The Interplay between Fatherhood and Male Identity in Family Life among the Ovawambo of Namibia: A Pastoral Hermeneutical Approach

By

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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Theology

at the University of Stellenbosch

UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY

December 2013

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety, or in part, been submitted at any university for a degree.

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Abstract

The goal of this study was to investigate the driving force behind family conflicts, its relation to change in gender roles, male power abuse, and their impact on Ovawambo family life.

Firstly, this research indicates that Ovawambo males are trained to be breadwinners, heads of families, owners of family properties, supervisors for their wives and children, and protectors of their families and the entire community. Secondly, the research indicates that both have also influenced the masculine identity of these males. The missionaries, as well as colonialism, promoted Western patriarchy, justified male dominance and reinforced the power of the male as the head of the family and exclusive holder of authority in the family, community and the state. The direct and indirect participation of men in the struggle for Namibian independence also possibly influenced them to apply power and threats. However, this study also indicates that Ovawambo males are under the influence of the modern mass media, which reflect and reinforce gender stereotypes and portray males as controlling or leading characters who tend to dominate women in relationships. Thirdly, this study indicates that the rapid socio-economic and political change, which took place in Namibia after independence, also directly affected Ovawambo male and female relationships. Through law reforms, gender roles were redefined and laws for gender equality were introduced. These laws (the Married Persons' Equality Act, Family Law on Rape and Domestic Violence and Maintenance Act) challenged the male-dominant norms; thus, the men feel that law reforms favoured only the women.

The second purpose of this study was to examine whether a pastoral-anthropological and theological understanding of God's vulnerability could help pastoral care to address the problem of the Ovawambo male identity within the cultural setting of Namibian males and the notion of power abuse.

In order to reframe male identity through a theological understanding of God's power, the researcher selected the *theopaschitic* interpretation of the theology of the cross. The *theopaschitic* approach renders God's power, in terms of the Pauline notion of *astheneia*, as weakness and compassionate vulnerability. The value of *theopaschitic* thinking, in terms of God's praxis, is based on a shift from the substantial approach in theological reflection to the relational and encounter paradigm. Through appropriate understanding of the fatherhood of God, Ovawambo men can appreciate their power and ability to enrich relationships, rather than destroy. It is argued that, the power of God interpreted as "weakness" and

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"vulnerability", can contribute to a paradigm change in the interpretation of male identity within the cultural setting of the Ovawambo. The paradigm shift emanating from this theological understanding of power, is from "threat power" (the need to control, to abuse, to dominate) to "intimate power" (the need to comfort, to be compassionate and understanding and to bestow intimacy and love within the dynamics of family and social relationships).

The study concluded that the church has a major role to play in helping families to survive the intrusiveness of modern family crises through a holistic systematic pastoral care model. The pastoral ministry of the church should help men to shift from selfishness, enmeshment, domination, dissociation and rejection, towards a healing family environment wherein intimacy, caring, trust, openness, understanding, supportive guidance and respect prevail. The church should fulfil this through models for relational, educational and therapeutic family enrichment programs. Pastoral care is one of the basic ways to promote, not only physical, but also spiritual well-being. It has been argued that an understanding of God's power in terms of a *theopaschitic* interpretation of a *theologia crucis* can play a fundamental role as regards a theological reframing of the existing patriarchal and hierarchical paradigms. Instead of male dominance, a disposition and attitude of compassionate intimacy is proposed. Such a disposition should reflect a kind of *diakonia* position within the dynamics of family life. In terms of a Christian spiritual understanding of fatherhood, males should represent the sacrificial ethics of *diakonic* outreach as well as a stance of unconditional love.

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Opsomming

Die hoofdoel van die studie is om daardie faktore wat aanleiding gee tot gesinskonflik binne die kultuurkonteks van die Ovavambo te bepaal. Wat is die verband tussen gesinskonflik en gender-rolfunksies, die tradisionele siening van manlikheid en die geweldsfaktor (magsmisbruik) en die invloed hiervan op gesinsinteraksie?

Die navorsing dui aan dat Ovavambo mans binne die kultuurtradisie opgevoed word wat daartoe lei dat gevestigde idees oor manlike rolfunksies vasgelê word.

(a) Die rolfunksie van die man is om broodwinner te wees; die man is die hoof van die gesin; die eienaar van familie-eiendom; die een wat toesig hou oor vrou en kinders; optree as beskermheer van die gesin asook van die hele gemeenskap.

(b) Die konsep van patriargaat bepaal deurslaggewend manlikheid en identiteit. Hierdie perspektief is verder aangewakker en versterk deur sendelinge wat binne die raamwerk van Westerse kolonialisme geopereer het. ‘n Westerse verstaan van die patriargaat het daartoe bygedra dat manlike dominansie gepropageer is sodat die man steeds die oorheersende faktor in gesinsaangeleenthede gebly het. Gesag is eksklusief gesetel in manlike funksies in beide die gesin, en gemeenskapstrukture. Die feit dat mans die oorheersende rol in die stryd vir onafhanklikheid in Namibië gespeel het, het verder die persepsie versterk dat mans die leiersfigure in die samelewing is en aldus, direk en indirek, met gesag beklee is.

Die studie dui verder aan dat Ovavambomans sterk deur die hedendaagse massa-media beïnvloed is. Die media projekteer manlike stereotipes wat daartoe bydra dat vroue steeds in ‘n ondersgekikte rol gesien word. Die man word voorgestel as die dominante figuur in verhoudingsaangeleenthede.

Dit blyk voorts dat ingrypende verskuiwings op sosio-ekonomiese gebied en radikale veranderinge binne politieke stelsels na die onafhanklikheidswording van Namibië, ‘n direkte invloed op die man-vrouverhoudings in die Ovavambokultuur gehad het. Wetlike hervormings het gender-rolfunksies sterk bepaal. Op juridiese gebied is gender-gelykheid wetlik verskans. Nuwe wette rakende gelykwaardigheid en gelykheid, gesinswette oor verkragting en gesinsgeweld, het bestaande geykte norme oor manlike oorheersing gedekonstrueer. Dit het daartoe gelei dat mans al meer bedreig begin voel het en van mening was dat die nuwe wette eintlik net vrouens bevoordeel.

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‘n Verdere doel van die studie was om te bepaal wat die moontlike impak van ‘n pastorale antropologie kan wees op die proses om stereotipe persepsies oor manlikheid te verander. Die teologiese vraagstuk duik dan op of ‘n bepaalde Godskonsep daartoe kan bydra om kultuur-paradigmas oor manlikheid te wysig.

Daar word gekies vir ‘n teopasgitiese benadering tot die Godssvestaan met ‘n besondere voorkeur vir die weerloosheid van God as teologies-paradigmatiese raamwerk vir die verstaan van gesag en mag. Die hipotese word ondersoek dat ‘n dergelike Godsverstaan manlike indentiteit kan verskuif vanaf patriargale oorheersing na ‘n liefdesintimiteit wat manlikheid transponeer na deernisvolle sensitiwiteit. Manlike identiteit word dan bepaal deur ‘n kruishermeneutiek; mag word geherdefinieer deur medelye en deernisvolle omgee vir die weerloosheid van die ander. Binne hierdie hermeneutiek speel die Pauliniese konsep van die swakheid (*astheneia*) van God ‘n deurslaggewende rol.

Die waarde van die teopasgitiese paradigma in die gender-debat is dat dit die fokus vir ‘n Godsverstaan verskuif vanaf ‘n substansiële interpretasieraamwerk na ‘n relasionele en ontmoetingsparadigma. Die praxis van God en die Vaderskap van God moet dan nie in terme van kultuurkonvensies oor manlikheid en vroulikheid bepaal word nie, maar in terme van ‘n teopasgitiese verstaan van mag as medelye. Hierdie teologiese konstruk kan aangewend word om die patriargaat te deurbreek en manlikheid binne die kultuurkonvensies van die Ovavambo te help herdefinieer. Ovavambomans kan dan manlikheid gebruik om verhoudinge te verryk en die vrou te bemagtig in plaas daarvan om die vrou te verkneg en op geweldadige wyse to oorheers.

Die waarde van ‘n kruisteologie is dat dit die paradigmatiese raamwerk aangaande mag verskuif vanaf ‘n bedreigende magspel na ‘n verrykende intimiteitspel. Dominering maak plek vir medelye; magsmisbruik maak plek vir deernis, intimiteit en omgee (sorg). Die teopasgitiese skema van interpretasie kan van toepasing gemaak word op alle vorme van menseverhoudinge, ook in die sosiale lewensbestel.

Die studie konkludeer dat binne die voorgestelde, teologiese verstaan van mag, die kerklike bediening ‘n belangrike rol kan speel om deur middel van gesinspastoraat, en veral gesinsverrykingsprogramme, die vraagstuk van manlike oorheersing aan te spreek. Vir dié doel moet gesinpastoraat gebruik maak van ‘n sistemiese gesinsmodel ten einde die hedendaagse sogenaamde gesinskrisis aan te spreek. Gesinsbediening en gesinspastoraat het

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ten doel om die man te laat skuif vanaf selfsugtigheid, ‘n dominerende houding wat andere versmoor, ontrekking en uitbuiting en verwerping, na intimiteit, sorg, vertroue, openhartigheid, begrip, ondersteunende begeleiding en respek. Op hierdie wyse kan mans daartoe bydra om die gesin weer heel en gesond te maak. Dit is dan ook die rede waarom die navorsing die aanbied van gesinsverrykingsprogramme sterk wil propageer. Dergelike programme moet dan naas die fisieke en sosiale behoeftes binne gesinsverband veral ook die spirituele dimensie van gesinsinteraksie bevorder.

Met verwysing na die rol van ‘n *theologia crucis*, is dit die tese van die navoring dat mans ‘n *diakonia*-posise en omgee-houding sal internaliseer ten einde uit te reik na al die fasette van gesinsbehoeftes. Vaderskap moet die offerkarakter van die kruisliefde demonstreer en aldus ‘n etos van opoffering in plaas van manipulering en hiërargiese oorheering reflekteer. ‘n *Diakonia*-posisie inkarneer die werklikheid van ‘n kruis-intimiteit, naamlik onvoorwaardelike liefde.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank God Almighty for his protection and guidance that enabled me to complete this thesis. He granted me the opportunity to study at the Stellenbosch University.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Daniel J. Louw and thank him profusely for his wisdom and loving guidance that gave me insight and helped me to be aware of the grace of God.

I am grateful to my Church, ELCIN, for offering me this chance, as well as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for supporting my studies.

I also wish to express a special word of thanks to my wife, Anneli, my parents and friends for their patience, encouragement, support and prayers. A further special word of thanks to my children, Johannelis Twapandula Gratia and Nicky-Peter Tunekwatho, to whom I am also indebted for their patience, encouragement and prayers.

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ACRONYMS

AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BDPFA:	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
ELCIN:	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia
ESV:	English Standard Version
FMS:	Finnish Missionary Society
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IBACP:	Independent Broadcasting Authority Code of Practice
IMAGES:	International Men and Gender Equality Survey
MDG:	Millennium Development Goals
MTV:	Music Television
NEPAD:	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NRSV:	New Revised Standard Version
NUNW:	National Union of Namibian Workers
NWV:	Namibian Women's Voice
PSDA:	Pastoral Semantic Differential Analysis
PSD:	Pastoral Semantic Differential
SADC:	Southern Africa Development Community
SADF:	South African Defence Force
SARDC:	Southern African Research and Documentation Centre
SWANLA:	South West Africa Labour Association
SWAPO:	South West Africa People's Organization
SWC:	SWAPO Women's Council
UNAM:	University of Namibia

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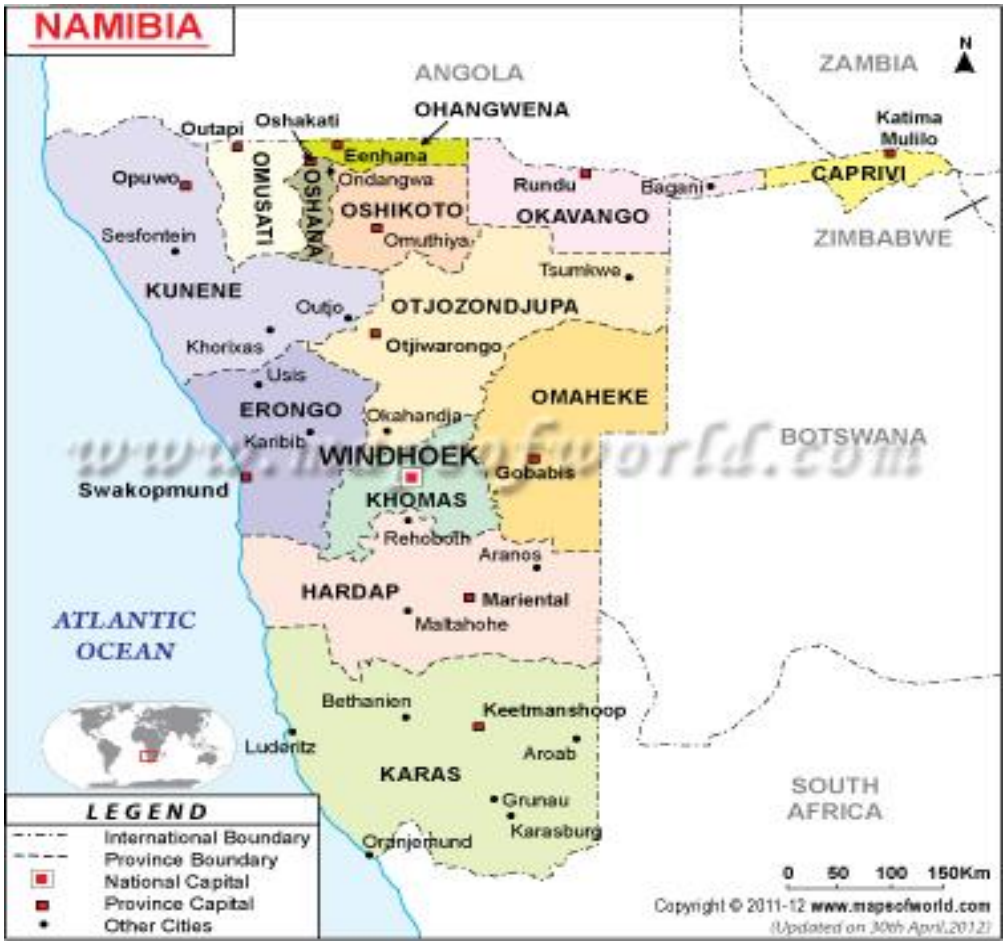
MAP OF NAMIBIA



Map of Namibia showing its 13 regions that include the four northern regions that comprise Ovamboland, i.e. Oshikoto, Ohangwena, Oshana, and Omusati.

From http://www.mapsofworld.com/namibia/namibia-political-map.html

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Problem Identification

Ovamboland is located on either side of the Namibian and Angolan border, and between the southern border of Angola and the Etosha National Park. According to Bantu legends and myths, the Ovawambo people were part of the Bantu movement from the north-east to the south-west parts of Africa. They are "closely related to the matrilineal agriculturalists of Central Africa". It is believed that the Ovawambo people moved from eastern Africa to their present location in northern Namibia and southern Angola. However, it is not clear how they arrived in this territory. Some believe that they came from the north-east over the Zambezi and Kavango Rivers westwards, while other historians claim that they arrived in the area as one group (Malan 1995:15, cited in Buys & Nambala 2003:xxxiii). Their presence in both Namibia and Angola was the result of an agreement on 30 December 1886 between the German and Portuguese governments regarding the international border of northern Namibia that split the Ovawambo people (especially the Ovakwanyama tribe) into two parts (Buys & Nambala 2003:xxxiii; Tötemeyer 1978:1).

Their neighbours, the Herero people, probably named them "Ovawambo," which derives from the word *ovayamba* that means "rich people" (Tuupainen 1970:12; Buys & Nambala 2003:xxxiii). Ovawambo (in Oshikwanyama) is also spelled Aawambo (in Oshindonga). While Ovawambo is commonly used to refer to the people, Ovambo refers to the land where the Ovawambo live, for example Ovamboland. One can also use term, Ovambo, in relation to a person in the singular, for example, an Ovambo man or woman, while in the plural Ovawambo denotes men or women. Oshivambo refers to the language spoken by the Ovawambo and to any type of property, for example, an Oshivambo name or Oshivambo culture. Ovambo is a collective name for eight different Ovawambo tribes, namely Kwanyama, Ndonga, Kwambi, Ngandjera, Mbalantu, Kwaluudhi, Nkolonkadhi and Mbandja. Each of these eight tribes has its own dialect, but much of the literature designated as Oshivambo is written in Oshindonga (Ndonga) and Oshikwanyama, although the various dialects (except Kwanyama) are closely related (Malan 1995:14,17). The majority of the Ovawambo adopted the Christian faith through the work of missionaries from Finland (Buys

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& Nambala 2003:xxxiii; Munyika 2004:141). After Namibia's independence in 1990, Ovamboland was divided into four regions, i.e. Oshana, Oshikoto, Omusati and Ohangwena.

The Ovawambo family follows a matrilineal[1] descent. Kinship is determined through the mother's clan; hence, children belong solely to their mother. Clan properties are controlled within a lineage and, when a man dies, his younger brother or his sister's son inherits most of the valuable property, especially the cattle. His biological children inherit nothing, because they belong to their mother's family.[2] However, the persistent question remains is: Why does the role of the fathers remain so important in Ovamboland, where the matrilineal system plays a major role? Perhaps this is so because fathers' access to certain types of wealth and resources is basic to their fatherhood, manhood, headship of the family and dominant position. In Ovambo family life, equality between a husband and wife is nonexistent. Those with authority are not the women, but the men who exist in a matrilineal relationship with their kinsmen. Hence, it is not the father, but the mother's brother who plays the central role in the children's lives. Sons are the heirs-to-be of their maternal uncle, therefore they always obey his authority (Malan 1995:18). This point will be expounded in the next chapter.

However, in Ovamboland, male initiation ceremonies *(epitotanda)*, long-distance trade, Christianity, colonization and war, and political centralization in the 19th century have redefined masculinity.[3] For many centuries, most Ovawambo men performed three main roles, that is, they provided meat by means of hunting, protected the village and the family,[4] and initiated and educated the boys. In spite of this, by early in the 20th century, the missionaries, colonial officials and labour recruiters challenged the fathers' role by attacking the dominant ideas of masculinity. Therefore, in the Ovambo society, the early 20th century was a time of crisis as regards male authority and masculinity.

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[1] According to Tuupainen (1970:32), in the matrilineal family system, children belong to their mother's clan not their father's; therefore, they have the right to inherit her property.

[2] Among the Ovawambo, the word "family" does not stand for father, mother and children as the Western world interprets it. It refers to a kinship unit that includes a mother, her children, brothers, and sisters and her sisters' children (Kanana 2000:36).

[3] "Masculine roles" refers to roles and behaviours that are considered appropriate to males, or roles and behaviours that are culturally assigned to men. Masculinity is also sometimes used to speak about male characteristics that, in some cultures, include being aggressive, athletic, physically active, logical and dominant in social relationships with females (Thompson & Hickey 1996:169).

[4]According to Olson and Leonard (1996:25-25), the concept of family refers to "any network of two or more people linked over time emotionally and usually biologically and legally, sharing such things as home, spiritual and material resources, interpersonal care giving, memory, common agenda, and aspirations." The central idea of a sociological analysis of the family shows that, "Families are a system of social relationships that emerge in response to social conditions and that, in turn, shape the future direction of society" (Taylor 2004:410,419).

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After Namibia's independence in 1990, the government made several efforts to strengthen women's rights by passing gender-based laws. In the mean time, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare was also established in 2000 with the aim of guaranteeing equality between men and women. By means of this ministry, women were empowered to participate in political, legal, social, cultural and economic development. However, traditional attitudes and gender stereotyping continued to be the main source of discrimination against women. Therefore, the Namibian government introduced the Domestic Violence Act, the Maintenance Act, and the Marriage Act (Hubbard 2007:209-210).[5]

Although the government implemented these laws, men began to react to the laws and to the socio-economic changes that they experienced. They felt that their power and position as breadwinners and heads of the families were being threatened. Although traditional male roles gave men the upper hand in past decades, current socio-economic and political changes caused them to question their identity and role within the family. This uncertainty is as a result of the current clash between traditional views of masculinity and cultural changes that include a drastic transition and shift in long-held beliefs in Oshivambo culture to new portrayals of manhood. In most men, this change has caused fear, anxiety and confusion about their manhood, masculinity and sexuality, and has also resulted in negative reactions, such as denial, ignorance, isolation, anger, resistance, and resentment. These reactions have serious effects, such as oppression, suppression, violence, and negative control on family life.

During his pastoral ministry in Ovamboland since 2000, the researcher observed a good number of Christian men who have entered into polygamous marriages, as well as an increase in cases of divorce, remarriages, unsettled disputes within marriages and families, unmarried women with children from married men, unhealthy relationships between married couples and live-in partners, and also between parents and their children. Most children live under poor conditions as their fathers neglect them. Domestic violence against women and children, including rape and forced sex, is experienced in many households and most migrant labourers find it hard to feed and care for their children, as well as those of other women in their extra-marital relationships; consequently, many men in Ovamboland experience depression and confusion; this results in them violating women's rights and dignity. Some men even murder their wives and children before committing suicide.

[5] Some of these laws will be examined in Chapter 4.

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As we have learnt, Ovawambo males defined their manhood through the various roles that they perform in their families and in society at large. However, one is tempted to say that, in the 21st century, men have found themselves in crises more than ever before. What is the root cause of the male crises? The dramatic changes in women's status, the workplace, and traditional roles have caused most Ovawambo men to live in a state of confusion, disillusionment, anger and frustration. They experience crises because their present situation contradicts the way they were brought up and because the mass media perpetuate gender stereotypes. They become confused because of losing what they believe makes them real men; they also feel disempowered and feel that they have lost social value and self-esteem. The high rate of unemployment and a low income also render many men incapable of fulfilling their social and family roles and expectations.

The current tension between their paternal and maternal relatives also confuses most Ovawambo men. On the one hand, with the current social change, men are expected to support their wives and children while, on the other hand, the old cultural habits based on the matrilineal system compel them to support their sisters and their sisters' children. Some men also experience problems when they retire. If they can no longer support their wives and children as before, when they were employed, the wives could discourage the children from supporting their fathers. In such situations, some men seek help from their maternal relatives. Although the Ovambo society has moved slowly from their matrilineal system towards patriarchy, the inclination towards the matriarchal system remains strong.

However, power abuse is the driving force behind many family crises in Ovamboland. This includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual discrimination, as well as child abuse and neglect. Sometimes, men exercise power to maintain the privileges of male authority. Therefore, women often feel manipulated, overpowered, controlled and oppressed. Consequently, women and children live in fear, confusion and hopelessness. So, power has become a tool used to violate Christian marriages, family health, peace and happiness.

Another habit that fuels this violent attitude is gender stereotypes. Some men view non-violent, sensitive and caring behaviour as being feminine, equal to cowardice (*uukatalume*) in the Oshivambo culture.

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Today's grave threats to family life among the Ovawambo include an increase in the prevalence of violence against women and children, gender stereotypes, rape, HIV/Aids, and a lack of unconditional love within families. However, the HIV stigma and discrimination, domestic and gender violence, and abusive sexual relationships are currently the major contributors to family crises among the Ovawambo (as described in chapter 4). Moreover, power abuse and its impact on family life result in the violation of human rights and dignity of the abuser's family members. Therefore, violence against women and children could be viewed as the result of changes in socio-economic conditions and social roles, which have caused dramatic changes in the cultural Ovambo family life. Men have become confused about their traditional and social roles, as well as the definition of manhood and fatherhood.

The question arises: What can the church do to ensure that the family remains the place *par excellence* of harmony, unconditional love and peace? What can the church do to recreate a positive environment for family life among the Ovawambo? In Namibia, the urgent challenge for churches is to act with renewed vision and energy towards family wellbeing, gender justice[6] and a healthy partnership between the men and other family members. Moreover, one could say that patriarchy,[7] based on hegemonic masculinity[8] and power abuse as a result of socio-economic changes in the family setting, is the most serious family issue that requires urgent pastoral attention among the Ovawambo.

With reference to the fact that, within the cultural setting of Namibia, patriarchy and the hegemonic paradigm are dominating males' self-understanding to a large extent, one could ask the following question: How can men cope and survive in this ever-shifting environment of cultural expectations? Can a theological understanding of God's vulnerability be applied in pastoral family care to foster and reframe the male identity and spiritual growth in our postmodern global world? Can the Christian spiritual understanding of human dignity help males to shift from power abuse and negligence to compassionate, graceful and merciful dealings with their family members?

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[6] "Gender justice" refers to just and right relationships, mutual respect and accountability, and respect for creation and the rights of both women and men to live life in its fullness (Sheerattan-Bisnauth 2010:2).

[7] "Patriarchy" refers to the systematic societal structures that institutionalize men's physical, political, economic and social power over women (Sheerattan-Bisnauth & Peacock 2010:206). According to Ruether (2010:929), patriarchy also refers to a legal, social, economic, cultural, and political system that authorizes the sovereignty of the male as the head of the family. It also refers to a social system in which men hold the power while women and children occupy a subservient position (Kaldine 2007:235).

[8] "Hegemonic masculinity" is defined as the configuration of gender practice that claims and tries to maintain a dominant influence of patriarchy in a particular society at a certain time through domination and subordination (Connell 1995:77; see also Haralambos & Holborn 2008:138-139).

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1.2 The Research Problem

So far, one should ask: If Ovawambo family life is currently under a threat of enduring violence, abuse and hegemonic masculinity, what can be done to address this problem in order to achieve positive change in Ovawambo family life?

Therefore, the core research problem is: Can a Christian spiritual hermeneutics of manhood, fatherhood and masculinity bring about fundamental paradigmatic changes that can help Ovawambo men to shift from "threatening power" and "dominant authoritarianism" to what could be called "compassionate power"? This study will investigate the extent to which images of God, reframed by *theopaschitic theology*,[9] can play a fundamental role in shaping male identity. It will thus investigate how the notion of a suffering God could be applied to pastoral family care and family enrichment programs.

1.3 Research Questions

The main assumption in this study is that a pastoral spiritual understanding of masculinity could transform existing paradigms regarding male identity within the cultural context of Ovawambo family life. Furthermore, it should address the crisis of masculinity from the perspective of a Christian spiritual understanding of human dignity and its implication for being male in Ovawambo culture.

The central problem of this thesis is based on the following questions:

1) What is the impact of the traditional understanding of manhood and fatherhood on family life in the Ovawambo culture?
2) Within the cultural paradigm of a patriarchal and hierarchical structure, what is the impact of the process of democratization and secularization of culture on the male identity in the Ovawambo context?
3) What is the connection between a cultural understanding of power and the current crises in family life (among the Ovawambo)?
4) To what extent can a spiritual Christian understanding of fatherhood bring about changes in family life and what is the role of God-images in this regard?

[9] According to Louw (2011:46-47), *theopaschitism* is the theory or doctrine by which theology tries to interpret a more passionate approach to our understanding of God's presence within the reality of human suffering, such as injustice, poverty, stigmatisation, discrimination, stereotyping, illness, violence, the abuse of power, tsunami's, or catastrophes (Chapter 5 will provide more information).

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1.4 The Basic Research Assumption

Socially and culturally, men have viewed themselves as the stronger and more powerful sex. Patriarchy and gender stereotypes have bestowed the powerful position of the head, and breadwinner of a family upon men. A man's role as father makes him responsible for providing, caretaking, protection, endowment, and formation (Stoneberg 1998:73). Changing of the gender roles is fuelled mainly by feminist criticism, the social media, globalization, post-modernity and the democratization of society. These have led to aggressive male behaviour and hegemonic masculinity. The mass media also promote this and portray the athletic male body as a symbol of power and moral superiority (Louw 2012:404). Masculinity then becomes roughness and toughness (Louw 2008:392).

Consequently, something must be done to arrest the crises and tensions in family life. Men also need help to reconstruct their male identity and fatherhood. They must be assisted to cope with this crisis in a way other than violence and power abuse. With the on-going crises in family life, men are called to show respect, faithfulness and compassion toward their family members, and to shift from the abuse of power to compassionate identity.

1.5 Hypothesis

This study could help to ease the vicious cycle of violence and negligence in Ovawambo marriages and families, as well as the self-destructive tendencies in the lives of some household members affected by domestic conflicts. This goal could be accomplished by transforming manhood and fatherhood in terms of a *theopaschitic* understanding of God's power. The reframing of his power helps to foster spiritual growth, spiritual healing and masculine spirituality. This goal would also be accomplished when the God-images inspire manhood and fatherhood, thus portraying God as faithful, loving, forgiving, protecting, guiding, and always showing compassion towards his people (Louw 2008:406).

1.6 The Purpose and Significance of this Study

The main aim of this research is to:

1) Investigate the interplay between men's self-understanding and what it means to be male within the Ovawambo culture, and examine the driving force behind family conflicts and its relation to the absence of fatherhood and power abuse.
2) Deconstruct Ovawambo ideas of masculinity by transforming and reframing their

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destructive traditional understanding of the male role as well as dominant forms of masculinity that are destructive to families.

3) Employ the idea of being created in the image of God to reform existing views of male identity and fatherhood.

4) Explore the connection between God's power and the pastoral notion of compassion and how a *theopaschitic* paradigm can be applied to the notion of male identity within the Ovawambo cultural setting, and whether it is possible to apply a Christian spiritual understanding of power to fatherhood within the dynamics of family life. The objective is to employ a pastoral-anthropological and theological understanding of God's vulnerability.

5) Reframe male identity and the notion of power, in order to foster spiritual maturity and compassion identity in Ovawambo males.

This study also aims to encourage men to embrace an intrinsic spiritual change by adopting norms and values that could help them to cope with contemporary family crises without violating human dignity and human rights (Louw 2008:387).

1.7 The Research Methodology

The research will employ the following methods:

1) Critical analysis of available literature on patriarchy and its relation to male identity and fatherhood in the Oshivambo culture, as well as the contributing factors to the crisis of being male in Ovawambo family life.

2) Hermeneutics, i.e. interpretation of texts within contexts and the impact of culture on meaning and paradigm. According to Louw (1998:97), hermeneutics involves "the interpretation of the meaning of the interaction between God and humanity, the edification of the church and becoming engaged in praxis through communities of faith in order to transform the world or to impart meaning in life." By means of this method, parishioners are helped to live and practise their faith within a congregational context and the contemporary social and cultural conditions. Based on this understanding of hermeneutics, as a primary task of pastoral care, we shall explain and interpret male identity and its relation to dominant paradigms within the Oshivambo cultural setting. In a hermeneutical approach, we shall attempt to reinterpret and reframe male identity and fatherhood among the Ovawambo in the light of spirituality, vulnerability and Christian spiritual understanding of human

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dignity. A hermeneutical approach will be employed in order to gain clarity on the link between patriarchal understanding and theological reflection. This will contribute towards finding a method for family pastoral care that will facilitate the comforting effect of God's grace and his presence and identification with human needs and suffering (1998:5,99).

3) Participatory observation, as the researcher was born into, and grew up in, Oshivambo culture and served as a church minister there for a period of nine years.

1.8 Disciplinary Context of Research – Practical Theology and Pastoral Care and Counselling

According to Osmer (2008:4), Practical Theology is a field of Theology that aims to interpret various situations by considering the surrounding events, the drawing forces that make things happen, what ought to happen, and people's possible responses to the changes. According to Hendriks (2004:19), "It is a continuing hermeneutical concern discerning how the word should be proclaimed in word and deed in the world." Practical Theology helps one to interpret the "good news of God's kingdom and salvation in terms of human experience/reality and social context so that the substance of our Christian faith may contribute to a life of meaning and quality." Practical Theology is the hermeneutics of God's encounter with human beings and their context. A hermeneutical method involves: "… the interpretation of the meaning of the interaction between God and humanity, the edification of the church and becoming engaged in praxis through communities of faith in order to transform the world or to impart meaning in life" (Louw 1998a:97). It also helps the church to fulfil its prophetic role more meaningfully by denouncing, in word and deed, those factors that oppress human beings; scorn love, support and peace; and lead the human family into crisis (Louw 1998a:2). Based on this understanding of hermeneutics as a primary task of pastoral care, this research will use a hermeneutical method to explain and interpret the pastoral anthropological and theological understanding of God's vulnerability. These will enable us to reframe the male identity and notion of power among Ovawambo males in order to foster spiritual maturity and to adapt a new role function and compassionate identity in their family relationships.

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1.9 The Proposed Outline of Chapters

In addition to Chapter 1 as the introduction, the outline of this thesis will be as follows:

Chapter 2 will deal with the descriptive approach to manhood and fatherhood within the context of Oshivambo culture. It will examine the impact of the Oshivambo traditional understanding of fatherhood and manhood, as well as how Ovawambo men regard and represent themselves, how gender relations are organized, and how men are expected to prove their manhood and fatherhood.

Chapter 3 will explore the issue of male identity in terms of the paradigm change within a global culture. It will deal with the interconnectedness between male identity and social influence, and probe the possible impact of socialization, democratization and globalization in the Oshivambo cultural setting.

Chapter 4 will investigate the concept of fatherhood in the context of the current crisis in the Ovawambo family life. This chapter's objective is to discover how socio-economic and political changes affect cultural and social life in contemporary family life and how Ovawambo men react to these changes.

Chapter 5 will examine previous scholarly views of fatherhood and God-images in order to reframe male identity and fatherhood in a way that offers healing, wholeness and compassion to families in crisis. It will also investigate whether the notion of God-images, a spirituality of vulnerability and spiritual understanding of masculinity can be applied in pastoral family care to transform family life among the Ovawambo.

Chapter 6 will serve as the conclusion and offer some recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER 2

MANHOOD AND FATHERHOOD IN THE OVAWAMBO CULTURE: A DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH

2.1 Introduction

In the last decade, patriarchy and masculinity have played major roles in many families around the world. This was caused by the way genders are constructed from one culture to another. Gender construction includes how men and women see and represent themselves and how notions of gender relations are organized and promoted. As a social construction, gender relation is shaped by socio-economic, cultural, and religious transformations. These transformations (including: the abolition of African forms of slavery, replacing older structures of political authority with those derived from colonial systems, the expansion of wage labour and cash cropping, the introduction of mission-oriented Christianity and Western education) had a mass impact on the gender notion (Miescher & Lindsay 2003:2).

The current family crisis in Ovawambo family life and society compels us to examine its root cause by first scrutinizing men's cultural and social behaviour as gendered beings in relation to other men, women and children (Gisbon & Hardon 2005:1). Before we attempt to redefine the Ovawambo ideology of masculinity and its destructive traditional understanding of the male role, it is important, first, to examine the role of power in the construction and practice of masculinity in various socio-cultural settings. This would help to determine how men are taught and groomed in the Ovawambo culture, how inequalities develop and are sustained, and how power is exercised (Morrell 1998, in Miescher & Lindsay 2003:2).

Therefore, this chapter will pay attention to the impact of the fatherhood's traditional understanding of contemporary family life in the Ovawambo culture. The emphasis will be on how men perceive and represent themselves, how gender relations are organized and promoted, and how men are expected to prove their manhood and fatherhood in the Ovawambo family life. The basic questions are: What makes a man to be a man? And, what factors motivate Ovawambo men to behave in the way that they do?

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2.2 The Concept of God (*Kalunga*[10]) among the Ovawambo

Although several factors are responsible for the Ovawambo men's behaviour and attitudes toward their women and children, the people's understanding of God-images seems to be a crucial factor. According to Aarni (1982:92), in most parts of the sub-Saharan region, especially among the Bantu, religion is based on a collection of experiences and thoughts of past generations. In order to understand the way of life and problems in a typical Bantu society, one must first understand their traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices. This is also crucial to understanding African theology in general.

However, most of the traditional elements of Ovawambo culture have been forgotten (Munyika 2004:157), mainly because, in the past, writing was unheard of among these people (Aarni 1982:9). Nevertheless, consensus exists among scholars that the Ovawambo believed in one Supreme Being called Kalunga (Dymond 1950:140ff; Hahn 1966:2ff; Tötemeyer 1978:2ff; Aarni 1982:92ff; Buys & Nambala 2003:1-4). According to an Oshivambo legend,[11] God is regarded neither as a father nor a mother - no sex is attached to God. However, God is sometimes figured as a mother because of the Ovawambo's matrilineal view, and sometimes as a male because of his roles and the people's view of him as a unique, supreme and superhuman chief (Dymond 1950:136-137). It appears that the people rank him with the aristocracy, but he could reveal himself in various places as an old man wearing untidy and shabby clothing (Vedder 1938:76). Due to his anthropomorphism, God is regarded as a Supreme Being who is unapproachable, just like a king or great chief (Dymond 1950:136-137). As God is supreme, he lives in the air with ancestral spirits, but sometimes comes down to earth. He is not personified, but is omnipresent and omniscient. He is the source of both good and evil, luck and misfortune. Although both good and evil originate in

[10] In the Oshivambo language, Kalunga is the name for God, the Supreme Being, and the Creator of heaven and earth (Dymond 1950:140).

[11] A myth about the creation of human beings relates that the Ovawambo had three ancestors, Amangundu, Kantene and Omungandjera. Both Amangundu and his wife were created by God, who struck an ant-heap with a stick. When a hole appeared, he commanded the creatures to come out. Two people emerged, a man and a woman. The man's name was Amangundu. When the woman became pregnant, she gave birth to a baby boy, whom his father named Kanzi. Later, another son was born, who was named Nangombe; then the woman had a daughter whose name has been forgotten. According to the myth, Kalunga, the supreme divine being of the Ovawambo, was the one who brought forth the man and woman out of the earth. Another version of the story claims that the man was called Noni, the bearer of the spear, who was a father of four children, three sons and a daughter. The name of the eldest son was "the cattle-man," because he was the one who bred and tended cattle. The second son was called "the man of the soil," and his task was to sow, while the third boy was named "the man of the fire," as his job was to watch the fire and the sheep. The daughter's name was Janoni; she became the people's ancestral mother. From these stories, one can discern different aspects about the people's practices and religion (e.g. about Kalunga, their God, and the holy fire), and the matriarchal order of the Ovawambo. There is nothing said about other two ancestors Kantene and Omungandjela simply because what was important to Ovawambo was to know their founding father Amangundu (Tötemeyer 1978:3).

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him, his favour cannot be obtained by means of offerings. He is above all, sees everything, but is invisible (Tötemeyer 1978:8).

2.2.1 The moral character of Kalunga

Kalunga requires good behaviour of human beings. God requires obedience to all laws, especially those regarding tribal ethics and customs, and reverence for one's elders, family and tribal ancestors. To commit a crime, such as murder or theft, or incur the elders' anger would evoke God's punishment or curse (Dymond 1950:149), because he always carries two baskets in his hands, one contains happiness and the other misfortune. He distributes either misfortune or happiness (blessings) according to the people's actions (Vedder 1938:76). The Ovawambo believed that God punishes girls who have become pregnant during their puberty, before undergoing the initiation rite, *efundula.*[12] Therefore, in order to prevent misfortune or a curse from God, parents needed to prepare their girls for *efundula* before pregnancy occurs. However, Kalunga had no objection to fornication, incest and abortion on the part of those who have reached physical maturity by way of the prescribed tribal rituals and conventions. In the past, Ovawambo males believed that, with her husband's permission, it was not a sin to commit adultery with another man's wife. Kalunga was not perturbed about that, because the action did not break tribal laws; nor did he object to falsehood in certain circumstances, or to robbing a stranger (Dymond 1950:149).

2.3 Chieftaincy

From the discussion above, it is clear that the Ovawambo believe in God's gender being male. As such, God is clearly regarded in the ruling style of kings and in their self-understanding. Until now, kings have ruled the Ondonga, Ongandjera, Uukwaludhi, and Okalongo, despite the other ethnic groups being ruled by a council of herdsmen, except for the Uukwanyama, whom a queen rules. Moreover, traditional communalism was predominant in all spheres of Ovawambo life but, behind this collectiveness, was the king's power. He was ranked between superhuman power and the elders, and was viewed as being above all families and the most powerful of the living (Aarni 1982:80). He was not only the king or chief, but was also a father; therefore, nobody was allowed to call him by his name. The Ovawambo called their kings *tate* (father), *mwene gwiita* (chief of war), or *aantu* (people or nation). The king was regarded as a symbol of fertility whose duty it was to reinforce the

[12] Other Oshivambo names for *efundula* are *Olufuko* (in the Kwanyama language) or *Ohango yIitsali* (in the Oshindonga language.

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lives of his subjects. Kings and chiefs in Ovamboland exercised their power in an autocratic way; the king always had the last word - his command or decision was final.

In the olden days, Ovawambo chiefs took fullest advantage of their power and ruled their people in a most tyrannical and abusive manner.[13] Women also suffered abuse and were forced to do whatever the king wanted.[14] When missionaries arrived in Ovamboland, a conflict arose between them and the local government, because the missionaries tried to stop some of the practices. A woman who became pregnant before undergoing the *olufuko* or *ohango yiitsali* initiation was believed to pollute the wellbeing of her clan. Therefore, both the girl and the boy who impregnated her, were burned to death but, after the 20th century, this practice stopped and only the girls were expelled from the kingdom, whilst the boys were forced to pay a fine (McKittrick 1998:241).

However, here, the aim is not to relate the history of Ovawambo kingship, but to consider some harmful practices of these kings. In the past, if kings in Ovamboland were regarded as holding the same position as Kalunga, then this could lead to an inappropriate understanding of God and to motivate Ovawambo men to misuse their powers, especially if they compared themselves to the king or to God, whom they understood to be male.

2.4 The Ovambo Concept of Family and Social Organization

The family structure among the Ovawambo is of the traditional African type comprising the father, mother, grandparents, children and grandchildren, although some families may consist of only the mother (e.g. a widow or single mother), grandmother and children. Sometimes, one may also find only a grandmother and her grandchildren as a family. Most families among the Ovawambo are extended by nature. Polygamy is practised by rich men because, among the Ovawambo, a man's status is generally promoted by his wives, and the more wives a man has, the bigger the *mahangu* (pearl millet) field he would have (Hahn 1966:24). In the past, women and children were always assigned to work in the fields for food, such as

[13]King Kamhaku of the Ombalantu forced his people to carry a roof in the form of an Oshivambo traditional hut over him wherever he went. It took 12 men to carry that type of heavy umbrella hut, covered with dry grass. Later, his nephew Intyayela commanded his fellow-men to discard the hut and set it on fire while the king watched (Hahn 1966:9).

[14] In 1917, during the reign of King Mandume in Oukwanyama, his slogan was "prisoners must die." Most people, who were found guilty, "were often made to roast meat on their hands held over burning coals. Others were scalped and thereafter given their own scalps to cure …. On one occasion, he noticed a young woman who was in an advanced stage of pregnancy pass his kraal. He had her arrested, tied down and, whilst she was still alive, opened her up with an Ovawambo knife, simply to satisfy his curiosity as to the position and stage of development of the foetus" (Hahn 1966:9).

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maize or *mahangu*. Children did not belong to their father,[15] but to their mother and her clan. Even today, it is common for a woman to ask her brothers, sisters or other relatives for her children's school fees because, as an Ovambo, she believes that her children belong to *her* family. Therefore, it is not the duty of the father to care for the children, since they do not belong to him in principle.

The Ovawambo culture forbids men to perform any kind of duty that is considered to be feminine, such as cooking, being in the kitchen, or pounding *mahangu*. At the same time, women are compelled to perform the so-called "feminine duties" without any rest or free time to relax (Isaak 1997:104). This kind of practice is totally discriminatory, oppressive and exploitative, although it, sometimes, is supported by the Ovawambo culture. The Ovawambo follow the rule of descent reckoned on kinship, which is based on the matrilineal way of life. The mother's kinship is seen as more important than the father's. This belief is based on an old Ovawambo folktale.[16]

Ovawambo children become affiliated only to their mother's lineage and clan, which plays a crucial role in property control. Due to the belief that a person's lineage descends through the mother, upon an Ovambo man's death, his young brother inherits his cattle and other valuable possessions. Sometimes, however, the son of the deceased's sister receives the possessions, but not the deceased's own children, as they belong to their mother's clan – *ezimo lyayina*. If

[15] According to Tuupainen (1970:50), "... Ovawambo believe that the foetus originates from the woman's menstrual blood. According to this belief, the cause of marital infertility always lies on the wife's side. It is for this view that Ovawambo [*sic*] derive their ancestry through their mother."

[16] A long time ago, there were two animals, Hyena and Jackal. They acted as farmers, each having only goats. Unfortunately, during a year of severe drought and hunger, it mainly affected Hyena. All his ewe-goats died. Jackal was left with five ewe-goats without any kids, while Hyena had only one ram-goat. As rams cannot give birth, how could he get more goats? Even a ewe is not able to give birth to a kid by herself. Both rams and ewes are necessary for reproduction. So Hyena and Jackal engaged in a wonderful conversation. They shared various ideas. But Jackal was cleverer than Hyena. He tried to sympathize profusely with Hyena and asked him kindly: "My dear friend, give me your ram-goat for some time, it's suffering from loneliness. It will stay a few days with my five ewe-goats. Hopefully, in the meantime, you will be able to look for ewes. This should be a good proposal for you," and Hyena agreed! Both officially accepted and guaranteed to this agreement. Then, Jackal received the ram-goat. Later, Hyena noticed that Jackal's goats were increasing rapidly, because of his ram-goat. Hyena now demanded all the kids born from Jackal's ewe-goats, as Hyena insisted that all the kids were born through his ram. A dispute ensued. Jackal and Hyena then decided to take their case to the local court. The lawyer in charge was Mr. Tortoise. The venue for the meeting was under a tree. The time was supposed to be nine o'clock in the morning, but the lawyer did not turn up in time, so everybody was angry. Eventually, by using some delay tactics, he showed up at four o'clock in the afternoon. Upon his arrival, he was asked: "Why are you late?" Tortoise answered that he could not come on time because he was acting as a midwife at his father's delivery. So Hyena became very angry and said: "I have waited for a long time to get a satisfactory answer. I am tired now. You are saying that men could become pregnant and give birth to babies like women? What a crazy idea!" Then Tortoise came up with an amazing question: "If men do not give birth to babies, Mr. Hyena, why are you demanding kids (small goats) from your ram-goat?" Hearing that question, Hyena scratched his head shamefully, so, the quarrel ended. Jackal went with his ewe-goats and their kids, but Hyena returned alone with his ram-goat (Amaambo 2008:31-33).

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a man decides to give special gifts to his wife or to one of his children, then he first has to seek permission from senior members of his lineage. Sometimes, this kind of gesture causes conflict in the family, especially when one shares in the estate of a deceased relative. The matrilineal nephews, who could come to take charge of their uncle's estate, usually confront the children of the deceased. In some cases, the children are forced to bury their father with his money, or to hide some of his cattle and claim that their father sold them before he died (Malan 1980:84).

2.5 Traditional Understanding of Masculinity in Ovawambo Culture

A man is regarded as the head of the family and, in many cases, the owner of the house (Isaak 1997:104). For that reason, no law determines that a man must head a homestead. A woman could also become the head of the family after her husband's death, or after divorce. In previous times, this was very rare because most widows and divorced women returned to their parents' home and formed part of their extended family (Williams 1991:48). As the head, a man had the right to assign duties to various members of the household and to supervise the performance of labour. In the past, the women and children were assigned to work in the field for food, such as maize or *mahangu*. Upon a man's death, his brothers or someone from his family or clan would receive the whole *mahangu* field.

As the head of the family, a man was expected to beat his wife deliberately and regularly to maintain love; in marriage, this was considered the traditional way of life; he was obliged to beat his wife at least twice a week as a sign of love! Although it is not very common nowadays, the practice is still maintained in certain quarters (Isaak 1997:104).

Kanana (2000:31) also confirms this:

> Traditionally, women were, and still are, vulnerable to be beaten by their husbands. I have grown up in the society in which many women experienced such hardships because they were beaten by their husbands in the presence of their children. They scold at them [*sic*] and have the right to accuse them for whatever a man thinks is unfair. Traditionally, women and children were forbidden to quarrel with the father.

2.6 Male Identity in the Ovawambo Culture

According to Isaak (1997:72), culture surrounds us and we live according to it, just as a fish lives in water. Culture is the storehouse of ways in which we create a meaningful world. It is about our actions today, as well as those of our grandparents in the past. Therefore, we should apply what we inherited from our ancestors. If their way of doing things work for us today,

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then we are fortunate, but if they do not, then we are challenged to search for new ways that would help us to understand what our world is about.

People achieve their own basic identity through an enculturation process through which their identity becomes established and strengthened within the group's cultural framework. Their own relative position in the group hierarchy also determines their actions and decisions during their lives, because they are based on the value system of their group of origin, that is, should there be no strong influences contrary to what they believe, or in what they have been moulded.

Most males from the Ovawambo culture[17] experience a similar identity acquisition, which affects their existence in their families and in the community at large. Their behaviour is based on to what they have learned in their daily lives (Saarelma-Maunumaa 2003:22).

The definition of what it means to be a male is not easy to determine, because it includes various ideas from different cultures. Cohen (1990:1) illustrates the idea of masculinity with the following personal experience:

> When I was a little boy I was often told to be a man. When my marriage was breaking up my mother told me "to be a man". By this she seemed to mean that I shouldn't go back to my wife. Being hard and unforgiving was the proper posture for a proper man. Her curious harshness made me remember times when, as a boy, I was told "to be a man". Sometimes, I was crying. I cried quite often since my parents bickered, shouted and fought most of the little time they spent together. Sometimes, I being a man (as far as my mother was concerned) meant standing up to my father ....

In most cultures, including that of the Ovawambo, Cohen's experience is enforced in men. Although, in the Ovawambo culture, children are not regarded as belonging to their father's clan, they are merely good friends of their fathers. According to McKittrick (2003:33-34), through this friendship, fathers reproduced dominant masculinity that ushers young men into full male adulthood by forcing them to endure certain hardships. An Ovambo man is trained in a patriarchal way from childhood to adulthood, when he becomes mature enough to be a father. A father engenders dominant masculinity by carefully shepherding young men into full male adulthood, especially through the redistribution of livestock resources; hence, the saying, *Omulumentu kala wu hole iimuna*, which means, A man must be a livestock lover.

[17]"… Culture is a system of symbols shared by a group of humans and transmitted by them to upcoming generations…. The important word in the definition, however, is system. The symbols shared within any given group of humans are not random collections of customs, activities, etcetera. Rather, we discover that each culture tends to have a logic of its own that makes the various elements of the culture related and interdependent" (Downs, in Saarelma-Maunumaa 2003:13).

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Therefore, boys inherit their male identity from their fathers - both socially and biologically. In most cases, if a boy had grown up with only his mother, he would be sent to spend some time with his mother's uncle, his elder brothers, or cousins for training to be a man. In the process, the dominant masculine trait, which is structured along generational lines and which theoretically is called "the social age," is inherited (Mandala 1990:154, cited in McKittrick 2003:34). While masculinity is associated with the biological category of men, male power converges at the level of ideology with them undergoing certain practices and initiations. Some of the initiations and social ceremonies that aim to test men and thrust them into manhood are outlined below.

2.6.1 The boys' designation ceremony

In the Ovawambo culture, it is a man's responsibility to treat his pregnant wife fairly because, if she happens to develop any complication or have a miscarriage, he has to pay a fine to the wife's clan. For this reason, men ensure that their pregnant women receive enough support in the form of receiving food or assistance from the man's other wives, if he is in a polygamous marriage. Traditionally, the confinement of babies takes place in a closed shelter inside the house. The midwives are alerted in time to be ready to help the expectant mother. As the woman delivers her baby, the midwives say to her: "What a blessing and joy! Is it a male or female? You are in good hands. Is it a provider of bread or a shepherd of cattle? Hurry! The family has increased. A male child is born, what a miracle! He is *omukwati gwomafuma e ya"* (the one who will catch frogs).[18]

After the birth, the woman must present the baby to family members and friends within four to six days. Soon after a baby boy was born, the midwife or the father issues pronouncements or prophecies regarding his manhood which he is to fulfil when grown up. This is done in the form of a praise chant to him, such as, *"Nekandangala ngOmbandje, kekango sha e ta omongwa, kiita sha e ta oongombe*"[19] (vigorous youngster like a jackal, who will bring salt from the saltpan and cattle from a war or raid). Jackals are regarded as the cleverest of the animals in the animal kingdom, and calling a man a "jackal" means that he is regarded as powerful and clever. Consequently, he will be a powerful and intelligent helper of his parents, family, and community, as symbolized by his ability to bring salt from the saltpan

[18] In other words, the more boys you have, the more frogs you will have. In that way, you would always have enough meat. It should be noted that frog meat is very special to the Ovawambo, especially the poor, most of whom cannot afford to buy beef. Frog-catching is still practised among the Ovawambo to a significant extent (Malan 1995:27).

[19] The word *nekandangala* is formed from the noun *ekanda*, which means a powerful man.

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and repossess cattle during wartime. He is supposed to be one of those who are well-cultured in their way of life, which means that he can distinguish between good and bad and between right and wrong in the time of his youth (Amaambo 2008:28).

At the child's presentation to the family and friends, breakfast is taken near the *ondjugo* (the woman's bedroom), where the baby was born. During the meal, the child is handed to everyone attending the ceremony, from the youngest person to the oldest man (from the father's clan), who would then shave off the baby's hair. If the infant is a boy, the old man hands him to his wife who then takes the baby to the main entrance of the house to show him to the "world." Then, the infant is taken to the front entrance of the *kraal* to introduce him to his role as a man, as he is expected to take care of cattle in later life. They also take him to the *ondunda yoondjupa* (place where milk calabashes are kept). The father has the responsibility to name the baby, but, generally, the name chosen is that of the father's good friend who is not only good in character, but brave as well. The logic behind this is that the child will emulate his namesake. Later, the father gives him a belt made from black cattle hide, a stick, a bow and wooden arrows, and a war whistle charm (Hahn 1966:26-27).

Between the ages of one and two years, he can undergo another practice called *okuhaka,* which is a type of immunization from fear - boys from three to four years of age are expected not to cry or show their emotions. The traditional understanding in the Ovawambo culture is that a man should never cry, no matter how much pain he endures. Either the father or mother always tells boys not to cry, as follows: "*Omuntu gwomulumentu iho lili wa fa nyoko*" (i.e. a man must not cry like his mother does). If a boy hurts himself or feels intense pain, the mother or father may stop him from crying by saying, "*Owumulumenhu!*" (you are a man!). This type of disciplinary understanding does not end with childhood, but continues even into manhood. A man has to show bravery *(uufule)* when facing pain or a difficult situation. He must try to prevent tears, but could display anger instead, because it is normal for men to show anger rather than fear. As men, they are trained to bottle up their pain and not reveal it to anyone (Kanana 2000:9).

The reason behind this practice[20] is to make boys brave enough to face the problems and dangers that life may bring. Another reason is to train boys not to cry as girls do because, to

[20] The researcher, personally, also experienced this practice. In his case, his mother was present and told him that she was very nervous when his uncle threw him on top of the hut and let him roll down.

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be a man in the Ovawambo culture, you must always hide your emotions. Although you feel tears in your eyes, you must make sure that you hide or stop them.[21]

When a child reaches the age of three or four years and has started using his bows and throwing the *ondhimbo* (stick), then he is required to take part in some domestic activities, such as looking after calves near the home and collecting firewood. Then, when he turns five or six years old, he starts to help his father to herd the big livestock. Besides these duties, a boy could also be expected to walk long distances to collect salt from the saltpan, fight with other boys, go hunting and exercise patience in difficult times, such as when faced with hunger or intense thirst. The child has to persevere when experiencing hunger and thirst because, as a male, one must not complain much about hunger or the pain that injuries from thorns inflict. The next step in the child's life is to go for *epitotanda* (circumcision). Although it is not compulsory for every boy to undergo the *epitotanda*, it is regarded as an initial transition from boyhood to manhood (Hahn 1966:27). In the olden days, an Ovambo father was well aware that to have a son is an extra source of income for the family. The boy was not a sign of blessing and source of income for his parents and sisters only because he herded the cattle, but because the whole family expected him to work on the farm to provide some income for them. Girls helped with domestic activities but would first undergo some initiations and tests to usher them from childhood into womanhood (Amaambo 2008:11).

2.6.2 Relationships between boys and their fathers

Traditionally, Ovawambo males defined their manhood through the functions they performed for their families and society at large. However, at present, an enormous change has taken place in the ideas and practices of masculinity in the Ovawambo society. As a result of socialization, democratization and globalization, this present change has had a greater effect on Ovawambo people after Namibia's independence. The major changes in family life, which have caused family crises, are legal and social reforms that offer women the possibility of greater gender equality. In family life, this change has caused a tremendous shift in the roles of both males and females. However, a serious challenge that women face in Ovamboland is the men's negative attitudes towards gender equality movements. More details about the reason for the Ovawambo male resistance to gender equality will be provided in Chapter 4.

[21] As an American, Anderson's (1997:203-204) experience, is comparable: I could feel the tears within me, undiscovered and untouched in their inland sea. Those tears had been with me always. I thought that at birth, American men are allotted just as many tears as American women. But because we are forbidden to shed them, we die long before women do, with our hearts exploding, or our blood pressure rising, or our livers eaten away by alcohol, because that lake of grief inside us has no outlet.

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The answer may possibly lie in cultural gender relations and how males are prepared for manhood and fatherhood in the Ovawambo culture. Therefore, the relationship between the fathers and boys may play a crucial role in conveying male gender norms from one generation to the next. The importance of fathers in reproducing and defining men remained strikingly consistent until Christianity and colonialism changed this. Chapter 3 will provide more relevant details.

Although the family had a more matrilineal form, the relationship between fathers and sons was very strong and the same applied to the relationship between mothers and daughters. Fathers were very important in their boys' lives, and they produced various forms of dominant masculinity by directing the young men into full male adulthood. They did this by means of the redistribution of cattle, sheep, goats and other domestic livestock. Male power - both social and biological - resided in fathers who protected and nurtured the boys. Therefore, dominant masculinity was transferred from father to son and from generation to generation. Although masculinity is only social ideology, rather than a biological trait, this continued to exist among the Ovawambo and caused flaws in the practice of male power, as well as in masculinity and gender stereotypes. Furthermore, in the middle of the 19th century, this quality of ideal men was even tested and redefined by means of a male initiation ceremony called *etanda*, which was only accessible for rich men's sons, as it was expensive (McKittrick 2003:33-34).

2.6.3 From Childhood to manhood

The transition from childhood to adulthood was the stage when most Ovambo boys were tested as men to determine whether they were stronger, braver and more disciplined than other youths, and when they were taught and trained to become brave and vigorous men (McKittrick 2003:35). This stage included *okupita etanda* (circumcision), training as a *uunahambo* (cattle herdsman), *ekango* (training in salt-panning, war and security), and *okaholo nuukoloni* (contract labour system and colonialism), which are among the first proofs of manhood. These will be examined in detail below.

2.6.3.1 Boys' Circumcision - *Okupita etanda*

According to McKittrick (2002:41-42), male initiation ceremonies were celebrated to demonstrate the influence of generation, gender, and royal authority. There are no oral traditions or written sources that provide clear information about what actually took place in

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boys' initiation ceremonies. Some sources say that it involved circumcision, while others say it was done to test boys' bravery, manhood and endurance, because they were kept deep in the forest for a period of two months, during which time they moved around naked, even in winter, in order to demonstrate their strength through physical exertion. The Ovawambo regarded initiation as a form of training boys to be brave in war. Through initiation rites, youths were also prepared for adulthood and for responsible parenthood. The initiation rite was one of the most important family and tribal ceremonies in Ovamboland because it socialized and purified sex.

For boys, the severing of the foreskin symbolized cleansing and purification. The boys then discarded all their old clothes and were subsequently dressed in new ones as a sign of crossing from boyhood to manhood. Their old clothes were burnt to indicate that they had crossed from childhood to adulthood. Abandoning their old clothes meant they were no longer children; they had become adults and they were expected to behave maturely.

After burning the old clothes, the young men were smeared with white clay mixed with ash. That night they ate a meal of peanuts and meat from a ritually slaughtered animal, which symbolized fertility, and also drank beer. An uncircumcised boy was considered to have a defect and was stigmatized, as it was believed that he would never be fulfilled in any way; he would not be blessed with children, cattle, or physical wellbeing. For the stigma to be removed, one had to undergo circumcision. Those who were circumcised enjoyed the same privileges as adult men - they were no longer boys, but men.

Circumcised men enjoyed much favour and were considered superior to the uncircumcised, because they were now entitled to participate fully in tribal life. They also received appreciation and honour from females. Through the process of circumcision, the initiates were taught about a man's responsibilities to his family and the society and were taught how to control their wives and ensure order in their homes. They were also reminded of some of the marriage taboos, which they needed to respect in order to bring peace and fortune to the community, and enjoy the same in their own lives (Tuupainen 1970:52).

Wolfe (1935:25) notes that circumcision was not practised only to signify one's transition into adulthood, but also to request rain from the ancestors. In order for the people to receive abundant rain, they had to perform circumcision on the graves of departed kings. This was to

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appease the spirits that, in the people's belief, produced rain. Through the ceremony,[22] men were bestowed male power that supersedes a more universal male authority, which is based on fatherhood. McKittrick (2003:34) states, "Initiates were put through tests of courage and endurance and could thus claim that their exalted position was based on the possession of ideal male quality: they were stronger braver, and more disciplined than other men." Today, however, circumcision is no longer considered seriously.

2.6.3.2 Cattle-Herdsman - *Uunahambo*

Livestock was valuable among the Ovawambo and remain so even today. A man without cattle was regarded as a coward; therefore, he would find it difficult to acquire a wife. Livestock was seen as a symbol of wealth as it was used to pay the bridal price and to bail a person out when arrested by the law. The cattle also provided milk and butter for the family members, and children were given fresh milk to drink to avoid malnutrition.

As soon as boys became old enough to use their bows and arrows, they were expected to take part in the family's daily tasks. Apart from caring for the calves and small livestock, such as goats and sheep, boys were also taught to collect firewood for cooking or to make a fire at the *oshinyanga/olupale* (meeting place). Later, under their fathers' or older brothers' supervision, boys were expected to relieve their fathers by taking charge of the large livestock. At the same time, they were expected to help their fathers with other tasks, such as tree cutting, milking, and house renovation (Hahn 1966:27). During the dry season, boys took cattle to the *ohambo* (cattle post) under the supervision of herdsmen. According to Kanana (2000:11), taking cattle to the *ohambo* was not easy, because the journey could take five to seven days, or more, to reach the preferred destination. This journey could be over 80 to 100 kilometres, depending on the destination of the cattle.[23] Boys were expected to complete this journey successfully in order to prove that they were adults. At the *ohambo*, there were no proper rooms or blankets; people slept around a fire and there were dangers of attacks by wild animals. Sometimes, people experienced a lack of food and thus would survive on wild berries and other fruits. They could suffer from loneliness and sickness (especially colds and fever), but they had to endure it (Amaambo 2008:42). They had to dig wells to find water for

[22] According to McKittrick (2003:35), male initiation, such as circumcision, was accessible to anyone, but it was not general or compulsory for every male. Its high cost resulted in poor families not participating, so only sons of wealthy people had this done.

[23] The researcher visited the *ohambo* three times in his life, but it was not easy, especially the first time. It was a long journey and we had to take cattle to the *ohambo* on foot. The boys had to carry their own food, a wooden milking pail, calabashes, and other tools that were needed. They also had to carry bows and arrows, machetes, knobkerries and other weapons for protection on the journey and at the *ohambo*.

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their cattle and themselves and had to fetch water for 60 to 100 or more cattle daily. Therefore, staying at the *ohambo* was not easy (Kanana 2000:14).

2.6.3.3 The Fetching of Salt from the Pan - *Ekango*

In the olden days, it was not easy to obtain salt. Most Ovawambo used to eat their food without salt as it was an expensive and precious commodity obtained from far off in the Ondonga and Uukwambi areas.[24] Fetching salt from such a distant place was regarded as a sign of manhood and bravery, because only brave men could endure thirst and hunger while carrying the heavy salt container, and walk with it through forests full of wild animals. Therefore, it was believed that such a man would be able to care for his household and family, and endure life, family problems and challenges (Tuupainen 1970:98). According to Wolfe (1935:25-26), the responsibility of fetching salt rested in the hands of men and boys who had to walk long distances to bring the salt home. Trips to the saltpans often took place between the months of June and July, the dry season. Shipanga (in Amaambo 2008:28-29) relates:

> When I was a young man I went four times to the saltpan (*Ekango*) to fetch salt. It is a hard job to accomplish and a long journey on foot. It is also a risky walk at night for lions might ambush you when they are hungry. You have to prepare yourself for such a special trip of about 100 kilometres. You go without carrying foodstuffs. Bringing salt home is the aim. You need two baskets of palm-leaves. The fresh leaves need to be dried and wetted and then you start to make a basket of palm-leaves. For such a handiwork, you need to pay attention to it by watching about its shape and volume. Before you leave for fetching salt, you need to eat *omahangu* porridge or any heavy stuff. No sleep and no rest taken on the way. It is a training of a young man by walking a long journey and carrying heavy stuff on his soft shoulders. The weight of the two baskets was weighing quite a lot of kilos. A basket of salt was fixed on each end of a pole and then carried on shoulders. My companion was my elder brother Petrus. We left home about four o'clock, early in the morning. The moon was brightly shining. It was winter and windy but we didn't catch a cold. Departure and arrival were both successful for boys at the age of twenty-six and twenty-seven. We were not permitted to take any weapon, knife or anything in our hands. That was a test to see whether we are brave. It was the custom for the young men to carry heavy loads in life, from boyhood to manhood ....

The journey to collect salt from the saltpan involved hardships of hunger, thirst, exhaustion, and the heavy burden of the salt that the man had to carry on his shoulders. A man could lose his life on such a journey through the jungle. Therefore, when the men returned home safely, the women sang and shouted for joy because of the successful journey to the saltpan. For example, they sang:

[24] Saltpans were located at Ondonga and Uukwambi. The distance from one village to the saltpans was far, depending on the location of one's homestead, and had to be covered on foot (Wolfe 1935:25-26).

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Oilumenhu yaNekanda
Oikongi yongobe ya Haivinga
yanashitai shiyala
Yanekondo laNambinga
kEkango ya et 'Omongwa
kOita ya et' Eengobe.

Literally, this means:

Men of *Nekanda*
Cattle raiders of *Haivinga*
The branch of *Shiyala*
For *Nekondo* of *Nambinga*
From the saltpan they bring salt
From war they bring cattle.

This praise song not only shows how difficult it was to fetch salt, but also that only brave men succeeded in bringing salt from *Ekango*, as they experienced the danger of encountering wild animals, such as lions and wolves, while passing through jungles at night. For this reason, only brave men, who knew how to protect themselves, could endure the journey (Kanana 2000:15-16). The aim of the initiation was to teach boys to face the bitter side of life with confidence. The heaviness of salt on the boys' shoulders was comparable to the pain of circumcision. Life on earth is summed up in the Oshivambo proverb: *Lupanda lwa magadhi lukwawo lwa mahodhi*, which means: life is like one cheek full of honey and the other full of tears[25] (Shipanga 2008, in Amaambo 2008:29).

2.6.3.4 War and Security Training

Boys were trained to fight each other from about nine years of age. In the process, they were also trained for warfare, as future warriors. The training was in the form of games that allowed boys to prove their heroism and included the following:

Onkandeka (fighting with the flat part of the hand) is regarded as a boys' game; girls were not allowed to participate in this game. Sometimes, the fight took place during the day or at night in the moonlight. The game was played in the presence of girls to encourage boys to take their game seriously and to pretend in order to attract the girls' attention so that the latter would fall in love with them (Kanana 2000:19). Sometimes, boys fought in pairs, the defeated group was called *ongundu yomawaya/aakatalume*, which means the group of

[25] When, as a boy of 13, the researcher went to the *ekango* in 1986 together with five boys older than himself and two men from his neighbourhood, it was not an easy journey. Luckily, they did not carry the salt on their shoulders but used donkeys. It was a long, arduous journey of approximately 90 km. Upon the researcher and his group's safe return home, their parents organized a party for them because they had proved themselves to be heroes in their community and among their peers.

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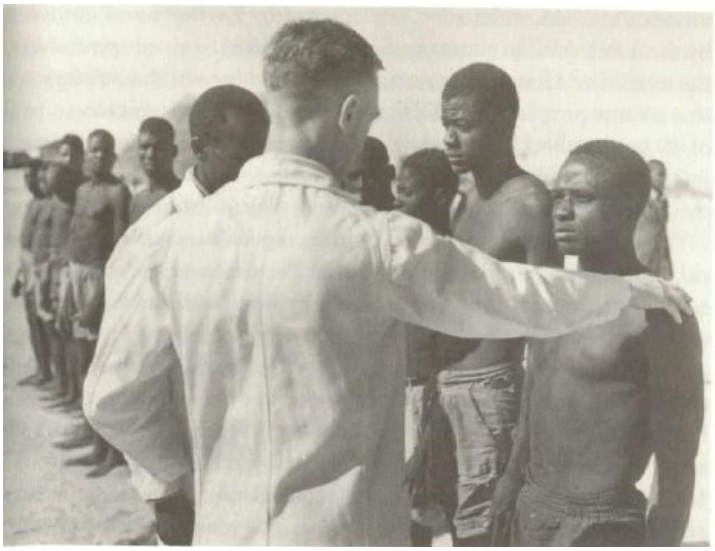
cowardly boys, at whom the others laughed. Therefore, every boy tried to defeat his opponent so that he would not be called *ewaya* or *omukatalume*, especially in the presence of women.

Oondaba is another game for boys. Boys formed two groups and threw sticks or stones at the rival group. Sometimes *oondaba* was played with unshaped traditional arrows called *ohwiinini*, which the rival groups shot at one another.[26]

2.6.3.5 *Okaholo nuukoloni* - Contract Labour and Colonialism

In Oshivambo culture, a man was not considered fit for marriage before he bought his father *omutenge* (presents in the form of a pair of trousers or a shirt), which the father had to exchange for a head of livestock. The obligation to buy *omutenge* for their fathers forced many Ovawambo men to leave for Uushimba (the south) to participate in contract labour so that they could be approved for marriage. Contract labour became a source of income for these men as it helped them to support their family members (Miettinen 2005:54). Large groups of Ovawambo men migrated to urban areas when they found jobs through the South West Africa Labour Association (SWANLA).[27]



The photo above illustrates labour recruitment in Ovamboland in 1953, was taken on behalf of the State Information Service in Pretoria (National Archives of Namibia [no.3270]) and reproduced by Wallace (2011:257).

According to Voipio (1981:112), at the end of 1910, 8000 Ovawambo men were working on German farms in Tsumeb and Otavi. For the men to arrive at these farming areas, they had to walk on foot over a distance covering between 180 and 200 kilometres through the huge,

[26] The researcher often used to play *onkandeka* with his peers when they were sent to take care of the livestock. He recalls a scene in which one of his peers lost his left eye during a game of *oondaba*. Through these games, boys always tried to prove that they were real men (Kanana 2000:19).
[27] The picture below was taken during a recruitment exercise (Wallace 2011:257).

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barren Etosha Pan for at least six days of hunger and thirst, as well as run the risk of being attacked by wild animals. These travellers were seldom reported as missing while making their way back home successfully, as they had been taught the skills of endurance from boyhood. In addition, more Ovawambo men were also recruited into the fishing industry in Walvis Bay and Windhoek, where they were paid low wages. They had no other option but to live in compounds that their employers provided. In Walvis Bay, the compound accommodated 7400 contract workers, about half of whom were employed for six months as seasonal workers during the fishing season. Each was paid approximately R10.75 per month. Their breakfast consisted of sweetened porridge, bread and tea. At supper, they ate fresh vegetables and meat (Kane-Berman 1972:13-14). Most of those who engaged in contract labour were married men who always found it difficult to leave their families for 12 to 18 months at a time, during which their wives were not allowed to visit them. Therefore, many women had to raise their children alone without the help of their husbands (Amaambo 2008:12), because the fathers spent more and more time away from their rural homes on labour contracts (McKittrick 2003:34). Disobedience was a common trait of many children, because their fathers were not around to discipline them. Although the father's absence was a burden as regards the family's wellbeing, it was considered a blessing in a sense, as he was expected to bring "luxury" items such as clothing, soap and money upon his return (Amaambo 2008:12).

When the contract labourers returned home after a year or 18 months, they would bring gifts for their fathers in the form of a blanket or an overall. Mothers received material for dresses and other accessories. A young man could sign up for contract labour three or four times and, after amassing enough resources, would start searching for a suitable girl to marry (Amaambo 2008:12). However, young couples were always strangers to one another, because the bridegroom had to return to work shortly after the wedding. This newly married man would explain, "My master ordered me to return within two months" (Kane-Berman 1972:13-14).

However, the question is: What forced Ovawambo men to seek employment in the south? According to Hishongwa (1992, in Kanana 2000:26), drought compelled most Ovawambo men to do so. When the rainfall was low, crop production often was impossible and their cattle also suffered and died. Therefore, men found contract work to be a more reliable means of support for their families. Due to the taxation system, which the tribal chiefs imposed on the Ovawambo, these people had easy access to commercial goods. So, they were introduced to many European goods, including various types of food and agricultural implements, such

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as ploughs, fencing wires and modern axes (Hishongwa 1992:53). Most men joined the SWANLA recruitment to earn money in order to afford these goods and to pay their taxes. With this money, they could afford to buy clothes, processed food and other modern stuffs, such as sugar, cakes of soap, etc. (Kanana 2000:26).

According to Becker (2005:28), a boy was regarded as a man only when he earned his own income and became less dependent financially on his parents. Although there is no clear rule of how and when boys become men, one of the most important transition rituals from boyhood to adulthood is marriage. According to the Ovawambo tradition, a family had to have its own traditional house. Therefore, it was the man's primary responsibility to find suitable land for both the *mahangu* field and the house. That was one of the reasons why many young men left Ovamboland to engage in labour contracts in order to earn some income, part of which was used also to buy cows for *lobola* (a kind of dowry that a bridegroom's family paid to the bride's family). Although their position, as the head of the family and breadwinner, drove some husbands to enter into contract labour to provide upkeep for their wives and children, the main reason was to buy enough livestock in order to maintain their position as head of the family (Becker 2005:28).

2.7 *Iigonda* and Marriage

In most cases, *iigonda*[28] and marriages were arranged when girls attained puberty - usually shortly after their first menstruation. It was the man's responsibility not only to propose to the girl, but also to give her an engagement gift. In the Ovawambo culture, engagement presents included *omuya gwongobe gwa gwayekwa oonkula* (an ox-leather belt smeared with red ochre and fat), *oshiteta* (a narrow leather front piece), *oshimona* (an ox-cord necklace) and *omihanga* (a string of ostrich eggshell beads made to wind four times around the pelvis). The *oshimona* signified that the girl was being joined to the ancestral spirits of the boy's clan. The *oshiteta* was the guarantee to the girl and her family that the young man would provide adequate clothing for his wife throughout their married life. Before the girl's family allowed their daughter to join her husband, he was also expected to give them an ox. In some communities, such as the Uukwambi, men were not expected to give an ox, but the girl received other valuable things, such as hoes or sheep (Tuupainen 1970:55). In the majority of cases, husbands were older than their wives. As heads of their families, men had the authority

[28] *Iigonda* is the Oshivambo word for bride price that is still practised today. It involves the granting of an ox or nine hoes from the groom's family to the bride, or to her family (LaFont 2007b:247).

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to make decisions about the couple's sexual and reproductive lives - wives were not to refuse any of their husbands' demands. If they rejected their husbands' sexual advances, they would be punished. Beating was regarded as the most suitable punishment for a woman who rejected her husband's advances (Isaak 1997104; LaFont 2007a:3). In a polygamous set-up, the man could formally, or informally, have multiple partners, but this did not apply to the wives (LaFont 2007a:3).

2.8 Fatherhood and Manhood in the Ovawambo Culture

An Ovambo man's quality was based on his good character that manifested in his acts of protecting, training, rearing and feeding his children, and caring and sacrificing for them. A man can fulfil these roles as the head of the family, father, property owner and figure of authority (Vedder 1938:67-68).

2.8.1 A Man's Role as Head of the Family

Traditional gender roles in the Ovawambo culture were based on the patriarchal order. Duties and responsibilities were based on gender roles, as duties were shared out, not according to the ability or capacity of a person, but according to gender. Duties in the family were divided between the male and female members, based on what men should do and how women should behave (Ambunda & De Klerk 2008:48). The man was the head of the family and the owner of the house. That position gave him control over all the household resources, such as the livestock, grains, and the *mahangu* field. He had absolute control over household resources, such as livestock and the income. Women and children were dependants, therefore they were expected always to follow the man's decisions and directions. A man had the power to overrule his wife or wives (in a polygamy marriage). In times of famine, food was served first to the man and, if there were any leftovers, they were shared by the wife and children. The man made most of the decisions in the home and did not consider his wife's views. The woman's contributions in decision-making were recognized only in matters that affected the children,[29] except when it involved the children's health, education or marriage (Ambunda & De Klerk 2008:48). The man had the right to assign duties to different members of the household and to supervise their labour performance (Hahn 1966:24).

A man was expected to protect the members of his family and community and was thus regarded as "family security" (Aarni 1982:26). Consequently, he was expected to carry his

[29] http://www.kas.de/up/load/auslandshomepages/namibia/women-Custom/ambunda.pdb

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traditional weapons, such as the *uutati* (bow and arrows of different shapes), stick and dagger in its sheath in his belt. A man who travelled without these weapons was regarded as a useless coward (Helmut 2002:22). Fathers and their sons were expected always to carry some traditional weapons, such as traditional knives (*omukonda/omwele gwomolumpangwa*), sticks, bows and arrows (sometimes with poisoned tips), or even guns that also were intended for self-protection. Boys also carried sticks when on duty tending the livestock.

Traditionally, in the Ovawambo culture, a man slept apart from his wife. His sleeping room was built close to the livestock kraal and the *iigandhi* or *omashisha* (corn barns) so that, in the night, he could keep an eye on his cattle and other livestock and safeguard them from thieves or inter-tribal cattle raiders. His bedroom was larger and more attractive than the other rooms in the house (e.g. the women's, girls' and boys' rooms). In his room, there was always an *egonga* (spear), an *ekuya* (axe), and a lighter (Hermut 2002:22).

In the Ovawambo culture, an axe[30] or a rooster symbolizes a man, while a pot of clay portrays a woman. As "an axe," the man is viewed as an important feature of family life because the axe is an indispensable tool. The woman is symbolized as a clay pot, because she is seen to be physically weak and can therefore only survive with a man's help and care (Ambunda & De Klerk 2008:48).

Although the symbol of a rooster has different meanings among the Ovawambo, it commonly symbolises bravery, leadership, ownership and responsibility. However, not all Ovawambo males qualify to be called *ekondombolo* (roosters). Only brave, hardworking men who have large numbers of livestock and enough food to feed their maternal relatives receive this name. Therefore, to become *ekondombolo*, one would have more than one wife to cultivate the field. Interestingly, the symbol of a rooster is also used among the Ewe[31] of Ghana, where the crowing rooster (cock) is a symbol of good leadership. The belief among the Ewe is that a good leader is a person who awakens his followers to their responsibilities and privileges. The Chiefs of the Anyako[32] in the Volta Region of Ghana use this symbol as a guiding principle for administration.[33]

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[30]An axe is regarded as an indispensable tool to the Ovawambo men (http://www.kas.de/up/load/auslandshomepages/namibia/women-Custom/ambunda.pdb; cf. Helmut 2002:22).

[31] The Ewe people live in the south-eastern quarter of Ghana and the southern half of Togo (www.ceanaonline.org/sections/ewehistory.html).

[32] Anyako is a small island situated within the Keta lagoon (one of the largest lagoons in West Africa). It is located in the south-eastern part of the Volta Region in Ghana, about 105 miles from Accra, the capital of Ghana.

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Although the image of the rooster could encourage Ovawambo men to be responsible members of their family and community, it also has certain negative effects. One of the reasons some men in Ovamboland fail to support their children is because of the cultural view of matrimony in which the children are related only to their mothers.[34] Men assume that the rooster only helps the hen to lay eggs, then the hen has to find food for the chicks. It implies that a man's duty is to impregnate the woman, but it is not his responsibility to take care of the children; it is the mother's duty. This, of course, could lead to neglect of the family, especially during the current socio-economic crisis in Namibia.

2.8.2 The Father's Responsibilities in the Family

In the Ovawambo culture, various activities confirmed a man's manhood or his role as a father. After his marriage, one of a man's duties was to erect a house for his family, either in the vicinity of his parents' house or at any suitable spot in the *mahangu* field that was not easily flooded or damp during the rainy season. Most traditional houses were built with wood, and only a strong man could cut down trees for the poles with which to erect the house or kraal for the livestock and the fence (usually made with thorn bushes) for the *mahangu* field. Since one needed an axe to do this, a man always had to have an axe in his house. It was also a man's duty to provide water for his family and livestock. He would dig waterholes or wells to supply water. He also constructed a mill at home where corn (*mahangu*) was stamped, and provided stamping vessels (*iini*) and stamping stocks (*omihi*) made from *mopane* trees (Kanana 2000:19). In order to accomplish all of this, he always needed an axe and a big stone or chisel with which to sharpen it. This man could also be called *ekuya*, because he could use an axe to accomplish his work in the family.

The primary responsibility of an Ovambo man was also to tend to livestock, fix handles for hoes and axes, build and thatch huts for the family's shelter, go hunting to supply family members with meat, as well as to make storage barns for the *mahangu* (millet). The father had

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It is believed that the island was first inhabited by two brothers. The first brother, Kpebiseyisu, settled at the end of the island and called it Konu (Ekpoanu), that is, "end of the island." It was named after Kpebiseyisu's brother, Anya, and it became Anyako. Basically, Anyako-Konu is a twin town and the inhabitants of the town are Anlo-Ewes, one of the largest ethnic groups in Ghana (anyako.org/about-anyako). (*www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-1/chapter_iv.htm*).

[33] www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-1/chapter_iv.htm

[34] The Oshivambo proverb that says "*Mondha ka mu zi ezimo,*" that is, "The family does not come from the penis" also motivated this idea (Kuusi 1970:214, cited in Aarni 1982:26). Children belonged to their mother, not to their father. Therefore, there was no relation between a father and his child, because he was only the physical father and the genitor. His closest relatives were his sisters; therefore, he could support their children, but not his own (Aarni 1982:26). For this reason, a man would not do any harm to his sisters' children. In some cases, for example, fathers raped their own biological children, but would not rape a niece.

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the right to engage his children as workers in his field or to tend to his livestock. For cultivation, he allocated to his wife/wives small portions of land that usually were on very poor and unfertile parts of his field, while he kept a large fertile portion of land for himself. The man's wife and children cultivated his portion of land, yet all the *mahangu* belonged to him. A father was also responsible for constructing barns for storing crops, and for roofing the huts for protection during the rainy season. Each wife was provided with her own granary (*barn*) in her kitchen. A man had more granaries apart from those of his wife/wives even though the women did most of the work. When the family ran out of *mahangu*, it was the man's duty to open the storage barns (*okumatulila*) and give the women more *mahangu* to cook.[35] However, some men would not even notice when their wives and children ran out of *mahangu* and had nothing to eat, and some would open their granary only when they realized that the family had nowhere else to find food. This happened mostly in cases of the woman not having a strong brother or nephew who could provide food for her and her children. The husband would open his storage barns to help, although his crops were not for feeding his wives and children, but his sisters' children and other maternal relatives (Kanana 2000:29).

The man also had the responsibility to teach his sons the men's roles in the house and in the community at large. Along with this teaching, he sometimes would discipline his son, but he had to do so cautiously, because if he caused any serious injury while beating him or if he killed the child, he would have to pay compensation to his wife's kinsmen (Miettinen 2005:55). Similarly, if the son lost or injured one of the livestock during the herding, or destroyed his father's property (e.g., by setting fire to his father's barn), the father claimed compensation from his wife's relatives. Another duty of a father was to take care of his children in crisis, especially in times of illness (Miettinen 2005:55). Additionally, it was his duty to name his offspring, ransom a child captured in war, offer a sacrifice (a dog) if a child became ill, and pay for the initiation of both his sons and his daughters (McKittrick 2003:36). If the child's illness continued, the father would go to the traditional healers who would examine his anus for *oompalo* (certain minor malformations or pimples), which the Ovawambo believed caused illness in children. If the child was not healed even after this ritual, the father had to slaughter an ox in the belief that this animal's blood would wash away the sickness. A father's refusal to do these things was regarded as a strategy to kill his child (Miettinen 2005:55).

[35] http://www.kas.de/up/load/auslandshomepages/namibia/women-Custom/ambunda.pdb (Helmut 2002:22).

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Modern clothes were not very common, as clothes were made from animal skins or from ostrich eggshells. One had to go to the Etosha Pan *(Etotha lyaNuumbwabwa)* at least once a year to collect the shells which, when broken up into small pieces, were roughly rounded, pierced by a blacksmith, and used to make rows of beads for the hip-belts. It was difficult to collect the shells as one had to pass through territories with dangerous wild animals, including lions, cheetahs and wolves. This is another way Ovawambo men provided clothes for their wives. With the use of ostrich eggshells, women made their clothes called *omihanga*, worn by wives of brave men, as bravery was needed to go where the eggshells were collected. The cowards' wives were easily recognized, because they did not have the proper covering for their buttocks. However, women could also inherit the *omihanga* from their mothers.

2.8.3 Men as Owners of Family Property

The Ovawambo are agriculturalists and cattle herders. Before colonialism, the economy of the Ovawambo depended primarily on cattle *(eengobe)* and millet *(oilya)*. However, a man's wealth was measured not only by these, as he also had additional property, such as agricultural implements (hoes and axes), weapons (daggers, bows, arrows and spears), and traditional ornaments (beads for necklaces and wearing at the waist). The situation is not very different today. Among the Ovawambo, a man could only be described as a rich *oshipuna* if he had hundreds of cattle or large fields of millet and corn; then, he was called *Ongundja*. In addition to *mahangu*, the Ovawambo cultivate sorghum, maize, beans, pumpkins, watermelons and groundnuts. Large numbers of cattle, goats, sheep, horses, mules and donkeys are also kept. With so many possessions, a man could easily feed his family members and relatives (Kanana 2000:24; see also Malan 1995:26).

It is remarkable that all these assets belong to the man. According to Ambunda and De Klerk (2008:48-49), the role of head of the family, ascribed to the man, enables him to control the entire household, including all assets and/or possessions, such us livestock, that belonged to the wife, brought as her dowry, at the outset of the marriage. The woman does not have any control over household properties and income, as she yields such control to her husband upon marriage. Most Ovawambo brides receive livestock as their dowry but, on reaching the husbands' homesteads, they lose control of it, as the men take ownership. Similarly, when wives are engaged in formal or informal income-generation schemes, such as selling *mahangu*, the income is always transferred to their husbands' pockets.

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According to Kanana (2000:34-35), other valuable assets that a man acquires are the house and the land on which the house is built. The land belongs to the man as the head of the family, and he has the right to sell plots to others because, traditionally, men buy and pay for land. Thus, the plot and the house become the man's property and come under his control and authority until his death, when they return to the village chief, who sells them to either the brother or maternal uncle of the deceased, whose wife and children are told to return to their maternal clan with only a few movable assets. As stated earlier, the Ovawambo culture is matrilineal; this also affects property inheritance when a man dies, as the matrilineal system does not permit a woman to inherit her husband's property, no matter how long they have lived together or how much property they have acquired. Also the children have no right to inherit from their father, but the deceased's mother (his father is not included), brothers, sisters and their children inherit his property (Kanana 2000:36).

In the Ovawambo culture, a woman was, and is still, considered to be her husband's property. A married woman is not under the control of her family, but under that of her husband. She is expected to do nothing nor take any action without consulting her husband, but he can make decisions without his wife's consent.

2.8.4 The Authoritarian Father

The patriarchal system placed the father as the head, above other relatives, to rule over the family. Similarly, kings or chiefs, who were heads of tribes, ruled over the Ovawambo. The chief was an autocrat and the whole of the tribal territory belonged to him. Whoever occupied a plot of land within his district did so merely on loan, because it could be taken away from him/her at anytime. The chief expected everyone, except his mother, to obey his rule. She was the only person who could challenge him freely (Vedder 1938:72). Most of the men in Ovamboland (and even today) exercised a similar authoritarian style of leadership in their households. Kanana (2000:31) states:

> In the olden days a man was considered to have similar authority like a king, in his house. He behaves like a king in his own house because he is the owner of the house and its property. He commands and disciplines the inhabitants of the house, his wives included. Everybody has to listen and obey his instructions and orders. Though he is not allowed to give severe punishment to his people by the law [*sic*] like what kings are allowed to do (by killing them), he has the right to use corporal punishment on them and to give them extra labour to fulfil…. Out of 27 families in our village only seven families were Christians. The same applies to the neighbouring villages. Imagine how much influence this system can give [*sic*] to those boys who have grown up under it. Many fathers were non-Christians. Therefore they were keeping their male traditions they learned and experienced from their father's houses. Even those who

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> later became Christians are still keeping these traditions because they were brought up under it.

Moreover, in Oshivambo culture,[36] male power was conferred on a man who had his own livestock, house, wife/wives, and performed the social role of being a father. Such power was obtained through a man's ability to marry and set up his own household where children were raised. The man no longer lived with his parents after his marriage; he erected his own house in a new locality. This caused a change in the rule of residence from matrilineal to patrilineal, where the father is the head. Consequently, members of matrilineages are dispersed between two localities, thus weakening kinship bonds among them. The father also exercises much authority over his children and dominates his family members - his wife and children must submit to his authority. Since a man is the head of the family and the breadwinner, women are regarded as dependants who must follow the men's directions and decisions. Men have the power to overrule their wives and control the resources of their household (Malan 1995:19). As the head of the house, the man has the final say as regards household property, livestock, and property disposal and acquisition (Ruppel 2010:18). This proves that there could be a conflict of interests between the man's patrilineal and matrilineal relatives. Such conflicts are the driving force behind the Ovawambo cultural reform that continuously enhances patrilineal grouping (Malan 1995:20).

2.8.5 The Church and Government Involvement in Ovawambo Family Life

As indicated in the previous chapter, in Ovawambo culture, the role of a dead man's relatives was most evident in the inheritance of personal property, such as cattle, fields, grain and *mahangu*. Upon a married man's death, his wife and children did not inherit his property, but it was divided among his brothers' and sisters' sons. Therefore, the synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) decided to ask the government to intervene. The synod passed a resolution that all parishioners, who were ready to marry, first had to solemnize and register their marriages with the government – i.e. in a civil marriage - before receiving a blessing in a church. Only those who had had a civil marriage could receive the authority to make a will. Thus, only in civil marriages, in community of property, would the marriage partners have the right to inherit each other's property when one of them died. This happened because the church realized that most of her members, especially the widows and orphans, suffered greatly after the death of their husbands and fathers. The church, therefore, decided to safeguard the wellbeing of Christian marriages and families (Auala 2009:45). In 1954, the

[36] The researcher was born into, and raised according to, this culture.

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synod also prepared a pre-marital counselling booklet in order to help with pre-marital counselling. This booklet remains in use today and it is the only pre-marital counselling guideline that the ELCIN applies. Although missionaries have contributed positively to these patriarchal abusive attitudes among the Ovawambo, they did not influence all the patriarchal attitudes.

However, negative traits that manifest in power abuse, a wrong interpretation of masculinity, family negligence, and abusive conduct continue to threaten women and children within the Ovawambo family life. According to Wise's (2007:330) survey, Ovawambo men believe some things have not changed since the Stone Age and will remain unchanged forever, because they have seen that what are linked to their genes ─ their manhood, power and sexuality - will remain unchanged forever. Therefore, if culture can be used to strengthen or empower males, or to excuse and justify behaviour that could be harmful to others (females), then something must be done to normalize family life. If culture is constructed to suit men in this way, then women suffer the consequences. Therefore, violence against women among the Ovawambo is a multifaceted phenomenon that is influenced by individuals' personal learning and experiences, which they bring to a relationship. It is also grounded in the dynamics of immediate relationships, the immediate social context, and attitudes towards the abuse of women in the community. The cause of violence against women is rooted in individual psychological factors, as well as broader micro and macro social factors (Heise 1994, in Nangolo & Peltzer 2003:18).

However, the gnawing question is: Why does the fathers' role remain so important in Ovamboland where the matrilineal system plays a major role? The fathers' access to certain types of wealth and resources was basic to their fatherhood, manhood, headship of the family and dominant masculinity. Thus, the hegemonic masculinity ideals and social seniority pass from one generation to another (McKittrick 2003:47). The perpetuation of notions of masculinity[37] continue, although we live in a different world and context that is influenced by

[37] According to LeBeau, Iipinge and Conteh (2004:8-9), most Ovawambo men feel that gender equality causes some rights that interfere with traditional beliefs. Culture must not be changed, but must remain unchanged. Gender equality brings confusion and mistrust between males and females. Sam, a 43-year-old rural Ovambo man explained this situation by saying that women and men *"do not trust each other well because of these equality laws. We have people being beaten up because of these disagreements that are brought on by equality laws* (LeBeau, Iipinge & Conteh 2002:24). John, a 39-year-old Ovambo man, says that, through gender inequality, "*women use their rights to abuse their husbands,*" while Kondjeni, also from rural Ovambo, feels that women's rights *"cause confusion and some women refuse to obey their husband's rules. ... they* [the women's rights] *change our traditional norms and values. Those things are European. They shouldn't be*

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globalization and technology. However, in this world, gender stereotypes and gender inequalities are being challenged. How then will some Ovawambo men, who still conform to the cultural norms of being a man, survive in this global society? What are the implications of Oshivambo ideals of masculinity in today's world?

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how the Ovawambo men relate to their culture, and how they respond to both good and bad practices. Some of the positive traits include caring for their wives and children and taking responsibility in society. As heads of their families, men were required to take care of their families. This was done by training them to be patient, strong, good, and caring fathers. They were expected to protect, not only their family members, but also the entire community.

However, from past generations, men not only learnt good things, they also learnt some negative things which need to be addressed urgently. Most Ovawambo men view themselves as having both influence and power as a result of their fathers' and socio-cultural influences (Wise 2007:332). This observation seems correct because, today, Ovawambo men keep their traditional male values that they learned and experienced from their fathers' and uncles' houses. From generation to generation, men were trained to be hard and tough, so as to earn more respect than women in the society. This process of training shows how the patriarchal system functions in the Ovawambo culture and how deeply it is rooted in the male psyche from childhood to adulthood. Within that structure, it is clear that women and children are exploited and abused. They have no rights over their own property or bodies, but are regarded as a man's property together with their personal property, and they deserve to be beaten! This indicates that, on the cultural level, there is a trend of oppression of females due to the patriarchal system. Since Ovawambo men enjoy making decisions and controlling the family resources, many women suffer from inferiority complexes, not only in Ovamboland, but in the whole of Namibia (Ambunda & De Klerk 2008:49). Hence, patriarchy is a system that violates human rights and dignity (Kanana 2000:2).

Although patriarchy is deeply rooted in the Ovawambo culture and it is difficult to convince men to stop that practice; something needs to be done to safeguard family life in Ovambo-land. Some of the negative practices must be discarded, such as wife battering, assigning

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practised here in Namibia." Thus, most Ovawambo males desire to maintain their traditional roles in family life as breadwinners, owners of property, leaders, authoritarians, and heads of their families (*ibid.*:10).

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children to their mothers only, men's selfishness, an incorrect interpretation of manhood and fatherhood, and the misuse of power. However, if we have to live with this paradigm change in women's rights, and thus challenging men's cultural conceptions of manhood, how then can males continue to be the breadwinners, protectors, leaders, authoritarians, and heads of the families? Should Ovawambo men stand by their traditional male roles and perceptions, or should they follow the new road that is paved with gender equality?

At this crossroads situation among the Ovawambo men, we need to find a way to help these men to transform their masculine ideals, because some of their traditional roles, like dominant forms of masculinity, are no longer acceptable in the modern world. Here, Ovawambo males need to be supported to develop a new form of masculinity that focuses more on "a greater value on love, family and personal relationships" (Gauntlett, in Louw 2008:395). Men also need freedom from the challenge and dysfunctional cultural stereotypes of masculinity that they have inherited (Clinebell 1984:10).

Furthermore, one could ask: Do only cultural norms influence male behaviour among the Ovawambo, or are there other factors that also could contribute to men's destructive and violent attitudes? Thus, in the following chapter, our focus will be on possible social contributions, as well as the process of democratization and secularization that could transform the male identity in the Ovawambo family life. In the following chapter, the main questions that we need to address are: What do men have in common globally, and how are these commonalities (or differences) constructed, and in what ways do these commonalities influence men in Ovamboland?

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CHAPTER 3

THE MALE IDENTITY: A PARADIGM CHANGE WITHIN A GLOBAL CULTURE

3.1 Introduction

In modern Western and African cultures, many men with diverse class, racial and ethical identities[38] seem to have lost the sense of what it means "to be a man," what women and children expect from them, and what men expect from women and children. These expectations concern many men who have been brought up with quite different conceptions of masculinity, or what it means to be a man. This is part of a much wider spiritual malaise that exists in the culture of the postmodern world. A sense exists that, in certain areas of life, particularly regarding matters of love, intimacy and relationships, people have lost their way and do not know where to look for guidance (Seidler 1997:32). Consequently, people search for, and desire certain things (e.g. equality and mutual respect) in marriage and family life. Husbands and wives expect to be best friends as emotional intimates and great sex partners. Women also long for men to be more involved in childcare and to be transparent about their feelings (Olson & Leonard 1996:17).

As noted earlier, traditionally, a father's role has been defined as that of provider or breadwinner, with responsibility, as well as moral oversight of children and gender role-modelling (Lamb 2000, in Richter 2011:52). Although, in traditional Arab, African, and other cultures, fathers still constitute the authoritative figure, important social trends have fundamentally changed the socio-cultural contexts in which this conception of fatherhood prevailed (Tamis-Le-Monda & Cabrera, in Richter 2011:52).

An African family is organized along gender relations that stem from patriarchy, which manifests in socio-economic and cultural structures in most African families. Patriarchy also goes hand-in-hand with cultural gender norms that affect the distribution of resources and power relations between male and female. Most gender researchers recognize that the

[38] The term, "identity" actually means similarity, but is also used to define our differences. It means similarity - as in "identical" (Latin, *idem*) – a person's identity as a man or a women. In Japanese, this means belonging to the same identifiable group. However, this term is also used to impart information on how we differ from another – a woman is different from a man, and a Japanese person from a Jew. Therefore, identity can mean both similarity and difference (Ackermann 2003:11, cited in Van der Watt 2007:33). This definition leads us to another concept, i.e. gender identity.

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concrete behaviour of each and every individual is the result of socially enforced rules and values that are imparted through a socialization process that prescribes gender roles. Once someone has conformed to a certain gender, then his/her quality of behaviour becomes part of perceived responsibilities. When this happens in many African families, gender roles are based on patriarchal systems in which the male authority and power are dominant (Wamue-Ngare & Njorone 2011:10- 20).

However, Dong Chan (2009:25) argues that the participation of women in the female labour force (together with a cultural shift and government family policy resulting from the new economy) has caused a devastating transformation of gender roles in the workplace and home. This has resulted in a man's loss of responsibility as the provider for his family. Therefore, male roles have changed and men now adopt new multiple roles characterized by emotional intimacy, expressiveness, nurturing and care, which were never regarded as masculine. Men are now expected to participate in domestic work, without reducing their hours employed at the workplace. In the past, it was enough for men to be breadwinners; but now it is not enough to be a provider; they also have to show a feminine side. Although male gender roles are changing, some traditional dominant forms of male roles remain, causing "male gender role strain," which is a global phenomenon that can be found in most societies and cultures, including that of the Ovambo (Pleck 1981, cited in Dong Chan 2009:25). However, a study of masculinity, which emphasizes only violence and complex sexual issues, could easily miss the significant aspects of the social construction of masculinity.

Thus, there is a need to conduct more research on masculinity, not only as a cultural construction, but also as a social practice due to the effects of globalization (Becker 2005:38). However, we need to examine the social context in which children develop in order to understand how gender stereotypes and expectations develop and are maintained (Basow 1992:141). Factors that contribute to gender stereotypes and how both males and females in contemporary society react to these factors also need to be examined. In this chapter, our overall purpose will deal with interconnectedness between male identity and social influences, and determine how the process of socialization, democratization, and secularization affect the male identity, especially in the Oshivambo culture.

Here, the emphasis will be on gender roles and identity, gender stereotypes, sexism, the impact of mass media on men's behaviour in social and family interaction, and gender reactions. First, we shall address the general interconnection between male identity and social

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influence in the global culture, and then show the possible impact of socialization (feminist movements' ideologies), modernization and globalization (mass media) in the Namibian (Ovawambo) male identity.

3.2 Gender Roles[39] and Identity

Life is a journey that starts with birth and ends in death. During this journey, several developmental milestones afford us the opportunity to learn what we need to know in order to survive as individuals in our various families, cultures, and environments. The challenge always faced on this journey is the nature and quality of the learning opportunities transferred to us through our parents and culture (Nathanson 1984, cited in Rabinowits & Cochran 1994:3). In several cultures, newborn boys are described as "bouncing," while newborn girls are described as "beautiful." Why do people create these differences between boys and girls? At the same time, male children are given more difficult tasks to perform than the females, and today, boys are still being raised in ways significantly different from girls. For instance, only girls are allowed to express their feelings by crying, while boys are expected to suppress their emotions and are not supposed to cry. Families, peers, and media heroes also force boys to equate maleness with toughness, competitiveness, and emotional inexpressiveness.

Furthermore, as children grow, they are continuously bombarded with much information about appropriate gender behaviour, not only from parents, but also from the school, peers, and the mass media. Another powerful dimension in satisfactorily fulfilling gender roles is also based on the development of a gender identity, that is, acknowledging one's sex and internalizing the norms, values, and behaviours of the accompanying gender expectations. Gender identity goes beyond a person's name; its marked differences include the way we play and dress, as well as language and communication. These encourage girls and boys to develop into feminine and masculine characters respectively (Thompson & Hickey 1996:168-169).

Gender roles and identity also affect us in every aspect of life – in whatever we do, think and plan (Hyde & Linn *et al.* 1986, cited in Rabinowits & Cochran 1994:4). These powerful influences often mould our vision, thoughts, and behaviour. From early childhood to late adulthood, all individuals are challenged to make their lives meaningful and fulfilling. Often,

[39] "Gender roles" refers to the degree to which a person identifies with what society defines and expects masculine or feminine roles to be (Basow 1992:2).

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this process entails struggling with familiar, cultural prescriptions and proscriptions that clash with our needs and desires (Nathanson 1984, cited in Rabinowits & Cochran 1994:3).

Biologically, males are different from females and the current core issue in the gender debate is grounded on the meaning of our being human as either males or females (Louw 2008:383). However, this meaning has contributed to innumerable myths, stereotypes, and arguments about what these differences between male and female mean. Although, biologically and physiologically, males and females are different from birth, this dissimilarity does not explain the important social and cultural distinctions that are made on the basis of sex (Thompson & Hickey 1996:168).

3.3 Sexism-inequality Based on Sex and Gender

Sexism refers to attitudes, conditions or behaviours that encourage and promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender (Sheerattan-Bisnauth & Peacock (eds.) 2010:207).[40] Sexism is a multi-dimensional factor in domestic violence, as it promotes stereotypical roles for men and women (Sheerattan-Bisnauth 2010:115). However, not only are racist beliefs promoted in the name of religion, but also through religions. The theologian C.S. Song (1982, in Isaak 1997:67) emphasizes:

> God in traditional theology is masculine from head to toe. Such a God is a personification of male power, authority, and even brutality. In the name of this masculine God, theology has justified the subservient position of women in church and in society….

This view dictates that, by nature, the male sex is inherently superior to the female sex. Just as racism assigns an inferior status to people on the basis of their skin colour or ethnic heritage, so also, on the basis of biological sex and its attendant functions, does sexism consider women essentially less valuable than men (Isaak 1997:67). Sexism has its origin in patriarchy, a system that positions men over women. It also involves how a society defines what it means to be a man. In many societies, including the Ovawambo, it is acceptable for boys to exercise control, and for girls to be less assertive (Sheerattan-Bisnauth 2010:115). Sexism motivates attitudes and actions of both individuals and institutions to support the different and unequal treatment of an individual on the basis of his/her characteristics but, in this case, on the basis of his/her sex. It not only encourages discrimination against females,

[40] "Sexism" also refers to the ideology that one sex, group of people, or certain tribe, is inherently inferior to another (Thompson & Hickey 1996:168).

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but also favours male dominant attitudes (Thompson & Hickey 1996:173). It was not only the masculine image of God that encouraged women's societal position to be inferior to men, but also the use of biblical passages. According to Franklin Goldberg (in Thompson & Hickey 1996:173), males are also sometimes victimized by sexism when socially limited by attitudes, norms, rules, regulations, and policies that are based on political and traditional gender expectations. In American society, for example, sexism spreads in all major social institutions including family, religion, education, the workplace, sports, politics and the government, as well as the mass media. Due to affirmative action, most men sometimes discover that they are being discriminated against and feel ostracized (Thompson & Hickey 1996:173). However, some of the factors that are attributed to gender stereotypes in contemporary society include the culture of patriarchy and the mass media. It seems that both men and women are socialized from childhood into thinking that sexism is normal and necessary to maintain order and stability in the family and society. Gender division of labour assumes that men should have control over resources and decision-making, leaving women with no power to negotiate. The result of sexism is the manipulation of women, overgeneralization, and sexual dichotomy (Sheerattan-Bisnauth 2010:114). However, differences between the sexes are acquired through socialization and learning, which guide us to fulfil our gender roles (Thompson & Hickey 1996:168). Therefore, one may ask whether gender differences are the result of environment or heredity (Balswick & Balswick 1989:161).

3.4 Explanations of Gender Differences

The emergence of modern science has caused a controversy about the question whether gender differences are due to the environment or heredity. The development of the biological sciences brought about the scientists' discovery that genetics play a key role in determining the nature of both plants and animals. Additionally, children not only inherit physical features from their parents, but also traits of temperament. Although each individual genetic package was understood to be unique, males and females were believed to possess distinctive genetic packages. Conversely, behavioural scientists challenged this understanding by explaining that gender differences are acquired after birth as a result of social and cultural conditioning. Hence, contemporary explanations for gender differences are much more complex, and both sides point to the interactive effect between heredity and environment. An examination of some of these theories follows.

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1) **Psychodynamic theories**

Psychodynamic theories focus on how early childhood experiences and primary care shape a child's personality. In the traditional psychodynamic theory, Freud explained the importance of biological factors and parental identification. From the onset of childhood, a child starts to learn from the group where he/she belongs. Each starts to view the same sex parent as the one who is either responsible for the absence of a penis in the case of a girl, or able to remove the penis in the case of a boy. This fear of penis removal is considered stronger for males than penis envy is for females, because it is assumed that girls have already lost the coveted penis. Thus, male gender identity is viewed to be stronger than female gender identity. Freud concluded that this same-sex identification is a healthy adjustment for the development of masculinity and a feminine personality (Basow 1992:120).

2) **The social learning theory**

Bandura and Walters, and Lynn (in Basow 1992:120) highlight the environment, in which the child grows up, as a factor in shaping the child's personality. The environment continually shapes the child where he/she learns, for example, about different treatments, rewards, and punishments through observational learning and modelling. In this social learning perspective, girls become more communal, while boys become more agentic. This happens because each sex is reinforced for different behaviours. The social learning theory views communal and agentic behaviours, not as something in one's person, but something one learns by being in a particular environment. Therefore, such behaviours can modulate or even eliminate changes outside that environment. Social learning theory views the child as relatively passive in the learning process and, while bringing his/her own qualities to any situation, he/she finds him-/herself (Basow 1992:120). It also suggests that human behaviours are learned by viewing the behaviours of others (Bandura 1977, in Thompson & Hickey 1996:66). In particular, children are easily influenced by media characters and they tend to imitate them (Williams *et al.* 1981, in Thompson & Hickey 1996:67).

3) **A gender schema theory**

A gender schema theory entails both social and cognitive developmental theories, as well as important cultural factors in development. According to this theory, a large part of sex stereotyping derives from the cultural definition of gender roles. By learning the cultural distinction between males and females, children learn gender role expectations. Therefore, gender schema in cognitive structure helps to organize and guide an individual's perception.

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For example, a child may learn that boys are described as strong, big and brave, while girls are described as good, nice and cute. From this, the child learns that sexes not only differ, but that certain attributes are also more relevant to one sex than the other. Such differences lead one to evaluate one's adequacy as a person. They also result in cultural stereotypes.

The gender schema theory teaches that, since culture has created gender stereotypes by making females more communal and males more agentic, children, whether male or female, learn these qualities. During the growth process, the child starts to judge her/his behaviour as either gender-appropriate or -inappropriate. Afterwards he/she starts to conform to the gender norms that are appropriate to his/her culture. Therefore, gender is socially constructed, but not biologically received. It is shaped by history, culture and psychological processes. Every culture creates its own meanings for the terms, "female" and "male," as well as the roles that are appropriated to each gender (Basow 1992:125-126).

4) **The socio-biological theory**

The socio-biological theory shows that the difference between males and females has developed through a natural-selection process thousands of years ago. This caused men to bond together because of their common need for hunting wild animals. On the other hand, women bonded together because of their nurturing abilities to bear and rear children. As a result, women are perceived as being more capable of emotional bonding with small children, while men are regarded as more adventurous, strong, and protective of their families. However, the differences in temperament between the sexes are explained in the same way, but we no longer live in a society that is dependent on hunting dangerous animals. Therefore, the differences between the sexes are no longer a matter of our prime function in life.

5) **The socialization theory**

The socialization theory claims that, from birth, we are already taught both explicitly and implicitly how to be a man or a woman. In learning to be a man, for example, men need to value masculinity[41] by expressing themselves through physical courage, toughness, competitiveness, strength, control, dominance and aggressiveness. Women learn to value gentleness, expressiveness, responsiveness, sensitivity, and compliance as part of their identity. There-

[41] According to Miescher and Lindsay (2003:4), masculinity refers "to a cluster of norms, values, and behavioural patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others." The masculinity, as well as the femininity ideology, is culturally and historically constructed, therefore its meanings are continually contested and are always in the process of being renegotiated within a context of power-related issues.

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fore, boys always fear being caught doing anything that, traditionally, is defined as feminine (Balswick & Balswick 1989:153,157). They are encouraged to play aggressively and to be punished physically for wrongdoing, and parents discourage them if they happen to exhibit behaviour that diverges from the prescribed gender norms (Hyde & Linn *et al.* 1986, in Rabinowits & Cochran 1994:4).

For this reason, gender stereotypes[42] start from the moment of birth when a child is identified as either a boy or girl. Hereafter, we are treated according to how we are expected to behave in our culture, as well as in society. From a young age, we learn how a boy or girl is expected to behave. Globally, a common behaviour expected from boys is, "boys do not cry," or they are told, "don't be a sissy." Boys then become anxious or even afraid of not being like the men. Therefore, they learn what culture expects them to be: physically and emotionally strong, competitive, dominating and controlling towards others. Likewise, girls avoid expressing themselves as aggressive, boisterous, and tomboyish, because of their fear of being branded as "unladylike" (Balswick & Balswick 1989:157).

6) **The neopsychoanalytic theory**

According to Nancy Chodorow (in Balswick & Balswick 1989:158), neopsychoanalytic theories explain that gender differences are a result of the relationship between parents and their children. The mothering process enhances a girl's nurturing capacity, while inhibiting it in boys. Although both boys and girls begin their lives with an emotional attachment to their mother, boys learn most masculine characteristics from outsiders. Sometimes, this happens because, in most cases, the father is absent at work. One might say that girls have an inside look into their role in the family while, on the other hand, boys learn their role from the outside. Girls experience a warm, close relationship with their mothers, while boys experience a cool, distant relationship with their fathers. As a result, females take an active part in family life, while males view themselves as outsiders. Therefore, when they become fathers, they probably will be distant emotionally from their children (Balswick & Balswick 1989:158).

In the light of these gender differences and stereotype explanations, the question we may ask is: Why are gender roles changing?

[42] "Gender stereotype" refers to the structured sets of belief that describe the personal attributes of males and females at both cultural and personal levels (Basow 1992:3).

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More factors give reasons why traditional definitions of sexual roles are changing. For example, the social sciences have demonstrated that many of the traditional characteristics of masculinity and femininity, assumed to be the result of natural development, are, in reality, a result of conditioning. Another reason is based on people's interaction. The increased observation and dialogue with people from different parts of the world have also informed us about most differences between masculinity and femininity as a cultural bond. The explosion of technological culture has caused another factor. Before the machine age, the physiological differences between the sexes determined one's role in employment. Being larger and stronger than women, men were expected to do most of the heavy work. Women were expected to do housework, such as cooking, washing and child care. However, with the emergence of electronics and computers, the most valued work is no longer only manual labour, but work that demands the development of the mind. This enabled both women and men to qualify equally for entrance into the job market. In addition, the development of contraceptives has freed women from having many children, which could prevent them from working outside their homes. However, feminism is one of the powerful forces that caused changes in the gender role.

3.5 The Feminist Movement

The change in the family paradigm mentioned above went hand-in-hand with the public agenda that questioned the appropriateness of the prevailing gender system. The public agenda was also geared towards ensuring gender relations in family relationships and in society at large. The public agenda developed as a result of advocacy by feminists and women's movements, a growing body of academic and policy research, and an increasing support of international actors, in particular, the United Nations (Valdés & Olavarria 1998, cited in Olavarria 2006:36). However, the goals of these stakeholders differed according to their analyses of the causes of women's subordination and their proposed solutions to end it. According to Balswick and Balswick (1989:158-161), there are five types of feminism,[43] namely Liberal, Marxist, Biblical, Socialist and Radical Feminists.

Liberal feminists place more emphasis on the opportunity for gender equality. They argue that the inequality of opportunities has been preserved by a social structure where men are the dominant class, while women are the underclass. They believe that most of the gender

[43] Feminism is based on the belief that women and men are equal and should be treated equally, because they have the same value and dignity (Basow 1992:329).

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differences are determined socially. Therefore, every individual has unique skills and abilities that have nothing to do with sex. Gender should not be used in criteria to determine involvement in any familial or societal task. Therefore, all people, whether male or female, should be allowed to practise whatever kind of task or activity he/she chooses to pursue.

Marxist feminism states that gender equality is possible only in a classless society. It views class differences as a private property that exists to oppress women, and also regards capitalism as an instrument to oppress women. Within capitalism, upper-class women are reduced to useless and perfunctory roles by being viewed as only beautiful objects to be adorned with fine clothes and expensive jewellery, while they remain helplessly dependent on men for survival. At the same time, lower-class women are overworked, exploited, and forced to bear the worst burdens. Therefore, women attain their freedom only if capitalism is defeated. Hence, women need to join men in fighting capitalism to attain economic freedom.

Radical feminism argues that the oppression of women is rooted in sexism. Therefore, they seek freedom from the economic bondage that men control; to be allowed to be sexually free and to establish spontaneous relationships with whomever they wish; and to be freed from the burden of rearing and caring for children, as society as a whole is supposed to share this task.

Socialist feminism believes that domestic work must be considered as real and productive labour. Therefore, the government must consider paying housewives. Socialist feminism has a common objective to end women's subordination in society. Furthermore, in its present form, it regards family as supporting capitalism and perpetuating sexism. Therefore, in order to eradicate sexual oppression, families first need to be eliminated.

Biblical feminism includes women and men who advocate for legal and social changes that would establish the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. They aim to help women to use their gifts for the advancement of God's reign on earth and interpret patriarchy as a sinful system, because it keeps women dependent on men. They also understand sexism as a sinful social system that perpetuates practices that discriminate against women and keeps them subordinate under the male domain. They challenge the inequality of hierarchical structures by promoting the ordination of women, opposing exclusive language against women, and fighting all the physical and sexual abuse of women and children.

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Generally, all of these feminist movements believe that both equality and liberation are needed. They seek to end the differences in sex value, and to change the gender roles, as they are restrictive (Basow 1992:329, see also Balswick & Balswick 1989:161).

However, gender inequalities and their manifestations in society are some of the issues that have come up in debates since the 1975 First World Conference on Women in Mexico. In Copenhagen and Nairobi in 1979, this conference was followed by the United Nations Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which enjoined world governments to commit themselves to gender equality. The International Conference on Population and Development followed in 1994, as well as the World Conference on Women in 1995, in which the exercise of sexuality, health reproduction and violence (particularly domestic and sexual violence) dominated the discussions. Both conferences highlighted male responsibilities in reproduction and in preventing violence against women (Olavarria 2006:36). Both conferences also highlighted what is expected from men in family life, including: staying at home, taking care of the children, and supporting their families (Fuller 1997, cited in Olavarria 2006:39). How do men react to this ideology?

3.6 Men's Liberal Movements

Women's movements not only brought changes to men's family roles, but many men also began to re-evaluate their role and raise their own consciousness. The men's liberation movements arose in the early 1970s with the aim of achieving changes in their lives. In general, a passion to change the system has not driven these movements, because most men gain sufficient benefits from the existing social, political, and economic systems. Therefore, these men's movements have tried to give men a forum in which to air and discuss their confusion and distress, as well as to gain other men's support in personal and social affairs. This need prompted two men's movements that developed during the 1980s – the "pro-feminism" camp that supports a feminist analysis of patriarchy, and the "pro-masculinity" camp that claims that men are victims (Fiebert 1987, Clatterbaugh 1990 and Astrachan 1986, in Basow 1992:335-336).

1) **Pro-feminists**

According to Seidler (1997:2) and McLean (1996:12), in the 1970s, a group of men responded to the women's movements because they felt uneasy about the dominant masculinity that served to oppress and subordinate women. These men's concern was based

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on the injustices and the sufferings that their fellow-men caused. The men also suffered under the stricture of a male culture that, allegedly, is as dehumanising for themselves as it is for the women (McLean 1996:12). For this reason, they felt that masculinity had to be deconstructed as it is a problem and cannot be a part of any solution. It was clear that men had started to rise against any forms of power abuse against women. They opposed male violence, rape and the sexual harassment of women, and also addressed the issue of power abuse against women and children. This left these men feeling guilty about themselves, and they realised that they had so often been reduced to silence, watchful about what they could say or do (Seidler 1997:2).

However, Basow (1992:335-336) notes that the focus of the men's pro-feminist movement was surely not to support women's movements. Its chief aim was to focus on the changes that men want in their lives, and how they could achieve it. The aim was not to change the patriarchal system, as they also benefited from it; it was to give men a forum where they could discuss their confusions and distress, and to gain other men's support in personal and social concerns. The aim of this movement was to counsel one another regarding the stress that caused the changes in women's roles and expectations. Through this movement, they started to examine what it means to be a man, primarily through consciousness-raising groups and books.

2) **Pro-masculinity**

Economic transformation increased the presence of women in labour markets, increased demands for equity, acknowledged women's rights, and resulted in cultural changes that have affected men's lives. A man's position as the household head and main breadwinner also raised questions because, in family life, men's paid work, as well as gender relations and the male identity have undergone a serious crisis. The concept of masculinity that prevailed for most of the 20th century also underwent a crisis due to these new family-related paradigms that replaced the dominant male identity model (Seidler 1997:15,30). Consequently, as Munroe (2001:8) points out, most men in every culture and social system are struggling to find their place in this fast-changing world. In many societies, the dramatic change in women's status, the workplace, and traditional cultural roles has left a significant number of men confused, disillusioned, angry, frustrated, and traumatized.

However, the feminist movements in various societies have succeeded in winning, for women, the legal status of citizens with the right to vote, hold political office, make property

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transactions in their own name, and have access to higher education, professional credentials and employment. According to Olson and Leonard (1996:17), feminist movements profoundly touched most of our most intimate relationships, as well as the whole society. It contributed to women's new self-understanding, greater awareness and articulation of needs, and their expectation of justice in relationships. The feminist movements have challenged many common domestic assumptions, such as: the final decision-making power that belonged to men alone; a dominant submissive relationship; endurance of violence against women and children; and the women's role of serving and accommodating men. The movement has also advocated changes in male gender roles in family and social life. Hence, how the male identity within changing gender roles and context has impacted on family life will now be described. Firstly, an examination of the change in global culture, then, its possible impact in Namibia, particularly in the Ovawambo culture, will follow.

3.7 Changing Gender Roles and Family Life

Feminism brought deep transformations and shifts in gender roles from the 20th century and throughout the 21st century. Perhaps the most apparent changes are connected to economic globalization, the role of national governments, demographic processes, as well as technological innovations. These are clear transformations that have affected both men and women in their private and public lives. There has been a considerable increase in all kinds of public demand, as well as other significant changes in private lives and family relations regarding, among others, intimacy, the meaning of physicality, family life and expectations, and attitudes toward work and leisure. These macro and micro social processes also have major impacts on various aspects of social life, such as gender relations and identities, social reproduction processes, and balancing family and work (Barker & Pawlak 2011:3). During the last decades of the 20th century, mostly in Latin America, the increase in women's access to the labour market has changed immensely, often as regards work that requires higher education and levels of skills. Sometimes, the situation forces them to accept unstable jobs outside the home, while they face restrictive gender relations within their households.

However, one of the key constraints to women's access to labour markets is the unequal distribution of housework and childcare within the household, which restricts their available time (Olavarria 2006:35). This causes men to share household chores with their employed female partners, as well as provide care for the children. This is why women demanded their freedom and liberation, as well as equal gender access to the public world of employment, as,

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from the beginning of the women's movement, they sensed that this could not happen unless men were ready to change.

According to Jelin (1994, cited in Olavarria 2006:29), the change that took place between men and women, especially as regards the separation of duties (between home and work and between where one lives and where production occurs) took place after the industrial revolution. This change first started in urban areas and led to the development of the nuclear patriarchal family. Donzelot (1979, cited in Olavarria 2006:30) notes that this type of family first started in Europe in the 17th century and in North America in the 18th century. It was first recognized among middle-income groups and then in the low-income groups in cities and areas with a large concentration of industrial and mining centres. In contemporary times, this change has became the mother of current gender identities, roles and relations.

"Patriarchal nuclear family," "sexual division of labour," "dichotomy of public and private realms," and corresponding gender identities and relations are all expressions of socio-cultural, economic, and psychological processes. Through these processes, male and female identities and socialization are determined. The patriarchal nuclear family has become the prevailing paradigm that was supported by the legislative framework. It was well-framed because of the 19th century's Napoleonic principle and codes. This legal framework, which included relationships between spouses and between fathers and their children, advanced and implemented family-related public policies (Olavarria 2006:30).

Since the second half of the 20th century, in most countries, these relationships have been ruled by civil codes and marriage laws. As urban middle-income groups grew at the beginning of the 20th century, various policies emerged that were aimed at strengthening nuclear families and ensuring an acceptable quality of life. These policies reaffirmed the structure of relationships within families. They also enforced the father/male responsibilities as breadwinner, protector, and authority over wives and children (Olavarria 2006:30). The survival and character of this nuclear family was dependent on the father's remunerated work, his authority over other family members, and the mother's exclusive devotion to household tasks, such as childcare and domestic chores, and the wife's obedience to her husband. Failure to fulfil one of these roles could cause a crisis within the family (Olavarria 2006:30). During the 20th century, the status of women rapidly changed, especially in the West. Although most parts of the world have experienced this change, in many parts of the world,

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especially sub-Saharan Africa, the status of women has not changed significantly, that is, when compared to that of women in the West (Stott 2006:325).

3.7.1 Women in Family Life

In most world societies, females have traditionally acquired status through marriage and motherhood. However, this situation is rapidly changing in such a way that women assume extra-familial responsibilities, especially in the work force. Many women experience contradictory expectations when they start their professional careers or employment outside the home. Magazines, films, and television encourage them to marry and have children and, at the same time, encourage them to be independent and career-oriented. The message given to women is that they must do both domestic and professional work. Consequently, they suffer stress and frustration. Although, sometimes, men also encourage women to assume both responsibilities, in most cases, men are not inclined to helping women to fulfill their double workload. This leads to confusion and disruption for the women, the men, and their families (Balswick & Balswick 1989:164).

3.7.2 Men in Family Life

Traditionally, the male is encouraged and expected to demonstrate characteristics of toughness, inexpressiveness, and competitiveness. In current gender redefinition, these traditional definitions of manhood have become too costly for women, children and for the men themselves (Balswick & Balswick 1989:164). Furthermore, the issue of manhood, fatherhood and fathering has become crucial in family research, practice and policy. Men's caring activities are some of the important things in women's and children's lives that could result in benefits for also the men's health and wellbeing. Parkovitz, Day, Lamb, Rabe, Hauari, and Hollingworth (in Richter 2011:51) state that most of the available literature on fatherhood and manhood acknowledges that the role of fathers is being influenced by the following:

(a) The structure of families including marriage, paternity and co-residence;

(b) The quality of primary relationships that include: the quality of the marital relationship, the relationship with the child's mother, the relationship with the father's own father, the type of fathering relationship with the child, individual levels of skills and motivation, the range and types of involvement, and the support for, and obstacles to, involvement, including those arising from the workplace;

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(c) Financial status - employment and income;

(d) Personal qualities, such as personality, health, educational level, parenting style, beliefs about the father's role, and cultural background (Lamb 2000, cited in Barker & Pawlak 2011:52).

Although the family has experienced the extensive changes in its structure and dynamics that occurred during the 20th century as a result of urbanization and labour migration, in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the extended family system has remained intact (Morrell *et al.* 2006, cited in Barker & Pawlak 2011:51). Although clans live in separate houses or villages, interdependence is fostered by means of marriage, collaboration in economic activities, and mutual dependencies between working adults, who continue to send home remittances, and those members of the family who continue to maintain the traditional land and homesteads. In such families, children are exposed to multiple adults who live with them (Parke *et al.* 2004, cited in Barker & Pawlak 2011:52).

Most fathers play a significant role in parenting their own, as well as their stepchildren (not theirs biologically). Moreover, other men, e.g., grandfathers, uncles, stepfathers, foster-fathers, older brothers, or cousins could perform various fatherhood functions in relation to a child (Rabe *et al.* 2007, cited in Barker & Pawlak 2011:51). Therefore, in most parts of the world, a man becomes a father when he assumes responsibility for his family and becomes a model of appropriate behaviour for young children. Even though a father does not play a direct role in the care and rearing of his children due to his work or other reasons, his authority is always present (Lesejane 2006; Lesejane *et al.* 2006, cited in Barker & Pawlak 2011:52).

Since traditional Western notions of masculinity have been connected to feelings of superiority in relation to women, it is hardly surprising that, after the challenges of feminism, heterosexual men feel uneasy and confused about what it means to be a man. Heterosexual men seem confused and demoralized in their responses to the changes that they experience through feminism. They start to lose a sense or a vision of masculinity and manhood in which they believe. Subsequently, women from different backgrounds feel that they need to explore their own space and time, while men also feel the need to explore their relation with patriarchal values, and to practise them, as they had experienced them from their fathers (Seidler 1997:24).

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These changes made men uneasy and confused, as they were no longer satisfied with the notion that they worked long hours for their partners and families. Women, especially in North America and Western Europe, also insisted that men had to be more emotionally involved in relationships and take greater responsibility for domestic work and childcare. However, this caused greater problems for men, because most of them felt that they had lost their power and status. The result of this change has been a high divorce rate and greater incidents of domestic violence and even the sexual abuse of children (Seidler 1997:15,30).

3.7.3 Changes in Childcare

Globally, a vast change is being experienced in family life. According to Barker and Pawlak,[44] changes have emerged through slight increases in men's allocation of time to caring activities, a global decreased fertility rate, an increased rate of marital dissolution, and a growing number of female-headed households. Most studies conducted worldwide reveal that many women throughout the world carry out a disproportionate share of care-related activities that include domestic work, childcare, and care for the elderly. However, many of the remaining inequalities in the care burden are associated with determining who, under traditional norms, is most apt to care for the children, has the final say in decision-making at the household level, based, at least in part, on men's higher income as well as on the lower status and value put on the work of caring.

A survey, conducted in 23 European countries, found that women frequently reduce their working hours in order to work part-time when they have children. The question that remains unanswered is: Why do men fail to do the same? In addition, studies also suggest that it is no longer a given that women provide care and men increase working hours when they have children. Instead, in recent times, these arrangements have become much more open to negotiation than before, which means that traditional patterns of inequalities in the care burden exist alongside newer arrangements, whereby these dual roles are now shared between husbands and wives (Ahrne & Roman 1997, cited in Barker & Pawlak 2011:15).

In a recent multi-country study carried out with household samples of men, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) suggests that changes are even expanding beyond high-income countries towards lower-income and under-developed countries. Both men and women value greater participation in caring for their children. The vast majority of

[44] http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/docs/men-in-families.pdf

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men have started to accept that it is important for them to play a role in their children's lives. The surveys, conducted in countries like Brazil, Chile, Croatia, India and Mexico, reveal that 20 to 65% of men had taken some leave when their last child was born. They failed to do so when their first children were born, because they then had little knowledge in this respect. Although there are still persisting patterns of inequality in the care burden, there is some evidence in certain settings that shows that the time devoted by men to domestic activities and care work may be increasing.

However, as ours is a modernized and globalized world, the following questions may arise: Is there any possibility that these changes could affect the Ovawambo community? What factors contribute to these changes in Ovawambo gender and family relationships?

3.7.4 Changing Gender Roles and Family Life in Namibia

The Ovambo family system has been shaped by the lifestyle within its society. There were no external influences that could change structure of the Ovawambo marital and family system. The laws, customs, and beliefs that control the Ovambo family's behaviour and communication still govern this system. However, due to the socio-economic change and democratization, change has happened that affects the entire society (Kapolo 2000:23). In 2000, after ten years of Namibian independence, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare was established. The main objectives of this ministry are to empower women, men and children, and designate the equality between men and women as a prerequisite for full participation in political, legal, social, cultural and economic development (Bösl 2008:19). However, before this ministry, the following five factors of foreign domination brought about basic gender relations in Namibia: missionary work and gender, colonial states (German and South African) and gender, migrant labour and gender, the impact of war on male lives, and the gender politics of the nationalist struggle. These five factors, together with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, played an important role in re-shaping Ovawambo gender relations and family life.

This section will only say more about the missionary work, colonial states, gender politics of the nationalist struggle, and the impact of the war in the life of males, which will include brief information about contract labour, as in-depth information on contract labour has already been explained in Chapter 2. In-depth information on how the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child is re-shaping Ovawambo gender relations will be provided in Chapter 4.

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3.7.4.1 Mission and Gender

The arrival of Finnish missionaries brought about changes in the local culture, as they viewed it with interest and suspicion. Becker (1995:101) states that, while missionaries converted the Ovawambo into the Christian faith, at the same time they also spread "civilization" in the indigenous population, by means of their home country's social norms and practices. The missionaries introduced civilization among the Ovawambo, as it was understood in the 19th century (mostly in Germany). This civilization included two basis objectives:

- To introduce the specific work ethic that had developed within the emerging bourgeois-capitalist society in central Europe.
- To establish patterns of Christian marriage and family in order to ensure the sustainable success of Christianization.

In order to produce "good Christians," they considered it necessary to condemn some local customs that, in their view, clashed with Christianity (Loytty 1971:20). They introduced and promoted a new moral order, while the traditional order was discouraged (Lafont 2007b:247). This included the abolition of customary polygamous marriages and the introduction of a monogamous marriage (Loytty 1971:20). Lafont (2007b:247) argues that the new religion promoted patriarchy and reinforced men's power over women. Therefore, the Ovawambo men regarded the adoption of Christianity as a blessing, because it suited their understanding of the role of the male as the head of the family. The missionaries trained Christian couples to aspire to great spirituality. They taught the local converts that the aim of a Christian marriage is to develop and train marriage partners spiritually, so as to attain mutual understanding and unity, procreate and rear children, and regulate and adjust sexual behaviour. To attain these aims, three clauses had to be fulfilled:

1) Marriage is strictly the union of one man and one woman;

2) Marriage is an inseparable and lifelong union;

3) The mutual love of the marital partners is the only right and lasting basis for marriage (Tuupainen 1970:107).

Mamozai (in Becker 1995:101) states:

> Christian marriage and family life was conceptualized as following precisely the pattern prevailing in late 19th century European societies, thus marked not only by strict monogamy and male dominance but also by rigid notions about proper sexual conduct, i.e. prudery,

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> above all, however, the male bread-winner/female homemaker model of familial reproduction and sexuality entailed deep penetration of customs of Namibia culture.

This proves that Christian marriages were modelled according to the missionaries' own gender ideology. Ovawambo polygamist males, who wished to be converted into the Christian faith, were permitted to keep only one wife and abandon the others.

In fact, the missionaries themselves, admitted the negative consequences of this practice. Missionary Klinschmidt (in Becker 1995:101-102) wrote: "Some women, however, have come into unfortunate circumstances by this separation from their husbands. They can hardly marry again; abandoned, they lead a miserable life."

Likewise, abolishing polygamist marriages weakened the Ovawambo male's power, because one wife was not able to cultivate a large portion of land for enough *mahangu*. It also prevented males from having many children to cultivate the *mahangu* fields and tend to the livestock. This caused conflict between converted and unconverted males, due to the fact that unconverted males were regarded as wealthy, as they still had multiple wives. The more wives you have, the more children you have; and the more wives and children you have, the more you produce enough food. Therefore, most converted Ovawambo males might suffer from an inferiority complex.

Furthermore, the content of mission education also included some gender division of labour. Boys were taught the making of bricks, building and gardening, while the girls were taught domestic skills, such as knitting, sewing, cooking and washing (Melber, in Becker 1995:102). However, an incorrect interpretation of Scripture often resulted in sinful acts of control over, abuse of, and violence against others. For example, as patriarchy derived its justification from religion and culture, religion has been applied to justify male domination in culture and society. So, men have appealed to religion to justify their positions of power and influence. The assumption that some people, by nature, are created to dominate others, often justifies such acts. Men also use the creation story to justify their position of domination and power; for example, Genesis 3:16b says, "…your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." This text is often used to justify men's control over women and to show the result of sin that entered the world, rather than to prescribe what God intended. Some men assume that women's bodies are for male enjoyment and that the woman's primary responsibility is to procreate, nurture and take care of the family. The long-term effects of Christianity cannot be overstated, and conservative Christian morality continues to impact on beliefs and

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practices regarding gender and sexuality. During that period, Christian doctrine was patriarchal and puritanical (LaFont 2007a:3), but the missionaries' teachings resulted in new opportunities for women, such as being able to opt out of unwanted polygamous marriages. The missionaries also helped women to obtain professional training that enabled them to develop a new perspective within the changing society (Becker 1995:105).

Although missionaries taught their local converts how they were expected to behave in their marriages and families, this did not bring lasting solutions to marital problems because of the prevalence of promiscuity. Lack of faith, poor pre-marriage counselling, and a wrong perception and understanding of a Christian marriage all contribute to violence within the family. All these factors prove to be very harmful and constitute a serious problem. They are also contrary to the Oshivambo cultural belief in the *uulinawa awuhe waayehe*, that is, the total wellbeing of all (Munyika 2004:229).

3.7.4.2 The Colonial State and Gender

According to Becker (2007:2,4), gender and the state have interacted at various historical points, raising questions about gender equality and sexual rights in current evaluations of Namibian "traditions." The advent of colonialism and apartheid created a clear line between those perceived to be inferior and those who perceived *others* to be inferior, between the oppressor and the oppressed, and between the powerful and the powerless (Wise 2007:331).

According to Voegelmann and Eagle, Vetten, and Mokwena (in Kandirikirira 2002:118), the apartheid system had a huge impact on social and family dynamics. The system also ensured the acquisition of power so that the powerful suppressed and oppressed the weaker group. Power to perform this transference derived from the oppressors' culture and society. The colonial administration refused to recognise female leaders and manipulated customary laws to suit their needs. Colonial officials also promoted Western patriarchy that reconfigured power within gender relations. The alliance between colonial administrators and the male traditional élite equally contributed to the ancient ideas that defined men as the exclusive holders of authority in the family, the community, and the state (Becker 1995:79-87).

Furthermore, colonial law classified a woman as a minor; she could neither vote nor own land or property, and needed her husband's permission to enter into legal contracts (Becker 2007:2,4; LeBeau, Iipinge & Conteh 2004:247-248). The colonial and apartheid systems created the current division between men and women, which maintains and reinforces men's ideas about manhood, power, race, ethnic identity, class and sexuality (Wise 2007:331).

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Some of the apartheid ideologies had a huge impact on family life. Under the leadership of C.H.L. Hahn, as the Native Commissioner, the formal colonial administration was established in Ovamboland. A body of ethnographic information on Ovambo society, which would ensure the survival of "native customs," was also established. The central issue in tribal traditions was matrilineality, which was of particular interest to Hahn. From matrilineal kingship and property inheritance, he deduced that no blood relation between a father and his children exists, therefore the father has no power over his children. This view caused Ovambo fathers, especially those on labour contracts, to spend more and more time away from their children and rural homes. It also influenced many Ovawambo men to refuse to support their wives and children financially, which deteriorated the family and households' lives.

Subsequently, a woman experienced heavier burdens of responsibility and she continued to depend on her husband as the owner of the house and head of the family (KcKittrick 1997, cited in McKittrick 2003:46).[45] Pass laws prohibited family members from travelling or visiting the men in their workplace (Kandirikirira 2002:118). In 1972, this situation caused 13 000 workers from Ovamboland to embark on a strike that started at Walvis Bay and spread to Windhoek and the entire territory. The workers protested against the whole contract system, especially the lack of freedom to travel and reasonable remuneration. According to the minutes of a meeting held on 10 January 1972, workers were agitated about the family divisions that the contract system caused. Two of the eight grievances against the evils of the contract system that related to family issues were that "it breaks up the family life and spoils the upbringing of the children" and it also "divide(s) family members because they don't have right [*sic*] to visit each other" (Serfontein 1976:221). It was difficult for the men to train their children, especially the boys, according to Ovambo custom. Without a father's guidance and training, a boy's future role as a father was compromised. Thus, for Ovawambo men under the contract labour system (as stated early in Chapter 2 under the topic, Okaholo *nuukoloni*), it was distressing to watch their sons grow up without their guidance. However, the colonial era in Namibia not only caused many Namibians to leave their country and go into exile, or leave Ovamboland to search for work in the mines and on farms, but there was

[45] According to Hishongwa (1992:98-10, cited in Becker 1995:99), "When the man went away for a long time, the woman had to assume full responsibility as the head of the household. She also had to work in the fields to produce food for the entire family.… Another area of concern, here, is the difficult role that women had to play in family decision-making while their husbands were away. According to the customs, men made the decisions though, in many cases, they asked their wives' opinion. Under the contract labour system, when the husband was away for so long a period, he gave orders to his wife through the mail or messengers. Anything the wife did at home would ultimately affect her husband. She therefore had to obey his orders though perhaps she did not adhere to them quite so strictly."

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also the possible impact of the war, that possibly caused attitudes of male violence in post-independence Namibia.

3.7.4.3 The Psychological Impact of War

In contemporary Ovamboland, many of the young men were born during the colonial era. Although no research has been conducted so far on the psychological impact of the Namibian war on the family, it is clear that the war affected many families. While contract labour affected many in Ovambo communities and families, war violence also affected many people. Most children, who are now adults, witnessed how military personnel from both South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) and the South African Defence Force (SADF) woke them up during the night. Some children witnessed family members (parents, brothers and sisters) or neighbours being killed. Some saw dead bodies on their way to school or when they tended livestock. Some were harassed and tortured, and witnessed their relatives being raped, as rape and sexual assault were common. Most Ovawambo men aged 24 to 46 years were born during the war, that is, as from 1966. Therefore, most witnessed methods of torture that included being beaten, deprived of sleep, buried in holes in the ground, forced under water, strangled, suffocated, suspended from poles or ropes, held over fires, threatened with snakes or with death, and corpses being shown to them. Some were also subjected to electric shocks to various parts of their bodies, including the genitals, and were held against the hot exhausts of military vehicles (IDAF 1989:65,72-73; Catholic Institute for International Relations 1986:44-45).

According to Wise (2007:331), in Namibia today, colonialism and apartheid have motivated most men who abuse their power. The advent of colonialism and apartheid created a clear line between those perceived to be superior, and those perceived as inferior, oppressors and the oppressed, the powerful and the powerless. Colonialism caused these divisions, and the apartheid system maintained and reinforced the men's ideas about manhood, power, race, ethnic identity, class and sexuality. Therefore, the manifestation of these differences in the post-colonial and post-apartheid era, is still present in how men think and articulate their manhood and power. Their power lies in their direct or indirect participation in the struggle for Namibia's independence. Most men were passively or actively for, or against, Namibia's struggle for independence and, through that, they were influenced to use power and threats. Therefore, their masculinity seems very much connected to the pre-independence experience of using power and threat to control others. The social environment, in which most

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Ovawambo men grew up and in which their identities were constructed and moulded, probably induced them to perpetuate violent behaviour.

3.7.4.4 Gender Politics of the Nationalist Struggle

According to Becker (2000:182), the Namibian struggle for liberation was not only against the South African apartheid, but was also against its Namibian allies, due to their gender oppression. Women found themselves being oppressed on two sides. Whereas the racist colonial regime oppressed women (like the men), the patriarchal tradition also oppressed the women. The South African colonial yoke forced many Namibians to go into exile in neighbouring countries, such as Angola and Zambia, to join SWAPO's liberation struggle. According to SWAPO's constitution, Art. 3, B 4 (Becker 2000:182), its aims included "to combat all reactionary tendencies of individualism, tribalism, nepotism, racism, sexism, chauvinism and regionalism." As an organization that also fought for gender equality, in its Tanga Consultative Congress in 1969/70, SWAPO officially created a women's section of the liberation organization, the SWAPO Women's Council (SWC). From the mid-1970s onwards, SWAPO women were part of the liberation movement's guerrilla forces, including their command structures. The SWC was launched after a long battle between women and the male-dominated SWAPO leadership in exile. The SWAPO leadership opposed the inclusion of women as freedom fighters. However, most women did not participate in actual fighting, especially inside Namibia, as men did, but were drivers, mechanics or medical workers. However, the emergence of a new gender discourse concerned the allocation of scholarships for women in exile to study in fields that previously were regarded as male domains, such as law, auto mechanics, drivers, and engineering. This opened the eyes of most Namibians, who were in exile, to challenge their beliefs of both femininity and masculinity.

Another women's organization is The Namibian Women's Voice (NWV), which was formed in 1985 in Namibia by a coalition of women from different backgrounds with the churches' support. Its aim was not only to address women's practical gender interests, such as earning an income or securing child-care, but also their strategic gender interests and the project of national liberation. The NWV targeted the women at grassroots in both rural and urban areas, whom the South Arica racist government oppressed just because they were black (Becker 1995, in Becker 2000:185). This information shows that, since the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, there was much talk within SWAPO and the Namibian community movements in respect of women's participation in the liberation struggle. Therefore, as any notion of

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feminism was regarded as counter-productive, women who were involved in Namibian political and social struggles unanimously put the goal of the country's independence first (Becker 2000:184-185).

How then do socialization, modernization and globalization play a role in this socio-cultural structure and long-held beliefs on family life?

3.8 The Impact of Socialization and Globalization on Males' Identity

The side effects of democratization, globalization, and secularization often affect marital and family life. These forces not only cause a division between the rich and the poor, but also within the family. Therefore, changing gender values, emerging poverty, and changing gender roles disrupt traditional families and challenge the very notions of marriage and family. However, not all changes shaped by modernity have negative effects on families. While modernization raises numerous issues into a good position, such as new educational and economic possibilities for women, it also forces other issues into the opposite direction. On millions of women and their children there are various negative consequences of poverty due to abandonment, divorce, extra-marital birth, and an increase in youth violence, domestic violence and power abuse, as well as the growing absence of fathers from their children's lives (Browning 2003:xi,4). However, for males, this journey is too difficult for them because of cultural institutions, as well as the media that have given them a narrow definition of what it means to be a man at various points in their lives in the modern world (Nathanson 1984, cited in Rabinowits & Cochran 1994:3). The redefinition of gender roles has led to much confusion in contemporary family life. Family disruptions often occur as many parents are confused about how to raise their sons to be men, and their daughters to be women in a context where traditional definitions of manhood and womanhood are being challenged (Balswick & Balswick 1989:153).

However, the problem does not exist with only the mass media, but on what people hear and learn through it as a result of the process of globalization[46] and modernization,[47] which bring not only wealth and health for many people, but also negative outcomes as well. One of the

[46] According to Debrah and Smith (2002:2, cited in Dong 2009:26), the term "globalization" refers to the shift towards a more integrated and interdependent world economy that implies a borderless flow of capital. Others, however, see globalization as the intensification of worldwide social relations that link distant localities in such a way that events which occur many miles away, and vice versa, shape local happenings (Giddens 1990:4, cited in Dong 2009:26).

[47] According to Max Weber (1958, cited in Browning 2003:5), modernization is a spread of technical rationality into various domains of life.

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negative impacts of globalization is that the world has become too small, especially through the media. An event in one corner of the world is soon seen and heard in another corner; what happens in one continent is soon seen and heard in another continent. At the same time, males are exposed to television programmes that portray masculine characters as tough, strong, aggressive, and in control (Greenberg *et al.*, cited in Rabinowits & Cochran 1994:4). Therefore, we need to find answers to the following questions: What is the impact of the mass media on the lives of family members today? How do television programmes, children's entertainment, game shows, magazines and newspapers influence our relationships today?

3.8.1 The Impact of the Mass Media on Men's Behaviour in Social and Family Interaction

One of the important goals of socialization is the transmission of cultural norms from one generation to another. To do this, communication is needed. In today's world, the primary source of communication is the mass media (Thompson & Hickey 1996:66). The mass media, including television, newspapers, magazines, the radio, movies, music and the arts, are important creators, transmitters, and interpreters of culture. They inform us of our historical background and shape our identities providing us with inspiration and a means of escape. From time to time, they also communicate messages on what sex roles are like. In most cases, males and females are presented in stereotypical (often negative) ways. In television, cinema, newspaper, and magazine advertisements, men are usually depicted as serious, confident, competent, and self-assured, compared to women (Richmond-Abbott 1986, Real 1989, Goffman 1979, in Thompson & Hickey 1996:66,177). In this way, the media play an important role in the process of gender socialization, especially in children, because they cannot clearly differentiate fantasy from reality (Basou 1992:157). Therefore, when society experiences rising levels of violent crimes, public discussions not only always try to discover the perpetrators of the crimes, but also the institutions that influence such aggressive social behaviours.

The question we need to raise here is: To what extent does the mass media[48] contribute to the spread of violence (Fox 2002a:281)? Cilliers (2004:11-12) explains how contemporary life is covered by what he calls the culture of images through the media. He refers to the incident of 11 September 2001 when passenger aeroplanes exploded into the World Trade Centre's Twin Towers in New York. On his children's impression of the incident, he writes, "My children

[48] The term "mass media" refers to modes of communication that transmit standardized messages to widespread audiences through newspapers, magazines, television, and movies (Thompson & Hickey 1996:351).

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drew pictures of this event shortly after it happened. It was clear that, for them, the impression of the aeroplanes crashing into the skyscrapers had become a type of icon of contemporary urban and even global terrorism."

From the easy availability of computers, cell phones, the internet and the World Wide Web, it is clear that the world has indeed become a small village (Cilliers 2004:11-12). Globalization enhances the world through the encounter of cultures and the development of global communication systems that promote the exchange of experiences and information. This implies that masculinity is also being constructed, not only from cultural perspectives, but also socially. According to Craig (1992:2), most (if not all) behaviour, commonly associated with gender, is always seen and learned, rather than innate. One of the primary elements in this construction is the representation of manhood that we see daily in the mass media. Here, gender is not a smooth shift from a patriarchal theme to gender equality, due to the gender stereotype that the mass media portray, where gender roles emphasize that women must be subordinate to men (Butler & Paisley *et al.* 1980, cited in Thompson & Hickey 1996:177). They promote hegemonic masculinity because, as a sign of bravery and power, the athletic male body becomes morally superior. It also includes the Adonis Complex that symbolizes the male image and masculinity in terms of a preoccupation with the building of muscles, a lean body, appearance and good looks, as well as attire, grooming, and penis size. Other variations include *metro-sexuality* in which the male is portrayed with a female component of his being, but freed from the strict categories and classifications of masculinities of the past. Another stereotype is *übersexuality,* in which men are categorized in terms of their status, quality and the positive aspects of being male, and masculinity as something of which one must be proud (Louw 2008:383-384).

In what follows, we shall consider some gender portrayals by the mass media and their impact on viewer's lives.

Today, television is a primary source of defining deviance and gender violence in the world. Wilson and Smith (2002, cited in McQuail 2010:484) identify four foundations of the negative impact of the incidence of violence on television as follows:

- TV violence contributes to antisocial effects on viewers.
- There are three primary types of effects from viewing TV violence: learning aggressive attitudes and behaviour; desensitization to violence; increased fear of being victimized by violence.

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- Not all violence poses the same degree of these harmful effects.
- Not all viewers are affected by violence in the same way.

If masculinity is viewed as a social construct, the questions we need to ask are: What is the role of the mass media in constructing masculinity, especially in connection with the first and second points above? How do men (and women) learn what behaviours are "manly" (Craig 1992:4)? To this question, Thompson and Hickey (1996:177) point out that, after World War II, motion pictures and television emerged as the major definers of masculinity and femininity. Then, the most important message was that real men are strong, silent, and rough-and-tumble characters and are also motivated by a strong sense of honour, loyalty, courage, and moral obligation to right injustice.

Between the 1980s and 1990s, most of the films in America portrayed masculine heroes in both stereotypical and non-stereotypical ways. Men, such as Mel Gibson, Kevin Costner, Michael Douglas, and some other male stars, were depicted as handsome, rugged, and even ruthless. Sometimes, they were also depicted as somewhat vulnerable and, occasionally, trapped by society's masculine stereotypes. In most of the shows, advertisers use photographs to underscore the message that men are more important, more aggressive, and physically, mentally, and socially superior to women (Richmond-Abbott 1986 and Goffman 1979, cited in Thompson & Hickey 1996:177).

During the 1950s, most of the television programs, such as *The Donna Reed Show*, *I Love Luck*, *Father Knows Best*, and *Leave It to Beaver*, depicted typical families in which both women and men were portrayed in idealized, stereotypical masculine and feminine roles. Men wore business suits, carried briefcases, and left their families in the hands of their wives for work outside the home. Women stayed behind as homemakers, wives and mothers, always busy inside their homes. They cooked, cleaned, cared for the children, and managed the households. Women were portrayed as being feminine and domesticated (Firth-Cozens & West 1991, cited in Thompson & Hickey 1996:177).

In the 1960s and 1970s, gender roles in television were portrayed in various ways. Men went off to work, made most of the major decisions, and removed the mess that their wives and children created during the day. Women were portrayed in less stereotypical roles. In television programmes, such as *The Partridge Family* and *The Brady Bunch*, women were portrayed as working outside the home, but their primary roles were still those of wife and

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mother. However, in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Police Woman* of the 1970s, these programmes portrayed single women with no families, who worked in businesses, solved crimes, and participated in non-traditional activities. Nonetheless, they worked for men who held the power and authority over them and made all the decisions on their behalf (Tuchman *et al.* 1978, in Thompson & Hickey 1996:178).

Most of the television programs of the 1980s portrayed females and males in both traditional and non-traditional gender roles. However, women were depicted as super women who did everything to maintain important professional careers, but also were perfect mothers and homemakers. Besides these, MTV, one of the popular television channels among teenagers and young adults, portrayed images of men who were engaged in more aggressive and dominant behaviours (Sommers-Flanagan *et al.* 1993, in Thompson and Hickey 1996:182).

In America, statistics prove that crime and violence have increased since the advent of television. The National Coalition of Television Violence stated that 37 of America's cable and network televisions feature themes high in violence. Why is television so taken with violence? Although television does not provide instructions on how one can commit a crime, it portrays images that make people respond emotionally to violence, rather than rationally. The images attract one's attention, but the more violent they are, the more people are bound to watch. Some movies have a dangerous content while, in recent times, sex combined with violence is even more overt on television (Cargas 1995:220). Televised violence has a great psychological impact on viewers in a number of ways - whether behavioural, cognitive or affective, but behavioural effects have a great impact on different situations. These television effects include a number of mechanisms, such as catharsis, arousal, no inhibition, imitation and desensitization. Clearly, gender stereotyping in television programmes and advertising is widespread (Gunter 1994:167).

The **Internet** is also swamped with pornographic spam that promotes highly reactionary views of gender. Pornography influences male behaviour and attitude towards females. According to Linz and Donnerstein (1987:212), harmful effects of pornography are not necessarily based on sexual images alone, but on the aggressive materials. The problem is that aggressive images cause men to react according to what they experience on television, inter alia, they violate women's rights through abuse and rape and, in many cases, women are portrayed as objects of male desire and consumption. This also causes men to transform their manhood by trying to increase the size of their penises. Furthermore, the celebrity culture that

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dominates the international mass media is becoming, for women, cartoon-like in its hetero-normativity (Connell 2009:131).

Movies also portray violence against women, particularly in films, and music that indulges in sex-role stereotyping combined with attacks against the female. However, women often remain underrepresented in action and crime series. Sometimes, they are presented as decorative, sensual and passive. Men are more likely to be portrayed as controlling or leading characters, and tending to dominate women in relationships (Fox 2002a:289,290).

Ultimately, these depictions have a strong influence on children, as they are more likely to have male characters as their heroes, having seen them as being aggressive and superior (Thompson & Hickey 1996:182).

Magazines also play a crucial role in constructing stereotypical gender roles and images. In magazines, male images indicate that fatherhood is contested rather than fixed. Contemporary men care for children, change nappies and take responsibility in family life, in contrast to the old ideology of masculinity that views such activities as feminine. Most magazines from the 1950s portrayed men as fathers through their domestic tasks (Clowes 2006:108). The father and male identity were well-conflated into the breadwinner and family guardian image. In most advertisements, features of black men holding babies, clearly stressed the role of the father. However, such pictures did not last, as pictures of housebound mothers with babies and children replaced them. This proves how magazine advertisements have gradually changed.

Fiction also interprets the roles of boys and girls in stereotypical ways. Early books, written by men, portrayed women as either pure or evil, but most current works of fiction present women in racially, ethnically, and sexually diverse ways. According to Weitz (1977, cited in Basow 1992:165), most popular books and works of fiction present the male as going on some adventure, unencumbered by family ties. Themes of aggression and predominance are usually cast in a stereotyped sexual role. Much of male fiction is also characterized by pornography with interconnected themes of sexuality, dominance and violence against women. Through reading, boys internalize and imitate these roles that can affect them psychologically in the long run (Dworkin 1981, Griffin 1981, cited in Basow 1992:165). Females are characterized as unimportant, incompetent, passive, and nurturing homebodies and homemakers, while males are important, competent, active, and aggressive wage-earners and athletes (Basow 1992:169).

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3.8.2 Does Violence in the Mass Media Influence Male Social Behaviour?

Much of the violence against women that currently occurs in Namibia (and elsewhere in the world) is based not only on cultural perceptions, but also on social influences. Although culture defines how both women and men should behave, social influence can also motivate their behaviour, i.e. based on what constitutes masculinity or femininity, and the modern mass media reflect and reinforce such stereotypes. Thompson (in Fox 2002a:290) notes that the modern media offer news, ideas, symbols and models in addition to general entertainment. Therefore, the media are a key element in both our national and global social outlooks. Modern media also serve as a central part of the globalization process.

In addition, violence in American films, such as in *Time Warner, Disney* and television, is becoming a global concern, as America is the major media production centre. Its media industries dominate global entertainment and their products are watched in many countries throughout Africa (Fox 2002a:288). Entertainment, education and socializing motivate people to buy these products; but, besides the potentiality, there are also negative consequences. The mass media encourage (and even cause) a negative influence on society, especially on children. The negative influence is perpetuated through the portrayal of crime, violence, and aggressive antisocial and even criminal behaviour that the mass media exhibit. The repetition of crime and violence in popular media (Smith *et al.* 2002, cited in McQuail 2010:480) and the widespread perception of male violence against females causes social evils to grow step-by-step. The Internet, popular music and cinema have been linked to the increase in acts of violence that young people commit (McQuail 2010:480). Therefore, societal concerns about violence in the popular media have currently increased in America, especially because of recent mass killings by youths in various high-profile incidents. One such devastating incident was the massacre of 12 pupils and a teacher by two young armed students in Denver, Colorado, in April 1999. A similar incident also happened in Erfurt, Germany in 2002.[49] It was reported that the killers were heavily influenced by collections of violent movies and video games that were later found in their homes. Reports published after the Colorado incident indicated that media violence is a primary cause of rising youth violence in the American society. The mass media, which today dominate the life of a child, have an extremely violent outlook (Fox 2002a:288). According to Lowery and DeFleur (1995, cited in McQuail 2010:480): "Television content is heavily saturated with violence. Children

[49] In that incident, a gunman went into Gutenberg Gymnasium School in Erfurt, East Germany, and killed two pupils, thirteen teachers, a school secretary, a police officer, and himself, (http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Erfurt_school_shooting.html).

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are spending more and more time exposed to violence. Overall, the evidence supports the hypothesis that the viewing of violent entertainment increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviour."

Before modernization and industrialization, the paths to manhood were clearly defined and understood, but this is no longer the case in contemporary society. The old certainties about the male sex role, the fragmentation of social life and old gender stereotypes are no longer applicable. They are being rewritten and reinterpreted continuously. When a boy reaches adulthood, he is already confused because he does not know whether he will "run his race" successfully, or not. This confusion also leads to the fear that a change in gender inequality could cause a decline in their personal power and status (Hubbard 2007b:226).

Most societies' males and females develop into their respective roles quite naturally. Our society is involved in debates about what constitutes masculinity and femininity, and what are appropriate roles for males and females. This redefinition of gender roles has caused immense disruption in most of family life around the globe and also affects marriages, due to the fact that the traditional definitions of marital roles are no longer clear. Disruption also extends to parents and their relationships with their children, as parents are confused about how to raise their sons to be men and their daughters to be women (Balswick & Balswick 1989:153).

3.8.3 The Mass Media and Masculinity in Namibia

According to Hubbard (in Hubbard & Chun 2012b:220), most current international studies suggest that there is a link between portrayals of violence in the media and violence in real life. This link may be more problematic in a developing country like Namibia because, here, most people may understand gender-stereotyping to legitimize rigid gender roles. This understanding can contribute to perceptions that the male control over women, including violence, is acceptable. Most of the violence against women that took place in Namibia and elsewhere was caused mainly by a cultural understanding regarding gender roles. This involves ideologies that consider men as authoritarian and women in a submissive position. Therefore, when the modern mass media continue to portray such gender stereotypes, it enhances the violence against women. Fox (in Hubbard & Chun 2012b:220) shows that Namibian society is still combating rigid gender attitudes and stereotypes.

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1) **Portrayal of women in the Namibian media**

Most media images of women reflect how women are culturally stereotyped. Portrayal of women in the media depends on the source, editor and journalist involved. In most cases in Namibia, women are portrayed negatively as victims of rape or violence, objects of beauty, martyrs, and subordinate to men. According to a Gender and Media Baseline Study of 2003, done by the Media Institute of Southern Africa, it found that the coverage of women's and gender issues has increased in recent years. One of the best media resources that provide information about women in Namibia is *Sister Namibia*. This magazine is distributed free of charge and can be found in many rural areas of Namibia. It reports on the status of women's issues and informs the general public of events pertaining to women. Another weekly newspaper, *The Windhoek Observer*, also informs its readers about stories of divorce, suicides and murders. In addition to this, much of the news covered in Namibia today through the radio and daily newspapers is about violence between males and females. But, in most cases, women are the victims. The Namibian media still give little insight into women's contributions, and concentrate more on women's vulnerability and victimization in the male domain. The media focus mainly on challenges that women face, such as rape, violence, and poverty, while failing to inform the nation about crucial roles that women play. Some printing media, more especially spiritual or churches-based ones, provide news about women's issues, the dangers of gender sensitivity, and the empowerment of women. However, most of the media fail to promote programmes or portray women and girls in good relationships with men or boys. They portray women as victims in need of help, not as the shapers of their own destiny and future (UNAM; SARDC 2005:39-40).

In such a climate where cultural understanding is challenged, males may misread the media's inappropriately stereotyped image of women. This may mislead and cause them to continue to control and violate women. Any films and television programmes that portray women under men's supervision or control could reinforce the male view that women do not have rights in the male domain. Therefore, the media policy has to promote images of everyday interpersonal relations that are geared towards wellbeing between males and females.

Furthermore, Fox (in Hubbard & Chun 2012b:220) articulates that:

> The consumption of media products is an intensely cultural activity. "Reading" and interpreting media content is an active part of contemporary culture and consumption. Audiences in nations where the visual media were put in place thirty or even fifty years ago have meanwhile been socialised into "reading" signs and cues encoded within popular visual entertainment. This allows them to better distinguish fact and fiction and to better interpret degrees of subtlety, irony and humour, and to decode violence where it is portrayed for

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> reasons that are gratuitous rather than for critical statement. Such audience "reading", in order to interpret and comprehend, has developed with the evolution of the mass media itself. It is clearly a luxury to which many developing societies do not yet have access. Here, the consumption of media and the cognitive dissemination of cultural decoding systems are clearly out of balance. … Consumers now confront an influential, complex set of communication institutions that they may lack the critical tools to interpret effectively. The danger may be that Namibian audiences who are new to mass visual entertainment misread images of messages of violence and gender stereotyping, resulting in the reinforcement of socially negative role-models – all the more since Namibia's colonial history of social and political violence has had a lasting effect on post-independence society. Violent, confusing and ambiguous mass entertainment may feed into this background at a crucial and delicate time in the rebuilding of Namibian society and identity, complicating pre-existing sociocultural patterns of aggression and violence.

So far, we have shown that, in Namibia, particularly in the rural areas, violence against women and children is based on cultural perceptions of gender roles. These perceptions prescribe the ways in which women and men behave, as well as what constitutes masculinity and femininity. However, the modern mass media reflect and reinforce gender stereotypes while also promoting their own models of negative and positive attitudes, and behaviours. To us, they portray both negative and positive personalities and behaviours. The visual media influence, reflect, and shape different aspects of Namibian culture. Although no statistics are available on how much time Namibians spend in watching television, the Namibian media engage in some forms of gender stereotyping. Data is not yet available to prove how males victimize females due to the influence of the Namibian mass media. Most of the television advertisements in Namibia display men promoting business, while women promote household products.

According to some Namibian media researchers (Kabongo 2007, Fox 2005a, Odada 2004, cited in Fox 2012:21), there is a danger of transmitting violence through movies or episodes in cinema and television entertainment in Namibia. The Legal Assistance Centre in Windhoek (2000) reported significant levels of simulated violence in television programming. Over a period of one month, viewers may have watched more than 2600 episodes of violence through the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) (Hubbard 2000:1). Some of the violent episodes include 24 murders, 30 violent assaults and 49 sexual assaults against women (Fox 2012:21). A look at the NBC mission to "effectively inform, educate and entertain the people of Namibia in order to promote peace, national unity and development" shows that violent television programmes can easily influence society, especially the youth (Mureko, in Hubbard 2000:2). Compared to South Africa, Namibia's Independent Broadcasting Authority Code of Practice (IBACP) forbids any portrayal of women as victims of violence, unless there is a logical or moral reason for it. On the other hand, in Namibia, the

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NBC seems to loosely operate a policy that prohibits any brutal or sexual show before 21.00, when teenagers or young children may be watching. In the past years, harmful American programmes, such as *To Catch a Thief*, *Homicide: Life on the Streets*, *Due South*, and *Robo Cop* were accessible to young people. All these series may have a negative impact on the lives of the youth, because they project juvenile delinquency, domestic violence and the relation between crime and low-income groups. Gender stereotypes in most TV programmes portray males as the controlling or leading characters who tend to dominate women in relationships. Women appear as law-abiding, delicate, sensual and under-represented (Fox 2002a:292).

According to Mureko (in Hubbard 2000:2), in most developing countries, like Namibia, where fictional television and films are rarely produced, viewers always find it difficult to understand that television dramas are not real events. Another dangerous issue viewed in magazines or television is pornography. A strong possibility exists that pornography contributes to hostility towards women. Pornography presents women as sex objects in men's hands; therefore, they are consumer goods displayed and served for male use. Even before they can read, boys could learn that a woman is a powerless commodity for a man to use. Pornography may influence males to think about rape and make forced sex more acceptable to them. Therefore, in Namibia, pornography defines women as offensive in a new way. The visual media could pose a danger to Namibian audiences who are new to mass visual entertainment. They could easily be misled to commit violence against women. As Namibia's colonial history of social and political violence continues to have a lasting effect on the post-independence society, a huge possibility exists that violent, confusing and ambiguous mass entertainment may feed into this background. What we learn from the mass media may encourage us to believe that: males are superior, they must dominate women, male aggression is acceptable as a means of attaining what is desired, women are passive, should submit to men, and are sex objects. These performances could lead to beliefs that could encourage males to be violent and aggressive towards women. To ease the current situation in which more crimes occur, we need sober mass media that would promote the society's identity and the pre-existing complicated socio-cultural model of aggression and violence, especially among the Ovawambo.

Therefore, there is no doubt that most Namibian men are under the influence of the mass media when it comes to gender stereotyping.

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Movies and television often motivate men to use their power to violate women. Clearly, women can challenge inflexible gender attitudes and stereotypes in the media (and society), but they cannot succeed alone. Men need to join in the struggle for female equality, even though some men regard this as inappropriate because, traditionally, violence is used to restore the *status quo*. In such a divided climate of contradictory cultural outlooks, the media aggravate the situation when it continues to promote stereotypical and inappropriate images of women. This could be misleading, fuel existing hegemonic masculinity, and reinforce the male view that women do not have rights in the male domain. Hence, the media policy must develop media images that help to promote responsible images of everyday interpersonal relations and promote non-sexism (Fox 2002a:290-291).

3.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, secularization, modernization, and globalization not only affect the world's economy, they also influence marital and family life globally. The feminist movement that arose in 1966 has also influenced most intimate relationships, especially the issues of gender and masculinity. This movement brought new self-understanding, greater awareness and articulation of needs, as well as an expectation of justice in family life. It challenged men's power to have the final say, acts of violence against women, and unequal distribution of domestic work. It has also caused some men to learn how to be allies of women and how to bring changes into their family life. Although the Ovambo family system is still governed by its laws, customs, and beliefs that have controlled their behaviour and communication for very long due to socio-economic changes and democratization, change has taken place that affects the entire society. Through the Christian religion, a new moral order has been promoted, while the Oshivambo traditional order was discouraged. This included the abolition of customary polygamous marriages and the introduction of monogamous marriages. However, this new religion supported gender inequality by promoting patriarchy that reinforced men's power over women. In fact, religion has been used to justify male domination in the culture and society. Men have appealed to religion to justify their position of power and influence. Furthermore, the colonial administration refused to recognise female leaders and manipulated customary laws to suit their needs. Colonial officials also promoted Western patriarchy, which reconfigured power within gender relations. Other powerful influences that fuel the gender stereotypes are the mass media. They communicate messages about sex roles from time to time by presenting females in stereotypical, often negative, ways.

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The Namibian media emphasize women's vulnerability and victimization in the male domain. Through these social influences, men are encouraged to exhibit superiority so as to dominate women. Men may also learn that aggression is acceptable as a means of attaining what they want from women and, on the other hand, women should be passive and defer to men, thus be regarded as sex objects. These beliefs could encourage males to be violent and aggressive towards women. These social influences could also influence men, including the Ovawambo men, to continue hanging on to their patriarchal culture and traditional beliefs.

Moreover, from the beginning of this chapter, we learnt that feminism caused a deep transformation and shift in gender roles as from the 20th century and throughout the 21st century. These transformations have affected both men and women in their private and public lives. These macro and micro social processes also have major impacts on various aspects of social life, such as gender relations and identities, social reproduction processes, balancing family and work, and the redefinition of gender roles. These disruptions also affect marital life, due to the fact that the traditional definitions of marital roles are no longer clear. But how have these transformations impacted Ovawambo cultural and social life? How do the Ovawambo men react to these changes?

Emanating from these questions, the following chapter will elaborate on contemporary changes in the Ovawambo cultural and social life, as well as the male crisis in family and society.

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CHAPTER 4

FATHERHOOD AND THE CRISIS OF FAMILY LIFE IN OVAWAMBOLAND

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we learnt that the male identity has changed due to the impact of globalization, the cultural shift and family policy. These factors are the driving force behind the transformation of male roles to include childcare, support for wives, and doing domestic chores. Although change is taking place in most parts of the world, in Ovamboland, there is not much progress in the direction of male identity norms. Issues, such as success, status, progress, power, aggression and toughness remain the most dominant male norms among the Ovawambo men. This makes family life difficult, especially for women and children. The HIV/Aids threat and increasing cases[50] of rape and domestic violence in Namibia and in Ovamboland, in particular, has prompted the following question: What motivates Ovawambo men to act aggressively towards women and children? However, in Chapter 3, we learnt how Ovawambo males underwent changes caused by missionary work, colonial states, gender politics of the nationalist struggle, and the impact of the war in their lives. We also learnt how Ovawambo males still live in a state of confusion due to the mass media that portray masculine characters as tough, strong, aggressive, and in control (Greenberg *et al.*, in Rabinowits & Cochran 1994:4). However, together with male confusion, another factor in Namibia brings lasting change to Namibian families in general, and Ovawambo family life in particular. Soon after Namibian independence, this change included gender reforms and gender equality laws. Through these laws, the previously inflexible Oshivambo cultural gender stereotypes, which reinforced patriarchy, social and cultural norms, have changed.

Therefore, this chapter seeks to examine the current male identity in Ovamboland and to investigate how socio-economic and political changes affect the cultural and social life in the contemporary Ovawambo family. This chapter also describes how Ovawambo males react to that change. The findings will assist us to help Ovawambo men to shift from their negative behaviour (that emanates from this change and is fed by the Oshivambo cultural understanding of manhood and the mass media) to peaceful and responsible fathering and

[50] According to information from the Namibian Police, in the local newspaper, *The Namibian*, of 13 October 2011 (http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php) a total of 39 rapes were reported in Namibia in September 2011 alone. This means that more than one person is raped every day.

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manhood.

4.2 Background Information

On 21 March 1990, the dawn of Namibia's independence brought not only political independence but also created opportunities for immense political, economic and social change. The liberation, which was achieved at independence, brought hope for the realization of other forms of freedom, such as the restructuring of gender roles and the attainment of sexual liberation. These freedoms are reflected in the new constitution and legal reform that aim to promote gender equality and the expansion of personal liberty. Independence has also fostered nationalism, which brought self-consciousness in terms of national identity and morality. Human rights issues that include sexual rights,[51] are at odds with some Namibian traditional values (LaFont 2007a:1). The government of Namibia has made various efforts in terms of strengthening women's rights; it firstly put more emphasis on gender equality in order to guarantee fundamental rights and subsequently passed progressive gender-based laws. Moreover, in 2000, a Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare was established with the aim of ensuring women, men and children's empowerment, and equality between men and women as prerequisites for full participation in political, legal, social, cultural and economic development (Ruppel 2010:2).

4.3 Male Roles and Obligation in the Family under Namibian Law

According to Niikondo (2005:v), a tremendous improvement has been made regarding the status of women in the SADC[52] countries. One of the important frameworks that promoted their status was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPFA), resulting from the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, and the 1997 SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, as well as the 1998 Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children. Rapid socio-economic and political change is taking place due to economic emancipation, marked by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The aim is to achieve human development and extend equal opportunities and outcomes to all. This change also marked the onset of equality for women.

[51] Current crucial topics of debate in Namibia include: women, gender and gender roles, gay rights, divorce, rape and murder, HIV, and cohabitation (LaFont 2007a:1).
[52] SADC is the acronym for the Southern African Development Community, a coalition of countries in Southern Africa.

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The main concerns of SADC countries, which are in line with the BDPFA goals, are issues of women's health in relation to HIV/Aids and power abuse. There have been advances in legislation, particularly on issues of sexual and domestic violence. Namibia is also extending the definition of rape to include marital rape, and tightening remedies for survivors of domestic violence to include the removal of the abuser from the home. All SADC countries have authorized and adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but few have ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Besides the actions of the church[53] to secure its members' marital and family life after Namibia's independence, some law reforms were made. Most of the government's law reforms on gender issues were in the areas of affirmative action and gender-based violence, and some were contrary to the way most Ovawambo men were brought up; most had been brought up in socially conservative homes - the last strongholds of patriarchy in Ovawambo society. Although these laws receive strong support from many Namibians, especially the women, some men started to defend themselves as they felt threatened, because most of the law reforms favour the women, and because these laws do not represent them (the men) well. Some of the laws are also contrary to certain societal and religious traditions, as well as culturally oriented individual beliefs, because they challenge the male-dominant norms that past patriarchal ideologies had shaped, especially in relation to the family. It will be helpful to consider some of the family law reforms in Namibia since this country's independence (Hubbard 2007b:209-210).

4.3.1 Married Persons Equality Act

The Namibian government also passed the Married Persons Equality Bill, one of the laws demanded by a post-independence Namibian women's movement in order to help married women, to share equal power with their husbands. Through this bill, women enjoy their rights because it abolished males' traditional authorities, which they perceived as invariably

[53] After independence, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) experienced great changes especially in marriage and family life. Most of its members were drawn into diverse social ills that included alcohol and drug abuse, criminal and violent acts, robbery, stock and property theft, shoplifting, housebreaking, and the fast spreading of HIV/Aids. The ELCIN, which is largest church body in the country with 678 000 members, is overwhelmed by a large number of orphans and vulnerable children. Therefore, its emphasis was on the education and training of its members in social issues, such as HIV/Aids counselling, training/refresher courses in Theology, and advanced courses in Theology, marriage counselling aimed at healing sick/ailing marriages, and pre-marriage counselling. Other areas are counselling for alcoholics, training workers to deal with domestic violence, leadership, work with vulnerable children, courses for church elders, Sunday School and confirmation class teachers, and poverty reduction workshops (Sheyavali 2008:45).

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patriarchal and discriminating against women (Becker 2007:23,33). The 1996 law (Act 1) was introduced to fight the discriminatory Roman-Dutch law's concept of marital power. Under the Roman-Dutch law, wives were placed in civil marriages at the same level as minors, while husbands held the right to administer the property of both spouses, even if the wife had acquired such property before marriage. The wife was not permitted to make decisions with regard to property without her husband's consent. She could also not buy a house or car, or acquire a bank loan without her husband's authority.

Couples married in community of property must now consult each other on most major financial transactions, with husbands and wives being subject to identical powers and restraints, while spouses married out of community of property now have the right to deal independently with their separate properties (Hubbard 2007b:209).

4.3.2 Family Law on Rape and Domestic Violence

One of the most progressive laws ratified is the Combating of Rape Act (No. 8 of 2000). The apartheid government's law related to rape in Namibia was not enough and actually even contributed to the rape of individual women. The previous laws did not legally define rape, but indecent assault; in fact, the previous law defined rape as "unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent." This left many cases of rape unprosecuted because the legal definition was not applicable. Under the new Act, the term used is "coercive circumstance," which broadly includes physical threat, force or other circumstances where the victim is being intimidated. Another problem with the previous government's law was the use of the term "unlawful sexual intercourse" to define rape, while it was generally regarded as a husband's lawful right to have sex with his wife at any time, and the wife did not have the right to deny it (especially among the Ovawambo) (Mufune 2003:433). Therefore, marital rape was not regarded as a crime in Namibia. This exemption of marital rape from the law emphasized the notion that a wife is the husband's property (UNAM, SARDC 2005:11). The Combating of Rape Act of 2000 is regarded as one of the most progressive pieces of rape legislation in the world. It includes the definition of rape and focuses on the rape victim's consent to the force or coercion that the perpetrator applies (Hubbard 2007:210). The new Act defines marital rape as illegal, and informs men that their wives are not their property. Therefore, men have no right to force their wives to have sexual intercourse against their will. Although this law has enough support from the public, the issue of marital rape is problematical. It encourages the wife to lay a charge of rape against her husband if he forces her to have sex with him (Hubbard 2007b:210-211 and 2007a:104). The Act was followed by

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the Combating of Domestic Violence Act 4 of 2003, which covers all forms of domestic violence including sexual violence, harassment, intimidation, economic violence and psychological violence. It includes all domestic violence between husbands and wives, parents and children, boyfriends and girlfriends and other family members. Those who suffer within intimate relationships have the freedom to lay criminal charges and ask for protection from the magistrate's court to stop the abuser from contacting the victims at home (Hubbard 2007b:210-211, see also Hubbard 2007a:106).

4.3.3 The Maintenance Act

The Maintenance Act was introduced to secure child support from absent fathers. Its aim is to help children and women economically. It guides couples in the sharing of expenses, beginning from pregnancy, and helps to determine the amount of maintenance that should be paid for the children's basic needs. It also outlines methods of enforcing payments when maintenance orders are disobeyed (Hubbard 2007b:212, see also Hubbard 2007a109-110). It also makes it the duty of both parents to support their children, whether born inside or outside of a marriage. This Act provides relief for women who often are left alone as sole caregivers for children (UNAM & SARDC 2005:12).

Beside these laws, national machinery for the promotion of gender equality was created soon after independence and the national gender policy. Namibian women have, undoubtedly gained considerable power and rights after independence. The law governing local elections and the statutory affirmative action provide for female candidates' affirmative action. This law affects the National Assembly, the first house of Parliament, and the City, Town, and Village Councils that, at present, are mostly in the male domain. Another gender equality improvement is experienced in occupations. Before independence, Namibian women were limited to occupations of domestic workers, subsistence farmers, some secretarial and clerical work, nursing and teaching. Contrary to this, the return of well-trained Namibian women from exile has led to the rapid feminization of a broad range of occupations and professions.

In the Ovambo community, women had already had access to traditional positions of authority, although this was hardly voiced. The Oukwanyama tribe is now ruled by a queen, instead of a king. Most women have been appointed to the position of headwomen, senior headwomen, government councillors, and governors, although still very few in numbers. Colonial representations of gender, and their reflection in structures of traditional authority and customary laws, have also begun to change in many respects (Becker 2000:186-187).

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However, in the post-independence era, after all the law reforms, it is important to scrutinize the Ovawambo men's behaviour, as well as their experiences regarding gender, power dysfunction, and their impact on the family wellbeing. This reflects that the male identity's traditional cornerstones have continued to vanish, due to the call for equality and the family law reforms. As noted in Chapter 3, power is an integral part of the masculine self-esteem and most men find it difficult to transfer power to women (Kahn 1984, in Basow 1992:353). Therefore, men tend to turn to violence as a way of reasserting their masculinity and use violence as an instrument to retain power and control women. When this gender change and insecurity confront men, they interpret their powerlessness and insecurity as emasculation. Consequently, women become victims of the symbolic reassertion of male power (Campbell 1992, in Vetten 2000:68.) How true is this statement of Namibian men? Do legal reforms lead to any changes regarding gender and power abuse?

4.4 Men's Reaction to Gender Reforms and Gender Equality

As learnt from the previous paragraph, in Namibia, gender inequality clearly contributed to a variety of social challenges that women faced. Some of these challenges are unequal access to material wealth (e.g. land, property, and cash income), gender-based violence, and discriminatory cultural and customary practices. However, the more women managed these various challenges, the more they experienced a greater risk of exploitation. This happens because men view women's social and economic change as a threat to their superior position.

4.4.1 Men's Positive Perceptions of Gender Reforms and Gender Equality

Most men in Namibia indicate that their economic position has not changed much since independence, and many men in Ovamboland agree that there is positive social change in women's lives in terms of economic change. Tomas, a 43-year-old Ovambo man (LeBeau & Spence 2004:48, see also LeBeau 2004:5) states that women's situation has improved in contrast to the past, because now they have their own properties and make money by selling their *mahangu* and livestock. They also have businesses, are employed in the government sectors and can now have greater access to finance and bank loans. Therefore, they enjoy a better standard of living than before independence. Peter (a 44-year-old Ovambo man) also supports women's progress by noting, "There are now female ministers, directors of businesses and inspectors in schools." Few men in Ovamboland regard women's more equal social status as an indication of an improvement in their lives. Some Ovawambo men (like another Namibian fellow-counterpart) regard women's empowerment as an indication that

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women have their rights and no longer need to depend on men financially. However, men argue that only urban women are more likely to enjoy this right; rural women still live as before independence (LeBeau & Spence 2004:33). Furthermore, Tomas, a 43-year-old Ovambo man (LeBeau 2004:5), continues to claim that, although women now have more rights than before independence: "I do not know of any customs or traditions that affect how men and women live together. There are traditional beliefs like the one that gives men more power in families, yes it discriminates against women … but it is good for the man to have power."

Although a few men agree with these Acts, they do not fully understand them and believe that they disadvantage the men. For example, Iilonga, a 53 year-old Ovambo man (LeBeau & Spence 2004:33), agrees that men must grant women's rights, but states: "The fact of a women sitting in front and the man at the back - it is very painful."

4.4.2 Men's Negative Perceptions of Gender Reforms and Gender Equality

Regardless of real change in women's economic and social life, men are more likely to complain about this change. Men view women's rights in a negative manner. They feel that women's rights have caused some of the current social problems. Men also fear losing their status and self-esteem, or giving up their power to women. Basow (1992:353) states that the consequence of this fear, confusion, and resistance is that men fight back to regain power. The alternative instrument that men use to regain their power is their only remaining power base, that is, coercive power. This has led to their increased perpetrations of rape, battering, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse of both women and children.

Let us examine men's reactions to the law reforms. Most Ovawambo men do not believe that their cultural customs discriminate against women. Kondjeni, a 46-year-old rural Ovambo man (LeBeau 2004:5), supports this and says: "The tradition is that women should respect and obey their husbands, but there is nothing wrong with that. … Our women are used to their tradition and they appreciate it."

The gender-related law reforms show how the Namibian government is seriously committed to make gender equality a reality in many spheres of life. However, male reluctance undermines this commitment to the sacrifice of power and privilege, especially in a marital and family context. Now, the Ovawambo men's reaction to the following three Acts will be

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examined: the Married Person's Equality Act, the Family Law on Rape and Domestic Violence, and the Maintenance Act:

1) **Married Person's Equality Act** - Many men feel that this law has created a problem, as it conveys the message that the law no longer recognizes the husband as the head of the household in a civil marriage. They feel threatened and fear losing their position as the head of the family (Hubbard 2007b:210 and 2007a:102-104). Men believe that the constitution was applied to contravene what men received from God, and which ancient African traditions also supported. They argue that, according to the Bible and African traditions, women and men could never be equal (Becker 2000:172). During the debate on the Bill in the Namibian Parliament (i.e., the National Assembly: 13 Oct 1995, 1, 8 and 27 Nov 1995; the National Council: 12 and 18 Dec 1995) (Hubbard 2007a:102), many Parliamentarians cited biblical accounts of Adam and Eve's story to support the controversy that a wife must be subservient to her husband. Thus, here, it is clear that African tradition and gender equality are incompatible (Becker 2000:172). An Ovambo male Parliamentarian stated:

> … marriage is holy and I feel that if the legislators tamper with it unnecessarily, we might cause havoc in our nation… Men and women cannot be equal. Even God, the Creator, did not consider such a situation… Man is the image of God and when we play, [we say] "Our father in Heaven," but not "Our Mother in Heaven" this means that man is more powerful than women. That is why there is no way to deprive him of his power or status. In many black communities in Namibia, if not in the whole of Africa, men must pay *lobola* in different forms to the family of his wife. Why do women not do the same if they are equal? Men can dig holes, work underground in mines, which means that men can be trusted to do hard work. Do we also expect women to do the same? A hen cannot become a cock and it remains so (CEDAW 1995:137, Hubbard 2007a:102).

As with other gender-related law reform issues, most Ovawambo males do not agree with the content of the Married Persons Equality Act. They regard this act as having caused problems between couples who were initially living together satisfactorily before this law. Men feel threatened by this Act because, to them, it favours the women. The Act mostly disadvantages men, hence men's reaction to it by using their power against this law, being one of the reasons why domestic violence is increasing among Ovawambo families. Tomas, the 43-year-old Ovambo man (LeBeau & Spence 2004:50) sums up the possible feelings of many Ovawambo males by saying:

> This Act says a man and a woman in a family should be equal. They share things equally in their marriage. This Act, to me, seems as if it is there to make men feel inferior to women. This Act is more for women than men. I feel that we men are no longer valued as we were in the past. They say it is equality in marriage but this Act is more one-sided.

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2) **Family Law on Rape and Domestic Violence** - This law protects victims. However, many men fear that the law did not do enough to protect men, who experience violence from women. They also fear that women will abuse this law to manipulate men, and that men who experience violence, who are deprived of sexual intimacy, or whose wives use witchcraft to interfere with their sexual performance, are not represented (Hubbard 2007b:210-211). An Ovambo male parliamentarian said the following about the restriction on marital power:

> … I have stated that I support the Bill in principle. However, … I disagree partially with the restriction on marital power where it proposes that the common law position of the husband as head of the family be abolished. This cannot be accepted. Husbands as heads of the families should be maintained. Husbands are naturally accepted as heads of families and they, in turn, naturally accept this natural responsibility. The nature made them to be heads of families. Each family needs a leader and in this case, a husband (CEDAW 1995:137).

3) **The Maintenance Act -** However, during the parliamentary debates, there were repeated allegations that some women abuse the maintenance system. They do this by plotting to produce children, as a way of getting money from men to spend on themselves (Hubbard 2007a:109-110). According to information obtained from a female member of the National Assembly on 6 March 2002:

> [S]ome mothers claim maintenance money from their ex-partners and squander this money on other things, rather than using it for the benefit of the child it was claimed for. Moreover, these very mothers who claim money dump the children with their mothers while claiming money from the fathers, which the children do not benefit from at all. It is equally true that those mothers refuse to give such children to their fathers who are financially strong and willing to take responsibility for the well-being of their children. This refusal comes as a means to suck money from the partner which, without any doubt, makes one thing that mothers want to make business with the children… I would like to propose that measures be taken to curb the milking of them [*sic*]… (National Assembly, in Hubbard 2007a:110).

A number of men were defensive about the law reforms. They felt that, somehow, the law discriminates against, or disadvantages, men. The main concern was not based on gender equality alone, but on the preservation of male power and proprietary sexual control over women (Hubbard 2007a:86). The voices of three Ovawambo men, who were members of parliament in 1994 when these law reforms were first introduced in Parliament before they were promulgated in 1996, are related below. Some concern of one Ovambo male parliamentarian has to do with the male headship in the family:

> [T]he common law position or notion of the husband assuming the headship of the family unit is not something that came about as an historical accident; it's a natural phenomenon common to both human beings and beasts. In fact, no two heifers can have two bulls as husbands simultaneously. Should this privilege be legislated away merely for the sake of effecting absolute equality between the two genders, a very far-reaching controversy could arise, as

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> there can be no such a thing as a country, a school or even a house without the head of such a state or institution. A train without a locomotive is unheard of! (CEDAW 1995:136).

However, two male parliamentarians, not Ovambos, took a different position on this. They were in favour of the law reform bill. One of them was concerned about discrimination against women:

> The discrimination and oppression of women [*sic*] is a cancer in the flesh of humanity. Men are part of humanity, therefore this deadly disease affects all of us, women and men. Some people try to justify this cancer by calling it a tradition, a way of life and even a heritage which must be preserved. Whatever may be said, for the sake of a better tomorrow for our children and their children, we cannot allow this disease to be carried into the 21st century. We also cannot go on talking about it forever; it must be removed now … (CEDAW 1995:136).

The male Minister of Justice at that time stated:

> I know that people's first reaction to this proposal is often shock. There are people who think that wives must simply accept what their husbands want in the field of sex. I have no sympathy for people with such a view. Women don't lose their rights when they get married. I however have some understanding for people who initially may not be in favour of this provision because they fear that such a provision can be misused. We are now coming in line with what other countries have done and the experience is that such fears for misuse are indeed unnecessary … (National Assembly 3 June 1999, in Hubbard 2007a:105).

According to LeBeau (2001, in LeBeau 2004:40), there is a strong possibility that the changing status of men and women may force men to commit domestic violence. Due to the some men's inferiority complex, domestic violence occurs when men feel intimidated by women's increasing social status. Jo, a 28-year-old Ovambo man (LeBeau & Spence 2004:40), supports this by stating that domestic violence happens when a woman is better educated than her husband or when her husband cannot provide for the family's needs. Furthermore, men also feel that women's rights weaken their rights. Men blame the women's rights movement for causing problems in Namibian society in general, because some rights interfere with traditional beliefs and, therefore, are not acceptable (LeBeau 2004:8). For some Ovawambo men, women's rights and gender equality also cause confusion, because some women refuse to obey their husband's rules. Sam, a 43-year-old rural Ovambo man (LeBeau 2004:9), also argues that this social and economic change brings more confusion and mistrust, than what already exists between men and women. The beating up of men and women is starting because of these disagreements that equality and gender laws have brought about. Many Ovawambo men oppose gender equality and use a variety of excuses to argue for the maintenance of a patriarchal system. One can say that Tomas, the 43-year-old Ovambo man

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(LeBeau & Spence 2004:50; LeBeau 2004:9), summarises the sentiments of many Ovawambo males when he says:

> This has been too much for us men! Everywhere you go they talk about women's rights. I think it is being overemphasised now! Yes very much! Women's rights cause problems between families. Because women are now just fighting for their own rights, they no longer recognise us. I do not agree with women being equal to men. I think men should remain as heads of households. Again if we refer to the Bible story a man, Adam, was created first by God and he was given the power to rule everything on earth! My wife should not have equal rights to me. I remain the head of the household and that's all!

The above information indicates that the current problem that Ovawambo women face is the men's negative attitude towards the current gender reforms and gender equality laws. However, both men and women are aware of women's changing legal and social status, although men, generally, are not happy about this reality. They realise that the reforms aimed at bringing about gender equality are indeed taking place (LeBeau & Spence 2004:50).

4.5 The Impact of Male Resistance in Family Relationship among the Ovawambo

It appears that Namibia's postcolonial gender discourses and most of the policies are being successfully implemented. However, the data on changes in sex role stereotypes in the Ovambo family life is insufficient. Urgent research is needed on changing male and female roles in social and family life in Ovamboland. Nevertheless, current circumstances show that most women in Namibia have autonomous decision-making power in certain areas of life, due to family law reforms. Unfortunately, most rural women are still under male oppression, because of some religious beliefs and cultural practices that assign less power and status to women. Among the Ovawambo, male domination is asserted by means of actual physical violence against women. While law reforms aim to entrench social and economic justice for women and encourage greater equality, especially in private affairs, not all Ovawambo women benefit by this. The law reform process itself is affected by the prevailing gender dynamics. Women continue to suffer subordination, but often lack the confidence to discuss what they experience in their private lives. The culture of silence plays a role in preventing women's voices from being heard. Men also feel that the law reforms sideline them, but favour the women, and threaten their own leadership role in both the family and society (CEDAW 1995:40).

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4.5.1 Family Negligence

According to Michael Kaufman[54]:

> The first and root cause of men's violence against women is the unequal power between the sexes. When you have inequality between people, ultimately it takes violence to maintain that inequality. Men's privilege and the sense of entitlement to privileges is a reason for violence. The most common form of rape or sexual assault is not carried out by a stranger, but by a woman's husband or boyfriend. He feels that he is entitled to sex with this woman whenever he wants. The third cause of violence against women is social permission. We allow it to happen. Our socialization into real men is the root cause of violence. Another cause of men's violence is that men are told never to show emotion. The final cause of men's violence is the past experience of men and boys.[55]

In the Ovawambo culture, the husband is expected to take care of every material need at home, including his wife's needs. Some men believe that they have the right to multiple sexual partners, and that their wives have no right to complain about it. According to research[56] that Mufune (2003:433) conducted at Outapi, Ovamboland,, most Ovawambos believe that a real man has many wives and, to be a man, depends on whether one has enough wealth to support the wives. To some men, it is all about having many children and wives, because a man's power is proven by his number of wives and children (Brown *et al.* 2005:590). Men not only support the notion of associating manhood with many wives and children, as shown in a woman's following statement (cited in Brown, Sorrell, & Raffaelli 2005:590):

> If you had many wives, many children will come your way… that is most important and that is how you became a man. I knew a man in Omusati region with 100 children. People threw him a very big party when the 100th was born. Just as it was in old days, nowadays to be a man means to have money, many girlfriends, and car.

Many women in Namibia, and in particular in Ovamboland, bear the financial responsibility of their children although their annual income, on average, is 50% less than what men earn (Iipinge *et al.*, cited in LaFont 2007a:7). Most men deny paternity, or migrate to urban areas where they pick up other women, resulting in poor communication with, and a decrease in, support for their wives and children in the rural area. Financial problems give rise to many Ovawambo families' arguments and quarrels that, in turn, end in physical abuse. In some cases, both the husband and wife have an income, but the husband controls all the money. Often, this results in arguments that lead to physical attacks. Since many women depend on their husbands economically, this sometimes forces them to stay in these abusive situations.

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[54] Michael Kaufman is the co-founder and International Director of the White Ribbon Campaign (http://www.kas.de/up/load/auslandshomepages/namibia/women-Custom/ambunda.pdb).
[55] http://www.kas.de/up/load/auslandshomepages/namibia/women-Custom/ambunda.pdb.
[56] The research was based on the question: What does it mean to be a man in the Ovawambo culture?

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However, if the Ovawambo men misuse their power over their family members, and if they enjoy the right to control and make decisions on family resources, then most families in Ovamboland would face serious conflicts in the modern world.

As noted earlier, many Ovawambo men work far from their families in urban areas, while their families live in the rural areas. They sometimes spend four or five months in the city without visiting their families; therefore, some eventually have extra-marital affairs in their workplace. When this happens, the men will not allow their wives to pay them impromptu visits in the town, in order to avoid clashes between their two women. The wife would always have to ask her husband's permission before visiting. The men argue that it is the husband's prerogative to invite his wife if he so wishes, but his wife does not have the liberty to pay him a visit without being invited, because she might find herself in a difficult situation. Although some brave women defy this norm, it always creates tension. In addition, many rural women do not understand much about child maintenance. Even if a woman is able to obtain a court order against her husband concerning maintenance, it is difficult to determine a man's income if he has an informal job (CEDAW 1995:143-144, 47-152).

4.5.2 Promiscuity and Power Abuse

In the Outapi community in the Omusati region (North-West Ovamboland), certain strict taboos prohibited a woman from refusing to have sex with her husband[57] (Fox 2002b:326). However, the common male attitude is that only the man has the authority to decide when he wants sex, not his female partner. The men express the same ideas when they say: "A woman has no right to refuse sex if she is not pregnant or menstruating. In our culture, women are not allowed to refuse her husband sex. The man can overpower her or chase her from the house for refusing" (Fox 2002b:326).

Mufune (2003:433*)* confirms that a woman may only refuse to have sex with her husband when she is pregnant, if her husband has beaten her, when she is tired, or when she is menstruating. She can also refuse if the husband does not provide for her needs, especially for *mahangu* or cattle. She may also refuse if the husband has been out of the house for at least two days without her approval. Some men responded that women have no right to refuse sex with their husbands, if they (the women) are not pregnant or menstruating. According to these informants, the Ovawambo culture forbids women to deny sex to their husbands. In

[57] The following describes a taboo: "A woman can refuse sex when she is pregnant, or finds out that you are having sex with another woman, or when a woman is menstruating."

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other words, a man has a right to sexual intercourse at any time that he wants it without fear of rejection. Should a woman deny sex to her husband, he has the right to use force, or chase her from the house. Young men (15-19 years) from Oshakati (cited in Fox 2002b:326) confirmed this norm: "Most girls when you meet them first time, she won't say straight that it's yes (to sex). Only later if you force her will she (agree). We force because we have to [*sic*]. You beat her because you are the man. She must understand that I am the man. I am the boss."

Women, especially those who want to remain faithful to their cultural norms and Christianity, are in danger of contracting[58] HIV/Aids because of male promiscuity. A woman from Enhana, Ovamboland, revealed that:

> My husband has other women and when I tell him to use a condom when we are having sex, he does not want [*sic*]. I am really sure that he has other women because I have two children with him and he has three other children born by different mothers… now I'm in danger of catching AIDS and syphilis. Men are spreading AIDS. In our village, there are AIDS awareness meetings but men never turn up. Now I am here beaten and in hospital and I don't have money because my husband will not give me money. I am appealing to the government to call meetings for men where they can be told about family planning, contraceptives and AIDS (Mufune 2003:433).

Male promiscuity and fear of violence reportedly also affect women's choices to seek voluntary testing. According to Ashipala and Tooley (in Deluca 2004), many women who are tested in New Start Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centres, do so secretly when they suspect that their partners have been unfaithful. They are also afraid that, if they inform their male partners about their test results especially if the results are positive, they will be kicked out of their homes. Another HIV counsellor in Oshakati (in Fox 2002b:325) observes:

> These old people, these sugar daddies, are a big problem because they think of culture, because they say even our forefathers were having many wives. They do not think about today's situation, they don't want to (consider) that because they think it was being done in their old society. They just follow their old style.

Although most people in Ovamboland are Christians, some continue to embrace the cultural understanding of masculinity. Fox (2002b:325) indicates clearly that some community members in Ovamboland prefer a polygamous lifestyle both before and after formal marriage. The issue of multi-partner sexual relations is well expressed by both younger and older respondents in Eenhana (North of Ovamboland). An elderly Eenhana man stated that multiple

[58] According to the information collected by Mufune (2003:428), "Although the impact of Christianity meant that men could only have one wife, men tended to have sex outside marriage. Men have given themselves the freedom of many partners. Traditionally having just one partner suggested poverty, low status and weak manhood."

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sex partners was part of the Ovawambo tradition. To have a relationship with only one woman was regarded as a sign of low status and weak manhood, while the ability to support many women materially denotes wealth and sexual competence.

Having multiple partners is not only a possible way for HIV to infiltrate into a marriage or relationship, it could also cause financial calamity. Multiple partners can hinder or prevent men (mostly breadwinners) in Ovamboland from providing support for their family members. A 35-year-old woman with four children from three different fathers (boyfriends) lamented:

> Now I also have a problem with my boyfriend. He has another partner, and still comes to me. I am afraid that he will bring a disease and I cannot share his money with another woman [*sic*]. The other girlfriend is also demanding. I need food for the baby and soap to wash the baby's nappies. But he cannot afford it, because he has two girlfriends.

This statement reflects how power abuse can endanger women and make them vulnerable to contract HIV/Aids, because the Ovawambo culture impacts negatively on the identity of married women and on men's control of women's sexuality. Therefore, such practices associated with masculinity in the Ovawambo culture, are harmful to the family members' wellbeing.

Men are also at risk, because they, sometimes, refuse to protect themselves. As stated in Chapter 1, in most African cultures (Ovawambo included), a man determines a woman's identity, especially in marriage and in relationships of love. According to Becker (2005:32), sexuality and gender relations play a huge role in issues of identity construction among Ovawambo men. Forced sex and promiscuity put many women in danger of contracting HIV/Aids. Sexual assertiveness, in some Ovambo male behaviour, is presented as a salient factor in the proper expression of manhood:

> If you have many girlfriends, then you are on top. You are a man. If a man has got many girlfriends, he is popular. I don't know why most girls will like him [*sic*]. But if a girl has too many boyfriends, people start calling her names. They'll call her *oshikumbu*[59](Tsumeb 1, cited in Becker 2005:32).

Moreover, when women find themselves competing for a man's income, as in this case, they may fight to maintain their position, end the relationship, or seek patronage from new partners.

A 35 year-old woman made the following statement:

[59] *Oshikumbu* is a derogatory term used to describe a single mother, who is considered to be a "loose woman," and is often translated as "bitch" (Becker 2005:32).

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> I went to Windhoek to my first two children's father. I was there for 8 months, and then I went home. I found that my boyfriend and I did no longer agree [*sic*]. He was drinking and beating me, and he had other women as well. I left him because he started to have other relationships. In the beginning, he supported the children, but when he started seeing other women, he stopped supporting them, and I left him. I went to Ovamboland (Tersøl 2002:352).

Alcohol abuse is a major cause of violence in Ovambo homes. Most of the men, whom the researcher counselled in the previous parish where he worked, told him that they beat their wives whenever they are under the influence of alcohol. However, men sometimes use alcohol as an excuse for violence. The abused women also regard drunkenness as the cause of violence. This may not be correct, as many people drink alcohol without becoming violent, while some men, who do not drink alcohol, nevertheless beat their wives or girlfriends. However, it is true that the use of alcohol could contribute to a violent relationship. Many marital problems develop from frustration, because couples waste their income on alcohol. Poor communication, modern attitudes, financial problems, extended family and other negative influences also play a role in the increase in domestic violence (Legal Assistance Centre 2008:5). Furthermore, several Ovambo boys (cited in Becker 2005:34) disclosed that they forced girls to satisfy their sexual needs by using violence: "You beat her because you are the man. She must understand that I am the man. I am the boss" (Becker 2005:34).

From these statements, it is clear that men remain sexually dominant in the Ovawambo culture, while women are not expected to articulate their sexual desires or needs. They do not have power over their bodies, like the men. That aspect of the traditional culture seems to remain dominant. Therefore, it is difficult for women to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections, or to suggest a safe sexual practice (Tersøl 2002:352).

Besides the gender law reforms, the Namibian National Women's Organization and the Namibian Women's Movement worked together with the government to establish the country's first rehabilitation centre, the Women and Child Abuse Centre, which opened in July 1993 in Windhoek (Adams 1996, Schikwambi & Ithindi 1996, in Nangolo & Peltzerin 2003:20) with the aim of supporting victims of violence. It was later renamed the Women and Child Protection Unit and provided services to battered women, abused children and their families. This centre that later expanded to some big Namibians towns, such as Oshakati, Keetmanshoop, Walvisbay, Tsumeb, Rundu, Eenhana, and Mariental, was a great step in the provision of services to battered women and their families.

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According to Nangolo and Peltzerin's (2003:17-25) research in two of these centres, Oshakati and Eenhana, it found that women experience power abuse from their husbands or male life-partners in various violent ways. The research included 60 black women living in the four regions of Ovamboland, who were battered by their husbands or lovers and whose cases had been reported to a Woman and Child Protection Unit in Oshakati and Eenhana.

These women had endured abusive relationships for a period ranging from two months to 33 years. All, except one, related that the violence started when they began to live with their partner. That means that only one woman had been abused before she started living with the man. Twenty (33.3%) battered women said their problems started after ten years of living together, while six (10%) stated that their problems started after five years of being with the man while they were pregnant. Three women reported experiencing two to six abortions/miscarriages as a result of violence, and only four (6%) said that the violence started after 20 to 30 years in the relationship/marriage. Almost half of the respondents (46.6%) were abused, during which the men used swear words, whenever these men felt like doing so, especially when they (the men) were under the influence of alcohol. Sometimes the women were beaten up due to jealousy. One woman confessed: "My partner does not want to see me with other people, he gets violent." At other times, the women were assaulted because of financial constraints and another woman noted, "My partner becomes angry, violent, when I ask for some money or when I ask him to assist us in order to buy food for the children or even to take our children to the doctor" (Nangolo & Peltzerin 2003:23). Furthermore, these women revealed that they were beaten because they did not cook delicious meals and that they hid their partners' money so that they would not spend it lavishly. One woman reported as follows: "I did not have money to buy food for the kids, or even soap to wash our clothes, but my husband is gambling almost every day. That day, I decided to hide his money with the intention of going to buy the needed goods. When he realized it, I was badly beaten" (Nangolo & Peltzerin 2003:23).

According to the data, women in this study experienced an average of two to three different types of abuse simultaneously. Most reported cases are about financial abuse, followed by emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

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Table 1. Illustrating the percentage of the types of abuse

1	Financial abuse	81.7%
2	Emotional abuse	60%
3	Physical abuse	53.3%
4	Sexual abuse	26.6%

Source: Nangolo & Peltzerin 2003:23.

Most of these battered women were beaten as a result of jealousy. One of these women revealed: "I thought when you are pregnant it is really special and so I wanted to be treated special. Mh.... I got it wrong. I was beaten and kicked in the abdomen during all six pregnancies and so I lost them all. The seventh baby was born but died the following day."

As indicated in the table above, financial abuse appears to be the most frequent form of abuse reported in this study. Many women reported that their partners denied them access to money. Some employed women indicated being forced to hand over their salaries to their husbands or life-partners. Some women were forced to plead for money and to hand it over to their abusive partners; if they refused they were beaten. Some women were beaten because they were employed while their husbands were not. Most of the abusers accused their spouses that they regarded their husbands as nothing because they (the husbands) were unemployed. This proves that Ovawambo males feel that their power is undermined due to their unemployment (Nangolo & Peltzerin 2003:24,29).

Furthermore, almost a quarter of these women reported the indignity of being forced to have sex against their will. After battering them, their partners forced them to have sex while they were still crying, feeling pain or angry. Only 20% of the respondents viewed rape in their relationships as severe, and 6.6% perceived it as minimal (Nangolo & Peltzerin 2003:24). Surprisingly, according to the national gender-based violence database system,[60] most rape cases occurred in all of the four regions: Ohangwena, Oshana, Oshikoto, and Omusati (highlighted in the table below) that make up Ovamboland. This gives a total number of 2035 rape cases between 2002 and 2008, in Ovamboland alone.

[60] http://sgdatabase.unwomen.org

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Table 2. Illustrating the reported cases of rape from the Namibia Police between 2002 and 2008

	Regions	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	TOTAL
1	Khomas	174	161	180	154	136	166	159	1 130
2	**Ohangwena**	**50**	**77**	**73**	**111**	**94**	**110**	**109**	**624**
3	**Oshana**	**107**	**118**	**100**	**68**	**72**	**90**	**56**	**611**
4	Hardap	43	58	77	71	105	165	63	582
5	Otjozondjupa	45	68	68	102	77	96	82	538
6	Erongo	67	72	74	56	73	80	88	510
7	Omaheke	52	58	77	76	51	66	76	456
8	**Oshikoto**	**53**	**47**	**51**	**48**	**105**	**58**	**74**	**436**
9	Karas	47	48	59	55	68	55	63	395
10	**Omusati**	**23**	**44**	**55**	**55**	**57**	**80**	**50**	**364**
11	Kavango	40	47	48	58	46	47	50	336
12	Kunene	28	33	28	52	59	51	43	294
13	Caprivi	34	30	25	25	30	47	28	219
	TOTAL	**763**	**861**	**915**	**931**	**941**	**1111**	**915**	**6495**

Source: http://sgdatabase.unwomen.org

4.6 The Impact of Power Abuse on Family Members

The available data reflects how the Ovawambo men's abuse of power has grave consequences for members of the affected families, in particular the women and children.

4.6.1 The Impact of Power Abuse on Women

In most cases, the unequal power relationship between the men and women has led to the male domination of women. Moreover, this is regarded as an old phenomenon that has been kept secret, as people pretend that the problem does not exist (Moore 1979, cited in Nangolo & Peltzer 2003:16). As found among the San people of Namibia (Kandirikirira 2002:120), some Ovawambo men still believe that the abuse of their wives is cultural. Some boys boast about their physical power that they use in violence to control their girlfriends. Most of the available research indicates that, in most cases, the main wrongdoer often is the person with whom the woman is cohabiting, or a husband, rather than a stranger. Furthermore, alcohol, drugs and other hard substances, cultural beliefs/ideology, unemployment and poverty are among the contributing factors to violence against women and children (Schikwambi & Ithindi 1996, cited in Nangolo & Peltzer 2003:16).

To be beaten by one's spouse creates fear and extreme distrust in marriage. It is important to recognize that the effects of domestic violence vary from one person to another. The effects may last for years after the abuse itself has ended. An abused person may turn to alcohol or drugs to help him/her through the pain, as such a person may have no outlet for the anger or

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pain other than self-abuse. Physical violence may result in permanent injuries, such as deafness, memory loss due to brain injury, kidney failure, miscarriages, loss of teeth, or the victim ending up in a wheelchair. Physical violence has the effect, especially upon women, of destroying the victim's self-confidence, self-esteem and sense of personal safety. The home is supposed to be a place of safety, comfort, and happiness, but victims of domestic violence have nowhere to relax and feel safe. They often live in shock, depression and confusion. Since they lack the necessary support, they sometimes even consider suicide. Victims may also experience self-condemnation, fear, guilt and shame.

The victim experiences domestic violence as extremely harmful physically, emotionally, financially and socially and may suffer, not only serious injuries, but also death, as well as a range of psychological problems. When a woman suffers abuse, her sense of self always becomes closely connected to her experience of violent control (Kirkwood 1993; WHO 1996, cited in Nangolo & Peltzer 2003:18). Psychogenic illnesses are also common among abused women due to their emotional pain that manifests in physiological forms (Bohn 1990:105).

In addition, female battering has been related to a number of serious health problems, some of which could be fatal, itemized as follows:

Physical health outcomes: injury (lacerations, fractures and injury to internal organs), unwanted pregnancy resulting from rape by a partner, gynaecological problems, STDs including HIV/Aids, miscarriages, pelvic inflammatory diseases, chronic pelvic pain, headaches, permanent disabilities, asthma, and irritable bowel syndrome.

Mental health consequences: depression, fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, sexual dysfunction, eating problems, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder.

Fatal outcomes: suicide, homicide, maternal mortality, and HIV/Aids (Kirkwood 1993; WHO 1996, cited in Nangolo & Peltzer 2003:18).

4.6.2 The Impact of Power Abuse on Children

Although no research has been done on how the abuse of power and family conflicts impact upon children's lives in Ovamboland, this possibility exists. According to the research of the Legal Assistance Centre (2008:6), power abuse (including domestic violence) is harmful to children in the family, because growing up in a violent family may cause emotional and behavioural problems for them. The perpetrator may lose his family's respect, as well as his

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own self-respect. He may then try to compensate for his feelings of shame and inadequacy with more violence, or with a trip into alcoholism. This often leads to a complete breakdown of the marriage or relationship, could also upset other family members and neighbours, and sets a bad example for the children in the community. Furthermore, it may cause other women in the community to feel intimidated and it creates a general atmosphere of disrespect for women. Male domination and power abuse maintain a high level of violence in society and children learn that force is acceptable. Besides the psychological consequences that any violence can have on a child, it can also sow the seeds of replication of similar forms of violence to settle differences in the child's future life (De Klerk 2009:347).

Children also experience domestic violence when they are physically abused, or they may be affected indirectly when they watch one of their parents being beaten or abused. This may cause long-term implications in a child's interpersonal relationships. Children, who grow up in the context of domestic violence, often suffer from nervousness, withdrawal, anxiety, bedwetting, and restlessness. They may also perform poorly at school and run away from home. In addition, they may experience increased emotional and behavioural problems, as well as traumatic stress reactions, such as sleep disturbances, intensified startle reactions, etc. Domestic and family violence can affect children in the form of on-going anxiety and depression, eating and sleeping disturbances, physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach-aches, problems in managing stress, trouble in forming positive relationships, aggressive behaviour with peers, bad school attendance and performance, and problems with concentration and attention.

Children who live with domestic violence are at risk of experiencing physical injury and of displaying strong ambivalence towards their violent parent – their affection coexists with feelings of resentment and disappointment. Violence at home affects children, who witness it, as much as the women who endure it. They might even learn to accept the situation as normal. Boys learn to imitate a violent father and use violence as a method of conflict resolution, and to get whatever they want. Boys may also develop disrespect for women, while girls tend to accept battering as part of a woman's life, and possibly results in an inferiority complex. They may equate love with pain and violence, and they tend to become involved with abusive men, leading to the perpetuation of a culture of violence.

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Adolescents exposed to domestic and family violence are more likely to suffer from depression, to be homeless, and to abuse drugs and alcohol (Family & Community Services 2011).[61]

4.7 Conclusion

So far, we have examined Ovawambo males' reaction to the cultural and social changes in Ovamboland. Although a few males have supported gender quality laws, most were negative about them. Since the country's independence, the changes in their family life have confused most men. Most males consider gender equality as a method applied to cause them to lose their manhood and status as the head of the household and also their feeling of being threatened and inferior to women. Some Ovawambo men also regard women's rights and gender equality as the cause of confusion, because some women now refuse to obey their husbands' rules, especially if they are employed and earn more money than their husbands. Males are also afraid that the change to gender inequality will cause a reduction in their personal power and status (Hubbard 2007b:226). They also fear losing face if they abandon the roles that society and culture expected of, or assigned to, them and for which they had been trained and raised. They are confused about their position as provider, as well as about their manhood, masculinity, and sexuality and are afraid of losing power as this will be contrary to the view that being a man means working hard and being strong.

Moreover, problems concerning gender inequality are still fuelled by various factors including: socio-economic factors, the mass media, the family institution where power relations manifest daily, fear and control over female sexuality, belief in the inherent superiority of males, and legislation and cultural sanctions that have denied women and children independent legal and social status (Heise 1994; Innocenti Digest, UNICEF, *Gender & Behaviour* 1999, cited in Nangolo & Peltzer 2003:1). To see or hear how their wives treat fellow-males, especially in an unemployed situation, also feeds the current male fear. They have lost their position as the head of the family, as they now depend on their wives' incomes and property. All this makes it tough for men to sacrifice their power and their privileges, especially in the family context. With the men, the root cause of the problem seems to lie in the effect of the changes in the socio-cultural norms. Since power is defined hierarchically and feminists challenge it, this causes most men to live with feelings of fear, failure, powerlessness, and rage. Such fears can cause men to react aggressively in order to maintain,

[61] www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_.../dv_hurts_children_fact.pdf.

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or regain, what their status as procreators, protectors and providers dictates. However, all this comes down to what males feel to be their basis for their self-worth and identity. Therefore, this is one of the reasons why the Ovawambo males abuse their power in order to maintain their position as the head of the family. The result may be suppression, violence, and aggression.

Men target those who are weaker (children) and those socially defined as less significant and powerless (women) (Clinebell 1984:306). Therefore, Ovawambo women experience negligence in the family, promiscuity, abuse and violence that jeopardize many women in abusive relationships. Many Ovawambo families experience the gravity of male domination and the manipulation of power within their family life. Violence also has a negative impact on the health, life and well-being of victims.

The Namibian government alone cannot help by responding to this male identity crisis. Also, gender-related laws alone cannot bring any lasting solution to the problem of gender inequality and patriarchy in Ovambo family life. Only the empowerment of women also does not help to disempower men in this drastic transition. However, it is clear that the way males have been raised in the Ovawambo culture and social context has been impaired. It is also clear that the Ovambo cultural gender understanding places males in positions of power and control, while women are in a weak, submissive position.

This information brought us to the conclusion that there is an urgent need to reframe the old idea of the Ovawambo masculinity in order to combat violence and crimes. According to Seidler (1997:24), in studies of masculinity, one of the most important tasks of the 21st century is to reconnect manhood and fatherhood to men's lives around the globe. This must also include a way to change men's ideas of dominant male identities that are always established at the expense of others making them feel good about themselves only if they denigrate others. Clearly, this is not the will of God, but a manmade policy. If males fear the loss of power and this leads to their low self-worth, what must they do to cope with this identity and gender role crisis? Would a pastoral anthropology and theological understanding of God's vulnerability help to liberate men from the expectations of who they are supposed to be, their function in their roles, and their understanding of patriarchy that distresses them when they fail in expectations? To what extent may the Christian spiritual understanding of God's power and fatherhood encourage men to embrace an intrinsic spiritual change that

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would help them to adopt an entirely new way of thinking, as well as the norms and values that are geared to foster human dignity, human rights, and equality?

These questions direct our discussion to a notion of a *theopaschitic theology* in which God's power and image of fatherhood will play a central role. The hypothesis will be that God's power, as weakness and vulnerability, can help to transform the Ovawambo male identity and masculinity in order to foster spiritual growth, spiritual healing and masculine spirituality. This goal would be accomplished when Ovawambo men and fathers are inspired by the God-images that portray him as faithful, loving, forgiving, protecting, guiding, and always showing compassion towards their people (Louw 2008:406). The next chapter will discuss a theological understanding of God's vulnerability in depth.

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CHAPTER 5

MALE IDENTITY AND FATHERHOOD IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: TOWARDS A FUNDAMENTAL PARADIGM SHIFT

5.1 Introduction

So far, the research has shown that fatherhood in Ovawambo family life is in crisis due to power abuse. Men in the Ovawambo culture regard themselves as the heads, breadwinners and rulers of their families. In other words, they are at the centre of their families and homes, empowered to rule their family members. However, gender and male power are undergoing deconstruction and change as a result of the ongoing debate about gender equality between males and females. Gender equality contributes to what is referred to as "the male crisis" (Louw 2008:404). On the one hand, women are trying to fight for their equality, demanding radical changes in society and family life, especially to patriarchal ideology and masculinity. On the other hand, men feel that they cannot respond to women's demands for justice, equality, and opportunities without exploring the radical redefinition of how manhood and masculinity are to be understood and lived (Culbertson 1992:2; Pleck & Sawyer 1974, in Basow 1992:336). All of this could causes division, confusion and vacillation in men's lives (Culbertson 1992:2).

However, some men oppose the injustice, suffering, dominant masculinity, and oppression that women experience[62] (Seidler 1997:2, McLean 1996:12, in McLean & Christopher 1996:12), while others find themselves in a state of confusion. For them, it is difficult to give up some power because dominant power remains the criterion that determines status. Most men are also accustomed to cultural gender stereotypes that exclude them from feminine behaviour, as they feel that they will lose their status and self-esteem (Basow 1992:353). Besides men's experiences of male power from their childhood, they are also bombarded with new experiences of hegemonic patriarchy through the mass media that leave them more confused and prone to violent behaviour (Louw 2012:55). This leads to what is called "a

[62] In the 1970s, a group of men decided to respond to, and support, women's movements against the dominant masculinity that served to oppress and subordinate women. Their concern was based on the injustices and sufferings that fellow-men caused. These men also suffered under the stricture of a male culture that, allegedly, is as dehumanising for them as it is for the women (McLean 1996:12). What motivated them was the understanding that masculinity had to be deconstructed as it was a problem and could not be a part of any solution (Seidler 1997:2).

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masculinity crisis."[63] As men experience the loss of power, they attempt to regain their power with coercive power. This increases their violence against women, which includes rape, battering, sexual harassment, and the sexual abuse of children - all signs of resistance against the goals of feminist movements (Basow 1992:353).

However, the most harmful attitude that both males and females exhibit not only depends on what the mass media transmit. The tension between masculinity and femininity is grounded in the dominating cultural and philosophical paradigms that determine male and female behaviour. The paradigms that determine these behaviours are also embodied in gender role functions and they prescribe the expression of masculinity and femininity (Louw 2008:384).

5.2 Patriarchy and Patriarchalism

Religion is one of the social forces that defines and sustains male power over women. Most of the world's religions, including Judeo-Christian religions, operate in patriarchal settings. Patriarchy not only derives its justification from religion and culture, but also uses religion to justify male domination in culture and society. Through religion, men justify their positions of power and influence (Chitando 2010:29,31). God is clearly portrayed as a dominating male and is perceived to be a dominating Lord and King who has taken over women's procreative powers. This God first created the human male, then the female as a subservient helpmate to the male. The story of Adam and Eve is viewed as a rationalization of patriarchy. In Genesis, the story of a woman's connection to the divine is restricted to her gender function as a female.

In the Church, for many years, men have used the creation story (e.g. Gen. 2:7) to maintain their domination in society. Men also point out biblical male figures (e.g. Abraham, David, and Solomon) as examples of God's "preferential option for men." They assume that, since these men played important roles in the biblical texts, they are worthy models for men to follow in contemporary society, in order to control all leadership positions in the family, community and society (Chitando 2010:29,31). Through patriarchy, men become the primary

[63] Munroe (2001: 11) illustrates the idea of masculinity crisis as follow: Historically, men have defined their manhood by the various roles they have fulfilled for their families and for society. Now that these roles are in transition, they don't have a solid definition of masculinity to give them a cultural context for life. As a result, many men believe they have lost part of themselves, but they don't have anything concrete with which to replace it. Often, they don't even feel wanted or needed by women any longer. They used to have clear direction about where they were going as men. Now, it's as if they're trapped in a maze, frustrated and unable to move forward purposefully in life.

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religious figures. Men's power over women also replaces God's power over men. Female sexuality becomes associated with sin and death (Basow 1992:156; Chitando 2010:29,31).

Patriarchy places men at the top of the pyramid of marital and family life, where they use their power to dominate and control other family members (Sheerattan-Bisnauth 2010:2), thus also restricting women's behaviour and lives and placing them under the men's control (Basow 1992:108). Moreover, women's status in patriarchal societies was characterized by many nuances because their physical protection and the property, derived from their families of origin, determined their position in the husband's family (Ruether 2010:929). They had no legal status in their own right.

A child's ancestry was traced from its father's side, and male children were valued more than female children (Ruether 2010:929). Men were the dominant figures in both culture and society, and were vested with power and authority to act as leaders in the community and family (Chitando 2010:28). Women's duties included food preparation, cleaning, caring for the children and other domestic chores. Men's primary duties were often outside the home and included hunting, fishing, and protecting the family from enemies (Thompson & Hickey 1996:173).

In a patriarchal context, men had a higher status, because their activities were more dangerous and vital for their tribe's survival. Their activities also gave them more power in the area of food distribution. Although women's economic contribution was also important, the division of labour in agrarian societies caused their economic contribution and status to deteriorate dramatically. The ideology of male superiority and female inferiority became embedded in cultural institutions and caused women's status to be lower than that of men. In family life, men traditionally dominated women economically and physically (Basow 1992:72,106,117). Male authority over the family also entailed the right to beat their wives, to confine her physically and, sometimes, to sell her into bondage (Ruether 2010:929). Men also took women as booty along with sheep and goats during communal wars, which contributed to the discrimination against women (Waruta & Konoti 2000:145). Their bodies, sexuality, and reproductive capacity belonged to their husbands (Ruether 2010:929).

Furthermore, the culture of patriarchy was also based on the perception of the philosophical and theological texts of previous generations of thinkers, but this hierarchical, controlling, individualistic tendency of patriarchy should be replaced by a more egalitarian, relational mutuality as a basis for everything, from epistemology to Christology and ecclesiology

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(Livingston 2002:112). However, mutuality and equality between sexual relationships are difficult to attain in such contexts, because men have been socialized to be in control (Chitando 2010:28). Furthermore, as the mass media continue to portray the male as a sex animal who maintains himself as a gladiator, it is not easy to find consensus between males and females. Consequently, the gender debate must take cognisance of the role of (what could be called) "patriarchalism" as the product of four interlocking premises:

1) That male physical strength is part of intended natural law;
2) That families and societies are naturally based on aggression, domination, procreation, and spouse and child protection;
3) That property, production and the distribution of goods are the natural domain of men, and
4) That male superiority, dominance and privilege are a part of received religious revelation (Augsburger, in Culbertson 1994:12).

These four interlocking justifications, that is, biological, cultural, economic, and religious, have recently provided an unquestioned position for the domination in most families in the world. Consequently, such patriarchal beliefs oppress, as they are grounded on the domination of one gender over the other (male over female). They thrive on oppressive behaviour and control, as well as social structure, and lead to the domination of one gender over the other (Louw 2008:385). Therefore, such patriarchal beliefs are oppressive by definition, because they are premised on the domination of one gender over the other (Freire 1970, in Culbertson 1994:13). These are all signposts that men are in serious need of liberation from patriarchy's oppression and abuse. In order to be liberated, men must be assisted to find the courage to open their eyes to their inner landscape and their psychic surroundings (Culbertson 1994:14). Men also need liberation from what drives them to compete and from the harmful and inherited stereotypes that denote masculinity to be equal to professional success. Although equality between men and women seems possible, it is even more achievable when men learn how to act differently. Therefore, this crisis challenges us to clarify our thinking about the human person, rather than to adhere to cultural gender constructions (Peacock 2010, cited in Sheerattan-Bisnauth & Peacock 2010:22). However, to understand the human person, we need to view people in relation to God as the fundamental and core who constitutes their existence (Heyns, in Louw 1998a:145). To attain this, we need

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to search for theological anthropology.[64] The content of theological anthropology includes the human as created, sinner, and redeemed. As a theological disciple, theological anthropology presumes and involves the understanding of the human in relation to the divine reality (Kline 2005:1259). Our humanity and personhood are based on dynamic entities and are from within a systemic network of relations between God and human beings. People should be understood primarily from their relationship with him, which means that this, generally, is the locus of theology's interchange with the behavioural science. To acquire an understanding, theological understanding of human beings may draw upon the insights of psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, or other models of understanding of the human phenomenon (Kline 2005:1259). But, we shall not pay attention to fundamental analysis in terms of psychic issues or behavioural modes, but to a fundamental comprehension of human beings in terms of their calling by the grace of God (Louw 1998a:125,128,146).

Therefore, it will help to examine the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.[65] By means of the concept of the image of God, men can attain a new vision of an inclusive community of justice and equality in which both men and women reflect fully that they have been created in the image of God, and that oppression is absent (Culbertson 1994:84).

5.3 The Doctrine of the *Imago Dei*

Scripture teaches two fundamental truths about the creation of human beings, i.e. that they have been created by God in his own likeness. This likeness to God is known as the *imago Dei* (Munyika 2005:97). God's purpose in creating humans as male and female is clearly illustrated in Genesis 1:26 -27: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air,… so God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them'' (ESV).

Essentially, the concept of God's image is biblical, but it has a far greater role to play in systematic theology than in biblical theology. The concept of the image of God is mentioned only five times in the Bible (Gen. 1:26,27, 5:1,3, 9:6). Its background is also found in Psalm 8:5, Wisdom 2:23 and Ecclesiastes 7:29. It is also applied as a traditional concept for the understanding of certain New Testament passages, such as James 3:9 and 1Corinthians 11:7.

[64] According to Holkins (1990:85), the term "anthropology" means "the study of what the Bible has to say about the origin, nature, and destiny of human beings."
[65] It refers to the image of God; *imago* means image and *Dei* means God. It also refers to certain characteristics or capacities inherent in the structure of human nature (Grenz 2001:142).

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For this reason, Peacock (2010:22) points out that: "… while there are only a few passages which refer to the concept of humans beings in the Image of God in the Bible itself, the volume of literature which has been written about it is expansive, both in terms of the quantity as well as the fact that it has been addressed repeatedly throughout Christian history."

The *Imago Dei* is God's divine endowment to humans, as he said, "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26-27). In the Bible, the concept, *imago Dei*, represents three features: 1) a qualitative difference between human beings and nonhuman creatures; 2) the spiritual basis for human response and obedience to God as Creator; and 3) the ethical basis for respect for human life. Various theologians have understood the use of the terms "image" and "likeness" in different ways. For example, Irenaeus (in Anderson 2005:571) suggests the character of the *imago* based on a distinction between the words image and likeness. Image was thought to represent the basic form of the human, while likeness means the material content of righteousness that, due to the fall, was lost or interrupted in its development. Today both interpretations constitute the uniqueness of humanity as created by God. Augustine (in Anderson 2005:572) unites both concepts in an original and perfect attitude of righteousness towards God that was destroyed in the fall. By following the text in Genesis 1:27, K. Barth, E. Brunner and G.C. Berkouwer (in Anderson 2005:572) reinterpreted the *imago Dei* in the form of a relational and functional sense. They see the openness of a human person to other persons in a relationship of trust, fellowship, and self-communication, as constitutive of this image. Humans are created in two directions: 1) Vertically, to be the counterpart of, and in relationship to, God; 2) Horizontally, in a relationship with each other, by being the counterpart of each other, and having each other as a counterpart (Grenz 2001:297).

This view places reason within the context of love and commitment, which clearly reflects God's character and being. Through this relational view of the image of God, we can now integrate a theological understanding of the uniqueness of the human personhood with sociological and psychological observations on the nature of human beings. To consider persons as related to one another and to God through a divinely endowed image and likeness gives an objective basis for accountability, forgiveness and restoration to health and wholeness, rather than only a subjective basis (Anderson 2005:571). The *imago Dei* is that which makes human beings unique, creative and able to play a significant role in the

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production of human history and culture, in a manner that no other creature can, but which carries divine history further. It helps us to understand the status and dignity accorded to humans in terms of their relation to God, to the community or neighbourhood, and particularly to other human beings (Munyika *et al. 2*005:97,99). The *imago Dei* also has an ethical, moral and doxological implication as it causes the human being to focus upon God and display his glory that induces the entire creation to become aware of God's presence and grace (Louw 1998a:147).

Furthermore, the theological understanding that all human beings are created in God's image can be seen as a fundamental anthropological concept in biblical theology, which denotes the dignity and equality of all people (Haspel 2011:554). From the beginning of ancient times, theological thinking within the Judeo-Christian heritage has considered the image of God as the cornerstone of thinking about humans' identity and their relationship with God, with other humans, and with the world around them (Moltmann 1985:215, cited in Peacock 2010:22). However, being created in the image of God should not be understood as possessing a certain quality, but as standing in a specific relationship to God (Haspel 2011:554). This is not in the sense of being in control like God, but rather that we are called to build and sustain our community and diversity. We do not desire power, but we aspire to consider, as our example, Jesus Christ, who took the form of a slave to save all humankind (Peacock 2010:27).

Therefore, current families and marital crises and dysfunctions should not be regarded as fatalistic or hopeless, because the original divine image continues to be our past (but present) gift of grace and unchanging love (Anderson 2005:571-572). Love is a principle, and the ultimate foundation for human relationships resides in the eternal dynamic of the triune God. Hence, humans can only fulfil their purpose as they were destined to be the *imago Dei* by the loving God and fellow humans, because he loves us. John stated this idea in 1John 4:19 (ESV), "We love because he first loved us" (Grenz 2001:320). But, how does the *imago Dei* help humans to understand the deep meaning of being created in the image of God? We need more information about what it means to be created in the image of God.

5.4 What does it mean to be created in God's Image?

The story of Adam and Eve in Genesis is not enough to explain what it means to be a human being in God's image. This is because this story relates how the first couple refused to be what God created them to be. They are the prime example of what human life, in the image of God, does not look like, because their image does not help us to reflect God's image in

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contemporary life. For an appropriate image of God, consider the figure of Jesus in the New Testament (Guthries 1994:197). The glory-Christology that pervades the New Testament leads naturally to the idea of Christ as the divine image. In 2 Corinthians 4-6 (NRSV), Paul speaks of "the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (v. 4); then, he declares that "the glory of God is visible in the face of Jesus" (v. 6) (Grenz 2001:209).

As a human, Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15), "the likeness of God" (2Cor. 4:4), who is "in the form of God" (Phil. 2:6) (ESV).

Through Christ's mighty works on earth, we learn what it means to be true human beings in the image of God. He was a wise man and teacher in his Father's kingdom, but he was also accused of being a glutton and drunkard because of his socialization with people. He was called a friend of prostitutes, a dishonest businessman and a political revolutionary who broke the law of the Sabbath, and was completely unconcerned about what good, pious, law-abiding people thought about him (Mark 2:15-27 ESV). One would ask why he did all these things that sometimes put his life in danger. Since he was a powerful king and God, why did he not use his power to control or to dominate? What made Jesus the unique person that he was? It was not because of any of his internal or self-contained personal attributes, but because of his way of being. He lived completely for God, was obedient to him, and lived completely for the human well-being (Guthries 1994:197) while, at the same time, radiating the very glory of God (Grenz 2001:211). However, this does not mean that he was a weak or passive man; rather, he was self-assertive and overcame all that prevented him from loving his father and his fellow human beings (Guthries 1994:197). Through Jesus Christ, as the image of God, humans (here, especially men) come to know God and to understand what it really means to be God (Grenz 2001:212).

According to Irenaeus, the image of God is not perfection, but rather a task - the fulfilment of which is found in likeness. This indicates that being in the image and likeness of God must not be understood as a gift that humans receive, but as a goal to which humans should aspire (Guthries 1994:197).

Thus, to be truly human in the image of God is not to possess some intellectual, moral, or spiritual capacity within ourselves. It is realized in relatedness, community, and fellowship with others, outside ourselves. The image of God also describes human life in a relationship with God and other creatures (Migliore 1991:122). This relationship between God and humans implies that God's moral attributes, such as love, compassion, and kindness are

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passed on to human beings (Cartledge 1994:74). The image of God becomes a project which requires the participation of all humanity in becoming more like him (Peacock 2010:22). This implies that we cannot attain God's image by ourselves, but by discovering the meaning of our very existence in its relatedness to God and fellow human beings. However, here it is important to note that God does not dwell in individuality or in lonely, self-sufficient sovereign power. God is a covenant-making God – "… I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you" (Deut. 31:6, Heb. 13:5 ESV). He is God who creates human beings in order to have fellowship with them, and he seeks to be with, and for, them as their friend, companion, and helper (Guthries 1994:197,199). Louw (1998a:147) emphasizes that:

> Both the terms 'image of God' and 'living soul' (*'nèfèsj'*) refer to the uniqueness of human beings as this is determined by their relationship with the living God. 'Image of God' refers to man representing God, while '*nèfèsj*' indicates that the source for life is dependent upon God's creative action and faithfulness. This has ethical, moral and doxological implications: the human person should focus upon God and display God's glory so that the entire creation may become aware of God's presence and grace.

Through these we learn that God is our Covenantal Partner and Soul-mate in life (Louw 2012a:159). However, the question we need to answer here is: How can the concept of God's image help to reframe male identity and fatherhood in such a way that it would bring healing, wholeness and compassion to families in crisis; hence, the need to move our argument towards a metaphorical understanding of God.

The term "image of God" portrays representation and relationship. As a creature of God, man should represent his Fatherhood that revealed his compassion and mercy. Therefore, in order to understand God in human terms, some models and metaphors could help us to understand our partnership with him. This involves the reinterpretation of God's fatherhood in terms of a hermeneutics of covenantal friendship and partnership between God and human beings. We need to move towards a metaphorical understanding of God for clarity on a relationship and partnership between God and our human misery. Therefore, the important question is: What is meant by "metaphorical theology" and how does it help us to understand the relationship between God and humanity (Louw 1998a:81,83,147-148)?

5.5 A Metaphorical Theology

According to Louw (1998a:39), metaphors are "a meaningful instrument for the naming of God, metaphors about God act as helpful instruments to signify and create possible meaningful and symbolic interpretations." A metaphorical theology helps us to understand

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the process of naming God in terms of real life issues. Metaphorical theology also enhances the dynamic interplay between God and existential events. It helps pastors by creating a fresh and open approach that liberates them from a rigid and biased dogmatic attitude. During a counselling session, it prevents a traditionalistic indoctrination that hampers the art of sensitive listening and assessment (Louw 2000:49). In addition, metaphorical theology is a hermeneutical model that shapes a theology of pastoral care by trying to explain God ontologically in human terms. An "ontological model" means an approach that tries to describe God metaphysically. For example, using the father metaphor in pastoral care is an attempt to interpret God-human relationships in terms of the dynamics of love (Louw 1998a:82).

Furthermore, Louw (1999b:136, in Hwan-Sung 2005:237), explains that the use of a metaphor does not mean that God does not exist - his existence is a realistic and substantial issue. However, because God is often conceptualized traditionally with metaphorical theological concepts, such as King, Lord, Ruler and Patriarch, appropriate God images are required. These traditional metaphorical concepts are largely unsuitable for the Ovawambo family life, because of men's penchant for violence and power abuse. The connection of God with fatherhood may arouse negative associations, especially in women and children who experience their fathers' negligence, violence and manipulation. Therefore, the "fatherhood" of God could be viewed as a symbol of oppression (McFague 1987:33, Terrien 1985:59, in Louw 1998a:85). However, the question may be asked: Why do we need metaphors in Pastoral Theology? However, the paradigm shift in pastoral encounters and the important role of a metaphorical approach in Pastoral Theology attempt to apply God's image to the various fields of meaning. It involves a reinterpretation of the Fatherhood of God in terms of a hermeneutics of covenantal friendship/partnership (Louw 1998a:82,85).

Metaphoric theology, so far, shows us that, if pastoral care has to opt for a metaphor that connects God to our human experience, then we need to search the Scriptures for the metaphors that shed light on those images that connect God's purpose for human existence with real life situations and describe God in terms of caring and compassion (Louw 1998b:39,238).

5.5.1 God-images and Metaphors in Pastoral Ministry

The question may be asked: Why do we need metaphors in Pastoral Theology? According to Louw (1998b:238), metaphors help to "illuminate," that is, to evoke insight into a framework of multiple references. Metaphors point out the effort to structure experience, particularly our

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experience of God, and provide the means to comprehend domains of experience that do not have a pre-conceptual structure of their own. They also characterize the function of substitution – "the substitution *(immutatio)* of a *verbum prorium* by another word which shares some features with the first *(similitude)"* (Knoblauch 1996, Hoffman 1996, in Louw 1998b:238). Metaphors serve as helpful tools to signify and create possible meaningful and symbolic interpretations of God's acts in human lives. They also emphasize the meaning of God's compassion and consolation in human suffering (Louw 1998a:52). Therefore, metaphoric theology, so far, has shown us that, if pastoral care has to opt for a metaphor that would connect God to our human experiences, we need to search the Scripture for metaphors that describe God's caring acts (Louw 1998a:238). Louw (2000:51-52 and 1998a:39-50) presents four metaphors that describe God's comfort and compassion as follows:

1) **The Shepherd metaphor** (that relates to the sensitivity and compassion of God's solicitous care). In the Old Testament, God is depicted as a shepherd in the context of grace, love and faithfulness. This taught the people in the Old Testament time that they were safe and secure within God's shepherding care. God's covenantal grace for the nation of Israel made their safety and security possible. Throughout the history of this nation, through his pastoral care, God proved that he was their God and that he remained faithful to his covenantal promises (Louw 1998a:40). The metaphor raises this unique meaning of pastoral care to a new understanding of compassionate and loving charity, and connects it to Jesus Christ's sacrificial, redeeming love and is more about God's covenantal sympathy and compassion (2000:51). The significance of this metaphor in pastoral care, based on the fact that it connects what pastoral care involves - compassionate and loving charity – i.e. Jesus Christ's sacrificial and redeeming love for humankind. Therefore, the caring that God displays towards his people should reflect in the Ovawambo men towards their family members. With this metaphor, men in Ovamboland will be challenged to work tirelessly to defend, guide, cherish and protect their family members, as well as all God's people, as God does in this metaphor (Louw 1998a:41).

2) **The Servant metaphor** (that entails God's identification and sacrificial woundedness): This metaphor describes service as therapy and pastoral identification. The servant metaphor communicates God's pathos and compassion in his identification with human suffering through persecution, death, disruption, illness, and sin in Jesus Christ's work. Jesus sees himself as the suffering servant and his services are linked to the fact that he gave his life vicariously for us. Therefore, his messianic work, embodied in the servant metaphor, has a

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therapeutic dimension in pastoral care, which allows people to recover at all levels of their being, including spiritual healing and physical recovery (Louw 2000:52-53) - a concrete example of sacrifice. Application of this metaphor to pastoral care conveys the notions of willingness to sacrifice and identifying with humankind's suffering and distress (Louw 1998a:42). The servant metaphor links suffering and therapy that clearly manifested in the way Jesus healed the sick and exorcised a demon. Therefore, Graber and Müller (in Louw 1998a:43) conclude: "The therapy of pastoral care is concerned with healing which is associated with the salvation of the Kingdom of God. Such healing has a symbolic dimension; it enables the suffering sufferer to gain inspiration from God's victory over all destructive powers."

This understanding could help men in Ovamboland to link and demonstrate their power in terms of faithfulness and healing rather a destructive attitude. As Christ suffered in order to heal human beings and end the power of destruction, so, Ovawambo men should follow this example by ending suffering instead of making others suffer (Louw 2000:53).

3) **The Wise-fool metaphor** (involves a comprehension of God in terms of paradoxes, such as weakness and being crucified): This is about paradox as an indication of pastoral discernment and understanding. According to Scripture, wisdom is essential for a sensitive and caring perspective on life. However, the source of wisdom lies in love and being in awe of God (Louw 1998a:42,44). According to Sleeper (1992:88, cited in Louw 1998a:45), wisdom is evident in God's involvement in human experiences and in all creation. The wise, then, react to this involvement with praise and wonder (Pss 19, 104). Wisdom also acts as a metaphor in our quest for human dignity and justice (Pss 1:3, 2:9, 21:3, 22:8). Therefore, wisdom is associated with human relations and life (Louw 2000:55). Wisdom is important for pastoral care, because it seriously regards human experience within concrete relationships and it directs decision-making and acting. Therefore, wisdom or the wise, is a metaphor for God's active involvement in our human experience and creation. Wisdom must be present in men's lives because it helps them to understand how to deal with other people – rich or poor, king or subject, neighbour or stranger. It is assumed that, "Wisdom is the key to proper social relationships" (Sleeper 1992:88, in Louw 2000:56). The wise fool metaphor could also help men's attitude and action in everyday life within family life in Ovamboland.

4) **The *paraklesis* metaphor** (deals with the consolation, encouragement, and empowering of God's Spirit): This metaphor signifies the act of comforting as a pastoral mediation of

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salvation. After surveying the concepts of several Greek words, such as *episkopein*, *paramytheisthai*, *katartizein*, *oikodomein* and *nouthetein*, Louw (1996:135, in Sung-Hwan 2005:241) concludes that the meaning of the word *paraklesis* describes and reflects a style of pastoral comforting and care. In the LXX, *parakaleo* is used mainly for the Hebrew *naham* that signifies sympathy and comfort. When used to translate *naham*, *parakaleo* expresses compassion, sympathy and caring according to Psalm 135:14; otherwise, it denotes encouragement, strengthening and guidance (Braumann 1978:570, in Louw 1998a:48).

However, in the New Testament, the word *paraklesis* means summon, invite, reprimand, admonish, comfort, encourage, support, ask, and exhort. Therefore, these meanings are associated with the concept of empathy and compassion. The term *paraklesis* is also linked to the term *parakletos* that can be translated as helper, advocate, counsellor, comforter and persuader. The term *parakletos* also denotes Jesus Christ's reconciliatory work (1Joh. 2:1), and the Spirit of truth (Joh. 14:17) who guides humankind into all truth (Joh. 16:13) and will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgement (Joh. 16:8). Therefore, when this *paracletic* metaphor functions as a central metaphor in pastoral ministry, it expresses the indicative components of care and comfort – justification on the grounds of Christ's reconciliatory work and victorious resurrection, and the imperative component of care – admonition, reprimanding and encouragement. These components function to bring change in life's direction.

Consequently, the concept of *paraklesis* combines the shepherding mode of protective cherishing, the servant metaphor of sacrifice in suffering, and the wisdom of true discernment and admonition for change. This helps the pastoral mode (loving care) and pastoral content (ministering consolation through the promise of salvation) to be mediated effectively in pastoral ministry (Louw 1998a:50). In addition, Firet (1977:95, cited in Louw 1998a:50) concludes that the *paracletic* mode is the way in which God meets human beings in the crises of their lives, such as anxiety, grief, sin, doubt, delusion and inadequacy. Through *paraklesis*, God liberates people from their agony in order to restore the fellowship of believers, the congregation. Therefore, Louw (1998a:85-86) emphasizes that: "An effective metaphor for God should express dimensions of sensitivity and compassion (pathos); identification (woundedness); insight and understanding in terms of paradoxes (wise fool); as well as consolation, encouragement (*paraklesis*) and empowerment."

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Furthermore, Louw (1998a:85-86, 2000:58-59) proposes another metaphor – God as "Friend," "our Soul Companion" and "Partner for life" – to communicate care in pastoral ministry and to instil meaning to life. Then he concludes:

> The metaphor is associated with the covenantal history, as described in Scripture, and with the meaning and function of the sacraments within the tradition of the church. It represents the components of partnership, companionship, commitment and intimacy. These are all dimensions of an encounter during which the shepherding perspective, the woundedness of the Servant, as well as the paradoxical wisdom and identification of a suffering and incarnate God are conveyed.

Nevertheless, in considering the Ovawambo males' destructive traditional understanding, family negligence and dominant forms of masculinity towards women and children, this research will examine the image of God, which could help to initiate and enhance the interplay between God-images and fatherhood/manhood in Ovawambo family life. To articulate constructive ideas that could help men in the Ovawambo culture, we first need to search for some models with which to assess God-images.

5.6 Models for Assessing God-images

It is assumed that, through this survey, one could uncover a model that interprets God in terms of his involvement with humanity. This will help us to understand God, not only in terms of a metaphor, but also in terms of the God-human encounter. Therefore, appropriate God-images could make a difference by transforming dominant and abusive forms of masculinity that are so destructive to men, women, children, families and the society as a whole (Sheerattan-Bisnauth 2010:5). However, in order to detect appropriate or inappropriate images of God, we need to probe this through a thematic cognitive model.[66]

5.6.1 A Thematic Cognitive Model

According to Louw (1998a:342), this model aims to detect whether God-images can play a constructive or destructive role in human life. This is because some God-images have negative experiences that give rise to emotional reactions, while others impart positive experiences. In many ways, people bring many concepts that reflect specific ideas or thematic issues regarding God's intervention with man. Dogmatics, church tradition, and cultural influence play an important role in the process of theological conceptualization. An inappropriate perception of God also has much impact that, in the long run, causes doubt, anxiety and aggression. Often, an appropriate image of God, which is desirable, does not

[66] The aim of this model is to detect whether God-images can play a constructive or a destructive role in thinking (Louw 1998a:341).

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really play an important role in theological conceptualization. Appropriate images of God are desired, because they have an enriching and empowering impact on faith behaviour, stimulate maturity, and strengthen the experience of gratitude, hope, love and joy. However, Louw (1998a:341) emphasizes that inappropriate (destructive) concepts are not necessarily wrong or better than appropriate ones. The real issues are based on the effects that these concepts have on human behaviour. Therefore, Louw differentiates the God-images as follows:

1) **Inappropriate God-images**

God as a powerful giant: The omnipotence of God is often interpreted in the light of the Hellenistic *pantokrator* (strength and violent power) and of the Roman despot (tyranny).

God as a bully: God might not be interpreted directly as a sadist or bully but, because God punishes and frightens people, they think that God enjoys their suffering. The conception that "God is unjust" can cause one to develop resistance towards him, which may lead to hateful thoughts and aggressive actions.

God as Father Christmas: Many people believe that faith acts as a guarantee and "insurance policy" against losses, that is, God and faith guarantee success and ensure progress. Within our materialistic, optimistic culture, the so-called "achievement ethics" functions by its demand for efficiency and its obsession with success. When people experience any failure in life, they feel disappointed, because God failed to help them to attain progress or success. When crises affect their health or rob them of their material guarantees, people with a "Father Christmas" view of God are deeply disappointed, and this could eventually lead to doubt and misconception.

God as mechanic/engineer: People often use faith to explain all inexplicable mysteries. God is portrayed as an "engineer" who made and maintains all things. This explanatory principle, which applies a deterministic and mechanical scheme of cause and result, can result in God being held responsible for all painful mysteries of life. Thus, God ultimately becomes the author of evil and the cause of suffering. Such an image of God often results in religious neutrality, leading to unbelief.

God as a computer: Faith is regarded as a purely rational issue. God's counsel is interpreted as a logical blueprint for human behaviour and the course of history. This blueprint may not

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be deviated from – life has been programmed in advance because of God's predestined counsel. Predestination is regarded as an anti-pole of rejection.

God as a magician: Faith is regarded as an instant formula to solve all problems. The statement, "Just believe, then everything will be alright," creates the impression that God waves his magic wand and all is well. This type of faith results in cheap optimism. Therefore, in such an approach, the effect on a believer is superficial opportunism, with the motto, "Have more faith and try harder."

To analyse these images, in the light of the view of men's in the Ovawambo culture, can also cause many inappropriate understandings of God. For instance, regarding God as a powerful giant or bully may cause men to imitate this God. They may begin to search for ways to be strong, thereby, misusing their power. The victims then may start to doubt God. There is also the possible danger of interpreting God as Father Christmas or a mechanic/engineer. The victims of men's power abuse and negligence may see this as God's intention to punish them because he loves them. However, this kind of love can cause the person to develop fear and resistance toward this God who allows her/him to be so unfortunate while other people, who are loved by the same God, may be enjoying life. This may cause despair, hopelessness and helplessness in victims' lives.

Furthermore, Louw (1998a:343) illustrates certain images of God as appropriate.

2) **Appropriate images of God**

God as Father: In Scripture, the father metaphor strengthens the important notion of God's faithfulness. This helps believers to rely on God because of his faithful promises, such as, "I will be your God." Although this covenantal formula does not guarantee success, it brings comfort, hope, and compassionate love (later in this chapter, this will be examined further).

God as Soul Friend: This metaphor expresses God's nearness to his people. His close presence means that he is a life-partner and companion. God's friendship implies help in two important areas – forgiveness in the case of human guilt, and vision in the case of the human fear of death (later in this chapter, this will be examined further).

God as Saviour: As a result of sin, alienation creates distance between God and man. God's conciliation, fulfilled through Christ, creates peace and abolishes the alienation between God and human beings, thus bestowing complete liberation and redemption on them.

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God as Comforter: The Holy Spirit confirms God's identification with suffering. God acts for people, declares them just, and is constantly with them. He is compassionate – full of sympathy and empathy.

God as Judge: The knowledge that God's norms determine human behaviour and, assessed in the light of scriptural values, this means that people are moral beings. The fact that God is a judge does not imply that one should fear him with trepidation. Rather, the fear of God means that, at all times, one should take him into account and have respect for him. This fear leads to responsible behaviour and the power of true and sensitive discernment regarding right and wrong. To regard God as a judge means that people have received stewardship, for which they are accountable. It could also mean that that his justice is guaranteed because of the fact that God is a judge. God as a judge does not imply that he keeps count of our debts; on the contrary, he cancels them.

However, one could say that many women and children in Ovamboland could view the concept of God as father differently, due to treatment rooted in the hegemonic masculinity that they experience in social and family life, i.e. patriarchal domination and power abuse. This may give rise to certain questions, such as: How can one, who has experienced domestic and gender violence, understand the concept of God as a father? What happens to victims of rape, and children who receive no support from their fathers? Thus, in such a case, the concept "father" may result in victims' understanding God as being distant and an abuser. Hence, within the context of post-modernity, pastoral care should become sensitive to the images that associate God with painful issues, such as discrimination and suffering (Louw 1998a:84). Furthermore, Van Gennep (1990, in Louw 2000:83) suggests a new way of reinterpreting images of God in our context by means of a new understanding and more appropriate concept of father. He admits that, ontologically speaking, God cannot be our father, nor is his fatherhood based on a patriarchal model of power. However, God's fatherhood tells how he, with his love, becomes involved in human history and in our human suffering. Terrien's (1985:59) opinion should be noted, that is, that God's fatherhood should be viewed less against a patriarchal background and more within the context of Near Eastern culture. Fatherhood is a metaphor of grace (Terrien 1985, in Louw 1998b:238-239; Louw 2000:85). Therefore, among the Ovawambo, we shall attempt to foster a new understanding of the image of God, through fatherhood, as a loving father full of compassion and faithfulness.

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5.7 The Fatherhood of God

So far, the study has shown that the use of certain imageries (father, soul friend, saviour, comforter, and judge), drawn from human family life, which describe the relationship between God and his people, are of great significance. They could help one to reframe the male identity and fatherhood among Ovawambo males in such a way that would offer healing, wholeness and compassion to family life. However, due to this limited scope, it is not possible to explain each image in depth. The focus will switch to the image of God as a father. The Christian tradition has enabled us to call God "our father" (Isaiah 63:16), and Christian writers have identified the Deity as a father figure; but the question is: In what way can God be a father to human beings? And, to what extent may the concept of God's fatherhood image bring healing, wholeness, compassion, companionship and mutual partnership to males and families in Ovamboland?

5.7.1 Fatherhood Images in the Old Testament

The Old Testament freely uses human images familiar to the reader to bring the Deity close. Some of the images are shepherd, king and warrior, and they enable the reader of the text to understand the nature of God's nearness to human beings. Therefore, within this setting, the image of God's fatherhood is viewed as meaningful (Mills 1998:71-73). In Scripture, the term "father" is not always used for God in the same sense[67] and it did not originate with Jesus' teaching, although he gave it a new and more profound meaning. As already noted, this notion originated from the Old Testament, where it expresses both a creative and theocratic relationship. The central relation of God to men, whom he made in his image, finds a full and fitting illustration in the natural relationship that includes the gift of life. The designation, father, is also used to express the covenantal relationship between God and his people, Israel. This relationship is collective, not personal. Therefore, as a covenantal nation, Israel was God's children, and they were challenged to recognize and respond to this filial relationship: "If I then be a father, where is my honour?" (Mal. 1:6).

[67] In his book, *Systematic Theology*, Berkhof (1994:90-91) notes that, sometimes, the term is applied to the Triune God as the origin of all creation (1Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:15; Heb. 12:9). While, in these cases, the name applies to the Triune God, it is also ascribed to him to express the theocratic relation between God and Israel, as his Old-Testament people (Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; Mal. 1:6). In the New Testament, the term is generally used to designate, in an ethical sense, the Triune God as the father of all his spiritual children (Matt. 5:45; Rom. 8:16). However, in an entirely different sense, the name is applied to the first person of the trinity in his relation to the second person (John 1:14,18, 8:54, 14:12,13). The first person is the father of the second in a metaphysical sense.

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The covenant with Israel's fathers, which included God's promises of descendants and a good land, made Yahweh very important in their life and history. However, the fatherhood symbol was used directly in the seventh century during the prophetic period. The starting point for the symbol could be seen in the light of Hosea's prophecy that compares Israel to grapes in the wilderness – *"I came upon Israel like grapes in the wilderness, I looked on their forefathers with joy like the first ripe figs"* (Hos. 9:10). This supports the older idea in Scripture that Yahweh found Israel in the wilderness (Deut. 32:8). Hence, God himself adopted Israel, and the experience of God's election constituted his fatherhood. Fatherhood is the channel through which God imparts his grace to us and the image of God as a father signifies his nurture and presence. Furthermore, the image of being "found" suggests the moment of Israel's adoption or election - the moment of their coming into being as God's people. Therefore, fatherhood is a symbol for the reception of life, rather than the initiation of life (Hamerton-Kelly 1979:34-35).

The fatherhood of God thus serves as a positive setting for human existence - that of good parental nurture. For example, Scripture says that, in prayer, we can ask for all that we need. The key notion attached to this image of God is love. In Isaiah 63, Israel is described as God's children, and he is described as their father. In verse 16, it is precisely as a father that God acts as the redeemer of the nation, treating them as a family branch in need of tender care. In Isaiah 64:8, God's intervention is experienced in Israel's national life as he is a father who gives an identity to his offspring, just as a potter gives shape to the clay. In this context, human beings are viewed as children in the divine family. Although the people sometimes acted rebelliously (Isa. 30), the intimacy of the relationship between the Israelites and their Lord made forgiveness possible. Despite the disaster of invasion and deportation, God did not abandon Israel and Judah. As a loving parent does not abandon his/her children, so God could be relied upon to renew the nation's fortunes. Therefore, this image - the image of a merciful God - is one of security, and is intended to reassure the human reader. The image of Yahweh as merciful and gracious belongs to recitals of God's saving acts in history. Furthermore, Hosea, Jeremiah and Second Isaiah use the language of divine compassion. For instance, in Isaiah 49:15, God asks whether a mother could forget her baby and answers that it could happen, but he (God) would never forget the nation of Israel (Mills 1998:71-73).

Similarly, in the faith tradition of the New Testament, the term "*abba*," meaning father, also articulates an intimate relationship. This term, which is in the Aramaic language, helps us to understand that the world must be understood within the Old Testament context of Israel's

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faith, rather than in the Greek or pagan tradition. Jews are the children of Abraham, or of Israel, and they are God's children, not because of a natural generative relatedness, but because God has freely chosen them. Therefore, when the Old Testament speaks of God's fatherhood, it avoids a natural generative use of the metaphor and, instead, affirms a social use, according to which the things at the centre of the picture are the free authority of the father over his sons, i.e. his covenantal responsibility to protect and care for them, and their obligation to trust and obey him. Hence, the emphasis is not on an affinity with nature, but on choice of will, not on generation but on election, not on a natural bond with God, but on the covenantal relationship between his grace and his people's obedience (Mercadante 1990:34-35). It symbolizes the saving element in Israel's life, and recalls the past as the experience of God. It summons Israel to be God's people, because he saved them from bondage and gave them their land, that is, because of their deliverance from Egyptian slavery and the gift of their land. It is a symbol of liberation and freedom from the bondage and from the relationship with God, which is based on faith rather than on fate (Hamerton-Kelly 1979:44,100).

5.7.2 Fatherhood Images in the New Testament

Early Christians took the term "father" as a meaningful expression of God, as it has a rich meaning. The term was adopted and designated for God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. Besides, the early Christians used the term father to express God's power, strength and ability. In their context, a father was considered to be a powerful, able, and capable person who could, and did, help. According to our belief, the Christian faith started with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He had been given all power in heaven and on earth, and now sits at God's right hand, which symbolizes power or ability (Smit 1994:42).

Furthermore, God's fatherhood is also clearly evident in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). In this story, the father's attitude is the centre of concern. The son's repentance was, in no way, a condition for the father's love, but it was the necessary means by which the returning son could receive and benefit from that love. Although the father waited so long for the son to return, when he saw him, without inquiring about the rationale and motive for his reappearance, he welcomed him with unrestrained joy (Smail 1980:124-125).

The father is the central figure in this parable; it was his patience, pity, as well as his willingness to forgive that were so important. God, who pities the weak, never gives up hope of retrieving his lost children. Therefore, the son's disobedience did not terminate his father's

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love. God is portrayed as a father who is always loving and always ready to forgive any prodigal child who comes to him and seeks to love and obey him. God, the father, who loves and forgives his wayward children, is the pitying and forgiving God who, through his son Jesus Christ, relates with us in this life. By entering human history through Jesus, God revealed the beauty of sacrifice (Fishburn 1981:140-141).

However, since the covenantal relationship was redemptive in its spiritual significance, it is regarded as foreshadowing the New Testament's revelation of the divine fatherhood. Christ himself applied the term "father" to his relationship with God. God was his father through eternal generations, which expresses an essential and timeless relationship. This redeeming relationship, which belongs to all believers, is viewed from two aspects, that of their standing in Christ, and that of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in them. Therefore, through this father-child relationship, God's fatherhood is shown as embracing tender aspects of his character – his love, his watchful care, his bounty, and his faithfulness (Douglas 1962:476-477). To conclude this, the father metaphor has helped us so far to understand and interpret the God-human relationship in terms of a dynamic of love (Louw 1998a:82). In his earthly ministry, Jesus taught his followers to proclaim his father's kingdom by being messengers to others, by proclaiming Jesus' message and by sharing in his ministry of healing, comfort, and help (Green 1988:52). Therefore, as we experience love in our relationship with God, this calls Ovawambo males to reflect on these embracing tender aspects, characteristic of love, watchful care, bounty and faithfulness. However, because we also deal with God's image, it will be proper to turn to the question: In what way did Jesus' image reveal the likeness of his father?

5.7.3 An Inappropriate Understanding of God the Father

According to Louw (1998a:85), the connection between God's fatherhood and patriarchal domination may cause and arouse negative associations in people's lives. Women and children, who experience oppression by men and fathers, may view the "fatherhood of God" as a symbol of oppression. According to Terrien (1985, in Louw 2000:85), the concept of God's fatherhood can easily be misused to justify patriarchy on earth and regard it as being sanctioned from heaven. Therefore, Terrien rejects this meaning in order to bring a liberating message. He views divine fatherhood, which is elaborated in the Jesus tradition, as the gracious goodness usually associated with a mother, because of her compassion.

Here, the task of feminist theology is just to find all the terms that speak more of God's male

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power than divine mercy (Ramshaw 1995, in Louw 2008:396). In fact, according to Nelson (1988:123), it was the patriarchal theological tradition that brought this confusion about God, the father. By using the term, father (*abba*), Jesus was radical in his transformation of the traditional notion of God's transcendence and distance; but our use of the term fails to capture Jesus' meaning. Therefore, we started to create God in our own image by comparing God's image with a human father. Because a human father, sometimes, is distant from his family members or abuses his power over them, we could depict God as distant and abusive. So, we confuse what is human and what is divine in our memories, emotions and even sometimes in our doctrine. However, to find meaning in life, a relationship with God (who makes our life meaningful) must be included, because our knowledge of God is what shapes our identity and our lives (Louw 1998a:331-332.

Thus far we have learnt that an inappropriate understanding of God the father is based on the image that depicts him through the patriarchal model of power or a despotically political model (Louw 1998a:83). We all seem to agree that the image of a strong, patriarchal God did play a role in the Christian tradition by projecting force and male superiority. Even Augustine (an early church father) confirmed this by regarding only the male to be in God's image, while the female, without a man, was not - she was incomplete. She could only be in God's image if she united with a man (Mowrey 1996, in Louw 2008:396). Consequently, Ross (in Louw 2008:396-397) concludes:

> Regarding God's necessarily male characteristic and their hierarchical applications, here I believe the issue is the need to salvage the authoritarian image of God. Authority in the ancient world was almost universally associated with the male – so much so that queens who wielded absolute authority were regarded as honorary males as evidenced by the false beards ceremoniously worn by Egyptian queens of some periods.

However, Harrington (1992:13) emphasizes that God is neither male nor female, even though the Bible originates in, and reflects, a patriarchal culture. It tends to be male-centred and androcentric, but God stands apart from such categories. The predominant biblical metaphors for God are taken from male experiences, with God being depicted as father, warrior and king. Father and mother describe a mere human reality. God is neither father nor mother in the same way that humans are (Harrington 1992:13,34). However, Louw (1998a:83) also stresses that, ontologically[68] speaking, God can be our father.

[68] The ontological approach tries to describe God metaphysically in terms of being.

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5.7.4 An Appropriate Understanding of God as Father

God's fatherhood is clearly revealed through his active qualities towards humans and the world. In the Old Testament, the father symbol is used to illustrate God's grace, because a father had several major roles in the Israelite family. He was the provider as well as a religious instructor (Deut. 6:20-24; Ps. 78:3-7) who enforced his family's obedience to divine ordinances (Gen. 18:19). Fathers and sons were strongly bonded in religious life; therefore, the transgression of the fathers had some effect on the sons (Jer. 16:10-12; Ezek.18:2-20; Exod. 20:5). The term "father" also meant liberation. In the Mosaic tradition, it first occurred as a way of describing what God did in liberating his people from Egyptian bondage. It also described the relationship between God and Israel as father and son. Consequently, the term father means freedom from human bondage and freedom for a loving relationship with God, which is based on faith, rather than on fate, as noted above (Hamerton-Kelly 1979:44).

However, if father (or mother) is a symbol of God's grace, we may ask how this grace can be understood by means of a symbol, and what the symbol means. In ancient Israel, the father had several major roles to play in the life of his children: he was their provider and responsible for their religious instruction (Deut. 6:20-24; Ps.78:3-7), and he ensured the obedience of his family to the divine ordinances (Gen. 18:19). Fathers and sons were united in their religious life, and the transgressions of the fathers had an effect on the sons (Jer. 16:10-12; Exod. 20:5). A father was a symbol of salvation, but salvation came as instructions that one had to obey. Therefore, the element of authority, which was clearly present in the Israelite father's (or mother's) relation with the children, was always exercised within the context of a prior gift and commitment to life, nourishment and parental love. Paternal authority is a combination of firmness (Prov. 13:24) and compassion (Ps. 103:13), and even as divine authority (Hamerton-Kelly 1979:45).

In the New Testament, Jesus attaches a new meaning to the term "father." His father, God, acted not for himself, nor for him (Jesus) but on behalf of humans. He always showed mercy and grace to humans and his love forced him to give his only begotten Son to the world for the sake of humans' salvation (Joh. 3:16). He allows grace to rule instead of the law; and because of his love, he rejoices when a single unrighteous person returns, as demonstrated in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24; Küng 1978:675). Christians also use the name father to express God's love for humanity through Jesus Christ. In his entire earthly ministry, Jesus demonstrated this love through his deeds, miracles and holy sacrificial death on the

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cross for our sins. Jesus Christ is a God who disclosed his love and grace as the God of widows, orphans, and strangers. He also cared for the poor, the suffering and the downtrodden and he is the one who forgives and saves.

The term "father" also carries the meaning of: giver of life, origin of life, creator and re-creator. Through Jesus' acts on earth, God indeed revealed himself as the God of life, as the giver of life and the protector of life. Jesus came so that we could have that life in abundance. God is our father because his struggle in Christ is against anything that takes a person's life. Therefore, Jesus' resurrection is the final victory whereby the ultimate enemy, death, is slain. God's fatherhood is also revealed in his protection, care, and help. In the story of Jesus Christ, the early Christians found many grounds for this fundamental trust in God's protection and care (Smit 1994:42).

Moltmann-Wendel (1991:25) states, "We can no longer put God in heaven and separate him from our personal experiences. We experience God in our experiences with people around us." Therefore, we should not understand God's fatherhood only in the light of the hierarchical symbol of masculinity.

In Jesus' ministry, a link is clearly evident between God's fatherhood, the notion of servanthood, and the ethic of diaconic outreach. While the term "servant" clearly correlates with the term "king," Jesus redefines servanthood in relation to divine fatherhood. One can conclude that Jesus probably chose the father symbol to humanize patriarchy. However, it is clear that Jesus experienced a peculiarly intimate relationship with God, which made "father" the appropriate symbol of his experience (Hamerton-Kelly 1979:102). Therefore, God's fatherhood cannot be justified with the human relationship of domination and submission, rulers and the ruled, or male lordship in the family and society (Nelson 1978:128,240). Thus, we are called to understand God's fatherhood in the sense of liberation and release from earthly bondage, and of fate, rather than a free relationship with God. God, our father, also called people away from the bondage of natural family relationships to a freely given new family joined by faith in God (Hamerton-Kelly 1979:100-101).

The appropriate understanding of the term "God, the father" symbolizes grace and freedom, maturity and faith, intimacy with the divine source of life, confidence in the final goodness of existence, and the possibility of growth and creativity (Hamerton-Kelly 1979:104). God is compared to a father (or mother) because he is a protector and provider, the one who tutors

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and nurtures, receives and forgives, supports, and comforts. He leads us from both physical and spiritual infancy to adulthood. Therefore, God, as father, is no longer regarded as a superior deity who just exercises his lofty power and remains detached from the weaknesses and tragedies of the human condition. Rather, he is the self-offering Spirit, who shares in our suffering through the death of humanity. Therefore, God's fatherhood is not about dominion, maleness, or masculinity, but points to strength in weakness and power of love that lives in death and even beyond death (Terrien 1985:221). Calling God "father" acknowledges that he is the source of our being, of our life, in a manner that, in some way, is comparable to one's parents' role in our shaping (Harrington 1992:13,34). God's fatherhood tells us how, in his love, God became involved in human history and in our human suffering. It also shows the reality of God's love and sympathy in human lives (Van Gennep, in Louw 2000:83).

The image of God's fatherhood helps us to become more aware of the goodness of his ways with us. Because of his steadfast love that endures for ever, he grieves over a broken relationship; he grieves for a tragic and unfaithful partner; he treats a human party in a relationship with total seriousness and scrupulously respects human freedom; and his patience is inexhaustible. Therefore, he is determined to restore relationships. The father metaphor shows God's faithfulness: "… I will be your God, you will be my people" (Heb. 8:10 ESV). "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians" (Exod. 6:7 ESV). He is a God of compassion and suffers with his children (Harrington 1992:13,34,66).

The distinction between the role of the heavenly Father and that of an earthly father is based on its emergence from the Trinitarian self-revelation in Christ. God is the father of the whole creation who, through the unconstrained freedom of his love, intervenes in the human situation and provides for it out of the resources of his life-saving possibilities and realities. God is the father who, throughout Israel's history, did new things for his people that they were unable to do for themselves. He intervened decisively in the life of the world through the incarnation of his Son. He is the one who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16); but the coming of the Son depended on the loving father's sending. Jesus' words and acts he had heard from, and saw in, his Father (John 5:19). Jesus committed himself to the cross at Gethsemane as he realised that his death was at the heart of God's

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saving purpose and will. It was the Father who initiated the creation of the cosmos and who also initiated the recreation of the cosmos by raising his Son from the dead (Smail 2005:160).

In conclusion, we learnt that the appropriate understanding of the father metaphor helps us to understand and interpret a God-human relationship in terms of the dynamics of love. God's fatherhood tells us the story in which God, in his love, becomes involved in human history and in our human suffering (Louw 1998a:82). This is a sign of the Father's complete and unconditional grace toward his people. The realization of God's universal fatherhood is an eschatological hope that will enable a new relationship between men and women in Ovamboland (Smail 2005:175).

Therefore, the metaphorical image of God as father could reframe Ovawambo males to understand that, to be in the image and likeness of the Father, means to reflect our heavenly father's image rather than our forefathers' images. That means, in their life in general and in dealing with others, especially family members, men need to create an avenue in which they can graciously help one another. They are called to intervene in situations and accept the responsibility for showing compassion toward one another and to emulate God's love for man by promoting the dignity and worth of fellow human beings (Smail 2005:160-161).

God is the caring father (or mother), who grieves about rape, murder and men's abuse of women and children. Therefore, for men and women in Ovamboland to live in harmony and promote human dignity and rights in their social and cultural behaviour, men need to understand the appropriate image of God as father. If male attitudes and ideas are re-shaped in line with God's fatherhood image, positive changes would be experienced in the Ovambo social and family life (Mills 1998:77,80). Thus, among the Ovawambo, women's liberation is possible if the men are shaped by the Father's love (Smail 2005:161,168). Through God's love, women's rights will be fully recognized and the equality between men and women will be practised and respected (Mercadante 1990:116,161). So far, our thesis is to reframe the male identity and fatherhood among Ovawambo males in a way that would offer healing, wholeness and compassion to family crises. However, the questions that still remain unanswered are: To what extent could a spiritual Christian understanding of fatherhood bring about changes in Ovawambo family life, and what is the role of God-images in this regard?

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5.8 A Spiritual Understanding of Masculinity

From the beginning of this study, we observed that socialization, democratization and globalization have greatly challenged and changed family life in Ovamboland. These changes have possibly caused a wretched predicament in family life and a crisis in men and women's relationships due to patriarchy, gender stereotype and hegemonic masculinity. This situation has caused both men and women to become aware of the importance of seeking new and healthier ways of being. Men not only need support as they break the bonds of the powerful structures that unsettle and abuse them; they also need liberation from crippling stereotypes of masculinity that they have inherited from older generations (Culbertson 1994:90). However, to be a male remains the quintessence of a cultural and social upbringing that teaches boys gender roles (refer to chapter two about manhood and fatherhood in Ovawambo culture, and chapter three about a paradigm change within global culture). The male identity is still determined by the traditional images of the hardworking breadwinner, the faithful husband, lover or playboy, the influential boss and leader, the rugged individual as the rebel, the tough guy or the superman. Each of these descriptions of masculinity connotes a specific way of perceiving the world. While some support patriarchy, other aspects also encourage men to refrain from the destructive elements of patriarchy.

As a cultural by-product and societal construction, masculinity therefore goes hand-in-hand with social roles and both personal and public self-esteem. Therefore, the notion of masculinity, as a dominant power of control, continues to prevail. This image was even culturally enforced in the church because, to worship an all-powerful, omnipotent and self-contained male God, encourages the male self-love of supremacy and religious sanction (Louw 2012:47,55,74). Nevertheless, God loves each one of us just like we are, not based on what we do. God loves his people simply because they are humans created in his image. God does not love us because of our résumés, our conquests, the connectedness of our femininity, or the ruggedness of our masculinity.

One of the challenges that pastoral care faces is the deconstruction of male power in the gender debate. As this has brought confusion to men's lives, pastoral care is one of the basic ways to promote not only physical, but also spiritual well-being through compassionate intimacy,[69] which could bring humane authenticity, friendship and ethics of unconditional

[69] Compassionate intimacy denotes a paradigm shift in Theology from its categories that put more emphasis on the power of God in terms of "threatening power," to categories that portray God in *theopaschitic* categories of compassion and vulnerability (Louw 2012:190).

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love. However, in Chapter 1, the researcher indicated that he will seek the connection between the power of God and the pastoral notion of compassion and how a *theopaschitic* paradigm could be applied to the notion of male identity within the Ovawambo culture. With this in mind, the researcher will explore how a *theopaschitic* approach could instigate a transformative change in the understanding of male identity within the Ovawambo cultural setting.

5.8.1 The *theopaschitic* paradigm: the compassionate and suffering God

According to the *theopaschitic* approach,[70] God does not allow evil but, in some way, also suffers with or under it in order to display his compassion in solidarity with his creation (Louw 2000:33). God is not passionless, but passionate and compassionate (Migliore 1983:65). God's power reflects his identification with our suffering, as well as his vulnerability, powerlessness and compassion. For a pastoral family's caring approach to help Ovawambo males to reinterpret their male identity, it should find its clarity in incarnational (Christ becoming human) theology. The importance of incarnational thinking is based on its theology of the cross in which God, in Christ, identifies with human suffering and becomes our co-sufferer (Louw 2008:430). The crucifixion of Christ proves how evil deeply affects God. As God identifies himself with our suffering, he shows his compassion and clearly proclaims that suffering is directly opposed to his will (Louw 2000:33).

The omnipotence of God describes his unique revelation that expresses God as the One who has overwhelming love and steadfast faithfulness (Louw 2000:64). The *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross) reveals the passion and compassion of a suffering God. The cross becomes a symbol that reveals our human predicament, which includes our destitution, powerlessness, brutality, violent behaviour and irresponsible actions (Louw 2008:441). The theology of Bethlehem and Golgotha, i.e. Christ's incarnation and suffering, direct us from a

[70] This approach articulates that God suffers with, and on behalf of, humankind through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Louw 2000:32). According to this approach, God suffers in order to display his compassion in solidarity with his creation. According to Berkhof (in Louw 2011:46), *theopaschitic* thinking for the praxis of God has value, because it proposes a shift from the substantial approach to the relational, and encounters *paradigma*. The switch is then from the attempt of orthodoxy to uphold ecclesial triumphantilism, a theology of glory (*theologia gloriae*) and an imperialistic ecclesiology of omnipotence (powerful force), to a theology of the cross (*theologia crucis*) of weakness, suffering and passion (Hall, in Louw 2011:46-47). The value of a theology of the cross is based on its revelation of God in terms of pathos. "God's passion" refers to his divine authenticity and identity. The cross of Christ becomes the proof that God identifies himself with human suffering and displays solidarity with human forsakenness. In God's passion and compassion, he suffers in Christ, with, and on behalf of, human beings. He reveals himself as a defenceless God in anticipating human suffering and predicaments. Therefore, the cross, as weakness and vulnerability, exposes God's power. Christ's suffering represents the characteristics and features of God's faithfulness to his promises. Both the Old and New Testament portray God as one with pathos through the history of his redemptive and covenantal relationships. The cross becomes an ontic principle that indicates our new status as new beings in Christ. This creates a new fellowship between God and human beings and in terms of the gender debate between men and women (Louw 2000:32-35,98).

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lonely and dark review of our own real suffering to God's suffering in solidarity with ourselves (Hall 1986:112). The theology of Bethlehem (the birth of Jesus) and Golgotha (the crucifixion of Jesus) becomes central to the Christian interpretation and response to human suffering, as it reflects God's power of transformation in our world (Inbody 1997:180). The *theopaschitic* approach clearly connects God and his compassion to human suffering and predicament and reveals his solidarity with human forsakenness. Therefore, Feitsma (in Louw 2000:35) views this redefinition of God's being in terms of suffering as the most ultimate expression in theology of what God's compassion means (Louw 2000:34-35).

However, beside the *theopaschitic* approach, which puts more emphasis on God's compassion and his not-willing of evil, there is another line of thought, i.e. doing theodicy. Doing theodicy puts more emphasis on proving God's compassion in terms of human and moral acts by being critical of any social evil, and persuading political change or transformation, as well as acts of liberation. Its aim is to help liberate humankind from all kinds of political, social, cultural and structural suffering, especially from manifestations of suffering caused by injustice or discrimination. Through this approach, the theodicy question shifts away from God's no to evil, towards humankind's no to evil, injustice and social/cultural suffering. Consequently, all social injustice and discrimination become a moral issue (Louw 2000:35).

Hence, amidst injustice that hegemonic masculinity and power abuse cause in family life, the belief in an all-loving and all-powerful God could be deeply challenged. The problem of divine power has become not so much the threat of omnipotence, as experienced and interpreted as abusive power, but rather the search for a redeeming power amidst current family predicaments, radical injustice and the fragility of modern life (Inbody 1997:3-4). However, according to Louw (2000:39), *theopaschitism* could help us to reinterpret our understanding of God in terms of his identification with suffering. Theodicy will always remain an important part of our theological endeavour, because it reveals our human need for a God-image. What is important in pastoral caring ministry is not only to explain how one can escape abusive power, but how to find, formulate, respond to, depend on, and celebrate a power of creation and redemption amid injustice that, in most cases, a misuse and misunderstanding of power had caused (Inbody 1997:3-4). However, as stated earlier in this chapter, Heyns (in Louw, 1998a:145) stresses that we can only understand a human being when we view people in relation to God as the fundamental and core relation constituting their existence. Therefore, in order to help Ovawambo men to overcome power abuse, foster

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spiritual maturity, adopt a new role function and compassionate identity, what is needed is to reinterpret God's power as vulnerable love and compassionate power.

5.8.2 The reinterpretation of God's power - vulnerable love and compassionate power

According to Louw (2000:67-69), the theology that interpreted the Hellenistic term, *pantokrator* – the version of the Hebrew phrase '*el Saddaj* - caused the problem of God's omnipotence. In this way, God's power is considered as strength, violent power and tyranny (e.g. a Roman despot). Therefore, if God is interpreted as a despot or powerful giant, this may lead to negative personal feelings and actions, especially within a situation of family crisis and predicament (Louw 1998a:441).

However, according to Migliore (in Inbody 1997:164), God's power is based on suffering, liberating, and reconciling love. God's power in Jesus is demonstrated in his forgiving sinners, solidarity with the poor, his suffering and dying for the world, and in the continuing presence of his transforming Holy Spirit, who creates new freedom and builds a new community. Louw (1998a:172) writes how Holy Spirit transforming power could affect our everyday lives as follows:

> This process of transformation implies that the Spirit releases new possibilities in person. Through his immanent workings, the gifts of the Spirit transform personality traits and physical components by changing their objective and destiny. People are turned away from loveless selfishness towards service and love. The perspective of *diakonia* (service) imparts a new intention and goal to human potential. It divers it from inherent egoism, to a service-oriented sacrifice which focuses on realizing the salvific gifts.

Hence, God's power, made known through Jesus, is not sheer omnipotence, but supremely powerful love (Migliore 1983:60,64). The concept of God's power has been re-described in terms of life, crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Inbody 1997:168). The "power of God" does not mean authoritarian rule, sheer omnipotence or immutability,[71] but the "exodus God," who acts to liberate his oppressed people through Jesus' ministry (Migliore 1983:64). This relationship between Father and Son reveals God's power, not as immutability (changelessness) or raw omnipotence, but as suffering, liberating, reconciling, and transforming love. God's faithfulness, unfailing compassion, and loving kindness reveal his completely steadfast, passionate and suffering love in character and purpose (Inbody 1997:146,168). In Christ's redemptive work, we see God's perfect and steadfast love, not the

[71] The meaning attributes changelessness to God. It shows that God does not move, undergo change, or have a history, therefore he is perfect and, what is perfect, never changes (Migliore 1983:64).

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immutability of a dead abstraction (Migliore 1983:64-65). The theology of the cross is not about impotence, because powerlessness of the cross is the paradigm of God's different mode of power that includes power of identification, participation, endurance, and transformation (Inbody 1997:180). God's love is always characterized by mercy, pity, compassion, grace, patience, righteousness, and justice (Guthries 1994:104) and, because God is with us (Immanuel), our suffering (though terribly real) receives a new perspective and new meaning (Hall 1986:113).

The resurrection, the overwhelming and victorious power of a living and faithful God, reframes his faithfulness in terms of the uniqueness of his grace and compassion. His grace and compassion are the pure signs of a love that makes sacrifices for the anger, doubt, pain and frustration of suffering human beings (Louw 2000:71-72).

The cross and resurrection do not emphasize the idea of power, but transform it, because the cross-resurrection is not a victory from the outside that eliminates all evil through a unilateral destruction. The cross-resurrection is a victory from within that accepts and transforms death in all its forms into the possibility of new life (Inbody 1997:180).

Furthermore, Inbody revises the concept of God's power to social relationships and suffering by replacing the concept of dominating power with a concept of empowerment through a mutual relationship. Omnipotent power must be replaced by relational and social concepts of power. The relational base of power refers to erotic power by means of empowerment through mutual relationships. This is to avoid the misuse of God's power in terms of violent male domination. Power must lead to interconnectedness and the power and courage to be. As a primary psychological, social and ontological concept, power helps us to communicate with others through the mutual empowerment available in a relationship. Relational power leads to mutuality of internal relatedness, rather than abuse of power (Inbody 1997:136). Inbody emphasizes the following:

> God's power is God's identification with the suffering of the world, and includes God's vulnerability, God's powerlessness, and God's compassion. God's power is the power of resurrection and transformation, which brings new life out of the suffering and evil of the world.

Therefore, omnipotence as effect and persuasion replaces omnipotence as force and control. Then, power no longer is a capacity with which to impose coercively one's will onto a totally powerless object, but effects another free centre of power through persuasion, because God's

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power is more the power to create, cure, and rebuild, than to control (Louw 2000:62-63).

However, Louw (2000:63) is critical of Inbody's way of using, exclusively, the social notion of empowerment through relation. He (Louw) attempts to define God's power (identification, compassion and transformation) by showing that it is not only based on relationality, but resides in his faithfulness. Furthermore, Louw (2000:63) believes that the power of God is never meant to be violent force, but is based on his covenantal promise: "I will be your God." His power is based on theology itself – continuity within discontinuity (faithfulness). God's power must be reinterpreted as a metaphor portraying his unique faithfulness and steadfastness in relation to his covenanted people, his relational revelation to sustain the world, and his deeds of salvation to save humankind. God's power is his redeeming vulnerability and powerlessness. Omnipotence is God's loving invitation to a relationship and covenantal encounter that guarantee true and real freedom in human life (Louw 2000:64,68). Furthermore, the concept of God's omnipotence is connected to the concept of "defencelessness" (Berkhof 1979:134, cited in Louw 2000:64). Therefore, God's goodness is not based on destruction, but on steadfast faithfulness, grace and compassion. Omnipotence should be viewed, not as an essential description and accurate attribute of God, but as a metaphor portraying his unique faithfulness and steadfastness in relation to his covenanted people.

God's love becomes vulnerable and is prepared to take risks with humankind. Although defencelessness describes God's patience and long-suffering, it does not exclude an active exercise of power, but excludes a violent and destructive exercise of power. What happened on the cross manifests the relationship between Jesus and his father, God. The distinction between Father and Son is expressed at Calvary, in that the Father abandoned his Son to sin and death, whereas the Son subordinated himself in obedience to the Father. The action of Christ on the cross had its primary source in the Father's will and initiative. Although this reveals the difference between the role of the Father and that of the Son, it takes, equally seriously, the identity of both the Father and the Son in their love and sacrifice. However, in the surrender of the Son, the Father also surrendered himself, although not in the same way, for Jesus suffered death by his Father forsaking him, but the Father who abandoned him also suffered the death of his Son, in his infinite grief of love (Smail 2005:124-125). According to Berkhof (in Louw 2000:65) God's power should be viewed as an overwhelming grace, rather than destructive and hurtful violence. His power is an overwhelming faithfulness in the sense of his gracious sovereignty and unique righteousness and justice and, by conquering death,

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overcomes his enemies and triumphs over the destructive powers of evil, darkness, hatred and injustice.

For this reason, Louw (2000:64) suggests that God's omnipotence should not be interpreted against the background of the Hellenistic *pantokrator* (power and violence), neither in terms of the Roman Caesar (*despotes*). God's power was never meant to be a violent force, but clearly covenantal through his promise that he would be our God. His goodness is not an all-round benefit, but steadfast faithfulness, mercy and compassion. This handing over of moral attributes to humans happens because God's power does not keep to itself, but hands it over; it is not coercive but sharing, not domineering but relational. God's almightiness and will are understood as primarily linked to the theological idea of his faithfulness. His omnipotence is not about superior power (God as Warrior) or as an oppressive authority, but it reveals God's unique revelation that portrays him as having overwhelming love and steadfastness (Louw 2000:68-69). Hence, Häring (in Louw 2000:68) concludes: "God is not a *Pantokrator;* neither should he be seen in terms of Aristotle's *potentia*. God's power is his redeeming vulnerability and powerlessness; omnipotence is God's loving invitation to a relationship and covenant encounter which guarantees real freedom."

With this understanding, the male identity could be reformed in terms of God's power in which pastoral care works with the shift from the notion of power as force (control), to power as love, that is, vulnerability and woundedness.

5.8.3 The significance of God's vulnerable love and compassionate power in the Ovawambo male's life

By means of this *theopaschitic* approach, Ovawambo males may therefore start to identify themselves not with patriarchal and hierarchical God-images, but with passionate God-images. In this regard, as a compassionate partner for life and a loving father, God can play a decisive role in the shift from powerful manhood into compassionate manhood. The value of *theopaschitic* thinking (the notion of a suffering, vulnerable, weak and passionate God in terms of a *theologia crucis*) in terms of the praxis of God, is based on a shift from the substantial approach in theological reflection, to the relational and encounter paradigm (Berkhof, in Louw 2012:190). This change then also generates from the attempt of orthodoxy to uphold ecclesial triumphantilism (Hall, in Louw 2012:190) and a theology of glory and omnipotence (powerful force) to a *theologia crucis* of weakness, suffering and passion. Therefore, what is needed is not for men to become like women, but the development of a

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new form of masculinity that emphasizes love, family and personal relationships. It also places less value on power, possessions and achievements (Gauntlett 2002, in Louw 2008:395), and more emphasis on compassion, integrity, flexibility, humility, mercy, pacifism, patience, fidelity, generosity, cooperation, and intellectual honesty.

This kind of masculine spirituality can only be complemented in the lives of men who feel ready to take the responsibility of their own liberation from gender stereotypes and seek a new, more sensitive self-understanding in the light of feminist critique (Culbertson 1992:110,167). Therefore, men could liberate others and themselves, not through power but through participation, not through might but through self-emptying love. God did not display force to destroy the sinner with the sin, but assumed solitary responsibility for the contradictory and confused admixture in our lives. God's pain gives us courage that is not like the courage of the stoic. It not only resigns itself to pain and walks on in silent, lonely nobility, but seeks out other sufferers. For in the encounter with the crucified God, faith learns about sharing the suffering in the beginning of its transformation to wholeness and joy (Hall 1986:113,119). Men may try to break the old shackles of gender role definitions, and silence the many voices from their past that encouraged them to shut down their feelings, play tough, keep moving, and push till it hurts. Men need liberation from the expectations of who they are supposed to be and from the patriarchy that punishes them when they do not live up to expectations. Hence, the reinterpretation of *pantokrator* with vulnerability and compassionate understanding of God through Jesus Christ's crucifixion, could bring about a paradigm shift in the Ovawambo men from understanding the notion of power as strength, control, domination and success, to understanding power as vulnerability, service, and a compassionate attitude towards other human beings.

In the contemporary Ovambo context, the challenge is for pastoral care to implement the existing modes of care-giving to make spiritual healing real and to promote new possibilities of gender-specific care-giving (Culbertson 1994:91). This is possible only when pastoral care, as an empathetic process, involves:

1) Interaction with people where they are, as they are, and meeting them, with deep concern and sincere empathy, in their being functions.

2) Healing with the aim of helping family members to regain what has been lost, helping them to acquire new coping skills and mechanisms, and to re-flame existing concepts and ideas (Louw 2008:75).

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Despite the *theopaschitic* approach, we need to explore another possible metaphor that can be of assistance in moving beyond the paradigm of the suffering God (*theopaschitic* theology) to the paradigm of the faithful God (God as soul friend) (Louw 1998b:233).

5.8.4 God as Friend

According to Louw (1998a:85), the metaphor of God as friend is linked to the tradition of the church. It reveals God's faithfulness as experienced in the nation of Israel's history. His faithfulness and both his identification and solidarity with human suffering through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection are viewed in terms of sacrificial friendship: "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command" (Jn 15:13-14). This metaphor communicates partnership, companionship and stewardship and creates familiarity and intimacy that link grace and humanity. It also articulates God in a non-sexist way because, in companionship with God, there is no male or female; both are equal and remain unique human beings (Louw 1998b:233). Therefore, Louw (1998a:86) furthermore indicates that:

> Friendship becomes a signal that the word of God assumes the hearer 'to belong to a subset distinguished by a bond of intimacy' (Cooper, in Hink 1993:101). The God-world relationship is illuminated by this friendship. It gives meaning to post-modern people who are in great need of intimacy. It also reflects the meaning of bonding between Christians who are willing to make enduring commitments.

Our aim to add a soul-friend metaphor is based on the conviction that it takes into account both the grace of God and the human need for salvation and intimacy. It also represents the components of partnership, companionship, commitment and intimacy that convey God's character as shepherd, wounded servant, as well as his paradoxical wisdom and identification of suffering and incarnation.

To conclude this, one can say that, both the *theopaschitic* (suffering) and soul-friend (God's faithfulness) approaches could help Ovawambo family crises because these approaches prefer to deal seriously with human anxiety, grief, despair and suffering (Louw 2000:39). Therefore, both the soul-friend and fatherhood metaphors could be models for the ministry in sustaining, healing, and fostering growth in marital and family life. To sustain a partner involves emotional security and sensitive, empathetic communication in the relationship, while healing involves the intention for a sexual relationship to be of the kind that can significantly transform the wounds in lives and contribute towards the greater health of a whole person's growth. "Growth" means the realization of a person's potential by increasing his/her access to

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physical, emotional, and intellectual resources (Nelson 1978:128,240). So far, the result of this research has shown how a *theopaschitic* approach that renders God's power as weakness and compassionate vulnerability, and the soul-friend approach that renders God's faithfulness, could reframe the male identity in Ovawambo men. Therefore, by means of these metaphors, Ovawambo men are called to discard domination and, instead, have an attitude of compassionate intimacy. Such a disposition should reflect a kind of *diakonia* position within the dynamics of family life. In terms of a Christian spiritual understanding of fatherhood, males should represent the sacrificial ethics of diaconic outreach, partnership, companionship, commitment, intimacy and a stance of unconditional love.

However, questions still remain unanswered about what the church can do to help family life in this wretched predicament in Ovamboland. Therefore, what is needed is a positive environment that strengthens family life to remain a place of harmony, peace, compassion and unconditional love. Can we achieve this by applying a theological understanding of God's vulnerability and a Christian spiritual understanding of human dignity in a holistic pastoral family ministry?

5.9 A Pastoral Family Ministry

So far, in Chapter 3, our study has shown how families in Ovamboland experience an unending predicament. Families become troubled because they are unable to cope with current changes that often cause crises. Consequently, families may apply firm rules to help children as they grow up. Sometimes, families choose scapegoats in order to divert attention from necessary change. Therefore, it is important for pastoral care to devise coping mechanisms to help family members together to regain problem-solving abilities and some sense of equilibrium in their lives. The church has a unique opportunity to facilitate the wellbeing of families through pastoral family ministry. However, to develop an essential strategy for ministry to the families, we first need to establish a theological understanding of "family."

5.9.1 A Theological Understanding of Family

An understanding of "family" is based the question: What does it mean to be in a relationship with a spouse or family member? The answer to this question could help us to understand what is meant by family. According to Olson and Leonard (1996:25) family means: "… any concept of two or more people linked over time emotionally and usually biologically and legally, sharing such things as home, spiritual and material resources, interpersonal care giving, memory, common agenda, and aspirations." This definition is based on systemic

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thinking. The concept of family, as an emotional, social, and often biological system, where every member is affected by, and who affects every other member, is an important part of the new paradigm for understanding families (Olson & Leonard 1996:25).

Theologically, God spoke and created human beings in his image. However, why did God need a creature made in his divine image? Was there something incomplete about God's existence that prompted this creation? To understand a human being, we need to answer these questions. God is complete and does not need our praise but, as a reflection of his own image, a person has a need to ascribe glory to God. This is what it means to be in God's image and likeness. God's joy increases when his creatures give him glory and praise in their relationship. God's glory that exists in the Godhead now has the benefit of receiving that same glory again when it is reflected through human beings who have been created in his image. However, human beings created in God's image are also created in community. The image of God in each person proves that that a human person is a relational being (Karl Barth, in Miller 1988:17). Therefore, when a person is born into a community, that is, a family, it is now the duty of such a family to nurture that person, whose identity develops purely in the context of a relationship - from the exchange of a smile to a warm embrace. When we are in family relationships that have varying degrees of the covenant,[72] we learn how to receive love and also give love to other family members. Therefore, the capacity to give love and receive love from God is made possible. When, as a covenanted member, one learns to attach to a family community, one's ability to connect with God becomes a reality in one's present existence (Miller 1988:17). The relationship between God and the children of Israel has proven to be the most fruitful model that could help us to develop a theology of family. According to Chatier (in Balswick & Balswick 1989:20), God's relationship with the nation of Israel could be regarded as a parenting model, which is characterized by loving, caring, responding, disciplining, giving, respecting, knowing, and forgiving. The establishment of a covenant between God and the nation of Israel is an important focus in developing a theology of the family. The concept of the covenant is a paradigm of family like the unilateral relation that God established with his people, Israel. Family is a covenant of love, therefore it means more than consanguinity - bound by ties of blood. Family is where people experience unconditional love, and where you can count on that love, even when you least deserve it. In

[72] Here, "covenant" is based on the relationship between God and the children of Israel. This relationship has proven to be the most fruitful model for the development of a theology of family. If we take God's actions toward Israel's people as a model, then loving, caring, responding, disciplining, giving, respecting, knowing, and forgiving will characterize family members' relationships (Chartier, in Balswick & Balswick 1989: 19-20).

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this light, we learnt that the concept of covenant is a fundamental and important element in developing a theology of the family. With this in mind as a principal point, let us now deal with elements in a theology of family relationship that involves covenant, grace, empowerment, and intimacy (Balswick & Balswick 1989:20). An explanation of each of these now follows.

1) **Covenant**

A family relationship must have a covenanted commitment that has unconditional love as its foundation (Balswick & Balswick 1989:21). For example, a commitment in marriage suggests that, in failure, there must be forgiveness. When people enter a covenant, they need to be aware of the tension that exists between what is promised and what, in reality, can be done. The establishment of a covenant between God and Israel helps humans, including husband and wife, and parent and child, to accept one another unconditionally because, if they are in a covenant of love, it provides the basis for the family. For this reason, "family" means more than consanguinity, where blood ties provide the basis for belonging, family is where you experience unconditional love, and where you can count on that love even when you least deserve it (Chartier and Anderson, in Balswick & Balswick 1989:19-20). McLean (in Balswick & Balswick 1989:19-20), suggests seven components as a metaphor for a marriage and family relationship:

1) People are social and live in community.
2) The basic unit of family and of covenant is the dyad.
3) Persons living in community will experience struggle and conflict, as well as harmony.
4) Persons living in covenant must be willing to forgive, and be forgiven by, each other.
5) Persons living in covenant must accept being bonded to each other.
6) Persons living in covenant will accept law in the form of patterns and order in relationships.
7) Persons living in covenant will have a temporal awareness, as they have a memory of the past, live in the present, and anticipate the future.

When God promised his loyalty to Israel, it was a promise to be faithful. He could remain faithful because of his perfect nature, but humans need to make that kind of promise, while knowing that the possibility of failure exists (Miller 1988:18). According to Louw (2012:113), in covenant, God is portrayed as a soul-mate and a partner for life. Therefore, the Christian

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faith implies: "The faithfulness of a living God, who identified himself with our human predicament in terms of a promise: I will be your God." (Exod. 6:7,Jer. 30:22 ESV).

From the security that this covenantal love provides, develops grace (Balswick & Balswick 1989:21).

2) **Grace**

Although it is difficult to distinguish between covenant and grace, it is clear that covenant works in terms of grace. From a human perspective, God's unconditional love without grace makes no sense. "Grace" is truly a relational word. Therefore, we are called to share in a gracious relationship with God. Grace means unmerited favour.

Family should live in an atmosphere of grace, not law. In such an atmosphere, family members act responsibly out of love, have a caring attitude towards, and consideration for, one another (Balswick & Balswick 1989:26). God's grace reaches down and moves with us through struggles and conflicts in family relationships. Through this grace, people work towards forgiving one another (Miller 1988:18). The incarnation is the supreme act of God's grace to human relationships. Christ came in a human form in order to reconcile the world to God; so, we too can forgive others as we have been forgiven. Divine forgiveness and love are the basis for human love and forgiveness (Balswick & Balswick 1989:26). Through this atmosphere of grace, family members have the space to empower each other.

3) **Empowering**

Empowering does not involve yielding to another person's wishes, or giving up one's own power to someone else, or controlling another, but it is an active, intentional process of enabling another person to acquire power. Jesus redefined and rejected the use of power to control others by using his power to serve others, to lift up the fallen, to forgive the guilty, to encourage responsibility and maturity in the weak, and to enable the disabled. Through empowerment, family members will use their areas of strength to build each other up, rather than control others, because empowering is love in action. Empowering is the ultimate goal when parents release a child to his/her self-control. This could help parents to understand that the key to their authority lies not in external control, but in internal control, which their children can integrate into their own personhood. Although parents may have a hard time in letting their children go, God provides us with the ability to follow the empowering principle in our relationships (Balswick & Balswick 1989:21,28). Even God's identification through

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the cross of Christ demonstrated his grace, sensitivity and compassion. It designated reconciliation in such a way that one discovers intimacy: God accepted human beings unconditionally for who they are, without their having to fear rejection (Louw 2012:114). Therefore, empowerment in relationships is a result of the covenant and grace that God and Christ offer, and leads to the possibility of intimacy between family members (Balswick & Balswick 1989:21,29).

4) **Intimacy**

According to Louw (2012:89), intimacy is not only about romantic love, but is also important for ethical living. He says that "intimacy implies a choice which represents an acceptance of responsibility for other. Love is about a 'yes' now without the possibility of rejection later on; it describes an unqualified, continuous process and commitment to the notion: partnership for life."

If the relationships of family members are based on covenant and they live in an atmosphere of grace and empowerment, they will be able to live, communicate and express themselves so that they know themselves and others intimately. They will put their efforts into listening, understanding one another, and searching for what is best for others rather than for themselves. This is what it means to be a servant and to empty oneself, as Jesus did when he took the role, of a servant. This also shows how one is to be submissive and loving in a relationship. For couples, or anyone in a relationship, if one is willing, it is important to sacrifice some of one's own needs and desires. When family members have this kind of attitude and perspective, they will find a common ground of joy, satisfaction, and mutual benefit (Balswick & Balswick 1989:30-31). Furthermore, intimacy within the we-space in Christ indicates a space where grace and reconciliation are exercised, which will lead to a quality of communication where soulfulness is experienced (Louw 2012:89). This brings us back to unconditional covenantal love - the cornerstone for family communication and honest sharing without a threat of rejection. When family members love unconditionally, then the security that is established will lead them to deeper levels of intimacy. The unconditional love that Jesus modelled provides a good picture of the type of communicative intimacy desirable in a family relationship (Balswick & Balswick 1989:31). Therefore, family relationships must create a space for intimacy that represents the unconditional love of God's grace and love. Without grace, family relationships could easily be misused for the abuse of power, exploitation, violence, manipulation and hatred. However, the more these and other

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traumatic factors change, the greater the demand for intimacy and maturity. The more family life is exposed to the wear and tear of globalization, secularization and post modernity, the quest for meaning and maturity will become a burning issue. Where society functions less as a support system, a higher demand for maturity is experienced. Families are not always successful in achieving their goal or in meeting their wishes and needs. To survive their stresses, families need support (Olson & Leonard 1996:65). Therefore, the home is the place where family members continuously need support. But, to what extent can the family[73] provide a space for intimacy for its members and be a place for education, nurturing and growth through their important developmental stages of life (Louw 2012:89)? Due to the fact that the covenant concept presupposes a link of systemic interrelatedness, God designed family relationships to grow to a maturity that enables members to reach out to persons beyond the boundary of the family (Balswick & Balswick 1989:33). Therefore, we need to understand family as a developing system.

5.9.2 The Family as a Developing System

Having examined a theological and biblical understanding of family, it is worthwhile to understand the family from a systems approach. The primary goal of systems is to investigate the interrelationships of all parts of a particular system. We need to regard family as a living organism made up of dynamic relations, where each member affects another. The process by which a family system gets its members shows how the family members function (Miller 1988:25,26). In pastoral care, for many years, caring for people as a whole has been the main task of Christian leaders, such as priests, ministers and pastors (Goodliff 1998:5-6). As an organism or social system, a family should be treated as a unit (Clinebell 1984:285). However, fulfilling this task is becoming more difficult due to individualism. Therefore, to understand family life as a system of organisms, we need to tackle individualism through the family-systems and family-development theories.

5.9.2.1 The Family-systems Theory

According to Balswick and Balswick (1989:35-36), individualism is one of the major problems that makes one focus on individual needs and perspectives, rather than on relationships and groups. The family-systems theory views family, not only as the sum total of all the individual members' actions, but also as the interactions of all family members who

[73] Here, "family" refers to a functional unit for the creation of a warm space of intimacy where people can develop a mature stance in life. Its overall goal is to guide children towards maturity throughout all life's developmental stages (Louw 2012:107).

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operate as a unity of interrelated parts. For pastoral care to be effective, it needs to view family life as the interaction of all family members who operate in this unity of interrelatedness. Family life is viewed, not only as the sum total of the actions of all the individual members, but as a shift from the individual to the broader family system through a holistic approach, with which every part of family life is understood in terms of connection and interrelatedness. According to Friedman (1985:19-39), the family-systems theory consists of the following five core basic concepts that distinguish the family model from the individual model:

The identified patient: According to family systems, the one identified as a patient is not one who is ill, but simply the one in whom the family's stress or pathology originated. Therefore, crises are regarded, not as an individual healing, but as an opportunity to bring healing or change to the whole emotional system so that everyone can benefit and grow personally.

The concept of homeostasis (balance): This is the tendency of any set of relationships that could help to explain why the relationship system, family or congregation has become disturbed. It identifies the resistance that families have to change, guides in the creation of strategies to bring about change, and helps in developing strategies for change.

Differentiation of self: This means the capacity of family members for self-differentiation, apart from surrounding pressures. A family therapist, Father Murray Bowen (in Friedman 1985:27) suggests that a key, variable in the degree to which any family can change fundamentally, is the amount of self-differentiation that existed in previous generations in the extended families of both partners present. Therefore, this multigenerational notion is important in examining the current behaviours, not only because it helps to explain individual factors in order to overcome resistance to homeostasis, but also because it provides a theoretical framework for strategies of healing.

The extended family field: This includes the family of origin, the nuclear family and other relatives, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews, etc. The family theory regards the entire network as important. The influence of the family of origin is important because it helps one to attain a better understanding of the emotional processes and to modify a response to them. Some of the specific patterns of behaviour, perceptions, and thinking, as well as specific issues, such as rudeness, territory, drinking, and health, have an uncanny way of reappearing. If family members can see beyond the horizons of their own nuclear family's area of trouble and observe the transmission of such issues from generation to generation,

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they can obtain more distance from their immediate problems to make a necessary shift. Any counselling approaches that encourage extended family contact are not a technique for bringing about change, but for re-entering into the world that shaped our ground of being.

The emotional triangle: This consists of three people or issues. The basic law of emotional triangles is applied when any two parts of a system become unhappy or uncomfortable with one another. Typical emotional triangles found in families are: a mother, father and child; parents and any other two children; a parent, his/her child and his/her own parents, or a husband, wife and in-laws. A work triangle system is any position of responsibility, someone you oversee, and the person who oversees you. Therefore, to bring change to a relationship of two is to try to maintain a well-defined relationship with each, and to avoid the responsibility for their relationship with one another.

5.9.2.2 The Family Development Theory

The family development theory views the family as having developed over time through the stages of a natural life cycle. Each stage of family life has more predictable times of tension, and certain stages require more family structure than others. The development theory allows one to view any family progress through the various stages of life, and the family as dynamic rather than static. In every stage of development, there must be a certain stage for developmental tasks that the family must accomplish in order to move to the next stage. If family members have not mastered these developmental tasks, the family will experience problems in its progress. Some developmental tasks are stage-specific; they must be mastered at a specific stage and no other. Other tasks can begin to be mastered at one stage and will continue to be mastered at all further stages. For example, a married couple needs to master the task of establishing their own house as from their first year of marriage. Conversely, interpersonal communication is a skill that will be worked on throughout the life cycle (Balswick & Balswick 1989:42).

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Table 3. Indications of the basic developmental stages, the major task associated with each stage, and events that initiate it

	Stage	Major Task	Initiating Event
1	Premarital	Differentiating from family of origin	Engagement
2	Marital dyad	Adjusting to marital roles (establishing a household)	Marriage
3	Triad	Adjusting to a new child	Birth/adoption of first child
4	Completed family	Adjusting to new family members	Birth of the youngest child
5	Family with adolescents	Increasing flexibility in the family system	Children's differentiation from the family
6	Launching	Accepting the departure of family members	Children's choice of career and marriage partners
7	Post-launching	Accepting years of being alone and the aging process	Departure of the last child from the home

Source: Balswick & Balswick 1989:42.

This table teaches that family is a mechanism in the developmental system. In a process from one stage to another, the family needs to be a life-support mechanism. To fulfil this, family relationships must be based on covenantal commitment with unconditional love that characterizes it at its core. Through this covenantal love, grace develops that could help family members to have freedom to empower each other. Empowerment leads to the possibility of intimacy between family members (Balswick & Balswick 1989:21).

Therefore, the family should designate a space where children can be exposed to an experience of unconditional love. As a social system of interconnectedness, the family must function as a space for support and preparation for adulthood in order to develop to maturity (Louw 2012:107). According to Louw (1998a:78), the systemic-thinking approach helps pastoral encounters as the metaphor of a relationship in God's historical covenantal intervention to presuppose a network of relationships that the Old Testament calls the *qahal Yahweh*. This concept suggests that people of God, or the gathering of people involved in God's covenant, are connected to one another. Hence, pastoral care should view the family as a systemic approach, which includes not only husbands, wives and children, but also relatives beyond the nuclear unity. It is important to adopt a holistic approach in which pastoral care not only targets the individual, but all the family members. Theological anthropology helps pastoral care to treat a person, not in isolation, but in a relationship with God. This possible togetherness symbolizes the original partnership between God and humankind, where love is experienced (Louw 1998a:151), and because God's power is shared power (Migliore 1983:77). However, Stewart (in Clinebell 1984:283) stresses that:

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> Where there is a breakdown in family life it is important to have some way of knowing what has gone wrong, and to help parents, children and youth regaining problem-solving abilities and some sense of equilibrium in their life together. … The church should not be at the periphery of this struggle but at its heart, and involved in supportive, caring, and strengthening ways.

With this in mind, we now turn our study to family ministry, in order to find a strategy that could help family members to cope with points in the developmental passage and also a period of accidental crisis.

5.9.3 Family Ministry:[74] A Strategy for Life-support and Spiritual Formation in and through Families in Church

So far, through family-systems and family development theories, we learnt that families are social developing systems. However, economic and social forms shape a greater diversity of family configurations. To survive the stresses on them, families need support[75] to become centres of wholeness in which intimate relationships can grow. Therefore, this paradigm shift in understanding families requires a shift in the way we organize ministries with families (Olson & Leonard 1996:65).

According to Balswick and Balswick (1989:44), the family, as a developing system, needs to be open to the arrival and later departure of new members. It must be able to tolerate, and be responsive to, the changing needs of its individual members. It must maintain stability that can provide a firm foundation for them. However, in order to understand how to build strong families, we first need to define a strong family.

Table 4. The difference between strong and weak families

		Strong Families	Weak families
1	Cohesion	Individuation Mutuality	Enmeshment Disengagement
2	Adaptability	Flexibility Stability	Rigidity Chaos
3	Communication	Clear perception Clear communication	Unclear perceptions Unclear communication
4	Role structure	Agreement on roles Clear generational boundaries	Conflict over roles Diffused boundaries

Source: Balswick and Balswick 1989:44.

[74] Family ministry is any specific programme that is set up to support families in church to realize what God intends for a family. This ministry attempts to deal with the complicated struggles that are part of life, by avoiding simplistic or idealistic solutions that stir up guilt, but by stimulating growth with a preventive approach (Sell 1981:9-10).

[75] Family support involves ministering with families in a way that puts them in charge of the care or services they are receiving. It involves respecting the needs, aspirations, and goals families have identified (Olson & Leonard 1996:65).

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In the light of this table, a strong family can be created only when nurturing, caring, and protection characterize the nature of the family system. Therefore, family ministry should help parents to support, guide, protect, care and nurture their children, rather than dominate and neglect them. A space where both parents and children can be prepared for mature adulthood is needed. Therefore, family ministry should focus on the development of maturity and the discipline of responsibility among family members (Louw 2012:107,119). Henceforth, family ministry should help families to take time to develop trust and confidence in and with each other. Families need to respect the feelings, rights and goals of each member, in order to build trust and to demonstrate love (Miller 1988:107).

In addition to this, what is most needed is a space where children can experience the warmth of love, and feel accepted and accommodated, despite their own personal limitations or experiences of failure when expectations are not met. Parents should receive guidance and support to become soul-mates to their children. "Support" refers to the role function of a guide and the responsibility of interpreting and understanding. The aim of support is to guide the children towards maturity and to create an atmosphere of mutual acceptance, which can help to enhance their development of identity and individuality. The family, as a life-support system, can help its members when it allocates a space where children can be exposed to an experience of unconditional love. In their interaction and interconnection, family members are thus also prepared for adulthood, their development to maturity, and empowering one another (Louw 2012:107,119). In family relationships, empowerment must reflect the covenant and grace that God and Christ offer, thus helping family members to use their areas of power to build each other, rather than to destroy and abuse one another (Balswick & Balswick 1989:44). However, for the family ministry to help the whole family system to improve their interdependent network of need-satisfying relationships (Clinebell 1984:286), family ministry needs to integrate family enrichment.

5.9.4 Prevention Care in Family Ministry: Family enrichment

Therefore, one could say that family enrichment[76] is about the development of the family as a space where people can develop into mature and responsible human beings. This can be achieved through the development of embodiment that is more about sexuality and gender,

[76] According to Louw (2012:114), family enrichment is a process through which families are assisted to assess and to understand what happens on a daily basis within the space of family interaction. Its aim is to assess how people of different dispositions within the family system influence one another and contribute to the atmosphere of family space, more especially that of intimacy.

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interrelatedness about interaction and communication, vocation about career, commitment about purposefulness, and maturity that involves identity. According to Miller (1988:105,107), through a Christian understanding of family, children learn most of their relational, attachment and intimacy skills in the context of their family. Therefore, our strategy for spiritual formation must include helping parents to understand the emotional processes and basic life skills for the guidance, support and education of their children. Parents need flexibility in order to adapt to, accept and be compatible throughout all their children's development stages, humour to understand parenthood not as a hampering obligation, but as a creative opportunity, and love as the art of accepting children unconditionally despite mistakes and failures (Louw 2012:120).

Mutually, family ministry, family enrichment and family development focus less on content and fact, and more on process, behaviour and attitude within the dynamics of the system. For this reason, family ministry focuses more on the position that family members adopt within the context of networking. These positions are influenced by factors such as: behaviour and emotions, perception, role expectations, needs, family traditions and the family of origin, attitudes, norms and values, patterns of behaviour, style of education, family structure, philosophy of life and faith or belief. Although creating change in a family can be a very long process, one could use a genogram[77] as a hermeneutical tool (Louw 2012:107,115-116,123). The use of a genogram helps us to examine our relationships with previous generations. By doing so, we can identify various dysfunctions and circumstances that previous generations experienced, which explain why the present family system is troubled (Miller 1988:35).

In spite of this, within the Christian approach to the family, the foremost task is to help children to pass through different developmental stages of their lives to guarantee the stability of the covenant. As stated before, a covenantal understanding of God portrays him as a soul-mate and a partner for life, especially through the cross of Christ where he demonstrated his grace, sensitivity, and compassion (Louw 2012:113). The ability of God's grace to purify our love in service (*diakonia*) to others and to motivate us to model unconditional love, is a fundamental part of creating change in a dysfunctional family (Miller 1988:34). According to Louw (2012:139), a Christian understanding of love involves: "sacrifice without

[77] According to McGoldrick, Gerson, and Petry (in Straub & Faidley 2011:99), a genogram is a psychological tool that diagrams a family's structure over three or more generations. It was developed with the purpose of promoting an understanding of relational and behavioural patterns within a family.

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compensation; service without expectation; giving rather than receiving; acceptance without any condition; forgiveness without remembering the past; and reconciliation without parole."

Pastoral family ministry should seek to teach parents how to display these skills in their own lives and then teach them to their children. Family ministry strives to help families to meet developmental needs, as families are central for identity development in their children. What children experience during their primary relationships is likely to have a great impact on how they view themselves. If they had experienced love, then they will grow up regarding themselves as lovable. If a child grows up in an unlovable context, they are likely to compete constantly in order to feel adequate (Miller 1988:106).

Doing family ministry in this way is essential, as we renew our church and help it to grow, because what happens in families, happens in the church (Sell 1981:29). This is so because families are the church members; a family's experience of problems also affects the church's well-being. On the contrary, a vigorous family system will have a positive influence on the church. Therefore, our strategy to help both the church and families in spiritual formation would include helping families to:

1) Take time to develop trust and confidence with each other and live in healthy relationships.
2) Help husbands, wives, and children to establish and keep a healthy system of relationships, because, by doing so, this creates a foundation for family members.
3) Develop a healthy relationship with God, and his family (the church).
4) Help parents to be good role models for their children, as this will give the children a precious gift and the ability to trust God (Miller 1988:165).
5) Shift from the chaos of selfishness, enmeshment, domination, dissociation and rejection towards healing the family environment where there is intimacy, caring, trust, openness, understanding, supportive guidance, and respect (Louw 2012:122; Miller 1988:165).
6) Plans extended times together, as well as take the child to bed, read the Bible and pray together.
7) Remain united and committed to caring and supporting the relationship unit (Miller 1988:165).
8) Live in intimate family relationships, as we need models that can help us to support families in the congregation.

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5.9.5 Models for Implementing Family Enrichment

We aim to offer possibilities for doing family ministry with the ultimate goal of helping families to experience God's compassion in their family relationships and produce Christlikeness in persons created in the image of God. Hence, our purpose in establishing models for doing family ministry is to move persons towards the goal of living, as God designated for the first human family (Miller 1988:115-116). We can reach this goal through church educational programmes. This ministry may be affected through intergenerational classes or intergenerational retreats for the entire church membership, including single, widowed, and divorced people. Family members can be helped to cope with the developmental passage points and life crises (Clinebell 1984:290). To help families through church programmes, three models will be considered: 1) relational; 2) educational; and 3) therapeutic. However, our emphasis will be on preventive models because they help people to function better. Although intervention, crises and corrective models will receive some attention, a greater emphasis will be on enrichment of families and marriage (a therapeutic model).

1) **A Relational Model**

This model includes:

I) *Family growth*: a programme that involves three to five families who meet frequently for mutual care, support and development of a family's potential. The implications of this programme as a family-strengthening approach are:

a) The family growth group goes beyond most traditional family life education programmes by involving the whole family as a unit in the experience.

b) It provides a supportive network of families to equip and strengthen the family unit, sense of community, and belonging.

c) It facilitates change and growth in the family by focusing upon the development of family potential, which can be understood as those hidden resources within every family that can help with changing, growing, loving, caring, communicating, resolving conflicts, adventuring, creating and experiencing joy (Anderson, in Clinebell 1984:290-291).

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II) *Family cluster*: According to Margareth Sawin (in Clinebell 1984:291), four to five families at various stages of family life, plus several single people can organize this cluster. These families commit themselves to meet weekly for two and a half hours with the aim to:

a) Provide a group in which, to each other, families model aspects of their family systems in communication, decision-making, disciplining, interrelating, and problem-solving.

b) Provide a joint life experience between generations in which adults can share their concern by comparing present time-life incidents and social changes. Through this, children are helped to compare their real world experiences with their parents' world experiences.

c) Help families to discover and develop their strengths through increasing loving, caring, joy, and to facilitate their living and growing together more productively.

2**) An Educational Model**

Our second model is an educational model that aims to enrich family life by teaching better communication skills between family members, by working through current levels of family conflict, increasing coping skills and the management of family problems, and providing family members with models of interrogational living (Clinebell 1984:290). It trains couples, parents, and family members to move effortlessly through these predictable developmental crises (Miller 1988:143).

3) A Therapeutic Model

The main aim of this model is focused on the intervention of identified issues within family relationships. Situations, such as: a depressed wife, a teenager in trouble at school, a husband's inability to communicate with family members, and a low self-esteem, are some of the issues that are symptomatic of other problems that need intervention. In church, this intervention can take place by means of a pastoral caring ministry (Miller 1988:153). Pastoral care[78] can be defined as "helping acts done by representative Christian persons, directed

[78] According to Goodliff (1998:10), pastoral care refers to the conduct of healing, sustaining, guiding, personal/societal formation and reconciling of persons and their relationships with their families and community by representative Christian persons (ordained or lay) and by their faith community, who ground their care in the theological perspective of that faith tradition and who, personally, remain faithful to that faith through spiritual authenticity.

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toward the healing, sustaining, guiding and reconciling of troubled persons, whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns" (Clebsch & Jaekle 1967:4, in Lartey 1997:1). Pastoral care is a therapeutic process which involves guiding, feeding, nurturing, liberating, empowering and interpreting. Pastoral care through these pastoral functions, could foster change and promote human and spiritual health and maturity (Louw 2008:75).

A therapeutic model includes a healing process that seeks to help people to remove obstructions within themselves and their relationships, in order to grow into Spirit-centred wholeness. It seeks to help people to enjoy their relationship with God, enabling them to cope with life's crises, such as losses, conflicts and tragedies. The therapeutic model aims to help the family to:

a) Communicate their positive and negative feelings, needs, desires, values, and hopes more openly, clearly, and congruently.
b) Shift from focusing mainly on the "identified patient" and deal with hidden pain, conflict, and blocked growth in all family members as a result of an individual problem.
c) Open their family system by means of developing more supportive relationships with other people outside the family system.
d) Alleviate their mutually damaging cycles of hurt-anger attacks sooner, and to gradually substitute a self-feeding cycle of mutual need satisfaction among family members (Clinebell 1984:295).

So far, we have dealt with relational and educational models as preventative models for healthy families, and a therapeutic model as an intervention model focused on fixing major dysfunctions. As said earlier, we shall pay more attention to preventative models. One could ask: Why does the church need to focus on prevention? Because preventative models can correct problems before they become too large and before it is too late. A strengthening approach can be healing for any family relationship. Therefore, the church needs to regard enrichment models for ministry as guardians in preventing marriages and families from losing healthy, and intimate relationships. However, when families experience dysfunction, both intervention and therapeutic models are necessary (Miller 1988:116) to re-establish and construct a warm atmosphere of love and intimacy, to guide children towards maturity, and to foster Christian spirituality that embodies grace, forgiveness, reconciliation and unconditional love (Louw 2012:132,139).

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The enrichment methods for couples and families must involve the entire family. They must aim to help the whole person, as well as the whole family - physically and spiritually - by meeting their needs and promoting relationships that help them to move toward wholeness (Clinebell 1984:286). This includes ministering to those who are engaged to be married, married couples, youths and children as family members, single parents, divorcees, fathers, mothers, stepfamilies, gays and lesbians and their families, the abused, and the elderly.

For Ovawambo families to live without intimidation, fear and violence, men have to transform their power into love, mercy, and servanthood, as God did for his Son's crucifixion and resurrection. Ovawambo men need to view their power in the form of weakness and vulnerability, which could help them to gain strength and power to reflect God-images in family and social life. This would not only bring tremendous change in social and family life, but will also liberate men, as Nouwen (1997:38) shows:

> The man who can articulate the movements of his inner life, who can give names to his varied experiences, need no longer be a victim of himself, but is able slowly and consistently to remove the obstacles that prevent the spirit from entering. He is able to create space for him whose heart is greater than his, whose eyes see more than his, and whose hands can heal more than his.

Through an appropriate understanding of God's fatherhood, Ovawambo men can appreciate their power and ability to build, rather than to destroy, because God's power portrays himself as unique in his faithful and steadfast relationship with his covenanted people. In terms of a Christian spiritual understanding of fatherhood, males could represent the sacrificial ethics of *diakonic* outreach and a stance of unconditional love by turning away from loveless, selfishness and individualistic achievement towards service, love and systematic caring (Louw 1998a:172;174). God's power is not coercive, imposing or controlling. It rebuilds, creates and heals, and is viewed in the form of graceful identification with human misery. Such an understanding of God's power can promote spiritual healing, faith in God, and self-limiting power among Ovawambo men (Louw 2000:64,67,70; Migliore 1983:91). As they experience spiritual healing, they can move from understanding their power role as oppression, tyranny, domination, cruelty, and persecution, to regarding it as persuasive, serving, healing, transforming and empowering. Spiritual healing's element of peace (*shalom*) will bring about healing and wholeness (*telos*) within families and social life. Thus, all destructive factors that cause anxiety, feelings of guilt, shame, despair, doubt, helplessness, vulnerability, and frustration will end and can be replaced with God's faithfulness, through

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gratitude and joy (Louw 2000:64,67,70). Through faith and self-limiting power, Ovawambo men are also liberated from the desire to control or being superior to others. In faith, they could also recognize their limitations and exercise self-limitation and self-acceptance as a prerequisite for any healthy personal relationship (Migliore 1983:92).

The faith of Ovawambo males will free them to acknowledge their limits and to accept both their creatureliness and their need for forgiveness, and liberate them from their desire to be omnipotent. Our understanding of God's power in his resurrection power could also free Ovawambo men from the fear that caused their use of power to control others, or to abuse and destroy. Self-limited power is not a sign of powerlessness, but is a reflection in human life of God's creative and redemptive power that freely exercises self-limitation for the sake of life-in-community. To live in a healthy relationship, Ovawambo men need to adopt both self-acceptance and self-limitation, as God accepts us in spite of how others, or we, judge ourselves. Hence, we could limit ourselves, because God also exercises his power in a self-limiting manner (Migliore 1983:92). Through pastoral family ministry, the notion of God-images and a spirituality of vulnerability could be essential for the renewal, growth and transformation of males' attitudes. God-images and a spirituality of vulnerability affirm the thrust of God's purpose; namely, recreating men in his likeness through the community of the church and faith (Miller 1988:165). Thus, what makes family life among the Ovawambo remain the place *par excellence* of harmony, unconditional love and peace is the shifting of the males' understanding of power from coercion, threat, control, violence and strength, to compassionate, healing, overwhelming grace, transforming, sacrifice, redeeming and suffering love. Migliore (1983:72-73) writes about the power of suffering love as follows:

> In Jesus Christ we know God as compassionate power. God is not indifferent to creation and its destiny. God cares passionately for the world. Unlike the God of deism, the God of the biblical witness does not remain aloof toward and unaffected by the sin and suffering of creatures. God freely creates the world and freely suffers for the sake of its redemption. This compassion power of God is perfectly embodied in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Compassionate power is not sheer powerlessness any more than it is sheer almightiness. It is stronger than sin and death. Weak if measured by the standards of compulsion, the compassionate power of God revealed in the cross of Christ is strong to save a world in bondage to self-centeredness, compulsion, and violence. From the sickness of seeking mastery and control over others, God can save us only by the exercise of a wholly different kind of power - the power of suffering love.

5.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, we learnt that one of the social forces that defines and sustains male power over women is religion. Most of the world religions, including the Judeo-Christian religions,

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operate in patriarchal settings. Therefore, patriarchy not only derives its justification from religion and culture, but also uses religion to justify male domination in culture and society. Through religion, men justify their positions of power and influence, as God is clearly portrayed as a dominating male; he is perceived as a dominating Lord and King, who has taken over women's procreative powers. In the church, men have used the creation story (e.g. Gen. 2:7) to maintain their domination in society for many years. Patriarchy places men at the top of the pyramid of marital and family life, where they use their power to dominate and control other family members. Therefore, such patriarchal beliefs are oppressive by definition, because, then, one gender dominates another. This proves how the liberation of genders is needed. Men need to be liberated from what drives them to compete and from the harmful and inherited stereotypes that equate masculinity to professional success.

To liberate men, the concept of God's image was used in which both men and women reflect fully as being created in his image. Research has found that the term "image of God" portrays representation and relationship; it also describes human life in a relationship with God and other creatures. This relationship between God and humans implies that his moral attributes, such as love, compassion, and kindness are transmitted to human beings. Furthermore, God's fatherhood image articulates him as a protector, feeder, tutor, nurturer, forgiver, supporter, and comforter. He is not a superior deity who exercises his power over his people, but is a self-offering Spirit who shares in his people's suffering and predicaments. To foster change, the Ovawambo men need to understand that they have been created in the image of God as a loving father full of compassion and faithfulness. The image of God as father could reframe Ovawambo males to understand their image and likeness to the Father, God.

However, due to males' aggressive, controlling, abusive and sexually unaccountable attitudes, and striving for success and completion, the solution could be found in the reinterpretation of God's power by means of a *theopaschitic* approach. Through this approach, which emphasizes the power of God as "weakness" and vulnerability, Ovawambo men could be transformed and helped to reinterpret their power within a theology of vulnerability that reveals God's power in grace, mercy, servanthood and sacrifice. This approach could also help them to view their power in the light of God's power, which is not meant for violent force, but steadfast faithfulness, mercy and compassion. This could also reform their male identity to shift from the notion of power as force, control, domination and threat, to power as love, serving, healing, and sharing. When male power is reinterpreted into faithfulness, servanthood, mercy, grace, love and compassion, the family's life will become a place of

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harmony, unconditional love and peace, where family members experience intimacy, trust, openness, understanding, and respect.

Therefore, the church could help family life in this wretched predicament in Ovamboland through a holistic pastoral family ministry. Its aim is to strengthen family life to remain the place of harmony, peace, compassion and unconditional love. Through preventative and therapeutic models, pastoral family ministry should strive to help and empower husbands, wives and children in a family developmental system, and in life's crises, to establish a healthy system of relationships, characterized by mutual respect, support, grace, reconciliation, forgiveness, responsibilities, and equitable sharing of power. The pastoral family ministry should help both males and females to become fully human, as God intended. The notion of God-images and a spirituality of vulnerability through pastoral family ministry may be essential for the renewal, growth and transforming of males' attitudes. God-images and a spirituality of vulnerability affirm the thrust of God's purpose, namely, recreating men into his likeness through the community of the church and faith. Through active holistic family ministry, Ovawambo males can be liberated from traditional definitions of masculinity that hindered them from developing healthy male-female and father-child relationships. This liberation will help families to interact with one another in a cycle of covenant, grace, empowerment, intimacy, and forgiveness. In this way, families in Ovamboland can remain places characterized by harmony, connectedness, pleasurable interaction and empathic responsiveness.

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CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The findings in the study so far can be summarized as follows:

This thesis was divided into five main chapters (excluding the introduction and this last chapter on findings, conclusion and recommendations).

Chapter 2 dealt with the descriptive approach to manhood and fatherhood within the context of the Oshivambo culture. Chapter 3 explored the issue of male identity in terms of the paradigm change within a global culture. Chapter 4 focused on the concept of fatherhood in the context of the current crisis in Ovawambo family life and Chapter 5 examined previous scholarly views of fatherhood and God-images in order to reframe the male identity and fatherhood so that it would offer healing, wholeness and compassion to families in crisis.

The findings of these main chapters will now be reviewed, in order to conclude with outcome recommendations.

Chapter 2 – Review and Key Findings

Chapter 2 examined the impact of the Oshivambo traditional understanding of fatherhood and manhood, how Ovawambo men view and represent themselves, how gender relations are organized, and how men are expected to prove their manhood and fatherhood. The researcher found that the Ovawambo males were brought up to portray good character, to be caring and responsible for the well-being of their wives and children. Their culture required them to take care of, and be the head of, the family. Through the male initiation ceremony, men were not only equipped for manhood, they were also equipped to be patient and strong, and to be good and caring, instead of irresponsible fathers. They were also trained to protect, not only their family members, but the entire community.

However, Ovawambo men display some negative traits that should be abandoned, such as wife battering, regarding children as belonging only to their mothers, selfishness, an incorrect interpretation of manhood and fatherhood, and a misuse of power. The fathers also exercise too much authority over their wives and children and dominate their family members by expecting their wives and children to submit to their authority. Since a man is the head of the family and the breadwinner, women are regarded as dependants who must follow the men's

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directions and decisions. Men have the power to overrule their wives and to control the resources of their households. As the head of the house, the man has the final say as regards the household property, livestock, and the disposal and acquisition of property. These traits are passed from father to son and from one generation to the next. As a result, as head of the family and breadwinner, a man regards his family members as inferior and himself as superior to the family. This negative understanding of manhood, which is based on dominant forms of masculinity, often prevents other family members from enjoying life to the fullest. It also causes women to be anxious and daily lives to be in a state of shock.

Chapter 3 – Review and Key Findings

Chapter 3 dealt with the interconnectedness between the male identity and social influence, and examined the possible impact of socialization, democratization and globalization in the Oshivambo cultural setting. This study shows that gender issues are undergoing changes all over the world. However, from 1966, the feminist movement brought to family life a new self-understanding, greater awareness and articulation of needs, as well as an expectation of justice. It challenged the ideology behind men's hegemonic masculinity, which promotes power abuse, violence against women and an unequal distribution of family responsibilities. But, it also taught some men how to be the women's allies and how to bring about change to their family life. Another change was brought about by the participation of women in the female labour force, which was accompanied by a cultural shift and a shift in the government's family policy that developed from the new economy. The result is a devastating transformation of gender roles in the workplace and the home.

Consequently, male roles began to change causing men to adopt new multiple roles characterized by emotional intimacy, expressiveness, nurturing and caring that have never been regarded as masculine. Men began to participate in domestic work without reducing their hours in the workplace.

In the Ovawambo context, the Christian religion has brought a new moral order by promoting Christian marriages and discouraging the Oshivambo traditional polygamous marriages. However, this new religion, Christianity, was good news for Ovawambo males, as it supported gender inequality by promoting patriarchy and reinforced men's power over women. So, male domination has been justified in the Oshivambo culture. Men appeal to religion to justify their positions of power and influence. Furthermore, the colonial administration also justified gender inequality by refusing to recognise female leaders, and

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have manipulated customary laws to suit their needs. Colonial officials also promoted Western patriarchy that reconfigured power within gender relations. Besides cultural upbringing, missionaries and colonial administration, the mass media also play a crucial part in men's attitudes towards manhood and fatherhood. From childhood, men are exposed to gender stereotypes that portray them as superior to women. From time to time, the mass media communicate messages that describe the sex roles, and present females in stereotypical, often negative, ways. The mass media continue to fuel gender inequality through gender stereotypes. In fact, the Namibian media stress women's vulnerability and victimization in the male domain. Through these social influences, men learn, and are encouraged, to exhibit a superior character that dominates women. They may also learn that aggression is acceptable as a means of attaining what they want from women. These social influences may influence the Ovawambo males to continue to cling to their patriarchal culture and male traditional beliefs.

Chapter 4 – Review and Key Findings

Chapter 4 investigates how socio-economic and political changes affect cultural and social life in contemporary family life and how Ovawambo men react to these changes. Although the Namibian government has tried to liberate women and children through gender and family law reforms, this is not being fulfilled amicably. The elimination of gender stereotypes, or the redefining of gender in terms of equality, aimed to liberate women. The researcher found that gender roles and inequality between men and women cause conflict and that the gravity of male domination and manipulation of power results in crises in family life. This change has caused resistance, confusion and fear in men's lives. Males fear that this change might cause a loss of their power, which remains the criterion that determines their manhood.

The mass media have appeared to bombard the male resistance and continued to portray women in terms of the cultural gender stereotypes. A consequence of this fear, confusion and resistance was to fight back to regain power. The abuse of power remains a threat and destroys the happiness, love and harmony in many Ovambo families. The alternative instrument that men used to regain their power was their only remaining power base, that is, coercive power. This has led to an increase in rape, battering, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse of both women and children by the men. This reflects how men continue to fight to maintain their position as head of the family and breadwinner, and to exercise authority over

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women. In addition, we have seen the negative impact of hegemonic masculinity that jeopardizes women's and children's health, particularly in spreading HIV/Aids.

Chapter 5 – Review and Key Findings

As a core research problem, the main task of Chapter 5 was to see whether a Christian spiritual hermeneutics of manhood, fatherhood and masculinity, could bring about fundamental paradigmatic changes that could help Ovawambo men to shift from "threat power" and "dominant authoritarianism" to what could be called "compassionate power."

Firstly, the researcher found that a theological understanding of human beings, as being created in the image of God, is a fundamental anthropological concept in biblical theology that denotes the dignity and equality of all people. To consider persons as related to one another and to God through a divinely endowed image and likeness, gives an objective basis for accountability, forgiveness, and restoration to health and wholeness. With the *imago Dei*, we considered, as our example, Jesus Christ who took the form of a slave to save all of humankind. Love then becomes the principal and the ultimate foundation for human relationships that resides in the eternal dynamics of the triune God. Hence, humans can only fulfil their purpose - destined to be the *imago Dei* by the loving God and fellow humans - because he loves us. The concept of God's image was used, in which both men and women reflect fully as being created in his image. Research found that the term "image of God" portrays representation and relationship. The term also describes human life in a relationship with God, as well as other creatures. This relationship between God and humans implies that God's moral attributes, such as love, compassion, and kindness are transmitted to human beings. Furthermore, the fatherhood image of God articulates God as protector, feeder, tutor, nurturer, forgiver, supporter, and comforter. He is not a superior deity who exercises his power over his people, but is a self-offering Spirit who shares in his people's suffering and predicaments. To foster change, the liberation of Ovawambo men is needed from their patriarchal and Ovambo cultural beliefs of female oppression. This change could be achieved only when Ovawambo men understand that they have been created in the image of God as a loving father full of compassion and faithfulness.

The researcher also found that metaphors help one to signify and create possible meaningful and symbolic interpretations of God's acts in men's lives. They give us the meaning of compassion and consolation from God regarding human suffering. A metaphoric theology also helps pastoral care to opt for a metaphor that would connect God to our human

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experience. Metaphors also express the dimensions of sensitivity and compassion, for example, shepherd (*pathos*); servant (woundedness); wise-fool (weakness and crucified); and *paraklesis* (the consolation, encouragement and empowerment of God's spirit).

Furthermore, it is assumed that the re-evaluation of God's power and the relationship between God-images and fatherhood from the perspective of the cross and resurrection of Christ can produce change. God "the Father" symbolizes grace, freedom, maturity, faith, and intimacy with the divine source of life. God, as the father, is not a superior deity who just exercises his lofty power, or remains detached from the weaknesses and tragedies of the human condition, but he is a protector and the feeder, the one who tutors and nurtures, receives and forgives, supports, and comforts. To understand manhood and fatherhood in this light would help Ovawambo men to forgive, instead of condemn, and to liberate instead of punish. It would allow them to focus on God's love and compassion. Therefore, it enables men to change their understanding of power as coercion, control and threat, to power as persuasion, serving, healing, vocation, compassion, sacrifice, transforming and empowering. The image of God as father could reframe Ovawambo males to understand their image and likeness to the father God.

However, due to males' aggressive, controlling, abusive and sexually unaccountable attitudes, strive for success and completion, the research found that the solution could be found in the reinterpretation of God's power through a *theopaschitic* approach, which emphasizes the power of God as "weakness and vulnerability." In the light of *theopaschitic* theology, which emphasizes the power of God thus, we may conclude that Ovawambo men need to transform and reinterpret their power within a theology of vulnerability, which reveals God's power in grace, mercy, servanthood and sacrifice. God's power is revealed through his Son's suffering and resurrection (*theologia crucis* and *theologia resurrectionis*) and becomes a means of fostering the experience of authentic and life-giving vitality. Hence, *theopaschitic* theology can play a fundamental role in shaping the male identity by creating a paradigm switch in existing cultural convictions, regarding the dominant position of males, to shift from "threat power" and "dominant authoritarianism" to what could be called "compassionate power." This understanding could reform the male identity to shift from the notion of power as force, control, domination and threat, to power as love, serving, healing, and sharing. The reinterpretation of power could help Ovawambo men to view their power in the light of God's power, which is not applied in violent force, but steadfast faithfulness, mercy and compassion.

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When male power is reinterpreted into faithfulness, servanthood, mercy, grace, love and compassion, then family life can become a place of harmony, unconditional love and peace, where family members can experience intimacy, trust, openness, understanding, and respect.

We have also suggested that pastoral care forums should be established to help family members, especially men, to cope with the current crisis. Pastoral care should view the family from a systemic approach, which includes not only the husbands, wives and children, but also relatives beyond the nuclear unity. It is important to adopt a holistic approach in which pastoral care not only targets the individual but all family members. Theological anthropology helps pastoral care to treat a person, not in isolation, but in a relationship with God and in relation to fellow human beings. Pastoral family ministry should help both males and females to become fully human, as God intended through the covenantal understanding. The relationship between God and the children of Israel has proven to be the most fruitful model that could help family ministry. This possible unity symbolizes the original partnership between God and humankind where love is experienced. God's relationship with the nation of Israel could be regarded as a parenting model, which is characterized by loving, caring, responding, disciplining, giving, respecting, knowing, and forgiving.

To facilitate the change in Ovamboland's wretched predicament, the researcher also found that the church could enrich family life through a holistic pastoral family ministry. Its aim is to strengthen family life to remain a place of harmony, peace, compassion and unconditional love. Through preventative and therapeutic models, a pastoral family ministry should strive to help and empower husbands, wives and children to establish a healthy system of relationships characterized by mutual respect, support, grace, reconciliation, forgiveness, responsibilities, and an equitable sharing of power. The notion of compassionate God and a spirituality of vulnerability could be essential for the renewal, growth and transforming of male attitudes. It has been argued that a spirituality of vulnerability can open up new avenues for the pastoral ministry to men and the families.

To create change in Ovawambo dysfunctional family life, the ability of God's grace should purify men's love in service to others (*diakonia*) and motivates them to exhibit the model of unconditional love. Through a pastoral care ministry, the men are invited to take positive steps that would enable them to bring life, in all its fullness, to themselves, their fellow-men, women, and children who suffer from power abuse and their (the fathers') negligence at home.

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Recommendations

To alleviate on-going conflicts in marriages and families in Ovamboland, and to counteract the self-destructive tendencies between men and women within their households, the church could benefit from the following recommendations:

Although there are many factors that cause crises in marriages and families, a contributing factor is the masculinity crisis. Therefore, the church needs to develop policies and procedures to address issues of domestic violence and power abuse within the church, and to create forums where gender crises and roles in the modern world could be discussed openly.

The church must be consistent with its own vocation of promoting justice in society by opposing all acts and forms of violence, regardless of any custom, tradition or religion, by trying to deconstruct the socio-cultural construction of hegemonic masculinity, patriarchal sexism and the mass media's negative gender stereotypes. This can be achieved through continuous holistic educational programmes of the pastoral care ministry, which could include child and youth programmes, pre-marital counselling, family care and enrichment workshops, refresher courses for counsellors and counsellees, and conferences for men and women.

The church needs to establish a holistic pastoral caring ministry for male groups, where men are supported and liberated from crippling stereotypes of masculinity, so as to adopt gender equitable values and to embrace redemptive masculinity toward a new model for masculinity that reflects their divine image.

Although this research among the Ovawambo reveals some important aspects of patriarchy and its impact on women's lives, it does not fully focus on men in relation to gender and sexuality or the impact of male violence on women's health, especially in the context of HIV/Aids. Therefore, in future, more research needs to be conducted on men in relation to gender, sexuality and how violence against women could jeopardize women's health and human rights. However, urgent research among Ovawambo marriages should be on the interconnectedness between masculinity and HIV transmission, and how males can be helped to accept caring responsibilities for themselves, the women and children.

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