workshops, Namibian and South African LGBT activists presumed the uniqueness and separability of LGBT identity terms from one another. Rarely would LGBT social movement organizations recommend individuals to assume a combination of LGBT identity terms, such as a transgender lesbian or transgender bisexual person. However, I did not find this to be accurate during my time at OutRight Namibia.

The emergence of 'global gay' identity constructions has been the subject of much disapproval. The 'global gay-identity model' refers to the transnational diffusion of Western gay identities and culture. Furthermore, the supremacy that global gay identity constructions are afforded through the transnational prominence of Western LGBT terminology, in particular, threatens to homogenize gender and sexual minority experiences in the global North and the global South. Thus, unavoidably, decimates indigenous/local sexualities and desires by rendering them into culturally exchangeable LGBT identity terms.

2. Foreign funding: a double-edged sword

African gender and sexuality diverse individual's use of Western LGBT terminology may have contributed to their cultural and political intelligibility with northern donors (Currier, 2012:459). However, Currier (2012:459) cautions against the possibly dis-empowering effects and dynamics that could develop from the involvement of foreign donors in the

organizing and mobilizing of gender and sexuality social movements in the global South. According to Currier (2012:459), gender and sexuality diversity social movements in the global South, who acquire funding from foreign donors, run the risk of having donors attach demands to their funding, that can “deradicalize and co-opt gender and sexuality movement organizations; organizations may also become increasingly reliant on foreign funding”.

In a context like Namibia where gender and sexuality diversity social movements are not supported and funded by local government and/or government agencies, it is not surprising that gender and sexuality diversity social movements have to acquire funding from foreign donors to ensure the viability of their organizations and to pursue their advocacy strategies. Although foreign funding is welcomed and allows for the work of ORN to continue and to prosper, it does have its downsides as foreign donors more often than not have certain ‘terms and conditions’ attached to their funding which in turn creates a dependency and (over) reliance on foreign donors. One can note how dependent and reliant ORN is on foreign funding as well as the ‘terms & conditions’ that are attached to foreign funding. The latter can be noted from the responses from Missy* and Steve* where they highlight the dependency and reliance of ORN on donors:

Missy* “Currently we are just...like I said we are relying on donors and going forward we are also looking at activities where we can also raise funds to maybe run our own programs and not have to rely so much on donors.”

Steve* “They look for funding like currently ORN is receiving...we are under grants and like a year ago we were like cut off from global fund and now by EU. So we are in the process of looking for new core funding like we want our own funding. We do not want to be under someone and have to report to someone and ask someone...we want to do this project can you please give us money and what not. So basically ORN is in the process of looking for their own core funding to do their own things.”

I asked Steve* whether ORN has much agency, in terms of project implementation and the direction and use of funds, when it comes to donor funding. This was his opinion: “It has” he responded. His response left me perplexed, as I had inferred from the above-mentioned

quotes that the organization does not have much agency when it comes to foreign funding.

When I asked him if the organization has to report back to the donor(s), Steve* responded:

“You need to report back that is why you...when it comes to donor money you have to be like very consistent with the money. You have to be very frugal with the money you cannot like spend left and right and just use money on things that you did not ask money for. So basically you have to report back and say this is what I did this is what I achieved from the money that you gave us.”

The dependency and reliance on foreign funding poses significant challenges for ORN as the organizations' advocacy strategies, programs, and the financial sustenance of its staff are all dependent on the funding from foreign donors. In responding to a question on the challenges that ORN faces due to their dependency and reliance on foreign funding, Missy* related the following:

Missy* “It is the financial part especially now that Namibia is regarded as a middle upper income country so that makes it difficult as ORN relies more on donors so that makes it difficult for us to run our programs. We want to implement other programs but because of funding we are unable to roll out these other programs. So one of the challenges is finances. Resources we do not have.”

Zee* spoke about the concerns the staff had and how the organization is limited in terms of project ideas and implementation:

“Staff turnover as well as funding those are the big challenges. I think that is one of the things that freaks out the staff and knowing that if there is no funding there is no job. Also being donor orientated you work based on what the funder wants unfortunately and you find yourself working outside your mandate because we are a LGBT organization but then we find ourselves only working for one of those letters and leave the others outside. Like you are only supposed to implement MSM and transgender things you are only HIV related...uhm focused and you are not focused on the human rights aspect. Like the one we did last year...the EU (European Union) one which was quite in the space of work of violations but for now we are quite donor funded and it limits us. I could share 10 000 ideas in a staff meeting but these things will then only come true if there is funding that speaks on these things.”

Similarly, Steve* relates that the challenges the organization faces are funding and the lack of staff. I asked Steve* what he thought the reason was for there being a lack of staff at ORN, to which he responded:

“It is because of funding. People want to be paid because you need to pay rent and you need to buy toiletries. Who in this lifetime can still work for free back in the day when the organization like started people did not really mind working for a 1000 dollars (Namibian

dollars) or for 500 dollars or maybe getting like a 200 dollars and so on. People used to walk but now these days people do not want to walk so that is the contributing factors also.”

The following response from Claus* reiterates the dependency and ‘terms and conditions’ that are attached to foreign funding. The following excerpt highlights how the dependency on foreign funding limits the organization’s direction and focus of program implementation and how this dependency, in turn, results in the organization failing to engage with its community members in a less ‘superficial’ manner:

Claus* “This organization depends on donors and when we have to get donors they also give you what you have to do... but we are failing to actually engage with the community to find out more what is lacking. We do not really understand them on a personal level to see what they are lacking because then if people have to come we just give them counselling. We say okay have you been tested? Do you want to be tested? But then we do not really get to know them...okay so what is your name? How is life treating you? Do you have a place to stay? Have you eaten last night? Are you going to school or are you unemployed? We do not really get to understand and help them on that level but we only focus on what the donors want.”

Therefore, it can be deduced that gender and sexuality diversity social movement organizations involved in sexual-decolonization efforts need to be careful and cognizant of the possibility of reproducing a neo-colonial dependency in the relationships they develop with foreign donors and LGBT activists based in the global North (Currier, 2012:459). Ironically, gender and sexuality diversity social movement organizations may have to decolonize themselves. SWAPO's 1995 public campaign on political homophobia prevented organizations like Sister Namibia, TRP (when the organization was still operational), and ORN from acquiring state funding, and thus these organizations acquired funding from foreign donors to support their projects and activities.

The Namibian government still does not financially support any gender and sexuality diversity organizations in the country, and organizations remain dependent on foreign donors to keep their doors open, implement their programs and sustain their staff financially. Furthermore, Currier (2012:460) states that regional alliances among LGBT activists continue to guide Namibian LGBT activists’ projects and guard against the intrusion of Western forces that dictate how Namibian gender and sexual diversity activism should

develop. However, due to ORNs dependency and over-reliance on foreign funding, they are not in a position to dictate to foreign donors about how they would like to spend the funds and in which direction their advocacy work should proceed. The aforementioned is evidence to the following response made by Zee*. Due to the length of her answer, I will only select certain sections of her answer that I deemed most relevant. Zee* made the following remarks:

“Unfortunately we lost Global Fund in 2017 it was the overall big funding but not just that last year 2018 we noticed that funding is being cut. You can imagine if funding is being cut it affects everything the country has been doing in the health aspect of implementation. The lesser the funds the lesser the level of implementation.”

“Then there is the gag with the USAID. So the gag thing basically you are limited from a certain level of implementation and this is with the US government and Donald Trump is one of the people that implemented the gag thing which keeps you limited...like we are not supposed to speak on abortion if we implement USAID programs or otherwise we will lose the funding. So the funding comes with all its restrictions and it is quite dangerous because again it brings us back to the mandate of the organization. The mandate is affected because then we have to implement based on what is the needs of the donor and once it becomes donor orientated you do not work towards the mandate of the organization.”

Furthermore, Zee* also highlighted how limiting certain donors can be in terms of project implementation in certain biographical locations and their target populations. This is Zee*'s account:

“With the USAID you are limited to implement in certain spaces...biographical locations. If you are based in the South you are only supposed to implement in Keetmanshoop and the Kharas region is quite big while other projects allow you to implement...when you say Kharas you are not limited to one place. It is the target that is being placed and this thing also might say that certain groups of people are not high risk although I feel everyone is at high risk. It is also that thing about going back to resensitizing the donors. You put your targets out there you need to understand when you people put medical words like key population...what do you understand by key population. Key population as some of us would say is the miners, the truck drivers and sex workers...LGBT people. So you place the key population the LGBT people also as high risk but when you do your study you let other people do your study who do not understand the LGBT people and then they come here with...oh I need targets, what is your data, how does your data look like, can I have data of your community members. Then they want data from us then they do not even understand the fact that you people call us key population but you do not even know what key population is. You only know that the organization exists. I hate donors.”

According to Currier (2012:461), some African gender and sexual diversity activists have prohibited some Western LGBT activists from speaking or taking action on their behalf. This is in part due to the fact that Western LGBT activists' actions have intensified anti-

homosexual speechmaking, violence, and harassment in some African countries. I am not aware of any similar statements made by ORN in the past and/or presently. As such, these prohibitive efforts made from several gender and sexuality diversity social movement organizations, substantiate that decolonization and sexual decolonization may take on various forms in post-independence African societies. Consequently, Currier (2012:461) states that “the co-existence of these multiple approaches to sexual decolonization indicates that decolonization is a work in progress not only in Namibia but also throughout Africa”.

Nonetheless, McKay and Angotti (2016:413) argue that powerful ties among civil society organizations, international organizations and western government officials, however, can often be a double-edged sword for local civil society organizations. Civil society organizations “gain funding and much needed political support from their international allies”, but at the same time are criticized as being replacements for western governments in national and local debates (McKay & Angotti, 2016:413).

In Namibia, between 1995 and 1997, contrasting sentiments over homosexuality in Namibia exposed the multiple and influential lobbying ties that “international queer rights networks had established with government foreign ministries that rose to support Namibia’s sexual minorities” (Lorway, 2008:80). Moreover, Lorway (2008:80) states that “the Swedish Federation of Gay and Lesbian Rights announced in a press release, that it had requested the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to launch a formal investigation into the hate speeches”. Moreover, Lorway (2008:80) states that in early 1997, the European Union had verbalized similar concerns to those expressed by the Swedish Federation over the hate speeches and their potential retraction of development funds to Namibia. During my time at the organization, I had learned that ORN had been cut off from Global Fund as well as the EU (European Union). Although the explicit hate speeches by some Namibian political leaders

has subsided in recent years, foreign donors are still wary of funding Namibian civil society organizations for various reasons, as evidenced by the following quotes.

In response to a question on what the reasons were for ORN being cut off from Global Fund and the EU (European Union), Steve* remarked:

“Because apparently in regards to Global Fund Namibia is classified as a rich country and the work that ORN is doing is not really that important that is why we were cut off. But for me like it is not about the work it is about the richness of a country. Namibia is mos like now classified as an upper middle class country so our government can fund these types of like NGOs if they really want to.”

The rumored previous mismanagement of donor funds has placed ORN in a compromising position as foreign donors are now reluctant and cautious to fund the organization. Missy* relates that:

“It (ORN) was blacklisted due to I think mismanagement of funds. So it was blacklisted by one of our donors but now it is back the relationship...the relationship is back to normal”.

Consequently, gaining access to donors has become a challenging task for the organization as reiterated by the following remarks from Missy* and Claus*:

Missy* “At this moment it is not easy given the background also of ORN. From the previous management that was blacklisted with other donors so that makes it difficult to get more funding from these donors and the situation in Namibia also.”

Claus* “From my understanding funds were accessible back then but then donors also now become strict because the NGOs in general not just ORN started also misusing funds. What they have used the fund for and what did they do...they must reconcile that. We tend to sometimes not do so we tend to use the money or staff sometime steal the money or something like that.”

The organization had been in the middle of an audit during my time at the organization.

Furthermore, Lorway (2008:81) stated that amidst “growing international disapproval and publicized threats of economic sanctions, Namibia’s economic dependence on western development aid became clearly revealed”. In reaction to this public revelation of Namibia’s economic vulnerability, SWAPO released the following press statement in 1997, which read:

“It should be noted that most of the ardent supporters of these perverts [homosexuals] are Europeans who imagine themselves the bulwarks of civilization and enlightenment. They are not only appropriating foreign ideas in our society but also destroying the local culture by hiding behind the facade of the very democracy and human rights we have created.” (Lorway, 2008:81)

Accordingly, McKay and Angotti (2016:411) state that throughout the mid- and late-2000s, anti-colonial and cultural sovereignty discourses endorsed by religious elites earlier in the decade were also invoked by political elites to contest Western aid politics and defend the countries' political sovereignty during economic and political crises. As such, African state leaders argued that "homosexuality could and should be regulated given the rights of African states and peoples to self-determination and dignity, despite their dependence on foreign aid" (McKay & Angotti, 2016:411). Hence, African state leaders commonly appropriated the language of democracy to shame Western governments and representatives for meddling in African matters.

In Namibia, SWAPO government ministers hurled verbal attacks against Namibian gays and lesbians. By conceptualizing sexuality to concatenate with concepts of national identity, human rights, democracy, and neocolonialism, Namibian state leaders "pushed 'sex' into speaking about the emergent problems of the post-colonial era and the encroachment of globalizing forces" (Lorway, 2008:81). Former President Sam Nujoma has been quoted saying that:

"The enemy is still trying to come back with sinister manoeuvres called lesbians and homosexuality and globalization...they colonized us and now they claim human rights, when we condemn and reject them...those who want to do that [practice homosexuality] must pack up and go back to Europe." (Lorway, 2008:81)

Furthermore, Lorway (2008:81) argues that homosexuality as a product of 'colonial residue' has become fundamental to Namibian state leaders' normative prescription for economic betterment from colonial and apartheid forces. Former President Sam Nujoma's address, made on arrival from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg South Africa, reiterated these sentiments. He said the following:

"We are tired of insults (from) these people. I told them they can keep their money. I told them that these political good governance, human rights, lesbians...that they want to impose on our culture...they must keep those things in Europe. Even in Namibia we have enough wealth. We have already enough meat, we are exporting meat. We have enough fish, we are

exporting fish to other countries. Now, why should we cry to these imperialists? I told them today that we don't need your money. We can develop ourselves." (Lorway, 2008:81)

According to Lorway (2008:82), citing Foucault (1982), this form of governmentality established by former President Sam Nujoma circulates through Namibian society as it "totalizes and individualizes" Namibians. As such, 'intimacy' and 'sexuality' are successfully exploited by SWAPO leaders to disseminate anxieties and suspicions throughout the Namibian society. Lorway (2008:82) states that "by casting types of sexual subjects (homosexuals) as suspected foreign objects, thereby authorizing particular forms of citizenship, anti-homosexual rhetoric both internalizes and externalizes immediate local struggles surrounding economic hardship". As such, Lorway (2008:82), citing Foucault (1982), argues that for Namibian citizens who engage in same-sex sexual practices and desires, the discourse of ideal sexual citizenship constitutes internal struggles as it "questions the status of the individual", and frames struggles against state authority. However, during the 2000s local and international civil society organizations, and representatives of western governments, started to strongly contend African state leader's claims to political sovereignty by invoking human rights discourses to express opposition to anti-LGBT legislation, and to advocate more generally for the decriminalization of same-sex sex (McKay & Angotti, 2016:412). The argument made was that anti-LGBT legislation constituted discrimination that was prohibited by international human rights treaties and national constitutions.

Ironically, Namibia is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR sets out to protect the civil and political rights of individuals (Hubbard, Lüth, Haloren, Meckler, Szoke-Burke, Aiken, Coomer, Engelbrecht, Kapere, & Ihalainen, 2015:49). The ICCPR is intentional in emphasizing commitments of non-discrimination. While sexual orientation is not explicitly stated in any provisions of the ICCPR, it does, however, make reference to 'sex', which has been understood by the Human Rights Committee as being inclusive of sexual orientation (Hubbard et al., 2015:50). Therefore,

Namibia being a signatory to the ICCPR raises the question of how gender and sexuality diverse individuals are constituted in and protected under Namibian law.

Furthermore, McKay and Angotti (2016:414) state that “ordinary citizens” have also utilized anti-homosexual discourses to condemn foreign donor priorities, as they have interpreted foreign donor priorities as out of line with their country’s development needs. As an example, Malawians condemned foreign donors for their “prioritization of the rights of homosexuals over the basic rights of all citizens to water and sanitation, food security, health, environment, and good governance” (McKay & Angotti, 2016:414). The aforementioned comes into stark contrast when one considers that, without foreign donors, local LGBT social movement organizations like ORN, most, if not all, gender and sexuality diverse individuals will not have the rights/privileges to proper and dignified health care, as in the case of my study. When I asked Steve* what perception the Namibian society and government had about the organization and the work that it does, he remarked:

“There is a lot of criticism of the work that ORN is doing and with our political spectrum there is like...barriers that contribute that makes the work of ORN very difficult but yet still the organization still stands by its mandate to fight for the rights of LGBTI people. There are some people in the different spheres that really contribute but there are also some people that denavigate the systems that is in place and the work that is being done and that is still in progress.”

Steve* had named the Ministry of Health and the Ombudsman as some of the key players in support of the work that ORN was doing:

“Like for example you can say the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health is really like one of the key players that really when it comes to uhm...Ministry of Health I can say for one uhm...we also have the Ombudsman like if you talk about government agencies and so on...you have the Ombudsman.”

However, during my time in Namibia, I had gathered through conversations and various forms of media that some individuals in the Namibian public health sector are discriminatory towards, and treat LGBTI people inappropriately when they visit public health centers. When

I posed this perception about the Namibian public health sector and its attitude towards and treatment of LGBTI people to Steve*, he remarked:

“...you will find when you go say for example if a transgender is now going to hospital and you are being helped...you do not know...you might be helped by a sister which really understands or know or does not really care because you are human. Then you will find someone who...maybe you are being helped by someone which is discriminating or maybe you will have someone that is imbalanced. Who will help you but will also discriminate against you but the work is being done around that. I for one...I have seen that and I have heard that at a clinic or hospital it is like that. You will see it is happening.”

I asked Steve* if he had ever been in the unfortunate position of experiencing any discrimination or mistreatment at a public health facility, to which he answered “No”, but Megaman* unfortunately, was not as lucky as he had told me about an unfortunate incident that happened a few years ago while he was still working at UNAM (University of Namibia). He related how, after work, he got onto his bicycle and left for home when he was driven over by a motor vehicle. The ambulance had taken him to the nearest public hospital for treatment, however, he recalls that the two nurses on duty that day had neglected to treat him on arrival and rather stared at him and asked whether he was a man or a woman. Fortunately, a transgender nurse that Megaman* knew personally was also on duty that day and she took his case over and treated him. Similarly, Megaman* tells of an incident where he again was confronted by nurses at a public health clinic when he went for a pap smear. He tells that the nurses again questioned whether he was a man or not and why he had come for a pap smear, nonetheless, he related that the nurses had attended to him.

Similarly, Claus* also had the following to say about the difficulties the organization and local LGBTI people face in respect to accessing proper and dignified public health care:

“Our organization has different types of projects that we deal actually with LGBT people that we link to health care...we do have other stakeholders that we can refer our clients to go to but then we also have public health clinics which are government clinics which of course are for everyone. The nurses there...or let me say health workers there are not trained on LGBT health issues and genders and what. So we end up like referring clients that side and they are being asked inappropriate questions which leads to clients just to leave. The health worker that side is asking me how I end up having things on my anus. Am I getting inserted in the

anus or something like that and this nurse is not even having the privacy or confidentiality...talking in front of maybe colleagues or other patients.”

The organization has a drop-in clinic/center on the office premises, however, during my time at the organization the nurse I met had initially been there full time for a few weeks, thereafter I did not see any nurse at the office nor did I ever see anyone come into the drop-in center for medical/health assistance. I asked Claus* if the drop-in center had the necessary equipment and facilities to treat people. This was his response:

“No it does have. It is set up to help people like I said we have clinics like our drop in center that specifically deal with the KP (key population) people. Like the LGBT people and most people that comes here are people that are out because this organization or this office here is a LGBT community and so...so you get people who are not out that do not feel like to be seen walking in here. Then the people will see that ‘oh why is this person going in there? Is this person also gay?’ So they will rather prefer to go to a public health clinic.”

The abovementioned quotes from my participants, in relation to the difficulty gender and sexuality diverse individuals face in regards to health care, clearly illustrates a case of basic human rights being violated, such as proper and dignified access to public health. According to Reygan (2017:26), writing for The Other Foundation, LGBTI persons in Namibia “experience verbal abuse from medical professionals and have concerns about confidentiality”. As such, LGBTI persons often are denied access to healthcare and/or avoid seeking medical intervention due to fears of being victimized and stigmatized by health professionals.

Furthermore, civil society organizations and NGOs run the risk of perpetuating a discourse of neo-colonialism when they accept funding and help from foreign donors. De Vos (2015:47) argues that the manner in which some African countries discriminate against gender and sexuality diverse individuals, as depicted in some parts of the western media and by some human rights activists fighting against the oppression and discrimination of gender and sexuality diverse individuals, may strengthen perceptions that the demands to respect the

rights of gender and sexuality diverse persons are part of a neo-colonial project and fundamentally racist.

As such, De Vos (2015:47) states that this “dynamic is not only at play when the human rights discourse is invoked to challenge discrimination against sexual minorities, but it remains one of the most potent arguments against the deployment of human rights in defense of sexual minorities”. Therefore, the human rights corpus falls within the historical continuum of the Eurocentric colonial project, in which De Vos (2015:47), citing Mutua (2002), states that “actors are cast into superior and subordinate positions”. De Vos (2015:47), citing Mutua (2002), states that the entire human rights discourse, invoked by Western governments and organizations, is underlined by a “ ‘grand narrative’ in which they pit ‘savages’ against ‘victims’ and ‘saviours’ ”. It is within this “grand narrative” that western governments and organizations take on the role of the patronizing “saviour” of a minority of victims (members of the sexual minority) (De Vos, 2015:47). As such, it can be argued that western governments and organizations thus present “African governments and the majority of their citizens as ‘savages’ who do not respect the most basic rights of their fellow citizens and need to be reprimanded and corrected by western governments and NGOs in order to help protect the innocent victims of this ‘barbarism’” (De Vos, 2015:47).

When gender and sexuality diverse persons are portrayed as a representation for all the “geopolitical and moral evils besetting the nation, for derailing economic and spiritual advancement, and darkening the future” (De Vos, 2015:47-48), then gender and sexuality diverse persons can also be portrayed as existing outside the borders of citizenship or even humanity, and thus not entitled to rights. Moreover, when human rights are used as part of a neo-colonial project to denigrate Africans as ‘savages’, then arguments can be made that “those who defend the rights of sexual minorities are merely patronising, meddling ‘saviours’ of the supposed victims on the receiving end of ‘African savagery’” (De Vos,

2015:48), and it becomes politically challenging to invoke the human rights discourse in the struggle against the oppression of sexual minorities.

In bringing this chapter to a close, let me sum up the key themes. First, African gender and sexuality diverse persons use of Western LGBT terminology may have added to their cultural and political intelligibility with foreign donors. However, it should be noted that there are possibly dis-empowering effects and dynamics that could develop from the involvement of foreign donors in the organizing and mobilizing of gender and sexuality social movements in the global South. As such, gender and sexuality diversity social movements in the global South, who acquire funding from foreign donors, run the risk of having donors attach demands/terms and conditions to their funding, that can deter the direction and intent of gender and sexuality movement organizations, and organizations may also become progressively reliant on foreign funding.

Second, in a context like Namibia where gender and sexuality diversity social movements are not supported and funded by local government and/or government agencies, it is not surprising that gender and sexuality diversity social movements have to acquire funding from foreign donors to ensure the viability of their organizations and to pursue their advocacy strategies. Although foreign funding is welcomed and allows for the work of ORN to continue and to prosper it does have its downside as foreign donors more often than not have certain 'terms and conditions' attached to their funding which in turn creates a sort of dependency and (over) reliance on foreign donors. The dependency and reliance on foreign funding poses significant challenges for OutRight Namibia as the organization's advocacy strategies, programs, and the financial sustenance of its staff are all dependent on the funding from foreign donors.

Third, foreign funding can be a double-edged sword for many gender and sexuality diversity movements, but not all is doom and gloom. With the funding obtained from foreign donors, ORN managed to support victims of human rights violations through grants. The organization also organizes activities for the local LGBT community and provides free HIV/AIDS testing and counseling services through their partner organization, Lifeline Childline.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This research study has attempted to address four critical research questions; (1) How does ORN, a LGBT NGO, navigate themselves as gender and sexuality diversity advocates in Namibia?, (2) How does the social, cultural and political context of Namibia enable/constrain the advocacy work of ORN, on gender and sexuality diversity?, (3) What does ORN say they need for the strengthening of their work on gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia?, and (4) What are the implications of conducting ethnographic research in a context of adversity (Namibia)? The first three critical questions and its subsidiary questions have been addressed substantively in chapters five and six, however, I will continue to give brief concluding remarks here.

The findings from this research study are as follows: OutRight Namibia is the only operational LGBT NGO in Namibia. The organization was established in 2010 with the purpose of ensuring that gender and sexuality diverse Namibians were not regarded as ‘second class’ citizens. The mandate of the organization is to create and advocate for equality and equity of gender and sexuality diverse persons within Namibia. As such, ORN regards themselves as advocates for gender and sexuality diversity in Namibia. The organization is also very much a community-based organization whereby they implement advocacy programs within the local LGBT community, such as their gender and sexuality workshops deemed LILO (looking in looking out) sessions, which are designed to help and support individuals who are unsure about their gender and sexual identities. Furthermore, the organization implements and hosts various sensitization workshops with local stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Health and Social Services, Ministry of Education, Traditional Leaders Authority and religious institutions.

Furthermore, homophobia is not uncommon in discourses on gender and sexuality diversity and human rights, and as such can be viewed as a form of social prejudice in the lives of gender and sexuality diverse persons. As such, homophobic discourses, as invoked by various African state leaders, exemplify hate speech used to strengthen and preserve a ‘natural’ heterosexual order in society. Namibian state leaders from the ruling political party, SWAPO, launched a campaign of political homophobia in 1995 that declared homosexuality unnatural and unAfrican. As a result, this led to an adverse social, cultural and political landscape in Namibia as it relates to gender and sexuality diverse persons.

The adverse social, political and cultural context of Namibia created significant challenges for OutRight Namibia. Staff members from ORN reiterated that the social, political and cultural context of Namibia was not conducive to the work of the organization, as various stakeholders within the private and public sphere were unwilling to engage in conversation about LGBT issues due to conservative social norms and the homophobic remarks made by former President Sam Nujoma.

Moreover, in a context like Namibia, where gender and sexuality diversity social movements are not supported and funded by local government and/or government agencies, OutRight Namibia has to obtain funding from foreign donors to ensure the viability of the organization and to pursue their advocacy strategies. Although foreign funding is welcomed and allows for the work of ORN to continue and to prosper, it does have its downsides as foreign donors often have certain ‘terms and conditions’ attached to their funding. This, in turn, creates a form of dependency and (over) reliance on foreign donors. The dependency and reliance on foreign funding poses significant challenges for OutRight Namibia as the organizations’ advocacy strategies, programs, and the financial sustenance of its staff are all dependent on the funding from foreign donors.

To remedy the uncondusive social, political and cultural context of Namibia, the organization had implemented various steps and measures, such as strengthening ties with traditional leaders across Namibia and sensitizing them on issues regarding LGBT people in their various communities. The organization was also in the process of strengthening ties with partner organizations in the hopes of creating a united front and strengthening their advocacy strategies. Moreover, OutRight Namibia also wishes to strengthen their ties with various media outlets/houses to ensure that their message and their agenda to fight for fair, equal and inclusive rights and treatment of gender and sexuality diverse persons is disseminated across the country.

What is more, I have argued that foreign funding can be a double-edged sword for OutRight Namibia, and many other gender and sexuality diversity movements. Staff members from ORN have reiterated that foreign funding has various conditions and limitations attached to it, but at the same time, foreign funding has made it possible for the organization to support victims of human rights violations, organize activities for the local LGBT community and provide free HIV/AIDS testing and counseling services.

The fourth critical question I will address here. In answering this question, I will reflect on what it means to do ethnographic research in the context of adversity. When I use the word adversity I am referring to the fact that gender and sexuality diverse persons are not included and/or protected under Namibian legislation, and although it can be argued that homosexuality is not criminalized in Namibia, the Sodomy Act, however, is still written into the Namibian Constitution. Furthermore, although Namibia is presently not as outspoken and violent towards gender and sexuality diverse people, one cannot ignore the lived realities of

gender and sexuality diverse people, and it would be irresponsible to say that the condition is ‘not as bad as in other African countries’.

As a novice researcher wanting to do an ethnographic study on a LGBT NGO in Namibia, I had to gain ethical clearance from the Ministry of Health and Social Services of Namibia as ‘any research done on human subjects’ had to be cleared by the Ministry of Health and Social Services. It is ironic that I had to apply for ethical clearance from a government institution when my research was based on a non-governmental organization. Nonetheless, I filled out the forms and handed it in at the offices of the Ministry of Health and Social Services. The secretary told me that I should expect an answer within the next month, which would have been August 2018. After about three weeks, I called the Ministry of Health and Social Services to enquire about my application and was told that my application had been lost and I had to re-apply.

I finally gained inter-country clearance on November 30th, 2018 after struggling for several months. Gaining inter-country clearance greatly delayed the research process and I only had about three months to do fieldwork, whereas I had initially planned to do six months of fieldwork. I would like to believe that had I been given the opportunity to do fieldwork for six months this study could have yielded much richer results as I would have been able to delve deeper into the complexities and intricacies of the organization and its people.

Furthermore, I deem it important to reiterate that at no point during my time at the organizations’ offices and during the Pride March, in Windhoek, was my life or the lives of my participants in any danger. In fact, we had police escorts during the Pride March in Windhoek, not because we were a threat but rather for our safety as the march took place on public roads. Moreover, I was never at risk of prosecution of any kind. That being said and to answer my fourth critical question; there is not any life-threatening implications when

conducting research in an adverse context like Namibia, at least there were none for me as the researcher. I still use the word adverse to describe the context of Namibia because I strongly stand by my point that, although no harm or threat had come to me, I cannot speak for others. It would be irresponsible, insensitive and ignorant for me to say that the condition is not as bad as in other countries. I cannot take away from the real and lived experiences of gender and sexuality diverse persons in Namibia. Homophobia, discrimination, stigma, and trauma are still very prevalent in the everyday experience of gender and sexuality diverse persons and cannot be ignored. My reality is not their reality.

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