"They say: divided we fall, united we stand…"

-A Study on National Identity and Nation-building in Postcolonial Namibia
Abstract

In most nationstates the construction and making of a national identity is a historic phenomenon as the process started hundreds of years ago. In Namibia however, the construction of a nation and a national identity has just been instigated. Namibia, as one of the last colonies in Africa, did not gain independence until 1990. For a long time, Namibia was subjected to German as well as South African colonial and apartheid rule. Our aim with this essay was to examine the Namibian construction of a national identity, with reference to Namibia’s historical postcolonial and postapartheid background. The focus is on how people from two ethnic backgrounds, the Owambo and the San, experience their situation as Namibians in one of the youngest countries in Africa. Hence, we have made 22 interviews in northern Namibia during the fall of 2004. The purpose with this essay has been to comprehend and present a process of nation-building and national identity in the making. We have found that ‘ethnicity’ still is an important mean of identification in Namibia. Moreover, the fact that Namibia is a postcolonial and postapartheid state, strongly affects the Namibian nation-building and the construction of a Namibian identity. Ethnic categories are still ingrained in people; the distinctions signify difference, and are used as means of identification. Although simultaneously, the segregation forced by the colonisers has now made ethnic categories less distinct since such divisions relate to apartheid and repression. The Owambo group tend to be more aware of their position as Namibians in the Namibian nation than the San groups, and their culture is to a large extent ‘dominant’ and influences the nation-building. The Owambos identify themselves as Namibians. The San groups on the other hand, identify themselves with their ethnic or tribal group. They are also in an inferior minority position, which they are highly aware of.

Key words: Namibia, Postcolonialism, Identity, Nationalism, Ethnicity, Nation-building
Acknowledgements

Without the help from some especially knowledgeable, kind and ambitious individuals, we could never have succeeded with this project. We would therefore like to thank everyone that in some way have helped us with accomplishing this essay. Thank you Marie Johansson for your hospitality, devotion and help with reaching people. We are also immensely thankful to Jens Reutercrona, for supporting and driving us, and for the use of a four-wheel-drive. We are also very thankful to Africa Groups of Sweden, who through Jens, Marie and other people, assisted us during and after our stay in Namibia. To our friend and guide Peter Mwahalukange: tangi unene for excellent interpretations. We would also like to thank Ulli and Annaleen Eins in Windhoek for your hospitality, advice and help in everything. Furthermore we are thankful to Martha Amupolo for help and guidance, Tom Fox at UNAM for support and interest, Joram Useb and the WIMSA organisation for interest and assistance, Magnus Berg for your interest and sharing your manuscript with us, and the Ministry of Land for giving us the opportunity to reach people. Moreover, thank you Magnus Ericsson for letting us choose you as our supervisor and hence for your excellent guidance. To Sida: thank you for bestowing us with this opportunity by means of the Minor Field Studies scholarship.

Last but not least, a warm thank you to all the people who agreed to be interviewed; without you this would never have been possible. Thus to everyone who contributed to our endeavour; a big Thank you
Source: Afrikagrupporna, http://www.afrikagrupporna.se/fakta/namibia/namkarta.htm
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<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CoD</td>
<td>Congress of Democrats</td>
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<td>DDR-kids</td>
<td>The East German (German Democratic Republic) Ovambo kids</td>
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<td>DTA</td>
<td>Democratic Turnhalle Alliance</td>
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<td>ICJ</td>
<td>International Court of Justice</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of Red Cross</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>LRAC</td>
<td>Land Reform Advisory Committee,</td>
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<td>NAPWU</td>
<td>Namibia Public Workers Union</td>
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<td>NBC</td>
<td>Namibian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>People’s Liberation Army of Namibia,</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Republican Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SADF</td>
<td>South African Defence Force</td>
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<td>SWANU</td>
<td>South West Africa National Union</td>
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<td>SWAPO</td>
<td>South West Africa Peoples’ Organisation</td>
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<td>SWAPO-D</td>
<td>South West Africa Peoples’ Organisation -Democrats</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNAM</td>
<td>University of Namibia</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNITA</td>
<td>União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola, National Union for Total Independence of Angola</td>
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<td>UNTAG</td>
<td>United Nations Transition Assistance Group</td>
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1. Introduction

“So, do all Africans still live in tents, as broadcasted on TV?” This was a very sincere but ignorant question that a woman in Malmö asked us before our departure to Namibia in September 2004. Some others asked us if we could confirm if Namibia was really in Africa. Similarly, a man we met in Namibia was once asked, before he left for Namibia, if Namibia possibly had been a member state of the former Soviet Union. Few people seemed to know about this beautiful, multifaceted and scarcely populated country. Namibia is a huge piece of land, the country, at least twice the size of Sweden is located on the south western side of the African continent, facing the Atlantic sea and neighbouring South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola. However, we have to admit that our knowledge about Namibia before instigating our endeavour on this study was likewise scarce and fragmented. In Sweden, Namibia is seldom mentioned in the media, nor is it, at least as far as we know, given much attention (if any) in Swedish schools. On the whole, people in Sweden, as well as in other parts of Western/northern Europe, frequently refer to Africa as a unit, as one homogenous entity, instead of the enormous continent, enclosing various different states, with different cultures, histories, peoples and languages, that Africa contains. Stereotypes, falsehoods and unawareness of the African continent, its histories and present-day situations, are often prevailing.
Some people might have heard of the Namibian Frankie Fredricks, an Olympic gold medallist, one of the world’s fastest men, then again maybe not. He did not seem to be a national hero in Namibia and certainly not compared to the heroes of the liberation war against the South African rule in Namibia. The national heroes of Namibia are instead those who fought for the independence of Namibia. Again not many people are aware of that Namibia, as one of the last colonies in Africa, did not gain independence until 1990. Thus, this implies nationhood in the making. How does a nation building process evolve and develop, and how is a national identity constructed? These were our first questions when we started to think about the upcoming study. Interestingly, Namibia contains numerous different groups of peoples and building a nation is not an easy task. We know what it means for us to be Swedes. Although it certainly differs between different people, we know what we see as typically Swedish, and we know of the symbols of Swedishness. However, the process of Swedish nationalism and national identity has been going on for hundreds of years. We wanted to know what Namibians think is typically Namibian. Do they have an idea of the Namibian national identity? What unites them?

Aim and Purpose

This is an essay about the processes of national identity and nation-building in Namibia, a complex area of research, in which many elements are involved. On the one hand, the situation that people find themselves in, in the republic of Namibia at this time in history, is unmistakably of importance, on the other, Namibia’s background stained by years of colonialis and apartheid rule and repression should not in any way be underestimated as an element influencing the national project. Namibia gained independence from South Africa as late as in 1990. South Africa had then been the ruling country for the past seventy years. Before South Africa, the colonial power in charge over Namibian land was Germany, who annexed South West Africa (as it was called until 1990) in 1885, and kept it under control until the end of the First World War. Thus, Namibia has experienced decades of colonial oppression, and apartheid. Today, fifteen years after independence, stability must be said to prevail and a process of nation-building is in progress in postcolonial Namibia. However, the country accommodates not less than 11 different categorised ‘ethnic’ or language groups and numerous different subgroups that are all partakers in the ongoing national project. Our intent here is to examine the Namibian construction of a national identity and national consensus, as
well as how people from two different ethnic backgrounds, the *Owambo* and the *San*,
experience their situation as Namibians in one of the youngest countries in Africa. We want to
understand the relations that individuals have to the state’s aspirations of building a new
nation, and mainly how the nation-building affects these individuals.

Our *aim* is, moreover, to see how Namibians experience their situation and identity as
Namibians, with reference to Namibia’s historical background and the fact that Namibia is a
postcolonial state. In most nationstates the construction and making of a national identity is a
phenomenon placed in the fields of history, even though it is still in process. In Namibia
however, the process of constructing a national consensus is happening right now and that is
what makes Namibia an interesting and appealing area of research, which we believe could
give us, and others valuable insight and knowledge about processes of national identity
making in a postcolonial context and how it affects people. The *purpose* of this essay is
subsequently, to comprehend and present a process of nation-building and national identity
in the making. We want to show how people understand this process in relation to their
subsistent ethnic identity. Equivalent studies has not yet been conducted, and are therefore of
great significance.

**Earlier Research**

Though similar research has not yet been accomplished, there is still some literature that
addresses the subject of nation-building in postcolonial Africa. Though only occasionally (and
briefly) is Namibia mentioned in that context. In this section, before we present our research
questions we will give a brief overview of conducted research in relation to this essay.

Back in 1997 Leif Johan Fosse published the article *Negotiating the Nation: Ethnicity,
Nationalism and Nation-building in Independent Namibia* wherein he analyses the process of
nation-building in Namibia in relation to theories of nationalism and ethnicity, which he in the
article claims “has not yet been applied to Namibian problems to any significant extent”
(1997:428). Fosse brings up several important and relevant aspects, and the main focus is to
examine the challenges that the new Namibian state is faced with in the relation to the process
of nation-building. Fosse’s article is an important contribution to this discussion, in which we
will enter more deeply. However, despite its small size, Fosse particularly neglects the
relevance of employing postcolonial theory in this field of study.
In 2004, the ethnologist Magnus Berg published the book *Förlåta men inte glömma; Röster om rasism, nationalism och det mångkulturella samhället I Namibia. Och i Sverige*, a comprehensive and all-inclusive piece of work, both descriptive as well as analytical. Berg’s focus is on the colonial oppression, apartheid and later independence and how these social phenomena have influenced the Namibian people and Namibia as a nationstate. Moreover, circumstances are put in contrast to the Swedish context. Berg founds his research partly in meetings and dialogues with Namibians who in some way have a well-off position in the society, as researchers, musicians, leaders of organisations or alike. The work is reflective, informative as well as broad and touches upon a wide range of subjects. To some extent it corresponds to our area of interest. However, at times Berg makes interesting conclusions that in our view may be seen as on the verge of making too rapid generalisations. Though being one of the sources for our research questions, the following quote might need more empirical founding: “Namibia is not a federation of ethnicities, but a nationstate in which the identity as a Namibian is more salient than the sense of ethnic affiliation” (own translation 2003:43). Thus, we find it interesting to investigate if that really could be said to be the case.

The Namibian Henning Melber is a researcher located at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala. Melber, whose parents were German immigrants in Namibia, has lived the greater part of his life in Namibia, and is a former member of the SWAPO (the present ruling party, South West Africa Peoples’ Organisation) liberation movement. However, due to, amongst other things internal disagreements with SWAPO after independence, Melber left both the party, as well as Namibia, for Sweden. Today Melber is a Research Director at the Nordic Africa Institute. He has conducted an immense amount of research on Namibia and Southern Africa, mainly focusing on processes and politics of reconciliation and nation-building. Melber is critical towards the Namibian governmental SWAPO party, which is visible in his writings. Thus, considering Melber’s stained relationship with his former home country, it is hard to know whether Melber is biased or not, but there are reasons for believing so. Besides Melber, other Namibian researchers, especially at the university of Namibia are also dedicated to the Namibian process of nation-building, from different perspectives and viewpoints.

With our study then, we hope to make a contribution to the rather unexplored field of study. Crucial for us are the reproduction and construction of postcolonial identities and power
relations in the new postcolonial states as well as the concept of imagined communities and
the social construction of ethnic and national categories. Considering our aim, we believe that
the IMER-aspect (International Migration and Ethnic Relations) is significant, since we then
have the opportunity to connect different fields of study and move in and out of different,
otherwise more conventional, contexts. Also crucial for our study is the intent to bestow it
with a “perspective from below”, whereby our main focus is on the Namibians themselves.
Considering the colonial, political, sociological and geographical background of Namibia our
purpose with the study is motivated by the “lack of” Namibia in all aspects of northern
European life, as well as the evident relevance that these issues have in daily life in Namibia.

Research Question
Considering Namibia’s late date of independence, its specific history of being subjected to
colonial oppression and the South African apartheid rule as well as the situation in Namibia
today:

• How are the two ethnic groups Owambo and San affected by the making and
  construction of a Namibian national identity, with reference to Namibia’s historical
  background as a postcolonial and postapartheid nationstate?

• How do people from the San and Owambo groups experience their situation and
  position as members of the young Namibian nation?
  - What is most salient for them, their ethnic or their national identity?
  - Considering the different positions of people from the Owambo and the San groups in the
    Namibian society, does the attitudes and experiences concerning the national affiliation differ
    between the informants of the two groups?
2. Method and Material

Our study will be a qualitative research made up of interviews as well as a multitude of secondary material. Our interviews were carried out in Namibia during the autumn of 2004. In this section we will present the methods (and the circumstances of the methods) as well as we will introduce and motivate our choice of theory that we make use of in order to achieve at investigating the issues of national identity in Namibia.

The Critical Research

The angle of this essay is critical. Our area of research is situated within a postcolonial context, postcolonial both in its location (as a former colony) as well as in theory, which will become clearer throughout the essay. Critical research, Mats Alvesson and Stanley Deetz in *Kritisk samhällsvetenskaplig metod* (2000) seek to critically examine social institutions, ideologies, discourses and practises. The focus is on asymmetrical power relations. The critical researcher is interested in how cultural traditions and powerful actors contribute to the “petrifaction” (förstningen) of social reality, in favour of some and to the disadvantage of most (2000:13). Critical research, by and large, seeks to dislodge existing social realities either by inciting/stimulating emancipation from dominant structures or through forms of resistance against those same patterns of domination (2000:7). Additionally, the authors claim, the aim of a critical researcher is often to engender opportunities for a more open discourse between people, groups of people and societies at large. This could be achieved by presenting counter images of dominant ideals with the purpose of creating a different understanding (2000:20). Keywords within the critical research are according to Alvesson and Deetz, *knowledge, criticism and transformative reassessment*. 

Postcolonial Critique

Thus, in order to accomplish our study we have chosen to apply compatible fragments of postcolonial theory, mainly through the theories of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha. The postcolonial approach is *the* fundamental element throughout the essay and it makes out the basis for our research as well as our research questions. In brief postcolonial theory questions and criticises the western monopoly of knowledge, a knowledge that throughout time has been used to legitimise *geo-political inequalities*, according to Catharina Landström in *Postkoloniala texter* (2001). Postcolonialism as a political movement, she
continues, aims at dislodging existing inequalities that are created as an effect of Western exploitation and colonisation. The field of postcolonial theory, then, raises and strengthens these thoughts on the academic/theoretical arena.

The postcolonial field of research, according to Catharina Eriksson et al in *Globaliseringens kulturer* (2002) is to a great extent influenced by Poststructuralism, a perspective that above all draws attention to the importance of language for the construction of identities, institutions and politics. The theorists Ferdinand Saussure and later Jacques Derrida (1999:18) declared that language must be recognized as a system of signs and symbols that are given meaning through explicit and implicit relations of differences and contrasts. Binary oppositions are active in the construction and preservation of social hierarchies. Subsequently, poststructuralists criticise and analyse dominant systems of perceptions and practice, something they mean could lead to disestablishments of structures of binary oppositions.

**Method in Field**

In our study, one of our main objectives is to scrutinize how the respondents experience their own position as members of the young Namibian nation. This will be accomplished by the conduct of interviews. The qualitative study is according to Alan Bryman in *Kvantitet och Kvalitet i samhällsvetenskaplig forskning* (1997) often characterised by its attempt to see the world through the eyes of the individuals that are being studied/interviewed (1997:77). This is right in line with our purpose of study, which partly aims at giving some sort of voice to individuals from two ethnic groups in Namibia. Moreover, Bryman claims that a further decisive factor for qualitative research is that it is context bound. The qualitative researcher often emphasises the necessity of interpreting information in relation to its context, and events, persons and actions have to be understood in relation to that (1997:80). This is also corresponding to another of our intents, which is to interpret the interview answers as well as the situation in Namibia, and authoritative actions (concerning Namibian nation building) with regards to Namibia as a postcolonial state. Thus, we believe that it is not only important to listen to our respondents but also to attempt at grasping their experiences and explanations in relation to the representations of the postcolonial context as they express it.

We stayed in Namibia for three months. By actually living in Namibia, taking part in the everyday life, talking to people and following the concurrent debates and discourses, we were
able to obtain an awareness and general pictures concerning the issues of Namibian nation-building contra ethnic affiliation as well as how the debate is being conducted. By staying in Namibia we were for instance able to observe the governmental and presidential elections that were held in November 2004, an event that provided us with valuable material and insights. Observing and absorbing the Namibian society has given us an understanding that we could not have obtained only through relying on secondary material.

The Qualitative Interview

We have chosen to base our study, in part, on semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 22 individuals from two different ethnic groups in Namibia. By actually listening to people who experience and take part in the phenomenon that we want to study we obtained a substantial amount of invaluable and indispensable material. Steinar Kvale in *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun* (1997) adequately phrases it, ”if we want to know how people apprehend the world and their life, why not talk to them? (own translation, 1997:9). The qualitative interview, Kvale holds, aims at obtaining accounts for the state of life (livsvärld) of the interviewee. From then on the object is to interpret the meaning of the accounts given by the respondent (1997:35). The vital issue is that the researcher gets to actually hear what people themselves have to say, views that importantly are expressed in their own words. The interview is an interaction between the interviewer, the respondent, awareness and knowledge is thus, built up as an effect of that interplay. In fact, Kvale points out, the meaning of the word ‘interview’ roughly is “between two viewpoints”(1997:9).

The Interviews

In order to obtain the most varied and abounding result as possible we decided to employ the semi-structured method of interviewing. *Semi-structured interviews* could, according to May Tim in *Social Research, Issues, Methods and Processes* (2001), be defined as interviews that are “in between the focused and the structured”(2001:123). Normally, interview questions are exactly formatted and specified, however, contrary to that standard format of interviewing, the interviewer can, within the frames of semi-structured interviews, ‘move’ more freely and ask for clarifications and elaborations. Therefore, this method suited our purpose of study. Before departure we prepared a standard form or a model of questions and themes (see appendix 6). As important to us, however, was the condition that the informants would be given opportunity to elaborate on the questions and the relating subjects. In that way they are able to
express their feelings, attitudes and beliefs more openly and ‘move’ in other directions if they want to. All interviews were recorded on a Mini Disc recorder and transcribed soon after the occasion of the interview. In addition, we also took supplementary and circumstantial notes during the interviews. The two of us took turns carrying out the interviews, and the one who was not interviewing at time took a more reticent position listening, observing and making notes. The fact that only one of us was “in charge” of the interview, turned out to be valuable.

Accordingly, before our arrival in Namibia we had prepared a form of interview questions. In Namibia however, while interviewing our respondents it soon became evident that we at times had a language and use of terms that many of our interviewees were not familiar with. For instance, key concepts in our interviews were, among others, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic groups’. These terms and concepts, as some informants also pointed out, do not have exact equivalents in the “Namibian” local languages. Moreover, Namibia was for many years subjected to the South African apartheid politics, and during those times the apartheid authorities in effect divided the Namibian people into, for the South Africans, suitable categories. Many times this fact made the meaning of ethnicity, ethnic groups or a “division of people”, a very sensitive or at least charged, subject. Moreover, the questions were sometimes perceived as too difficult to answer, either as a consequence of the language barrier, or simply because the informant, on the whole, seemed to be unfamiliar with or not willing to discuss the ideas as presented. Obviously, the language, the dissimilar situations, politics, confusion of terms, mistrust, fear and our so clearly distinct backgrounds are all barriers in some way. However, we feel that we nevertheless solved such difficulties as far as possible, by for instance changing the terminology, giving examples and avoiding certain modes of expression. Certainly, we also attempted at giving an appearance as polite and trustworthy as possible.

Most interviews were carried out in English, the Namibian official national language, however at some occasions it was necessary for us to use an interpreter. The fact that we had to use an interpreter is a variable that has to be taken into consideration when interpreting material obtained during the interview. Sometimes the answers may well be influenced by the interpreter or by the way that the interpreter asks the questions. Since we clearly do not know the language that is used, we do not know the rules of intonation and cannot therefore estimate the shades of meaning and the subtle distinctions in the discussion. Subsequently, these are meanings that we fail to attend. Another thing to keep in mind is the risk of missing
out on information that might be difficult to translate. The political situation in Namibia might hinder both the informant as well as the interpreter from expressing their minds. A fact that was characterised by a question from our interpreter, who asked halfway through our second interview with his help if it was okay to talk about politics, because the informant had begun to talk a lot about politics. We had thought that, in presenting and explaining the interviews and the project we had started, political issues were pertinent and apparent. Clearly we had been wrong. The attitudes towards politics are entirely distinct in Namibia compared to Sweden, and evidently it cannot always be as easy or approachable as we might be used to. One must also bear in mind that there is a risk that the respondents might not tell us what they really think, they might lie or in other ways fail to communicate their true feeling to us, certainly not with malicious intentions but simply because they do not trust us or the interpreter enough. This is however, also highly significant for our study. The fact that we are able to see and interpret what the respondents do not say, or show that they believe that they cannot say, for one reason or another, is an important part of our research. Nonetheless, we can only be aware of these aspects, have them in mind and at the same time we must believe that they communicate what they want, and hopefully also what they really think.

Our Respondents

As planned beforehand, we interviewed 11 people from two different ethnic groups in Namibia, the Owambo and the San. Altogether we interviewed 22 individuals. The selection of the two different groups is based upon their diverse positions in the Namibian society. The Owambo groups are in a definite majority and are also the people who make up the majority of the ruling SWAPO party. The San groups on the other hand, are in a clear minority, and highly marginalised and impoverished. Hence, we found it intriguing to interview people from the Owambo groups in order to obtain an understanding of how people of the majority (with the political power at hand) comprehend their position and identity in the Namibian society. Equally, by interviewing people from the San communities, we were able to attain an awareness of how an especially exposed minority group with hardly any power comprehend such questions and experience their situation in Namibia. To get an as wide range of answers as possible, we interviewed both men and women between the ages of 17 and around 70.

The interviews with our Owambo informants were accomplished in Northern Namibia, in Owamboland, in and near to the towns Oshakati and Ondangwa. Namibia is an enormously large piece of land and the great majority of the land is uninhabited or scatteredly populated.
Many of the San groups live far out in the bush or on the savannah\(^1\) without electricity or any such facilities, which made it difficult for us to reach and get in contact with possible informants. A further restrain was our lack of a four-wheel-drive. Thus, without helpful, and knowledgeable people, an interpreter and access to a four-wheel-drive, we would never have been able to accomplish the interviews. The majority of the interviews with our San informants as well were carried out in northern Namibia in a small community close to the Angolan border. Due to issues of anonymity and the exposure of many San groups in Namibia we abstain from mentioning the name of the community. A few interviews with individuals from different San groups were later on carried out in the Namibian capital city, Windhoek.

A few of our San respondents did not know their age. When this is the situation we will, when referring to them in the analysis, instead of age write “elderly”, or “in his 40s”. Since we have nothing else to rely on, than our interpretations of their age based on their appearance, our judgements could be said to be somewhat arbitrary. Important to be aware of is that the Namibian healthy life expectancy of the San groups, is far lower than for most other countries and the healthy life expectancy is even lower than for other groups in Namibia, this means that we might perceive them as old at a much earlier age than what we would normally do.

**Our Position as Researchers in a Postcolonial Context**

Namibia has undergone years of colonial repression, white domination and apartheid politics. Accordingly the postcolonial context and our position as researchers within that context have to be taken into account. Undoubtedly, the fact that we are white researchers from Western/northern Europe influenced and made an impact on our informants, most likely it affected their perception of us as well as it might have influenced their answers. However, our own presence in the postcolonial context even so affected us the same as well as our position as researchers. In the beginning of our stay in Namibia this fact affected us much more than we ever thought it would do. Despite all our preparations, one cannot really know how to react when confronted to these issues, and needless to say we found it hard to be in and react to the circumstances we found ourselves in. As researchers we felt that we had to be cautious and perceptive towards our interviewees and it became particularly important to explain to them who we were and why we were there, in order not to create any confusion. Occasionally, but not always, we perceived it as if our informants answered what they thought we wanted to

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\(^1\) Since they were pushed out in the rocky wasteland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See further elaboration in the historic background and the section concerning contemporary Namibia.
They say: divided we fall, united we stand…

Carolina Hamma
Johanna Sixtensson

hear from them, as they wanted to make a good impression on us. At some points we also felt that our informants were afraid of expressing their thoughts openly and at times they asked if we somehow represented the government or an organisation in connection to the government. Consequently, we had to be very clear on issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Even so, at some points our informants did not want to talk about certain issues. On one occasion the leading SWAPO party had a rally in the area where we carried out several interviews by reason of the up-coming elections. This clearly affected our informants and we temporarily had to cut off an interview since election officiators were close-by. This made the respondent to change absolutely and go against the opinions he had expressed just before. All this could, at first glance, be perceived as aspects reducing the validity of our study, however, we are of the opinion that us being aware of such factors instead could strengthen the study, seeing affecting aspects as benefits rather than flaws, making our study even more comprehensive. In connection Alvesson and Deetz (2000) claim that empirical data can never be objective. On the contrary, data collected by a researcher are constructions made by the researcher, through interviews or observations in interaction with the respondents. The researchers adjustments to the in the society existing norms cannot be mixed up with an objective reality (2000:126).

Theoretical Framework and Secondary Material

Besides the interviews we will also employ secondary material relating to our aim and purpose. Compatible fragments of postcolonial theory will serve as the theoretical framework whereby several concepts and theories relating to our study will be presented in the theory chapter. Thus, as previously mentioned, postcolonial ideas deriving from primarily Spivak and Bhabha concerning national and ethnic identity in a postcolonial context will be important corner stones in our analysis. Concepts and theories elaborated by for instance Benedict Anderson and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, will also serve as our theoretical framework, ideas of these academics will function as central tools in our analysis. Förlåta men inte glömma, röster om rasism, nationalism och det mångkulturella samhället I Namibia. Och i Sverige (2004) by Magnus Berg will function as an empirical as well theoretical source. Since Berg is both a theoretical and empirical academic and author. Besides secondary material assembled in Sweden, we also gathered a wide arrange of material when we were in Namibia, material important for our study, like newspaper articles, books and booklets.
Delimitations

In this essay we make use of a broad variety of sources in order to make a comprehensive and substantial examination of our research questions and the aim of this essay. We use both first hand and second hand material, and we use literature in all different kinds and forms, as our sources are books, articles, WebPages from the Internet, and different sorts of reports. We do not see ourselves, in a way of being white, female middle-class students from Western/northern Europe as a limitation in this essay, but instead quite the opposite. We are aware of our position in the world, and with that in mind and the application of postcolonial theory in use, we see our backgrounds, experiences, and ourselves as assets, in this external perspective of exploring the national identity in postcolonial Namibia. Clearly, however, our minds can still delimit this essay some way or another. As the study is narrated through us, the essay will contain the same delimitations as we encompass in ourselves. What furthermore delimits us is the fact that we have only chosen to focus on two groups of people in Namibia. Therefore we cannot make any generalisations on national identity for the whole of Namibia’s inhabitants. Moreover, we have only made 22 interviews, and 22 people cannot possibly reflect the entire bulk of people in these two groups. It does, however, make it possible for us to look at tendencies for how these two groups experience their situation in Namibia, and exactly what our specific respondents appreciate their condition. We have not either, taken the white population into consideration much, even though we think that it would have been interesting to compare with our two focus groups. As this is a D-level essay, time and space has certainly limited us further. In our interviews we do not compare the different aspects and variables that gender ad age imply, even as we know that this is of importance, again since time and space limits us. Here follows another highly significant factor and variable that we have chosen not to attend to as much as we might have wanted to, the HIV/Aids pandemic.

Health and HIV/Aids in Namibia,

Namibia has been severely hit by the HIV/Aids pandemic. According to The Africa Groups of Sweden the HIV/Aids rate was in 2004 around 22 percent of the adult population (15-49 years of age) (www.afrikagrupperna.se). There are however extreme discrepancies between women and girls, and men and boys in the infection rates. Generally women are subjected to more daunting circumstances since they are economically and socially more vulnerable and dependent on their family members. Moreover, women are more easily susceptible of the virus for biological reasons and they are also less in power of their own bodies and their own
situation in society than are men in Namibia (*UNAIDS/WHO Epidemiological Fact Sheet on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections*, www.who.int). Further differences in the infection rate can easily be seen in the different regions, whereas the HIV/AIDS rate in Kunene is about 10 percent, the rate in the Caprivi region is alarmingly higher with around 43 percent of the population contaminated.

The repercussions of the HIV/AIDS pandemic are clearly monstrous and devastating in all aspects of life in Namibia. The currently most common cause of death is HIV/AIDS and in 2004, 120 000 children were orphans by reason of the epidemic. These figures are also ever increasing and the peak is estimated to be around the year of 2018. Especially those living in poverty are hit hardest by the epidemic (www.who.int). The effects that HIV/AIDS have affect each and all in Southern Africa, emotionally, economically, socially and demographically, the losses in all fields of the Namibian society are enormous and the issues of HIV/AIDS are complex and extensive. For reasons of delimitation we have chosen not to elaborate on these issues. Due to Namibia’s geographical, historical and political position in southern Africa, the country has further difficulties in combating related diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and many other disorders (www.who.int). Nonetheless, expositions on that will be left for further research.

**Disposition**

After these *introductory chapters* a presentation of the related *theory* will be outlined. After that comes the section *The Case Study: Namibia* containing an overview of the *Namibian history* as well as important elements of the *contemporary Namibian society*. Both presented with theory and research questions in mind. Thereafter an analysis of our interviews conducted in Namibia will follow, and the linkage of that with the theory presented in the theory chapter. Lastly, the discussion and subsequently the conclusion will bring our study to an end.
3. Theory

In this section we will present the theoretical framework for our study. We have chosen to apply elements of postcolonial theory as well as a theoretical framework of concepts that are crucial for our analysis of national and ethnic identities. The concepts that we have selected are reliant on writers and notion conceptualisers like Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Anthony D. Smith, Thomas Hylland Eriksen, and Jeffery Herbst for whom we are thankful. Since we are concerned with the Namibian sense of national and ethnic identity we are convinced that a critical analysis within the African context is crucial and indispensable. The concepts and theoretical notions we have chosen to include are according to our view also relevant for our purpose. They also signify what we mean by using the different concepts, our view/definition of certain concepts. The theoretical notions will be presented after the introducing section of postcolonial theory and eventually it will be applied and analysed in relation to our thesis questions and the empirical material of the analysis in chapter six.

Accordingly, we will begin with Postcolonial Theory under which headline we have in succession placed the subheadings Postcolonial Identities and Applied Theory for Postcolonial Identities. Then we will move on to the Theoretical framework a heading that has many subheadings that each present one or several concepts and provide the reader with our view on those concepts. The sections are, in order: Nation, The Nationstate, Nationalism, Nationalism in Postcolonial Africa, Tribe or Nation?, Ethnicity, Ethnic Identity, Stereotyping, National versus Ethnic Identity and lastly Postcolonial Nation-building.

Postcolonial Theory

In order to look at identity in a former colony in Africa, we find it imperative to apply critical postcolonial theory; since it is after all, postcolonial identities and structures we are interested in. We are of the belief that scrutinising identity is not an easy undertaking, and that we therefore need to analyse our material with the help of a critical theory that problematises the issue, instead of using mechanisms that make us and others believe that we can elucidate the issues easily. Theory does not make us see everything clearly, but instead theories such as the Postcolonial, make us understand how complex the matters are, and why it is important to consider the subjects within a critical, postcolonial frame instead of in the domain of “rational” Western universalistic, theories, like Liberal Humanism, Structuralism and
Essentialism. We cannot claim to be objective, but we can use a critical approach to the complexities in order to avoid being too subjective. We do not find critical theory as a “way out” of knowing, it does not correct our comprehensions but instead critical theory helps us to produce the view that we believe to see and represent. Not in a biased manner, but instead in a way of assuring others that we are aware of that we cannot convey any representations outside ourselves. For that reason, a critical input assists us in being as objective and unbiased as possible. In this section we will therefore explain the emergence and works of postcolonial theory that we find important for our study. We will also present the specific reason for why we believe that these theories are important for our essay and thesis question.

In Peter Barry’s, _Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory_ (2002), it is clear that the founding texts for ‘postcolonialism’ and postcolonial theory can easily be traced to Franz Fanon’s _The Wretched of the Earth_ (1961) and Edward Said’s _Orientalism_ (1978). Though even as early as in 1958 Chinua Achebe set the scene and groundwork for postcolonial theory with _Things Fall Apart_, which allegedly is the first African novel.

According to Catharina Landström (ed) in _Postkoloniala texter_ (2001), postcolonial theory questions the traditional approach of seeing knowledge in a way of focusing on the meaning of the geographical position of people’s situation within and beyond society, the geopolitics. Postcolonial theory hence, turns the production of knowledge on its head and “questions” the universalistic ideas within knowledge as rational, Eurocentric facts. Postcolonialism puts the consequences and the injustices done by the Western powers in the history of colonising and exploiting other parts of the world, on the academic agenda (2001:7). Moreover, postcolonialism, Landström holds, revises and criticises the identities of the West, as it links knowledge, with science. Concurrently, it criticises the way the West has all through history seen the Western worldview as the sole form of knowledge and ‘reality’. This furthermore does not indicate that scientific research should be halted in the name of postcolonial theory, Landstöm remarks, but rather that it is decisive for a thorough understanding of science and knowledge to note the meaning of the hegemonic Western white dominance and, the submission of non-whites in modernity and today’s societies (2001:11-12). Hence, in all concepts when discussing features of an ex-colony, the aspect of postcolonialism is crucial.

Richard Werbner in Werbner and Ranger (eds.), _Postcolonial Identities in Africa_ (1996), holds that among many other things, the African states’ sovereignty really is just a political
‘narrative’. He claims that the African states have almost no control over nationally important economic transactions at all, that their nationalism is externally enforced, and that the international community has affected their welfare systems drastically so that this subsequently has put them in the poverty so immensely apparent in all of Africa. Therefore, Werbner claims, “many African states appear to be states in name only” (1996:5). These consequences of the special characteristics of postcolonialism then are prone to ‘neo-colonialism’, or what Werbner calls ‘Global Americana’. Werbner holds that earlier (his co-editor Terence) Ranger wrote about the change from the multiple shifting and fluid identities that the Africans allegedly moved in and out of before colonialism, to an enforced, more rigid, tribalism, as times turned through colonial Africa. Currently however, and as Ranger holds in the last chapter (1996), the stability and ‘reality’ of colonial identities are questioned on an additional level. Surely this wished-for dogmatic staticism or rigidity of identities during the colonial era is what the western tachographic scholars and authors wrote about at that time (and even still writes about), precisely because control, rigidity and rationality was the ideal and thus also the subsequent way they saw (and still see) the colonial power and administration. Postcolonial theory opens up for this kind of critique, according to Ranger. Postcolonial identities are not seen as rigid or static, thus most likely, neither were the colonial identities. If not totally impossible it surely is an extremely difficult task to impose on people one static, exclusive and fixed identity. Nonetheless, the colonial fabrication of African ‘tribalism’ and ‘ethnicity’ strived at doing this, all in the name of rationality. Postcolonial theory therefore includes this method of revising the way of looking at the colonial rule in its agenda. However, Ranger most utterly reminds us that when discussing postcolonial Africa it is important to bear in mind that despite our wishes, it has various features and aspects in common with colonial Africa (1996:280).

According to V.Y. Mudimbe in Diskurs om makt och kunskap om de andra, marginalitet och koloniseringens struktur (in Globaliseringenskulturer, Eriksson et al, 2002) colonialism and colonisation basically implies “organisation”, or the ordering and arrangement of things. This can easily be traced back to the time of Western colonisation when non-European territories were taken into position, reformed and organised to suit the European measures. Mudimbe in accordance, distinguishes three key elements within the process of colonial organisation: (1) the dominance of the physical room/territory, (2) the transformation of the consciousness of

2 A tachograph provides a record of a journey over a period of time, like a black box (Oxford Reference Online).
the ‘native inhabitants’ and (3) the incorporation of local economical history with the Western perspective. These three elements together make out what Mudimbe calls the structure of colonialism. One effect of colonial structure is the construction of a system of dichotomies, or binary oppositions, such as traditional/modern, nature/civilisation, and so forth. Moreover, Mudimbe claims that by colonialism, ideas and lifestyles are forced on the colonised people, eventually accepted and even requested (2002:129-133). In accordance, Catharina Landström in Postcoloniala texter (2001) discusses how patterns of domination still are prevailing in former colonies. Even though ex-colonies today formally are free, the patterns of subordination are reproduced, but they have taking on new forms.

Hegemony is one of the most important terms in postcolonial theory and, according to Bill Ashcroft et al in Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies (1999), it means, in brief, “domination by consent”, a meaning that in its broader sense was invented in the 1930s by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who investigated why the ruling class “was so successful in promoting its own interests in society” (1999:116). In essence, Ashcroft et al write, hegemony is “the power of the ruling class to convince other classes that their interests are in the interests of all” (1999:116). Domination then is not exercised by extreme force, maybe not even automatically by “active persuasion” or coercion. Instead power is more elusive and wide-ranging and it is exercised in such a way that the interest of the ruling classes is presented as the common, popular interest. The term is frequently used when describing the success of imperial powers over colonised people. Even though the colonised people certainly by far exceeded the colonisers in amount of people, their wish, need or crave for “self-determination [became] suppressed by a hegemonic notion of the greater good” (199:116). This certainly involves the introduced and coerced Christian mission. Thus, hegemony, Ashcroft et al write, or the ability to influence and affect the minds of the colonised people, was the most powerful and effective strategy of the imperial powers.

Clearly, the questioning of (the production of) knowledge, reality and the ethno- and Eurocentric worldview is the focal issue of postcolonialism, and to this Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is highly dedicated. According to The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism (Vincent B. Leitch General ed., 2001) Spivak has described herself as “a practical deconstructivist feminist Marxist” (2001:2193). In accordance she links all and everything that is seen as the ‘other’ and writes against this oppressionist traditional “worldview” and the
‘discourses of knowledge’ within. Traditionally, as European production of knowledge is seen as the only valid and rational idea of knowledge (and science), the ‘other’ is ascribed all those characteristics that are present within that production of knowledge but are at the same time the features that are feared the most. This is the postcolonial (savage) ‘other’. According to the Norton Anthology, Spivak states that the voiceless, the ultimately and radically ‘other’, never really can be heard and that this is exactly why they are voiceless, they are hegemonically positioned outside power. In the words of Spivak, these are the “subaltern”. For Spivak, postcolonial theories provide novel ways of emancipation of the ‘other’, to connect to experience and subjectivity. Identity then is about, “a function of its place in a system of difference”; it is always relational (2001:2195).

**Postcolonial Identities**

Spivak discusses in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), among other things, around *nationalism* and *ethnicity* and claims that there is a traditionally endorsed neglect for African ethnic identities in the colonial west, a neglect that has very little in common with the evident ‘fact’ that all identities are without exception *hybrid identities*, inexorably established by the assertion of ‘representation of performance’. Spivak highlights the hegemonic Western predisposition of appointing a constant ethnicity to the ‘other’ in order to position critique or affirmation of the core of Western sophisticated ideas or performances. Nationalism, in turn, can, according to Spivak, never be more than an essential political agenda against repression, and consequently cannot bestow us with a complete guarantee of identity. In nations that have just recently obtained independence the pursuit for a ‘national identity’ often, and consistent with the colonial view of ethnicity, fails to differentiate between religion, culture, and ideology. Moreover, Spivak maintains that “scapegoating colonialism” in the most extreme and dismal way, like throwing away the blame and saying that colonialism has, in spite of everything, led to advantages and development for the colonised, safeguards and protects the novel imperialism or colonialism of ‘exploitation as development’ (1999:371). According to Spivak, rudimentary theories of *national identity* influenced by Western powers, are used to quieten the resistance and to legitimise this ‘development exploitation’ account of neo-colonialism. However, the very notion of a ‘national identity’, Spivak argues, in fact disregards all the multiplicity at work inside the realms of a nationstate.
“They say: divided we fall, united we stand…”

According to *The Norton Anthology*, Homi K. Bhabha founds his writing in, among others, the works of Derrida and Said as well as in Anderson and prolongs their critical analysis on the dichotomies seen in for instance “the center and the periphery, the empire and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed, and the self and the other” (2001:2377). Bhabha presents ideas of *nationality*, *ethnicity* and *identity* as interdependent, “dialogic” and ‘hybrid’, words that he determines as novel and “neither the one nor the other” (2001:2377). According to Bhabha, *The Norton Anthology* holds, these concepts do not derive from a natural essentialistic core but instead they are narratively produced. Bhabha does not provide a clear-cut overarching theory for the analysis of identity politics since he thinks that this is exactly what produces the taxonomies and thus also the ‘other’ (2001:2377).

In *The Location of Culture* (1994) Bhabha holds that we must not forget that all cultural accounts and structures are established in ambiguous and tentative spheres of articulation. Hence, hegemonic allegations of a pure and original traditionality in cultures are invalid. The symbols and features of *culture*, like that of *ethnicity* and *nationality* are not primordially fixed and static, according to Bhabha. Like so are the features of *national identity* not traditionally unitary and static but they change, vary and mutate not only in time but in space, location and position as well. Identities are hybrid and so are the national identities as well (1994:37-8). This, Bhabha notes, becomes especially important in the liberation period of a country, in a time in which “constancies and continuities” of nationalist and “tribalist” traditions are shattered (1994:38). Those who wish to identify the people with a genuine national culture will then be thwarted, the people have already succumbed to the enforced western system of nation-state, and accordingly they have constructed their cultural nationality after western formats and means.

Bhabha refutes the traditional philosophical and anthropological idea of identity, claiming that it is neither “the process of self-reflection in the mirror of (human) nature”\(^3\) nor that the “difference of human identity returns as located in the division of Nature/Culture”\(^4\) (1994:46). Instead Bhabha resumes the ideas of Roland Barthes’ “sign-as-symbol” as equivalent to the language in use when explaining and allocating identity (1994:49). Thus instead of the traditional philosophical idea of the ‘mirror image’ of nature in identity, Bhabha discusses the “visuality” or “visibility” connected to the linguistic concepts that outlines the ‘language of

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\(^3\) The philosophical view of identity according to Bhabha

\(^4\) The anthropological idea of identity according to Bhabha
personhood’ (1994:49). In postcolonial texts, Bhabha argues, the revisions of the frames for identity is of constant quandary, to locate “the space of representation” and identify the ‘other’ of the image, where it is confronted with its difference (1994:46). Hence in writing that concerns post-colonies, it may be difficult to see all spheres of identity and then it also becomes complicated to identify the ‘other’ in that picture, to locate the conflict in identification, subjectification, and normality. It befalls even more difficult when it turns evident that identity (or the identification of for instance a national identity) is never theoretically lucid, or whole. In the weighty words of Bhabha: “[f]or identification, identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality” (1994:51). Thus we can merely see the image of identity when negating the authenticity, genuineness, originality or primordiality in the features of identity, however according to Bhabha, this image is still a replacing (or ‘supplementing’ 5) ‘metaphor’, a fantasy figure of an existing reality and a ‘metonym’. It is in the process of seeing the replaced image of the sought-for identity that the normality and the norms are re-established and hence also the space of identifying the ‘other’ as well as the prohibitions and regulations, the social control that does not tolerate deviants (2001:52).

In accordance with most post-colonialists Bhabha holds that along with nation, knowledge is emphatically narrative. In the first chapter of Nation and Narration, 1990, Bhabha presents the idea of the narrative nation “as one of the major structures of ideological ambivalence within the cultural representations of ‘modernity’”, as he maintains his wish for inducing the unsure margin of the ‘nation-space’ (1990:4). To disclose a margin in which a minority group is positioned is first and foremost “to contest claims to cultural supremacy, whether these are made from the ‘old’ post-imperialist nations, or on the behalf of the ‘new’ independent nations of the periphery” (1990:4). Thus minorities, or groups in the marginal, do not at all choose to rejoice their position as marginalised. It is the idea of nation as narration that founds the cultural regulations and precincts of the nation in a way of allowing ‘thresholds of meaning’ in the process of cultural production. For new nations, like the South African and then certainly also like the Namibian, the population have not yet found their nation (1990:4).

In the article DissemiNation in Nation and Narration (1990), Bhabha decidedly holds that ‘nationness’ and thus also national identity are cultural constructions as well as temporary

5 After Jacques Derrida’s notion of the ‘supplement’ of writing, as apr. the (surprising) addition and/or replacement of thought and speech.
ideas of social and textual membership. In the same way ‘the nation’ is a system of power, a
narrative strategy that repetitively produces a categorising of similar, even ‘metonymic’ sort.
Likewise, do people, minorities, or other cultural differences’, overlap incessantly, in the
performance of nation building (1990:292). ‘People’ is never plainly horizontal Bhabha marks
in accordance with his claims in *The Location of Culture* and with Spivak. Instead he claims
that representation is temporary, lacks underlying core logic, and moves in and out of
‘cultural formations’ and ‘social processes’ (1990:293). Bhabha emphasises the importance of
location and geography for national identity, and the ensuing naturalising rhetoric of national
affiliation and its expressions, as he holds the ‘landscape’ is the persistent metaphor for the
inner nature of national identity. The seemingly insignificant bits and pieces of everyday life
must constantly be converted into signs of national culture, though by that very act of
narration the order is interrupted by a questioning of the increasing collection of national
subjects (1990:295-7). But national identity still needs to be founded in these bits and pieces.

According to Bhabha, the ‘political unity of the nation’ lies in a repetitive dislocation of a
hopelessly plural modernity tied together by different slightly antagonistic nations into an
ancient and mythical signifying space. This system then is ambiguously representing the
nations modern territoriality, in the ancestral and nationalistic temporality of *traditionalism.*
Thus it is this irresolute recognition of ‘love and hate’ that unites a community (1990:300).
When this is done then and the nationstate is established, the focus of difference is shifted to
the inside, to the domestic otherness. Hence, the ethnographic prospect of different cultures’
current co-existing divides the national subject (1990:301). In this making of national identity,
one must not forget the significance of the people’s articulation of the *will* to be a nation,
since that wish will bind together past memories and safeguards contemporary consensus,
this then is exactly that outset of the *narrative* that *forgets* the history, the violence and the
command of the nation’s past (1990:310). Requirements to forget, or forgetting to remember,
are in a way a production of a national ‘contemporality’, a discourse on society that
challenges that national will (1990:311).

**Applied Theory for Postcolonial Identities**

From the views of Spivak then, it becomes clear that we need to make use of the view that
identity always is relational and dependent of the structure of difference that the subject is
operating within. Also important is the remark that ethnic identities in former colonies are
traditionally ignored by the Western stance, and opted as static, even though ethnic identities just like all identities in fact are hybrid. Simple ideas of national identity can be used to legitimise exploitation and neo-colonialism as well as to silence the opposition. These simple versions can ignore the multiplicity and diversity in practice, completely, especially within a newly independent state. We will be careful not to make such mistakes in this essay.

From Bhabha we will use the significant ideas that identities are not constant or coherent in any way, but radically altering. We are only able to see an image of an identity when we reject the idea of the authentic, genuine and original ethnicity, nationality or identity, since there is no core or essence in those concepts or in any specific identity. However, in doing that we find ourselves left with an image that still is not equivalent to the “real” identity, but it corresponds to the looked-for characteristics instead. What we find in this way, is the illusion of existence and reality, a representational metaphor, and it is in this “process of substitution” we perform that we encounter normality and the regulating norms that we want to/must abide by. It is in this procedure that we detect the conflict of power and regulations within the structures of society. “Identification[…] is always a question of interpretation (1994:52).

Bhabha moreover holds in DissemiNation, 1990, that history does not come about outside the centre and core, but the ancestral national past as well as the language and discourses of ancient belonging marginalises the present of contemporary national culture. Pleas to the national past have to be seen as the ‘anterior space of signification’ that distinguishes the nations cultural entirety. The ‘national narrative’ then is the location for undecided identification; a periphery of the ambiguity in cultural meaning that might turn into the space for a polemical minority position (1990:317). Bhabha claims that people emerge from the boundaries of the nation, marking out the transitional or initial cultural identity and in that way produce manifold discourses of territoriality and temporality (1990:320). Bhabha holds that there is no knowledge outside representation and that social conditions are repeatedly being reinscribed reliant on that knowledge and reproducibly represented and accordingly the pluralism of difference of the national signs and symbols emerges.

Like this, people of new states have not yet found their nations, the dissemination of the nation has only been initiated, but still the cultural authority might have and most probably has been established, and even so national identity as a cultural construction is temporal and
The nation then is a narrative system of power, in which people and languages overlap and depend on each other as “cultural formations and social processes”. Moreover the national identity must have its signs and symbols anchored in the fragments of daily life. In order for the nation to unite, recognising inclusive and exclusionary features is necessary. Though when the ethnic and cultural authority regularises the differences and marginalises some, this becomes problematical for the national project. On the other hand what really is problematic and challenges the crucial will to a national culture and identity is the failure to remember history, the loss of commemoration for purpose of producing the national present.

Theoretical Framework
As explained before, we will in this section outline concepts and theories that are crucial for our study and as so, will serve as analytical tools in the analysis. Due to our comprehensive, but also specific, object of study and the immense amount of material, that despite its magnitude does not always fit our purpose, we have chosen to include fragments of different theories alluding to our purpose of study and applicable on an African postcolonial context.

Nation
Benedict Anderson in Imagined communities (1991) defines nation as “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1991:6). He holds that a nation is imaginary in the way that the members of a nation will never get to know, meet or even hear of all other members of the nation he or she belongs to. Nevertheless, in the minds of people, a sense/feeling, or as Anderson says an “image”, of their unity and alliance persists. We feel that we belong together even though we do not have anything in common, except that we live in the same nation. Anderson argues that all communities “larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact […] are imagined” (1991:6). Nations are restricted areas; thus a nation is an imagined area with fixed/limited boundaries, even though these boundaries, at some point, might adjust the bonds in some direction. The focal point is however that a nation is restricted and its members feel a sense of unity with all people inside the borders of the nation. Beyond the borders other nations are located, with which these feelings of unity do not exist. Anderson holds further that the nation is “imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm”(1991:7). Nations dreamt of being free, and the sovereign state signified and symbolised that freedom. Moreover, a nation is imagined as
a *community* “because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (1991:7). This Anderson claims is visible through the human force to be prepared to die for the nation (ibid).

**The Nationstate**

During the late 18th and the early 19th century the loyalty to the monarchs was replaced by loyalty to the nation. John Rex writes in *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration* (1997),

> The nation thus became an emotionally charged object and nationalism emerged as an ideology centred upon the sentiment of belonging to a particular community […]. The nation state was created as a political institution with a territorial base which utilized the doctrine of nationalism in its foundational moment to generate a common culture and a sense of belonging among its members (1997:4-5).

According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen in *Etnicitet och nationalism* (1993) the fundament of the nationstate is the coinciding of political and cultural boundaries. Further Hylland Eriksen claims the nationstate possesses a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence as well as taxation (1993:137). This particular monopoly is the main source of power. Additionally, it is precisely this specific concentration of power that symbolises a nationstate. A further feature of the nationstate, Hylland Eriksen continues, is its bureaucratic administration as well as the existence of a written legislation that includes all citizens. The nationstate also has a shared labour market for all its citizens and most have a national or an official language as well. Likewise, the ideal of the nationstate is to create a uniform system of education (1993:137).

**Nationalism**

Ernst Gellner, in *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) briefly defines nationalism as a “theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state -a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation -should not separate the power-holders from the rest”(1983:1) In accordance, Anderson and Hylland Eriksen also claim that nationalism implies some sort of solidarity between all people within the territory, and that,
political, cultural, and ethnic and boundaries should not be set apart and segregated, is the foundation of nationalist ideology.

As Benedict Anderson in *The nation and the origins of national consciousness*, in Guibernau and Rex’s *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration* (1997) analyses the origins of national consciousness, he refers to the rise of the printing technology and its meaning for the spread of nationalism. He holds, “the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation” (1997:51). According to Berg (2004) though, other theorists relate the rise of nationalism to the process of democratisation and industrialisation, as well as the connection between the two. In this sense, the nationstate came to function as a frame around national economic markets that came into being as a result of the industrialisation. More clearly, the establishment of a firm nationstate protected the growing national industry and served as a protective frame against the industrial and economic competition of other nations (2004:232). Berg claims that the relationship between early capitalism, nationalism (the rise of the nationstate) and industrialisation often are emphasised in order to explain the “global leading position” that Europe occupied during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (2004:232-3). Another central aspect of the industrialisation and the process of nationalisation is, according to Berg, that the two homogenized the working classes. More clearly, for the industrial production to reach the highest possible profits, its products needed to attract as many people as possible, whereby a homogenisation was crucial for capitalism to gain foothold. Berg further emphasises how the democratisation fits into this scheme. With the introduction of democracy, people became more dependent and attached to the nationstate and thereby to the industrial capitalism (ibid).

**Nationalism in Postcolonial Africa**

According to Rex in *The Basic Elements of a Systematic Theory of Ethnic Relations* in *Sociological Research Online* (2001) during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries the world order was characterised by imperialism. However, the world of the late twentieth century brought with it the breaking down of most empires, either as an effect of economic or political weakness, or through the resistance of suppressed people. The surfaced question then is what type of social bonds or institutions will transpire in the postcolonial areas (2001:18).
In the same manner, Laakso and Olukoshi in *Challenges to the Nation-State in Africa* (1996) claim that the standard (official) view of a nation-state (as culturally homogenous) was brought to Africa along with colonialism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Before the arrival of colonial authorities, ethnic groups were frequently in conflict with each other. As the colonial authorities gained power and set off to rule, the diverse ethnic groups were swiftly pushed together “under one new state”. Now, the common colonial strategy of “divide and rule” led to the formation and construction of “new ethnic identities”. This, Laakso and Olukoshi claim, helped the colonial authorities to strengthen their control and power while it at the same time deepened conflicts between ethnic groups (1996:12).

At point of independence several governments “set themselves the task of undertaking a vigorous process of nation-building with the aim of welding their multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-religious countries into ‘one nation’”(1996:13). This process was determined by the state, that regularly depend on what Laakso and Olukoshi call a “top-down approach”, involving extensive “centralising implications” (1996:13). Moreover, a common characteristic of the nation-building in the former African colonies was the prevailing opinion that the wide range of ethnic groups/identities could be a harmful factor, in the process aiming at a fortunate nation-building, whereby the prerequisite was the weakening of such identities, by subordinating them to the identification of the dominant group/s that held the “state power” (1996:13). As a consequence, Laakso and Olukoshi assert, new African governments instigated processes of social and economic modernisation. It was expected that these programmes of modernisation would diminish ethnic identities and attachments and, as was the case in Europe during the industrialisation, encourage feelings of “nationhood” (1996:13).

As Berg and others asserts, the nationstate and nationalism in Europe developed at the same time as the industrialisation. Many theorists holds Europe’s industrialisation as foundation for nationalism, as industrialisation was in need of homogeneity, to attract as many people as possible (2004:253). In the African context, Berg claims, one obviously cannot talk about an equivalent phase of industrialisation. Consequently, nationalism is in the African context, made up of ‘words and politics’ and not of an “impersonal force that transforms peoples cultural, social and material life”(own translation, 2004:254). Nevertheless, some sort of connection between nationalism and industrialism even within the African context has been pertinent and still is to some extent, but this relationship is rather ‘anticipations’ of the state.
By this Berg asserts, African states, administrated by a nationalist elite, in many cases, aim at constructing national homogenisation. The expectation is that in this fashion, industrialisation will develop and economic growth will enhance as a consequence (2004:254).

**Tribe or Nation?**

Conceptualised in Europe and applied on Africa, *tribalism* is, Basil Davidson writes in *The Black Man’s Burden*, (1992), though difficult to designate, a sort of clientelism⁶; a benefaction system “dependent on personal, family, and similar networks of local interests” apparent in post- and neo-colonial African “nation-state” (1992:12). However, Davidson underscores that “nation-states”, just like any other concept, have the ability of meaning exactly what one thinks it means (1992:58). We all do apply our own connotations and our own meanings to all the concepts we hear and use, and of course that goes for ‘tribalism’ as well. Davidson elaborates on the history of *tribalism* and *nationalism* in Africa and holds that the popular Western view of Africa up to the end of the 1970s (if not even still) was that before colonisation Africa lacked anything that deserved to be called self-governance. Furthermore, this acceptance led to arguments, like “democracy versus tribalism”, based on the belief of the colonial rule as the only foundation of authority and institutions for Africa, instead on believing in the development of the own pre-colonial structures (1992:75). Though, in effect, it may be hard to differentiate between the meaning of tribalism and the meaning of nationalism (1992:11). Davidson maintains that it suited the colonial powers to think of tribalism as the only “order” in Africa. It was a comfort to apply the (formerly euro-centred) concept of tribalism (since Davidson indicates that the word was elaborated in the first half of the twentieth century to explain Eastern European fractions) to the “black” continent of primitive ‘savages’ in contrast to the European nationalism, the, in their view, enlightened and rational organisation of life which they leaded (1992:100). In actual fact, Davidson insinuates that, what existed in Africa at the time before the concept of tribalism became Africanised, was something that suited the definitions of nation and nationalism just as easily or perhaps even more so, than tribes and tribalism. Tribalism is in this way “the new product of ‘divide-and-conquer policies” according to Davison; if the Africans merged and unified in and became tribes then the costs of the European administration would diminish significantly. Hence units, communities or even nations within (predominantly western) Africa united, disbanded and reorganised themselves as tribes, partly as a weapon of “self defence” in order

They say: divided we fall, united we stand…

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to fit in to the European description, and tagged along on the course to nationalism, the social order of the avant-garde, developed world (1992:101).

Rather distinct from the popular view, the European nation-state is not a natural state, it is not pre-existent and it is not the only solution to an economical-political-social order in the world (1992:133). Nonetheless, Davidson writes the story of the ‘nation-state’ as the ‘formula’ of the ultimate solution for peoples within the “world order” concocted in Europe (1992:137). Further on Davidson shortly debates the notion of ‘uhuru’ in saying that the in Britain eagerly received concept of ‘uhuru’ did not just mean peace and liberation in Africa, but also the acceptance of the Euro-centred, anti-colonial nationalism (1992:164). Davidson implies that in the 1950s when some African leaders began to embrace the European nationalism as a way towards emancipation and ‘freedom’ they also simultaneously far to uncritically and simply, accepted the “colonial legacy” and the endowment of the neo-colonialist control system of the nationstate that was based on European, not African history (1992:181).

Notwithstanding, that the Europeans had refuted to call the African idea of organisation nation, and applied tribalism instead. However the emerging idea of nationstate for the Africans was not based on ‘national consciousness’ or the urge for a flag representing the country and nation, but instead simply on the emancipation and on social security in form of food, education, housing and heath care for the people (1992:185). Nevertheless, by this time the postcolonial tribalism had grown strong. Nationalism or ‘nation-statism’ was, according to Davidson “boosted as ‘Europe’s last gift to Africa’ […] One can’t but think that Europe’s ‘last gift’, in fact was in the nature of bad or incompetent advice” (1992:188). Davidson argues that the Europeans later on misinterpreted conflicts of interest (and still do, though sometimes still disguised as ethnic divisions) and labelled them once again as tribalism.

Thus, since “Europeans believed Africans lived in tribes: Africans built tribes to belong to” (1992:101). For the Africans however, ‘tribes’ had no genuine, general meaning.

Notwithstanding, Europe’s collective experiences claimed that the Africans had only one historically primitive legacy of politics: that of “tribal loyalties” (1992:206). Hence, while the world so stubbornly refused to call any loyal ties in Africa national, ‘tribalism’ became the evidence of how there was nothing in the history of Africa that had any substance of importance for the progression in/of Africa (1992:224). The tribalism that we discern today is

\textsuperscript{7}Meaning Freedom in Swahili.
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A sort of system that (people seem to think of as pre-existent) flourishes on ‘disorder’ and sets aside issues like morality and the rule of law (1992:11). Thus after the emancipation period there was no alternative for the Africans to organise themselves in but the European nation-statism, and the African nationalists who sensed the hazard with the neo-colonialist nationstate, were totally excluded in the nation-building (1992:106).

Ethnicity

John Rex writes in the article The Basic Elements of a Systematic Theory of Ethnic Relations in Sociological Research Online, 2001, about a need for “an overall general theory of nationalism and ethnicity”. Rex claims that a community established on supportively mutual attachments, is supposed to consist of other supplementary features as well, one of these being ethnicity. According to Rex, the attachment to an ethnic group does not solely entail the psychological feeling of fitting in, but additionally it involves “a sense of sacredness” that includes regards like language, territory, history and myths, religion and kinship (2001:7).

Rex points out that a group certainly does not always define itself on own accords, but many times other communities refer to the group in certain ways and hence also attribute characteristics to the group in question. Thus, the ‘ethnicity’ is not always ‘self-chosen’ but ascribed by others. This twofoldness is always significant to keep in mind when discussing the subjects of ethnicity and ethnic circumstances. Communities always describe other groups from other, external points of views, and the group will of course refer to itself in specific ways. Furthermore, Rex implies that in contemporary multifaceted societies, ethnic groups are more often than not, defined by the government or the authorities in power (2001:7).

Clearly, it is not merely groups located outside the territories of the society, that are attributed their ethnicity and other features by that society. When it does happen that a group within the boundaries of a bigger community is attributed its ethnicity, but does not partake in all of the structures of that society, the group is described as a minority. The minority, Rex claims, does not even have to be small in numbers of people but can in fact be in majority in the society since it is mostly the degree of participation in the community system that determines the distancing alienation and thus also the attribute of being a minority (2001:7).
Ethnic Identity

Thomas Hylland Eriksen in *Etnicitet och nationalism* (1993) defines *Ethnicity* in an anthropological manner as “the aspects on relations between groups that consider themselves, and are considered by others, as culturally specific” (1993:13). Thus, ethnicity is an aspect of social relations and interactions between actors that look upon themselves as being culturally secluded from members of other groups. Hylland Eriksen defines ethnicity as a social identity based on a “fictive relationship” (1993:22) and given meaning through the contrasts that differentiates between ‘us’ and ‘them’. According to Hylland Eriksen, ethnicity is all about the other and this distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, between inclusion and exclusion. In this way, ethnicity is constructed through the relations and interactions between people.

*Ethnic identities*, as other social identities, are constantly transforming and shifting as well as dependent on the specific situation a person finds him/herself in. A person encompasses several different identities. The ethnic identity is merely one among several other identities. Moreover, in multiethnic societies, Hylland Eriksen asserts, the ethnic identity of a person frequently has to stand back for other identities. From this we learn that the ethnic identity evidently is not always important for a person. Ethnic identities or the perceptions of being in a (ethnic) group or in any sense of ‘we’ are dynamic and constantly changing identifications. Depending on the context, the sense of ethnic affiliation might change and can become both tighter as well as looser. In accordance, when a person, belonging to a certain ethnic group within a multiethnic nation, goes abroad he or she might very well take on the identity of the nation instead of the ethnic group. At that particular time the person’s national identity is more salient than the ethnic identity. Thus, ethnic identities as well as national identities become more or less prominent and important depending on the context a person finds her/himself in (1993:43). Ethnic groups are constantly defined and given meaning through their relationship to other groups. Bonds between different ethnic groups are social bonds that can, but do not have to be territorial bonds (1993:53-59). Ethnic classification is about creating a rational order in the society, a phenomenon that could be seen in relation to the racial categorisation that has taken place historically. According to Hylland Eriksen there is a close relationship between identity and social situations, societies changes and so do identities (1993:80-81). For ethnicity ‘to function’ the ethnic group must not only be acknowledged by a specific group of people in power, but it must as well be recognised by its surroundings.
Stereotyping

Stereotyping is frequently used to categorise and distinguish one group from another. Thus, ethnic stereotyping implies the construction (and the application) of standardised ideas suggesting that certain cultural characteristics are distinct for specific groups of people. The phenomenon occurs in more or less all multiethnic societies and it helps people, Hylland Eriksen claims, to understand and ‘make order/sense’ of their surroundings, or as he writes, to make “a neat map over the social world” (1993:36). Moreover, stereotypes can be used to justify differences in a society and thereby also the different distribution of resources between different groups and they are furthermore important for people to mark and define the bond between the own group and other groups as well as to justify differences. Thus, stereotypes are important tools in the human urge to make distinctions between people in order to be able to categorise the ‘self’ (1993: 34-36).

According to Hylland Eriksen, for a long time ‘ethnic groups’ were equal with ‘cultural’ groups. People who where seen as having a shared culture where seen as belonging to the same ethnic group as well. However, today this can no longer be maintained. Cultural variations do not automatically suggest ethnic dissimilarities. Ethnicity is an aspect of social relations, not of cultural distinctions between groups of people. In so-called mono-ethical societies or nations ‘ethnicity’ is seldom referred to since there is no counterpart that signifies difference (1993:47). In correlation Hylland Eriksen brings up the problem with defining what ethnicity is; what the criteria for ethnicity are. He indicates that ethnic groups often tend to be of the opinion that they have the same descent and that that is the basis of their unification. Some ethnic groups lay emphasis on ‘race’ or blood-ties. According to Hylland Eriksen, all this is problematical. In contrast, he is of the opinion that the most important criteria for ethnic groups are the perceptions of a shared culture (1993:48).

National versus Ethnic Identity

According to Rex ethnicity and nationalism are two interrelated concepts, difficult to separate from one another. He claims,

[the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism imply a certain commonality among members of a group, the ethnic group in one case, the nation in the other; these are constructed symbolically and presuppose the existence of boundaries which separate one group from another. In fact they both]
emphasise minimal differences between the members of certain groups. The nation predicates continuity with the past and common descent and this is how ethnicity is brought into nationalism (Rex, 1997:5).

According to Thomas Hylland Eriksen in *Etnicitet och Nationalism* (1993), a clear relationship between national identity and ethnic identity exists, both are social constructions and are thus not something given by nature. Ethnicity, as any other identity, can take on numerous different forms and can develop under different historical circumstances. It is not something that permanently belongs to a specific group or a person. In accordance with Benedict Anderson, Hylland Eriksen declares that nationalism denotes solidarity between all people within the borders of a nation. Moreover, the foundation of the nationalist ideology is that political and cultural boundaries should coincide. National identities like ethnic identities are, he further suggests, constructed in relation to the ‘Other(s)’. He describes this as nationalist dichotomisation, that is to say that nations are understood and given meaning through the existence of other nations (1993:128). Even though nationalism and ethnicity are interrelated concepts, the relationship is complex and it, at many times, contains conflicting interests. Feelings of nationalism often are marked by ethnicity. A nationalistic ideology is an ethnic ideology that demands a nation on behalf of one ethnic group (1993:148-50).

**Postcolonial nation-building**

As Anthony D. Smith in *National Identity* (1991) asserts, a great number of non-western states once started off as European colonies. This evidently has influenced the nation-building that set off after independence, in several ways; “any identity or solidarity that a colonial population possessed was initially the product of the incorporation and changes brought by the colonial power” (1991:106). Thus, the postcolonial nation-building within numerous former colonies is defined by the colonial state, in its boundaries as well as in its character.

According to Smith it seems like two main ways of constructing former colonies outside Europe into, as Smith puts it, “civic, territorial nations” are present. The first model, Smith asserts, is the “dominant ethnie model”. In this model the foundation of the new state’s national and political identity is the culture of its dominant ethnic community. Although other cultures continue to do well, the identity of the new up-rising political community is shaped by the historic culture of its dominant ethnic group (1991:110). Hence, Smith holds, the nation building is, to a great extent, influenced and shaped by the requirements, needs and
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Cultural habits of the dominant ethnic group. Consequently, in these cases, Smith claims, constituting a nation is not so much about inventing a new nation but rather about “reconstructing” the dominant ethnic group, a reidentification incorporating its culture so that it follows the western model of a state as well as sees to the interests and needs of minority groups. This model is, in part, comparable to the status of medieval kingdoms in Europe that, as well, were built up around “ethnic cores” that eventually expanded to include other nearby lands and ethnic communities. However Smith claims, in the African (and Asian) context the length of time as well as the ideological background differs significantly from what took place in Europe a long time ago. The new African states are under extensive and instant strain to construct nations cast in the same mould as European and American nations, not the least to be capable of competing with other nations on the global arena. Moreover, ideologically, the new African states are devoted to constructing a nation that in actual fact stands for “state-building combined with national integration and mobilisation” (1991:111). This requires the foundation of a national (cultural and political) identity that unmistakably distinguishes itself from its neighbouring states, from the others. It is appealing to build a new state on the basis of the dominant culture and simultaneously go for a “popular mass-mobilisation solution” to the quandary for postcolonial states of inventing a ‘new’ nation (1991:111-112).

The second model of nation-building in postcolonial states is, according to Smith, the construction of a “supra-ethnic political culture”. In such situations there is no recognized single dominant ethnic group. The new state either includes a number of small ethnic communities and categories and none of them alone dominate the state, or it consists of a number of opposing/rival ethnic groups, as is the case in for instance Nigeria (1991:112). Smith poses a few examples to illustrate his assertion, among them the example of Nigeria and Zaire (today Congo). In Nigeria resentment between different ethnic groups is a major source of conflict. Over the years Nigeria has suffered civil war, massacres and coups due to ‘ethnic rivalry’. Evidently, Smith holds, this makes nation-building and creating a sense of common identity difficult. In Zaire (Congo) on the other hand, Smith claims the postcolonial regimes have intentionally undertaken to create a ‘supra-ethnicity’. The regime has encouraged and strived against creating a common ‘Zairian’ symbolism and religion in order to try to unite different ethnic groups into a new nation free from ethnic friction (1991:113).
Jeffrey Herbst in *States and Power in Africa*, (2000), asserts that the new African leaders could not anticipate any other solution for how to organise a ruling system of politics for the new African countries, the European modelled nation-state (2000:100). However, the internationally sanctioned (and exclusively recognised) nationstate was surely the main reason for “choosing” it, especially since it was with help from the international community that the colonies could be liberated and become independent (especially UN who solely acknowledges nationstates as actors). This aspiration to employ the outline of the nationstate was so strong that many elements of the colonial rule were maintained as they were (2000:101).

*Nationalism* can, according to Herbst, be seen as a technique through which a state can strengthen its power over large areas, though instead of relying on compulsional authorities, ‘nationalism’ works through a “normalised” legitimacy. Therefore, it should be of particular significance for the states on the African continent since it can involve authoritative legitimacy without including large economic capital (or illicit coercion). Still, nationalism never came to be as prevalent as it had prospect of being, or as many thought to see a promise of in the emancipation period in Africa in the 1960s. Thus Herbst remarks, the persistent problems of the predicament of how to unite and bind the inhabitants together in loyalty to the state might easily increase, especially if the states are both internationally and internally seen as economically and authoritative weak\(^8\) and lack popular legitimacy (2000:127). As Herbst notes, in contrast to most other African states, Namibia did, just as many of the European states, go through a war of independence and national liberation, by which the shared national trauma and commemorated national union may well, as it did in Europe, develop into nationalism and establishment of a ‘nationstate’. As implied though, most other African states did not go through national liberation wars, a fact that could put Namibia in a more favourable situation when it comes to issues of nationalism. Namibia does not lack a “shared historical mythology and memory on which state elites can set about ‘building’ the nation” that Anthony D. Smith purports that most African states are deficient in (Herbst, 2000:129). However Herbst maintains that Namibia is amongst the countries with the most “difficult political geographies”(2000:161) along with for instance Angola, Somalia and Sudan. Hence

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\(^8\) For further explanation concerning strong and weak states as well as the question of whether a state should be strong or not see for instance *The State, Identity and Violence: Political Disintegration in the Post-Cold War World*, Brian R. Ferguson (ed.) 2002, or *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, Rotberg, Robert, (ed.) 2003, or *State failure, sovereignty and effectiveness: legal lessons from the decolonization of sub-saharan Africa*, Gerard Kreijen, 2004.
this is one of the main reasons (the other major reason being the absence of assured economic development), that Herbst claims for why national identity still is such an extremely difficult matter for most African states and attracts fewer inhabitants than the identification with other groupings of people. Membership in for instance ethnic groups therefore ‘competes’ with the public nationalised endorsed devotion. All in all, African states do not lack the benefits of nationalism completely, but the matter of uniting (around) nation and state, is however much more difficult and complex than in the Western world (2000:130).

According to Herbst, citizenship in African states is still regularly not actively designed for the inhabitants of that country but are instead reliant on the policies of the former colonial rule had for citizenship (specifically developed over time to suit the original colonial power). Perchance, Herbst argues, these ties to the former rule are not all peculiar and perplexing, especially when considering the fact that the territorial borders are in most cases kept intact and adopted by the post-independent African leaders. Nevertheless, Namibia has the citizenship regulating policy of jus soli⁹, even though it was a German colony for about 30 years and Germany has the political regulation jus sanguinis¹⁰. Yet on the other hand, Namibia was under South African rule for almost 90 years and South Africa’s system of legislation was influenced by the UK, a jus soli state. Luckily, Herbst maintains that jus soli regulations of citizenship are most suitable for countries such as Namibia (2000:239-44).

Closing Moments of Theory

This preceding theory chapter has encompassed what we entail and what we mean by the different concepts and theories that we consider as significant for the purpose of our essay. We will present discussions of the concepts in our analysis of the interviews in four themes deriving from this theory chapter; these are in order 1, Postcolonial Nationalism; 2, Ethnicity; 3, National versus Ethnic Identity; and 4, Postcolonial Nation-building. We have attempted at presenting some of the difficulties in discussing these issues. We have found that postcolonial identities in postcolonial Africa are shifting, hybrid and overlapping, and that they are permeated by several complexities. In order to clarify the theoretical part of our essay, a simplified summary of this chapter follows.

⁹ “jus soli” [Latin: law relating to the soil (of one's country)] The rule by which birth in a state is sufficient to confer nationality, irrespective of the nationality of one's parents”, Oxford Reference Online (Law).
¹⁰ “jus sanguinis” [Latin: law relating to blood] The principle that the nationality of children is the same as that of their parents, irrespective of their place of birth. This contrasts with jus soli, whereby nationality is dependent on place of birth”, Oxford Reference Online (Law).
As presented above, we will apply critical Postcolonial theory as a theoretical framework for this essay. We find that the production of knowledge as ethno- and Eurocentric as well as essentialist is one of the most crucial issues. Another significant aspect is the construction of the (savage) “other” as ascribed all those features and characteristics that exist but are feared within the Eurocentric and Essentialist and Liberal Humanistic worldview, as well as the processes of ‘othering’ involved in nation-building. We have presented many significant concepts in relation to the Postcolonial theory, as for instance the concept of hegemony. From this chapter, we have learnt that identity is relational, and postcolonial identities are multiple shifting, fluid, and hybrid. Postcolonial national identity in turn, as well as ethnicity, and nationalism, as they are in practice and in process right now, are socio-cultural constructions. These notions of nation and ethnicity, furthermore, are all ‘imagined communities’. The nation is a narrative system of power; hence a national identity requires its signs and symbols to uphold that narration and have meaning and foundation in everyday life. The national identity is in need of mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion like this. However, when the ethnic and cultural authority embark on a process of ‘othering’ and regularises the differences between people, some get marginalised, which is problematical for the joint national project.

With colonialism, ideas and lifestyles of the colonisers and/or missionaries are forced on the people and eventually accepted and even requested. One effect of the colonial structure is the construction of a system of dichotomies, and paradoxes like of traditional versus modern, or nature versus civilisation. The remains of colonialism are in this way multitude, tribalism for instance is one of those; Africans coercively constructed tribes to belong to since the Europeans applied the concept upon them. Thus, it was simply much easier to consent and please, as the respond to divide and conquer, in order to be able to keep some of the own structure and culture. Subsequently, the entire idea of the nationstate is certainly European. It is the only acknowledged form of organisation of a country and somehow considered as “Europe’s last gift to Africa“. Though, it might not be the most appropriate form of structure for Africa, as it has not been proved to fit. In the same way today, nation-building is influenced and shaped by the requirements and cultural habits of the dominant ethnic group. Membership in an ethnic group therefore competes with the public affiliation of nationalism. All in all, African states do not lack all benefits of nationalism, but the issue of uniting around nation and state, is clearly more difficult and complex than in the hegemonic Western world.
4. The Case Study: Namibia

Historical Background of Namibia

In this chapter we will somewhat briefly go through the historical background of Namibia up until the contemporary society of today. An understanding of the historical background and the development of Namibia up until today is central for the understanding for contemporary issues of nationalism and ethnicity. The accounts that we have chosen to include in this section are the occurrences that we find are the most important for the sake of our essay.

Preliminary Remarks

The pre-colonial histories of Africa usually and rationally fall into the same category as the mapping of different ethnic groups, or ‘tribes’ if one wishes. Therefore we will correspondingly to the academic pursuit, try to map out the movements of people into the land and soil of what today is called Namibia. It is hard to give a fair picture of the history of an area, such as Namibia, of which the people who inhabited the area during that time has no written history. Even the oral history concerning many parts of Africa does not correspond to the rational, fact based and categorised type of text that the academics in the Western world counts as the only trustworthy form of history. Hence, it is difficult to give a picture of the different ‘groups’ from the pre-colonial time because the colonisers wrote (down) that history.

Magnus Berg (2004) writes about a yearn for stability and structure in all concepts and peoples he came across when reading about Namibia at the outset of his endeavour, a desire he calls intellectual panic. When the colonisers started reporting and writing about the state and the histories of the peoples in the area of what today is called Namibia, they were confronted by disorder, unsystematisation, and fluidity. The confusion and bewilderment that followed this was for them disgraceful, discrediting and humiliating according to the western perspective and thus not what the colonisers wanted to report home. Consecutively, the picture they gave of the histories of peoples was arranged and systematised into an order that they seemed fit. Just as the administrations in situ and the purpose of the colonial powers presence in Africa, it was made to look rational though it was highly irrational, since as Berg holds, “[the white man’s burden is precisely constituted by knowledge and certainty]” (own translation, 2004:181). Basil Davidson marks in relation that somehow, unfathomably, the popular picture is that the old colonial powers have paid back their dues with interest and thus
the white man’s economic burden is repaid. Hence, Davidson holds that for some inscrutable reasons what the western powers are doing today according to the own western view are being generous and big-hearted towards “the poor benighted blacks” in Africa (1989:218). As persistently marked by Davidson, it is significant to keep in mind the pre-colonial complex social, political and economic structures that resembled the structures of nations and states, when reading about history in Africa. However, at the time of colonisation those institutions were impossible, thus they were destroyed by the systems of divide-and-conquer. In postcolonial times, the only allowed systems of government are (nation)states.

**Pre-colonial History**

Apparently, the most original inhabitants in Namibia and all of southern Africa are allegedly the ‘San’. According to Peter H. Katjavivi in *A History of Resistance in Namibia* (1988), were the San a nomadic people for a very long period of time, and lived as hunters gatherers. Today the opportunities to live a nomadic life are very limited and “development” has made further restrictions on nomadic life. The word ‘San’ is not referring to one definite group but instead to many different groups of people situated in various countries, with many different languages. “San” is therefore a generic term and a term that definitely can be debatable.

Katjavivi uses the term ‘Ovakuruvehi’, a Herero word “meaning ‘the ancient (or original) ones’” in order to refer to this categorised grouping of people (the San) (1988:1). The San have moreover been referred to as ‘Bushmen’, a thoroughly condescending and degrading term founded and employed by the colonisers. The development of the word ‘San’ may also have dubious circumstances, however that is the most adequate word/term available and thus we will apply it in this essay.

‘Herero’ is another pinpointed group of people with a common though shared language. Another group of people, the ‘Himbas’ also speaks a variation of that same language (Katjavivi, 1988:3). The Hereros were according to Katjavivi pastoralists, as were the ‘Namas’ and the ‘Damaras’, groups with which the Hereros shared a similar originating background. The Damaras, however, engaged in hunting to a greater extent than the Hereros

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11 The word means ‘outsider’ in the khoi language, Nama. “‘San’ was actually the insulting word that the herding Khoi people called the Bushmen. (‘Khoi’ is the term used by those who were labeled “Hottentots” by the Dutch. [...]’Khoi’ means ‘the real people.’)” (Sailer in Name game- ‘Inuit’ or ‘Eskimo’? 2002).

12 Herero is the name for a defined language and one of the categorised groups of people in Namibia. See text above for further explanation.

13 The Himbas, supposedly a variation of the Hereo people or vice versa attempts at living a, as realizable traditional life as possible, still at this day.
and the Namas (1988:1). Both the Namas and the Damaras are Khoikhoi\textsuperscript{14} speaking groups, with the same descendants as the ‘San’ (khoi\textsuperscript{15}), who speaks a Khoisan language. The ‘Oorlam’ categorised group is in accordance with the Namas also a Khoikhoi group (Berg, 2004:23). The largest group today is the ‘Owambo’ group; the Owambos were “traditionally” farmers and were located over an area exceeding what today is Angola. Owambo is also a generic term that in Namibia includes 7-8 different “tribes” and dialects\textsuperscript{16}. (According to the CIA factbook “about 50% of the population belong to the Ovambo tribe” and the Kwanyama group is the largest)\textsuperscript{17}. Notwithstanding the different ethnic groups and tribes, the differences are mostly semantically pragmatic and the prerequisite for the different groups is time, or time and change, since ‘time’ means change and movement (Berg, 2004:180). For the peoples who were put together into the categories of ‘Caprivians’, and ‘Kavangos’, the rivers of Zambezi and the Kavango were important holders of livelihood. The ‘Tswanas’ one of the smallest minorities today still, live predominantly in the Kalahari (http://namibia.safari.co.za).

There are certainly other groups of African peoples who came in from various ways into Namibia in the early days before the colonisers had got there. The words or ‘names’ referring to the different groups as well as the history of the origins of the peoples are in many ways contrived, written and pigeonholed by Europeans. The names of the different groups and tribes have certainly changed over time. In accordance with the Oorlams for example, the ‘Rehoboth Basters’ also emigrated from the Cape (South Africa), they settled in the town of Rehoboth and their motive was the systematic marginalisation and racism from the sides of both the Europeans and Africans in the Cape (Katjavivi, 1988:1, Diener in Diener and Greafe, 2001:240). The Rehoboth Basters are allegedly descendants to a white father and an African (Nama) mother (Berg, 2004:23). The European seafarers and traders started moving into the country by the seaways during the 1800. Most came from Holland, Germany, England or Scotland. Other whites (such as, and not insignificantly, Swedes) also started settling on Namibian land. Later on Finnish missionaries played a significant role in the history of Namibia and as well did the Afrikaners who moved in from the South African Cape.

All the categorised ethnic-groups are today distributed over the landmass according to the pattern that followed the system of the colonisers and the South African apartheid rule (more

\textsuperscript{14} Literary meaning ‘human being’.

\textsuperscript{15} Literary meaning ‘the real people’.

\textsuperscript{16} Kwanyama, Ndonga, Kwambi, Ngandjera, Mbalanhu (Mbalantu), Kwaluudhi and Eunda.

\textsuperscript{17} Berg holds that on this certain account, in contrast to most others, we can trust the CIA (2004:304; 3).
about that in the following sections). This allotment and division of the population are evident the whole time right through history and are still, to some extent, maintained today. Throughout time the names and terms for the different ethnic groups and tribes have changed and accordingly the groups have changed in them selves as well. What now can be perceived as a definite, static and distinct group of people might not even have been a clearly defined group, they might not even been related to start with (Diener, 2001:239-240).

**Under Colonial Rule**

For quite some time Namibia’s impassable coastline, the skeleton coast, made conquest a difficult matter for seafarers and European powers in search for land. Thus, according to *Namibia the Facts* (1989) it was not until during the 18th and primarily the 19th century that colonial powers showed a definite interest in the area, even though European infiltration to some extent had occurred long before that. Natural resources, especially diamonds turned Namibia into an attractive piece of territory and the claims of the land were many. Subsequently conflicts over Namibian land grew stronger and as a cause many Africans were forced to leave their property (1989:9-10). However, at the decisive and notorious conference in Berlin in 1884-85, it was decided that Namibia should fall under German colonial rule (Berg, 2004:19). The area was given the name **German South West Africa**.

According to *Namibia the Facts*, the German colonisers changed the former shapes of Namibian settlements to a great extent and resettled the African inhabitants or forced them away from the area entirely. By the year of 1903, Katjavivi writes, the colonisers had obtained 50 percent of the land belonging to the Herero people. One year later in 1904, Hereros deprived of their land initiated an uprising against the Germans (1988:8-9). The Hereros were defeated in this battle, though not completely, and they continued their resistance against the Germans. The Germans were resolute in their mission to gain full control over the area (of both Hereros and Namas) whereof they begun to poison waterholes and in other ways put the Hereros to death (*Namibia the Facts*, 1989:10). The German general Lothar von Trotha ordered the extermination of all Hereros and after a short period of time half of the earlier population of southern and central Namibia were dead (Katjavivi, 1988:9). Thousands of survivors were brought to prison labour camps, wherein the majority eventually died due to poor conditions and maltreatment. The German camps constituted the first concentration

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18 Appendix 1
They say: divided we fall, united we stand…” Carolina Hamma
Johanna Sixtentsson

camps named as such\textsuperscript{19} and together with the mass killings and the academic Nazism and scientific racism, it laid the foundation for the holocaust. In the end of 1905, only 20-25 percent of the Herero population had survived and by the year of 1911 between 35 and 50 percent of the Namas had been exterminated (Berg, 2004:31-59, Katjavivi, 1988:10) The genocide of the Hereros, which solemnized its centennial in the summer of 2004, are still notably debated and commemorated in Namibia today.

From the 1904 up until the year of 1915 the Germans controlled the central and southern areas, a territory the Germans called the Police Zone (Katjavivi, 1988:11). Short-term contract workers were recruited (the use of forced labour was also employed) from the north, more exactly from above the Red Line\textsuperscript{20} to work for the whites inside the Police Zone. Only contract workers and, of course, white people could cross the border of the Red Line into the Police Zone. Women could not cross the line at all and even cattle were forbidden to pass, all due to the fact that cattle and women in the Police Zone were incompatible with the German idea of divide and conquer in the African life (Berg, 2004:33). According to Namibia the Facts, as the First World War broke out the basic structure of what would eventually become the apartheid system was already well founded in Namibia and South Africa. In the Police Zone, African workers were kept segregated and either worked on white owned farms or settled in reserves designed by the Germans. Africans\textsuperscript{21} living in German South West Africa lacked social and political rights, only a few, separated their situation from slavery (1989:13).

After the First World War South Africa managed to annex the territory known as German South West Africa\textsuperscript{22}, an area they had sought to occupy for a long time (in 1915 they even stated the military conquest), (Berg, 2004:36). In 1919, the League of Nations\textsuperscript{23} authorised South Africa the power over Namibia provided that South Africa would be supervised by the League of Nations. According to Namibia the Facts, another requirement for the transition of power was that South Africa would administer “the territory as a ‘sacred trust of civilisation ‘ and for the ‘wellbeing and development’ of the indigenous population” (Namibia the Facts, 1989:14). The South African domination was completed in 1921 (Berg, 2004:36). South

\textsuperscript{19} Concentration camps had already been established in South Africa by the British in the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century after the Boer war, however they were not outspokenly referred to as concentration camps back then.

\textsuperscript{20} Separating the Police Zone from the rest of the country, and segregated the Africans.

\textsuperscript{21} In Namibia the Facts they use the ‘African’ to “describe the Namibia’s pre-colonial inhabitants” (1989:8).

\textsuperscript{22} Germany evidently lost the jurisdiction of all its colonies after the 1st World War.

\textsuperscript{23} The previous organisation of United Nations.
Africa, however, treated Namibia as a subjugated colony and divided large pieces of the land between white South African farmers. South African families/farmers who wanted to settle down in Namibia were even offered money. This Berg claims was an attempt by the South African regime to construct whiteness and white (Boer) identity that they perceived as being threatened (2004:36). In 1926 the white population was almost twice as big as it was in the first decade of the 19th hundred and approximately 1000 farms had been founded. The new South African administration applied the same model as for South Africa to oblige Africans into small reserves. Even though education never has been among the most important elements of Boer life, the figures for and content of the education for blacks show a clear contrasting image from that of the picture of white education. During the period of 1925-32, funding spent on education for whites was twelve times higher than for blacks and in 1932 the amount of money dedicated for the education of white children were 25 times higher than for black children (Namibia the Facts, 1989:14). Education was in this way a mean of controlling people. Education for black children was called Bantu Education, and was overtly referred to as the foundation and the prerequisite for white hegemony and (total) suppression of the blacks. Black youths were not in any way permitted to study any subjects that could lead to a profession or a carrier, except for teaching in black schools. Moreover, Africans were forbidden to possess land. In urban areas Africans were not allowed to live in towns but had to settle in the outskirts, in so-called locations. On the 14th of “December 1946 the UN General Assembly rejected South Africa’s request to incorporate Namibia” (Katjavivi, 1988:36), however the South African grip over Namibia instead hardened, special taxes on hunting were established, curfews were imposed, pass laws24 were inflicted and all Africans over the age of 14 were obliged to carry documents for identification in the Police Zone (1989:14-15). Moreover, punishments for specific crimes were made stricter in order to bring in more people to prison labour, child labour was also employed, and for many contract workers violent abuse was a part of everyday life (Berg, 2004:39-40).

Apartheid
Hence, as South Africa secured the mandate over Namibia, white domination continued and grew stronger. In South Africa, the Nationalist party formally introduced the apartheid system in 1948, even though white domination and the segregation of people started long before. After 1948, however, apartheid was reinforced through legislation (Berg, 2004:40). Since

24 The pass laws are widely discussed and famous pictures of Nelson Mandela show him and other freedom fighters burning their passes in protest.
Namibia was under South African mandate, much of South Africa’s apartheid legislation encompassed Namibia as well (Namibia the Facts, 1989:22). Thus, in Namibia the system of apartheid divided people into different categories according to colour of the skin and “traditional” ethnic affiliation, in the same way as was done in South Africa. The intention was to separate whites from blacks and to arrange people into different categories and classifications through the deliberate and segregating institutionalisation of people and skin colour as well as through a discriminatory racial body of law. The South African administration additionally divided Africans in Namibia into eleven different groups with reference to, among other things, “ethnicity” and language. Whites, however, were not divided into different language groups but were instead given total power over the indigenous inhabitants merely due to the pale colour of the skin (1989:19).

The rule of law of the Apartheid regime of South (and South West) Africa has been heavily debated over the years. It consisted of an array of different acts and amendments that sought to control and regulate the blacks and to protect the whites from the threat that blackness meant. As soon as in 1948, the Populations Registrations Act was ratified and it came to constitute the basis for the venture of the Apartheid principle. With the implementation of the Immorality Act (1950) and the Mixed Marriages Act (1949) the South African regime sought to establish, strengthen and reinforce all the different separated categories. The Immorality Act (though the name suggests otherwise) expanded a previous prohibition on sexual relations between whites and blacks to outlaw sexual relations between whites and any non-whites (Berg, 2004:116). Furthermore, with the Group Areas Act (1950) they attempted to fortify the colour boundaries and limits (for blacks of course) geographically and in accordance created homelands or Bantustans. In order to handle the discontent with the entire restricting legislature, the South African Apartheid regime answered with repression. One of the means of repression was the Suppression of Communism Act 1950, which encompassed an abundant amount of actions as communist actions. 37 Namibians including freedom fighter Andimba Toivo ya Toivo were charged under the act. In 1967, whilst in custody they were brutally tortured by the South African Police, as follows one person, Ephraim Kamati Kaporo, also died consequently during trial procedures (1989:61, http://africanhistory.about.com).

25 Appendix 2.
26 Appendix 3.
27 See page 47
The question of land was one of the main issues during the apartheid years and the South African rule over Namibia. The South Africans continuously increased their possession of land areas and the Africans were forced to resettle in desert areas or to move into reserves. In 1964, after recommendations from the Odendaal Commission\(^{28}\), the country was divided into one large white section and ten black ‘homelands’ or so-called ‘bantustans’. As an effect, the white population obtained over 60 percent of the land. The Bantustan system aimed at guaranteeing white power and control, although an additional and as important aim was, according to \textit{Namibia the Facts}, to “[undermine] the national liberation struggle by dividing the oppressed population”(1989:19). The system of bantustans further extended as the South African government created a bantustan for every ‘population group’, this resulted in three additional bantustans. Even though the Africans, as an effect of the Odendaal plan, obtained a larger area of land, they were removed from the fertile farmland and instead resettled in areas of desert or desolate mountains where only just a minuscule part of the population of the specific group already lived (1989:19), for example, less than 3 percent of the San population lived in “Bushmanland” (less than 1000 persons) when it was established as a Bantustan for the San (James Suzman in \textit{An Assessment of The Status of the San in Namibia}, 2001:5;40-52).

Hence the other central issue, the undoubtedly foremost important concern during apartheid was the division of people and the construction of different population groups according to colour and language that took place during apartheid. All people in Namibia were classified and registered as belonging to one of the eleven groups and “the criteria for these divisions may involve physical appearance, language, parentage or place of residence” (\textit{Namibia the Facts}, 1989: 20). According to Berg apartheids founding objectives was to segregate and break up different groups of people, groups that to a large extent were constructed by the colonial power itself, and keep these groups separated in different “economical, political and socially marginalised cells” (2004:43). \textit{Namibia the Facts} holds that the South African authorities sustained the system of segregation as historically and geographically justifiable and corresponding to the diverse cultures and languages in Namibia (1989:20). The South African division of the Namibian people into categories depending on skin colour and language, and into specific population groups, led to segregation in more or less all sectors of the Namibian society. There were social, legal, cultural and educational segregation to

\(^{28}\) A inquiry commission founded in South Africa in 1962 to develop an agenda for the future of Namibia’s “non-white” people, the subsequent plan was then to strictly separate white and black development (Katjavivi, 1988:72-73), see Appendix 4.
mention a few. Even though the apartheid legislation abolished some of the regulations during the latter part of the South African dominion, the same pattern of repression, separation and white power and authority was never abolished, but was constantly ever so present (1989:22).

**Liberation Struggle and Independence**

Even though the South African government did everything to keep groups separated, people, especially contract workers, did manage to meet across ‘ethnic’ boundaries. Subsequently, a new process of identification arose among the workers as resistance originating in feelings of common repression grew stronger and united people from different ‘ethnic’ groups for a common cause. In 1958 Namibian workers in Cape Town founded the *Owamboland People’s Congress*, where one of the front figures was Andimba Toivo ya Toivo. The basic aim of the group was to support contract workers in Owamboland (northern Namibia) but also to try to enlighten the surrounding world about the severe oppression of the people in Namibia (Berg, 2004:43-45). One year later, in 1959, the organisation established itself in Windhoek and became instead *Owamboland People’s Organisation* with Sam Nujoma (later on Namibia’s first president) as chairman. Eventually, the organisation changed appearance a third time and finally became SWAPO, South West Africa People’s Organisation, a name change that really signalled the aspiration to cross the ethnic borders, to unite against the South African rule and to include all people of Namibia. The third transformation of the organisation, Berg suggests, indicates that the organisation now really sought to plea to all groups in Namibia, not only the Owambo categorised group (2004:46-49). The slogan became, “One Namibia, one Nation” (*Namibia the Facts*, 1989:81).

According to *Namibia the Facts*, at the outset, SWAPO mainly focused on “diplomatic pressure and political mobilisation” (1989:81). This approach, however, gradually changed and the resistance became harsher and more determined. In 1966 an armed struggle was initiated by SWAPO, who urged all Namibians to “rise in arms and bring about our own liberation” (1989:84). Thus, SWAPO and the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia, PLAN, started an armed uprising in northern Namibia. Simultaneously, international pressure on South Africa hardened and in 1966 the UN finally put an end to South African mandate over Namibia as the General Assembly declared that South Africa “has no other right to administer the Territory and that henceforth, South West Africa comes under the direct responsibility of the United Nations” (Katjavivi, 1988:58). Somewhat earlier in that same year Liberia and
Ethiopia and the Court’s Judgement brought South Africa against the International Court of Justice. Likewise, five years later, in 1971, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as well as the UN Security Council declares that South African presence in Namibia was illegal and requests South Africa to withdraw from Namibia (Namibia the Facts, 1989:98). Despite international pressure South Africa had no intention to give up Namibian land. On the contrary, South Africa tried to modify its method and tactics in order to continue its rule over Namibia (Katjavivi, 1989:55). For instance, according to Berg, South Africa made tactical attempts to pursue blacks in Namibia to enter into negotiations with them, of course on South African premises. This strategy Berg claims, was established in order to calm Namibian uprisings and thereby improve the South African reputation on an international basis (2004:49). The UN General assembly recognised SWAPO as the “authentic representative of the Namibian people” in 1973 (Katjavivi, 1988:93). In 1974 The UN “Security Council demands South African withdrawal by May 1975” (Namibia the Facts, 1989:98).

In 1975, South Africa set up the so-called Turnhalle talks. The South Africans selected and gathered representatives from the different, by them ethnically defined, groups in Namibia. SWAPO was not invited. At the time of the conference some progresses were made, for instance the law forbidding sexual relations between blacks and whites was abandoned, furthermore the pass laws were abolished. At the conference/talks, plans for the independent Namibia were discussed and elaborated on. However, Berg argues, these negotiations were again only an attempt by the South Africans to manoeuvre the Namibians in a direction suiting South African interests (2004:50). In the same manner Katjavivi claims that this was simply a performance to appear to meet the requirements of the nationalist liberation movement. SWAPO as well as the UN rejected the conference. Eventually the Turnhalle Conference reformed itself and members of the conference formed a political alliance, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) (1988: 94-96).

At this point UN increased its pressure on South Africa, who finally agreed on a strategy to free Namibia. However, hostilities continued and South Africa attacked a SWAPO refugee camp in Kassinga in Angola. The camp hosted hundreds of Namibian exiles, women, men and children. According to Katjavivi more than 612 refugees were killed in the attack (1988:111). In 1978 the UN Security Council passed resolution 435, the resolution comprised the withdrawal of South African forces and administration as well as a time prospect for
Namibia’s first free and democratic elections *(Namibia the Facts, 1989:92)*. During the 1980s conflicts and armed struggles continued. However, as Cuban and South African troops left Angola, resolution 435 could be implemented in Namibia. The process of national elections instigated in 1989 and were supervised by UNTAG (United Nations Transition Assistance Group) and Martti Ahtisaari, the UN Commissioner for Namibia and later on the President of Finland (Berg, 2004:51). In November 1989 Namibia’s first free elections finally took place and the SWAPO party won with great majority. The freedom fighter Sam Nujoma became Namibia’s first president and on the 21 of March in 1990, Namibia, Africa’s last colony, finally gained its independence. The exception was the important seaport Walvis Bay that had to wait until 1994 (2004:51).

**Concluding Remarks**

It should however yet again be noted that this is not really the “genuine” history of Namibia and its people but instead the history written by the Europeans in the way they chose to conceptualise Africa and about what they considered as important and noteworthy. The first section of the history is how it started out, not the history of the country of Namibia and its people but the division of people into ethnic groups and the outset of tribalism in Africa (Davidson, 1989). Diener writes in Diener and Greafe, 2001, about the construction of ethnic groups in Namibia, that we should not forget “that establishing ‘San’ and ‘Khoikhoi’ (or ‘Nama’) as separate ethnic groups is arbitrary and hardly in keeping with the criteria said to be constitutive of ethnic group, i.e. cultural and in particular linguistic features, and real or supposed common origin” (2001:240). In accordance, Berg holds that the history of ethnic identities displays flowing and changing movements, which are predominantly determined by varying socioeconomic conditions, geographic developments, occasional alliances between different groups, and alterations in political power relations and thus not essentially by distinctions and boundaries between the ethnic groups (2001:240-257, 2004:177).

Thus the different ethic groups were inflicted upon the people within the drawn-up borders of Namibia as God-given, natural divisions and not as the consequences of the allegation and convenient invention of the European colonisers and scholars about tribalism. Many bits and parts of the African daily life during the apartheid time can be difficult to pinpoint and actually understand the meaning of in academic texts, especially if you are looking for
documents concerning Namibia and how the situation was there at that time. These bits and parts are the details about all the limitations, degradation and personal suffering, even within their “autonomous” but economically starved reserves, details that the subjected themselves can tell you about and that you cannot measure in figures or statistics. Simple things, like how they were not allowed to buy white commodities such as white bread, how the pass laws and the curfews restricted their life and consciousness, how they were not protected by the rule of law, and how they were detached from any possibility of development, no matter their own traditions or the white cultures that they often had a clear insight in.

Contemporary Namibian Society

In this chapter we will bring up some, in our view, crucial features and accounts of the Namibian contemporary society. The aspects included here relate to the issues presented in the theory chapter, connections that we find important for this essay. Thus, by including this section we want the reader, having the Namibian history in mind, to obtain an understanding of the Namibian contemporary society in relation to matters of ethnic relations, nation-building, postcolonial politics, and of minority issues, as well as the broader reasons for tensions in between. We will start here below with a presentation of the different complexities concerning the ethnic relations in Namibia.

Ethnic Relations in Namibia

According to Berg’s perception, Namibians tend to hold an uncertain attitude towards the concept of ethnicity and what it stands for. This ambivalence is, Berg insinuates, a result of the politics that were initiated by the Germans during the colonial rule and later brought to an extreme by the South African apartheid regime (2004:42). During the colonial era, white authorities constantly attempted to categorise the Namibians into distinct and rigid groups, mainly based on language. However, despite white domination, ill treatment and the categorisation of the Namibian people into segregated systems, based on, for the Namibians, unfamiliar criteria, the Namibians eventually had to submit to it. Not due to conviction, Berg importantly points out, but since generation after generation had to live according to that scheme of classification, the ethnic categories in due course became normalised (2004:43). However, at the same time, Berg claims that the concept of ethnicity does have a bad

connotation in Namibia\textsuperscript{30}. Ethnicity and ethnic categorisations are strongly associated with the former apartheid system and according to Berg, at least on “the official level” disbelief towards ethnic classifications persists.

According to James Suzman in \textit{Minorities in Independent Namibia} (2002) simultaneously as Namibians declare a noticeably stronger sense of national identity and national affinity than was the case during the South African rule, ethnicity, Suzman claims, is still a central indicator of social as well as political identity. This, he states, is primarily due to the fact that Namibia continues to be “geographically and functionally” separated into regions that are dominated by individual ethnic groups or communities. Within these areas then, “culture and common activities continue to bind people together according to ethnic and linguistic affiliation” according to Suzman (2002:6). The state territory, the country, is still divided up in the areas that were settled on in the \textit{Odendaal plan}\textsuperscript{31} in 1964, divisions that are highly racist since each area is exclusively meant for one specific ethnic group. Although the regions are today somewhat revised and renamed, the names, their perceptions and connotations are still to a great extent alive and present today (Berg, 2004, Katjavivi, 1988).

In \textit{Ethnicity and Nation-building: Towards Unity Respectful of Heterogeneity?} (in Diener, Greafe’s (eds.) \textit{Contemporary Namibia: The First Landmarks of a Post-Apartheid Society}) Diener, in the same manner as Berg, writes that apartheid, among other distresses, hampered the fluidity of identities and reformed them into a fixed taxonomy. Theses fixed categories later would repeat and reproduce themselves (2001:250). Today, on the surface, it might look like Namibian ethnic structures have vanished. Institutions are according to Diener ‘de-ethnicised’. The concept of ‘citizen’ is central and ethnically diverse groups often are referred to by language instead of the ethnic category, for instance people tend to refer to someone as Oshiwambo-speaking instead of Owambo. By fighting colonialism and apartheid and finally by defeating the two tyrannies, Diener holds, the Namibians gained a fundamental, life-changing victory over white racism and oppression. However, according to Diener, a “second round” is left to be battled, namely the need to fight racial discrimination and prejudice amongst the Namibians themselves, as “racism is also to be found on the victims’ side”, (2001:257). Seemingly, the use of ethnic stereotypes in Namibia has, through the hands of time, become accustomed, or in Diener’s own words; “a conditioned reflex” (2001:250).

\textsuperscript{30} As the notion on Ethnicity is understood in Namibia, most have only ever discussed ‘tribalism’ in this sense.

\textsuperscript{31} See Appendix 4. and page 45 in the section on apartheid.
Ethnic Minorities

In the article *The Struggle for Indigenous People’s Rights* in *Re-examining Liberation in Namibia—Political Culture Since Independence* (ed., Melber, 2003) Clement Daniels addresses the issue of minority rights in Namibia. There are several problematical matters concerning this, for instance, the Namibian constitution does not specifically recognise the rights of minorities or indigenous people. Additionally, the country has not signed any of the international Human Rights documents concerning the rights of indigenous people (2003:47). According to Daniels the term *indigenous* in itself conveys complicated connotations for many nationstates. Namibians for instance often identify the term ‘indigenous’ as something created by Europeans, a leftover from the European colonialism that basically assigns almost everyone born in Africa indigenous status. Actually, the Namibian Traditional Authorities Act\(^{32}\) (from 1995) categorises all Namibian traditional communities as ‘indigenous’. This, Daniels holds, is problematic for groups that more accurately *are* indigenous minorities in Namibia whereby he calls for the establishment of some “criteria” to be able to identify indigenous minorities and thereby being capable of approaching their particular needs, for instance through affirmative action. The *San* do have aboriginal status in international Human Rights contexts, above all since they have looked upon themselves as aboriginal peoples, for the existent criteria to be valid however, convention (169) concerning *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries* must be ratified by Namibia\(^{33}\) (2003: 47-48).

Daniels further discusses the Namibian policy of national reconciliation as a founding element in the process of nation building. The Namibian Constitution “prohibits discrimination on grounds of ethnic or tribal affiliation. Nation building and national reconciliation discourages the use of ‘ethnic’, ‘tribal’ or traditional identities”(The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, and 2003:48). However, in reality, Daniels holds, tribal attachment possesses a central role in the relocation of wealth and national funds in Namibia. Moreover, ‘ethnic’ identities and ethnic categorisations were constructed and accentuated during the colonial period as an element of the policy of “divide and rule”. As a consequence it has become difficult to overlook such established identities (2003:48). Daniels accentuates two ethnic minority groups that in particular are residing in a position of uncertainty, namely the *San*

\(^{32}\) Defines the role, duties and powers of traditional leaders (www.usemb.se/human/human97/namibia.html)

groups and the Himbas.\textsuperscript{34} The explanation to this is primarily, in Daniels words, “[Namibia’s] inconsistent approaches to development and a lack of policies that appreciate the marginalised position of indigenous communities” (2003:67). According to Daniels, Namibia is no exception to the wide-reaching neglect of indigenous rights. A further problem for Namibia though is that the “structural poverty” is so profoundly ingrained in Namibia. As a reason, the future of the Namibian indigenous people in the end is dependent on the accomplishment of the Namibian economy altogether. Moreover, Daniels claims that if no emphasis and attention is put on the actual causes of the marginalised status of San and Himba, the San groups who will most likely subsist a dependent lower class, in need of resources from the state (2003:68).

The San Groups

Another severe aspect for the San groups is, according to Suzman, the quandary of identifying the San groups as if they were merely one social category. While some San language groups identify themselves (and are labelled by others), as San (though mostly as ‘Bushmen’) there are many other groups that do not recognise such a simple categorisation (2001:2). However, Suzman continues, there is one common feature for all San groups, namely their shared status as belonging to a Namibian underclass. Accordingly, the San groups consist of many different language groups, language groups that in turn have many different dialects. Formerly the different local San language groups used to identify themselves first and foremost with their own local group, today however, labelling themselves as San or Bushmen is getting widespread, Suzman claims (2001:3). This development, Suzman continues, “reflects a newly evolving sense of collective identity that draws as much on their shared marginal socio-economic status and shared perceptions of alienation and disenfranchisement as it does on their common socio-linguistic, economic and genetic heritage”(2001:3).

From the above section of \textit{Ethnic Relations in Namibia} we understand that the meaning of ethnicity, the labelling and categorisation of people, is a delicate and complex subject, due to the reference to apartheid. However, at the same time it continues to be an important marker of social status and identification, enclosing prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. In the upcoming section we will go somewhat deeper into the politics of Namibia’s former liberation movement that after independence transformed into a political party. We will elaborate on the processes of reconciliation, and subsequently present the SWAPO’s opposition parties and the

\textsuperscript{34} The San and above all the Himbas are the groups of people who in some areas still live a traditional life.
phenomenon of ‘ethnic voting’. At last a short passage will recall the most recent Namibian election that was held in November 2004.

Postcolonial Politics

After the liberation struggle SWAPO apprehended the legal political power in Namibia, and the party has remained in power since. In the first chapter in *Re-Examining Liberation in Namibia, Political Culture since Independence* (2003) Henning Melber discusses the phenomenon of ‘postcolonial political culture’ that he claims has arisen in several of the former colonies in Southern Africa, among them in Namibia. According to Melber’s point of view, several problematical issues and complex difficulties emerge out of the phenomenon of liberation movements transforming into political parties and subsequently gaining power and political control. Political parties that transpire from liberation movements repeatedly lack democratic dedication, Melber claims. Additionally, they tend to discard political ideas and ideologies that used to be central elements within the liberation movement (2003:9-10).

After independence liberation movements took over the control and transformed into political parties in several Southern African countries, for instance in Zimbabwe, South Africa and in Namibia. The time for independence varies but nonetheless, Melber claims, methodological similarities in how liberation movements captured the control over the state apparatus and acknowledged themselves as political parties can be spotted. Melber writes about “a new ruling political elite” characterised by narratives and memories of the liberation struggle (2003:10). Liberation movements often are organised in a relatively hierarchical mode. This is recurrently also the reason for succeeding as well, the most hierarchal and strictly organised movements are the ones that manage to seize and control. Moreover, the post colonial, new societies still contain a great deal of what it once struggled against, “aspects of the colonial system reproduced themselves in the struggle for its abolition and subsequently in the concepts of governance applied in postcolonial conditions. New societies share the binary view of the colonial discourse of the past” (2003:12)\(^35\). In accordance, Melber discusses the view of Abrahamsen, as she emphasises the significance of being aware of the relationship between power, discourse and political institutions. According to Melber, Abrahamsen asserts that resistance in a coloniser/colonised relationship cannot only be seen as a binary relationship. We have to go one step further; resistance cannot be identified as sheer

\(^{35}\) Binary oppositions suggests duality or twofoldness, it describes something that has two different parts. A term frequently employed by poststructuralists.
opposition towards its dominator. Resistance must be seen as a force that works inside a structure of power, a structure that it simultaneously challenges and facilitates to maintain. Consequently, in postcolonial national identity-building Melber maintains, antagonistic or aggressive rhetoric is frequently used as an instrument of inclusion or exclusion. Melber indicates that even though the ruling postcolonial parties promote and strive towards reconciliation and the reunification of different peoples, ethnic groups or “tribes”, this is not observable on the political arena where political diversity is opposed rather than encouraged. Present instead is a dichotomy of ‘we and them’, “if you are not with the liberator (as represented by the movement, now party and state), you are considered to be the enemy” (2003:10). Despite the brutal suppression the liberation movements and its people suffered during the years, it did not prevent the liberation movements themselves to exploit and mistreat the power it obtained with the liberation movement. This phenomenon could be observed in several of the Southern African colonies fighting for independence (2003:10-13).

SWAPO, Liberators and Politicians
In Namibia then, SWAPO remodelled itself after independence and became a political party. This “made up the government, occupied the state structures and executed control over the political sphere within Namibian society” altogether, Melber claims (2003:13). It is remarkable, according to Melber, that when it comes to political development in Namibia since after independence SWAPO, the former liberation movement, has constantly strengthened its dominant role and opposition parties never succeeded in genuinely challenging the SWAPO party. Melber36 is strongly critical towards the way that the party has executed their power, among other things to disguise their own errors and mistakes. For instance the Namibian strategy of national reconciliation helped the liberators to hamper dialogues on violations of human rights “within their own ranks” (2003:20). Melber furthermore raises some, as he puts it, “disturbing features” (2003:20), with reference to Namibia’s political culture as an independent country. A survey conducted among six African countries at the turn of the millennium places Namibia last “in terms of public awareness of democracy” (2003:21). A further survey shows that among six Southern African states, Namibia was the only country “in which a large majority would not accept a defeat of its party” (read the SWAPO party) (2003:18-21).

36 Yet, significant to note here is Melber’s disagreements with SWAPO administration and management (as well as the reasons of why he left the country). Melber was an active and most politically involved member of the political party SWAPO.
Under the headline “Namibia and ‘the pitfalls of national consciousnesses’”, Melber further questions SWAPO’s leadership. The quote, “the pitfalls of national consciousnesses”, is taken from Franz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (2002), where Fanon according to Melber utters his repulsion against new elites that after independence have grown strong in former colonies in Africa. According to Melber, Fanon gives expression to the thoughts that representatives of the new states were using “pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric” as a deceptive cover-up (2003:23). Moreover, Melber refers to the ideas of Johnson (2002) in claiming that national liberation movements share ‘a common theology’ and that two assumptions can be said to exist within liberation movements. First, the national liberation movements cannot be wrong, “whatever venal sins they may commit” (2003:22). Second, the national liberation movement coming to power symbolises the end of a process. In relation to this Melber discusses SWAPO’s aggressive rhetoric and its support of the Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe. SWAPO’s open support of Mugabe and his politics, especially his strain to stay in power, simultaneously and accordingly became a struggle for SWAPO’s urge to stay in power in Namibia (2003:22). For instance, at a congress for Namibia Public Workers Union (NAPWU) Namibia’s president Sam Nujoma gave a speech about the necessity to fight neo-colonialism and western ideas by stating: “We must defend our selves […] we will not allow these lesbians and gays. We fought the liberation struggle without that”. Further also, “We have whites who are Namibians, but […] they have no right to force their culture on anyone. If they are lesbian, they can do it at home. […] I warn you as workers not to allow homosexuality. Africa will be destroyed” (2003:22, from *The Namibian*, August 19, 2002).

The republic of Namibia still has, thus, a long way to go. It falls short on living up to the principles of the liberation movements, such as ‘social equality’ and Human Rights (2003:24). As it is today, postcolonial political cultures, like the Namibian, lack democratic dedication to a large extent. Moreover, Melber is, as formerly stated, critical towards the abuse of power that according to him occurred even within the liberation movements, “they were not always sensitive to human rights issues” (2003:9).

One example of a milder but questionable act carried out by SWAPO could be its recruitment and education of Namibian children in Germany, the DDR-kids. During the years of independence war (mainly during the eighties) SWAPO and the communist East German
Government that supported SWAPO with both funds and material, had a shared project of educating Namibian (Owambo) children in East Germany with the ambition of creating a sophisticated elite to govern the Namibian freedom fighters and the future Namibia (Cambridge University, www.srcf.ucam.org). The educational syllabus for these over 400 Owambo children incorporated weapon instruction and military drills, in accordance with bodily and oral abuse as well as systematic ideological indoctrination of the cause. Many of the children were orphans, but even so they were all sent back to Namibia subsequent to the liberation of the Namibian people and the fall of the Berlin wall (of course numerous refugees and freedom fighters in exile returned to Namibia as well), where they alone had to struggle with their complex identities, in a home country that, though claimed as theirs, they had only heard about from others. Today these children are young people who clearly still identify themselves with Germany (www.srcf.ucam.org, and www.k-hess-verlag.de).

Namibian Reconciliation
Magnus Berg in Förlåta men inte glömma (2004) examines and discusses, amongst other issues, the Namibian ruling party SWAPO’s reluctance towards a confronting of the past. He holds a sceptical attitude towards why SWAPO did not follow the path of ANC in South Africa and established a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” to investigate crimes and infringements committed during the apartheid era to be able to move on and get over the past and as Berg says “begin a new nation-building”(our own translation, 2004:303). In the article Truth and Reconciliation, the Road not taken in Namibia (2003) Paul Conway discusses SWAPO’s, by many questioned, decision to disregard its opportunity to come at ease with history in the same manner as Berg.

After the South African independence, Conway holds, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in South Africa with the purpose of investigating crimes and violations of the Human Rights committed during the apartheid era. The initiative was taken by the African National Congress (ANC) headed by Nelson Mandela. Archbishop and freedom fighter Desmond Tutu was appointed the TRC chairman. The starting point of these investigations was allegations of Human Rights violations committed by ANC in military training camps outside South Africa37 (Berg 2004, Diener 2001). Accordingly these

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37 According to Davis Lush in Last Steps to Uhuru, (1993) these issues occupied a great deal of attention during the time leading up to the first national election in Namibia, when the witnesses and victims of SWAPO atrocities (absurdly accused of espionage) begun to return.
accusations were investigated and it became visible that some of the accusations were definitely true. However, it was argued that these crimes had to be considered in the light of the crude apartheid rule and all cruel violations of Human Rights that people had been exposed to during that time. Along these lines, Berg claims, the violations in some way needed to be reviled and discovered whereby the TRC was founded (2004: 123). One of the most characteristic and crucial element of the process was that no penalties were imposed; in its place, amnesty was granted. According to Conway (2003), without the assurance of acquiring amnesty, individuals who committed crimes neither would confess nor give information and testimonies of human rights violations. In Namibia however, the reconciliation process was allegedly instigated without any admissions or confessions of atrocities committed during the liberation war, the people were instead encouraged to forgive and forget. Though the question whether this national amnesia ever functioned still remains.

In Namibia, despite the similar record in history as South Africa, the SWAPO (the South West Africa People’s Organisation) party choice not to duplicate South Africa in this matter, a decision that has been questioned repeatedly. Conway writes, “in Namibia, as in South Africa, thousands of people disappeared during the struggle against apartheid […] an important question is why nothing comparable happened in neighbouring Namibia “ (2003:66). Conway holds that the South African authorities were certainly accountable for an immense quantity of political felonies that took part during the apartheid era in Namibia. In Namibia, however, the liberation movement SWAPO, just as ANC in South Africa, were faced with accusations concerning alleged human rights violations within their own ranks. Though, contrary to ANC, the only investigation that SWAPO initiated to address the accusations on them or the crimes committed by the colonisers, was an investigation coordinated by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC). This enquiry, Conway states, was “tentative” as well as “inconclusive”. The ICRC was only allowed to look into materials and information that the governments in Namibia, South Africa, Angola, Botswana and Zambia approved to present to them. Accordingly, Conway writes, “[a]fter the ICRC investigation, Namibia’s government simply declared a policy of national reconciliation had been accomplished” (2003:69).

Numerous discussions have taken place regarding the question of why the Namibian government chose not to sort out the past methodically. Among others (Melber included), Conway is fairly critical towards the party today. He is of the opinion that the absence of a
TRC in Namibia is a cause of SWAPO objectives to cover up their own mistakes not to “embarrass or damage high-ranking officials” (2003:71). Moreover, it appears possible that several of the human rights violations that occurred within SWAPO (towards soldiers and adherents) were typified by ethnic prejudice, in favour of the Ovambo majority group. Conway states that SWAPO volunteers who were non-Ovambo (Herero, Damara, Nama or from other minority groups) occasionally could be accused of infidelity merely due to the fact that they belonged to another ethnic group. David Lush writes in *Last Steps to Uhuru: An Eye-Witness Account of Namibia’s Transition to Independence* (1993) about the emergence of the hundreds of SWAPO detainees’ (perhaps around 800, though not even the UNHCR could offer the accurate amount of people detained by SWAPO, 1993:201) accounts and evidence based accusations of cruelties and torture during the time before the first national election. The much-debated detainees were SWAPO members involved in the struggle, who many of them were accused of espionage, and most of the time by Kwanyama-speakers. One of the most famous detainees, a founding member of SWAPO who went into exile during the liberation war, Andreas Shipanga, had spent five years in imprisonment but returned to join the interim government with his party SWAPO-D (Democrats) (1993:163; 198; 204).

**Brain Drain and Affirmative Action**

In South Africa several reasons, ideological as well as practical, triggered the establishment of the TRC, according to Conway. One of the reasons was that the government was afraid the country would suffer a “brain-drain”, that the majority of the white, educated population would flee the country, afraid of being punished and persecuted for crimes committed or for defending the apartheid regime. Such a mass departure would have, Conway states, harmed the South African economy severely (2003:72). In Namibia on the other hand, the risk of a “brain-drain” was never immediate since the constitution prescribed all existing appointments to be prolonged after independence. Lush (1993) also writes about the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness due to the feared brain drain, but adds that as importantly, or perhaps more so, the feared for effect was that the whites would take with them their money if they fled the country, and hence leave Namibia almost bankrupt (1993:194-5).

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38 Oshikwanyama, one of the Oshiwambo dialects.
39 However it is today clear that young white Namibians attend universities and job opportunities abroad and skip the predominantly black UNAM, and the job market in Namibia.
Affirmative action is inscribed in the Constitution of Namibia, article 23, in favour for the earlier “disadvantaged” groups of people (due to the structurally grim apartheid practice), but simultaneously it states that racial discrimination is prohibited. Diener (2001) writes that the issue of affirmative action bears the same dichotomising problem as equality and balancing between the ethnic groups. Egalitarianism and equivalence cannot come if (sometimes unjust) labels and comprehensions of the dissimilarities between the identity groups are equalised. The old ethnicity denoting letters on the doors in parts of Katatura, the shantytown outside Windhoek are still there and as well are other ethnic markers, hence balance between the ethnies are still far away (2001:252). With the risk of being eliminated or pensioned, along the lines of affirmative action, there might also be a certain risk of brain drain. However, article 141 in The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, spells out that “any person holding office under any law in force on the date of Independence shall continue to hold such office unless and until he or she resigns or is retired, transferred or removed from office in accordance with law” (The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, article 141:1). According to Conway this in addition to the government’s assurance not to prosecute war criminals made the white population stay in Namibia (2003:72).

To return to Berg, SWAPO’s hesitation for a reconciliation commission to set to work with the allegations, has to do with the desire to maintain the image of SWAPO representatives as being “heroes”, or the liberation movement personified, for which the population should be nothing but thankful. To admit alleged cases of crimes could severely damage the SWAPO party and its members’ reputation as freedom fighters and politicians. It would then as a consequence, Berg claims, weaken and harm the nation-building. The questions, however, remain, as one of them according to Berg, is “what the [national] affinity is worth that rests on such a fragile and foundation” (our own translation, 2004:303). Hence, SWAPO’s decision not to follow the method of reconciliation in South Africa is, we understand, questioned by many. The efforts to unify and harmonize the population formerly on categorically different sides of the rigid apartheid barrier are truly uncertain and debatable.

Political Resistance: Opposition Parties
Besides the SWAPO party Namibia’s political arena encloses several other parties that are trying to challenge the dominant former liberation movement. In the last election that took place in November 2004 not less than nine parties competed about the votes of the
numerically small Namibian population. The prime competitor at present is the CoD, the Congress of Democrats followed by the DTA, Democratic Turnhalle Alliance. SWAPO’s lead has, however, been substantial since the first election in 1989, and it still is unthreatened. The Namibian parliament encloses 72 seats. SWAPO possesses 55 of them, CoD 5, and DTA 4. The remaining 8 seats are divided up between other parties (http://www.grnnet.gov.na).

The Congress of Democrats, CoD was established in March 1999. The initiator was the former SWAPO member Ben Ulenga who was unsatisfied with the SWAPO party and its president Sam Nujoma. In Guide to Namibian Politics (2004) by Graham Hopwood it is stated, “SWAPO immediately saw CoD as an electoral threat and […] President Sam Nujoma warned that there was ‘euphoria’ among the youth about the party”(2004:44). However, Hopwood continues, CoD thus far has not been able to challenge SWAPO but gained most of its votes in its first election in 1999 from other SWAPO opposition parties (2004:44). DTA was established as early as 1977 as an effect of the Turnhalle Constitutional Conference held in 1977 (see our section of history). Prior to independence, South Africa aimed at achieving internal agreement in Namibia in order to (exclude and) diminish the support for SWAPO, by establishing the Turnhalle Alliance that later on became DTA. According to Hopwood the DTA is often even today rebuffed, by SWAPO and others, as a “South African-controlled ‘puppet’” (2004:46). At the time of independence the party enjoyed quite a strong support and at Namibia’s first election to the constituent assembly in 1989 the DTA gained 28,5 percent of the votes. Since then though, the support has gradually decreased. Other significant parties are (for instance) the Republican Party (RP) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) as well as the former labour movement South West Africa National Union (SWANU) (2004:46-47).

‘Ethnic Voting’?

According to Suzman (2002), SWAPO to a great extent get its support from the Owambo group. In the 1999 elections for example, between 93 and 99 percent of the votes on the party came, according to Suzman, from individuals of the Owambo groups. This fact evidently influences the party politics (2002:15).

In connection, Magnus Berg in Förlåta men inte glömma (2004) discusses the possible relationship between ethnicity and party politics. Is there a connection? Berg holds that to state that ethnicity alone decides the structure of Namibian party politics would be a
simplification (2004:162). Several surveys indicate that the SWAPO party and its opposition parties do not obtain all their votes from one and the same ethnic group, thus people of a specific ethnic group do not necessarily vote for a specific party. However, Berg claims that at the same time, there are many indications of ‘ethnic voting’. According to a survey 90 percent of the Owambo enquired claimed that they “liked” or “strongly liked” the SWAPO party, 65 percent of the Hereros enquired equally “liked” or “strongly liked” the DTA and 60 percent of the Damaras enquired declared the same thing about the party UDF (United Democratic Front) (2004:163). Moreover, Berg in accordance asserts, there are signs in the Namibian society of what he calls “ethnic mobilisation for ethnic-political goals” (own translation 2004:166). The example Berg raises concerns an incident where a group of Hereros marched from the outskirts of Windhoek into the governmental buildings to demonstrate their dissatisfaction about the government’s management of traditional leaders and their customary law (2004:166).

The 2004 Election

A few days after the recent election in November 2004 Henning Melber writes in the article Namibian Elections: over before it began-but where are the fruits of liberation? on www.pambazuka.org, “it does not require any prophetic magic to predict the obvious results of Namibia’s parliamentary and Presidential Elections […] SWAPO […] will retain its two-third majority and will continue to govern in an absolutist and authoritarian fashion within a de facto one party state”( www.pambazuka.org). Further on in the article he additionally states that within the SWAPO party there is actually a more noticeable split, than ever before. However, he sustains, even if that is the case there is practically nothing that can threaten SWAPO at this stage.

On the website of the Africa Groups of Sweden, Cecilia Strand, positioned in Windhoek, Namibia, writes about Namibia’s most recent election focusing on the pre-electoral accusations against the SWAPO party for alleged electoral rigging. In December 2004, the majority of the opposition parties made common cause to try to prove that SWAPO’s many dubious undertakings during the election were “systematically” used in order to influence the outcome of the election. The ambition has been to get the November parliamentary and presidential election declared invalid. One of the concerns, Strand writes, is that the number that took part in a ballot, or at least who registered for the then upcoming election, actually
exceeds the estimated number of the population over 18 years old. More clearly, there were more registered voters than people over 18. According to the Namibian the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of November 2004, CoD spokesperson Ignatius Shixwameni held: “How on earth could close to a million people, which is more than half the total Namibian population, could have managed to register as voters if the 2001 census report indicates that indeed more than 51 per cent of the Namibian population are below the age of 17 years” (CoD Demands Vote Audit by Petros Kuteeue, The Namibian, November 22, 2004, www.namibian.com.na). Almost one million had been registered as qualified voters, however Namibia has only got around 1.9 million people. Moreover, votes made at foreign embassies and similar were not counted nor included in the final result (www.namibian.com.na).

A disturbing matter was also that many of the votes were made without adequate identification cards, or other proof of identity. Additionally, in a dried out riverbed ballot-papers were found that were not counted. Close-by more of them were found, some of them half burnt and all of them with the vote given to one of the SWAPO opposition parties (www.namibian.com.na, Cecilia Strand www.afrikagrupperna.se). Namibian postcolonial politics clearly have been dominated by the SWAPO party. Accordingly, we have learned that the transformation of liberation movements into politicians is a problematic phenomenon for postcolonial Africa and Namibia since much of the politics of SWAPO contain elements that the party once fought against. Included in the previous section was a presentation of the political climate in Namibia today.

Nation-Building and Ethnic Tensions

“The challenge that remains for the nation is to join hands and march forward in unity. As a united nation we shall conquer every challenge and overcome every obstacle” (Anonymous, www.grnnet.gov.na). According to Suzman in Minorities in Independent Namibia (2002) the ruling SWAPO party declared, straight after the Namibian independence, that nation-building was a main concern. However, Namibia is a heterogeneous society consisting of roughly eleven main language-or folk groups (repeatedly identified as ethnic groups as well), the majority is the Owambo group and as formerly stated there are ten other groups, which makes nation-building a complicated undertaking (2002:3)\textsuperscript{40}. Suzman asserts that the Namibian nation-building and construction of a \textit{national identity} among other things required “the

\textsuperscript{40} Appendix 5.
subordination of individual ethnic identities in favour of a broader, all-encompassing, national identity” (2002:10). SWAPO’s assured preference to build a nation and a national identity mirrored, according to Suzman, its ambition to take apart the apartheid structures invented by the South African regime (2002:10). In connection, the newly elected (November 2004) President Hifikepunye Pohamba states on the official governmental website:

Now, more than ever, we must be united. Just as unity was vital in the liberation struggle, it is still very important for the implementation of our common objectives. That is the only way in which the nation can prioritise its needs and fully exploit its potential. A divided community spends valuable time in internal wrangles that can only sap its strength and ensure its failure. In the famous words of my predecessor, Comrade Nujoma, “a people united, striving to achieve common good for all members of the society, will always emerge victorious” (www.grnnet.gov.na).

However, after independence, Suzman continues, the government had to deal with the complications of constructing a nation entailing numerous ethnic identities. This then was an arduous task, Suzman writes, since the government had to, if they wanted to succeed, assure minorities but also to “demonstrate a commitment to the continuity of the once relatively autonomous ‘tribal’ authority structures and the legitimacy of customary law within the former homelands” (2002:10). Many communities, especially those who in some way had opposed SWAPO, were worried about what would really happen to them in independent Namibia (like communities in the Caprivi region). The Namibian government on the other hand was, Suzman holds, concerned about the diversity of the Namibian people and if tensions emerged, what that could do to the Namibian nation-building. Thus, the government arranged formal meetings with participants from the various communities to discuss their future in relation to connected matters, such as the function of customary law and traditional leadership. During these debates, however, Suzman claims, it became apparent that a “strong central state” would reinstate any past autonomies of ethnic communities. Additionally, under the new constitution, customary law would still “remain valid”, but only on condition that it did not collide with Namibia’s rule of constitutional or statutory law (2002:10).
Ethnic Tensions

The Namibian nation building is according to Berg, taking place in the tensions between on the one hand a national political elite and on the other reasonably strong ethnic affiliations. In Berg’s view the tensions must be considered as moderate, however, there are indicators of that not all Namibians are in all satisfied with Namibian nation-building. Berg highlights two examples to demonstrate this manner, namely the Rehoboth basters’ call for autonomy in Namibia as well as the Caprivi uprising, in Berg’s view probably the most serious threat towards the Namibian nation building so far (2004:255).

In 1999, Caprivian secessionists attacked the police station, the military base, and the NBC radio station in Katima Mulilo in eastern Caprivi (http://africanhistory.about.com). The violent outbreak that resulted in many severe injuries and causalities is attributable to a decade-long conflict in Caprivi that originates in disturbances between the Namibian post-war government and groups of people from San groups in the village Omega concerning their involvement in and support for the South African Defence Forces (SADF) during the independence war. The President Sam Nujoma declared a state of emergency for the Caprivi Strip that was sustained for almost a month due to the riots. In 2000 some French tourists were attacked and killed in the vicinity of the Caprivi region but whether this is due to the Caprivi uprising and its circumstances or due to Namibia’s involvement in the close-by civil war in Angola is not entirely clear (the Angolan UNITA has among other things mined the roads of northern and north-eastern Namibia). According to Daniels both Angolan and Namibian forces have been accused of violating Human Rights during these years, especially against the San communities in the Kavango and Caprivi Regions (Daniels in Melber, 2003).

Moreover, the colonial heritage in general, Berg holds, makes nation-building a difficult project in Namibia (2004:53). Independence and the introduction of democracy evidently did not automatically transform the socio-economic structures of Namibia. Racial imprints are yet exceedingly present and disparities between people that can be traced back to apartheid and the colonial era are still significant. Thus, even though the contemporary Constitution and the

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41 See Pre-colonial History, page 40.
42 Namibian Broadcasting Corporation, the national TV and Radio network that clearly changed character after independence.
43 Formerly known as Camp Alpha, a military base for the SADF and the 31 Battalion made up of San soldiers, see The Bushman Myth by Gordon and Sholto Douglas, 2000.
44 Since different sources claim the perpetrators affiliation differently. See for example http://africanhistory.about.com.
government of democratic Namibia encloses the political conditions for a more equal Namibia, plenty needs to be accomplished before “equal citizenship” can become reality, and more than a political objective. However, this is a difficult task, Berg agrees, since South African and transnational companies as well as white farmers and entrepreneurs still to a vast extent hold the economic power in Namibia. The black population in Namibia are extremely poor (2004:54-55).

In An Assessment of the Status of the San in Namibia (2001) James Suzman draws attention to facts presented by UNDP in 1999, grading Namibia as one of the most unequal countries in the world when it comes to income distribution (2001:7). Suzman further accentuates this by presenting some figures of the socio-economic unequal state between different groups in Namibia, as according to the UNDP in 1998. However, the figures of life expectancy have decreased dramatically during the last few years, above all due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as the general life expectancy for all groups now, 2005, is only about 44 years, placing Namibia at the 180th ranking of the 195 in the world (www.studentsoftheworld.info, WHO), and expected to be about 40,2 years in 2006 (www.grnnet.gov.na).

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<td>German</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oshiwambo (Owambo)</td>
<td>61,3</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>1707</td>
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<td>San</td>
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A further issue that could possibly cause ethnic tensions and serve as a possible threat towards stability in Namibia is the question of land, more to the point, the unequal distribution of land, an offspring from the apartheid era that the government, despite the fact that it was on the agenda as one of the most important electoral promises in 1989-90, has not succeeded to come to terms with.

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45 Even though Namibia evidently consists of many other groups, we have chosen to display figures of three groups, our two groups in focus (San and Owambo) as well as the most affluent group, the Germans. Today some measures are taken to for instance reduce poverty (not so successful) and increase literacy in rural areas. On the whole, some of the figures have changed. However, despite the fact that the figures are not up to date they are still relevant indicators of the large socio-economic gaps that exist between different groups in Namibia.
The Question of Land

Thus, the question of landownership is a vastly important but all the same a sensitive question in Namibia. As Clement Daniels writes in *The Struggle for Indigenous People’s Rights* (in Melber, 2003) for most Namibians, access to land is a prerequisite for surviving. Nonetheless, Namibian land is to a great extent still extremely unequally allocated. At the time of independence the government immediately approached the issue of how to relocate the Namibian land that had been so unequally distributed during the colonial rule and the apartheid era. However, despite the approximately 15 years that have past since independence and the initiatives that in actuality have been taken, Namibian land is far from equally distributed (2001:259). According to Mari Dahl Adolfssson who writes about the issue on the Africa Groups of Sweden webpage, approximately 4000 individuals, the great majority of them white, own about 6400 farms. The farms cover, according to Dahl Adolfsson, 44 percent of Namibia’s entire surface, but also 80 percent of Namibia’s fertile land, suitable for agriculture and cattle breeding (www.afrikagrupperna.se).

As Wolfgang Werner writes in *The Land Question in Namibia* (in Diener and Greafe, 2001) a land conference was held in Namibia in July 1992. The aim of the conference, Werner holds, was to reach a “national consensus” concerning the land question. All in line with Namibia’s strategy of national unity and reconciliation (2001:265). One of the main subjects of debate at the conference was, according to Werner, the one about ancestral land that had been appropriated by European settlers. The main concern was whether it ought to become possible in the future to claim compensation for that lost land (2001:266). The turn out was negative as it was considered to be unattainable to achieve such compensations. In 1995 the Agricultural (commercial) Land Reform Act was passed. The reform act gives the government the right to buy land as soon as any landowner wants to sell. At the same time as the Land Reform Act came into being a committee was established (the Land Reform Advisory Committee, LRAC). When the state buys land the committee, among other things, advises and makes recommendations to the minister on how to relocate the land. According to the Act, land should be offered to, “Namibian citizens who do not own or otherwise have the use of agricultural land or adequate agricultural land, and foremost to those Namibians who have been socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged by past discriminatory laws and practices”(2001:268).
Thus, soon after independence it was decided that landowners who did not wish to sell land did not have to, but that those who wanted to had to sell the land to the government who then in turn would sell the land auspiciously to black farmers, all according to the Land Reform Act of 1995 (Berg, 2004:143). The consequence of this however, Dahl Adolfsson writes, was that the government could not redistribute land faster than the landowners wanted to sell the land. Quite rightly, the landowners have not sold as much land as the government hoped that they would. Each year the government has put aside 20 million Namibian dollars for the purpose of buying land; however, the entire amount has not yet been spent. Another problem has also been that land purchased by the government often is clearly of poor quality or located in dry or arid areas (Mari Dahl Adolfsson, www.afrikagrupperna.se).

Most of the Namibians are communal farmers carrying out self-supporting farming. According to Daniels approximately 65 percent of the Namibian population actually practise what he calls “subsistence agropastoralism on communal land” on a smaller area than is shared by the 10 percent of the population (mostly white) that are commercial farmers (2003:58). A further problem is that the Namibian communal land is, as Daniels asserts, clearly state-owned. Thus the communal farmers cultivate and live on land that they do not own, a fact that according to Daniels often makes farmers unmotivated as well as less concerned about the land. In accordance with Adolfsson, Werner as well holds that even though the government has taken initiatives to come to terms with the question of land not much has actually been done. The former president Sam Nujoma regularly made public statements concerning the issue. At some occasions he has turned directly to the commercial farmers, demanding them to sell. Non-commercial farmers in turn have warned the commercial farmers that if they do not sell land their farms will be occupied and taken from them. A possible consequence then is that the situation develops in the same direction as it has in neighbouring Zimbabwe. This has accordingly been a subject of debate, especially for reason of the fear of white farmers and the evident support for Mugabe by former president Nujoma (Berg, 2003, www.afrikagrupperna).

As seen above, the debate raised after independence concerning possible compensation for ancestral land taken during the colonial era will not come about. However, Daniels writes if such a thing would have become reality the San groups would be, he says, “entitled to claim much of Namibia” (2003:58) then that would also be a reason for the government to go against it. The San groups and other exposed minority groups are especially affected by the
imbalanced distribution of land, and in connection to this Daniels writes, “due to their [the San] vulnerable social structure, poverty and insecurity, San communities remain under threat from stronger and better organised ethnic groups” (2003:59). He claims that as long as the state does not grant sufficient protection, the San groups will remain “vulnerable to dispossession”. Moreover he holds many San leaders have requested that land given to them should be “exclusively under their control”. This requirement is partly induced by the knowledge, Daniels asserts, “that others often perceive land occupied by the San to be ‘open land’”(2003:59).

Hence with this, we have addressed aspects of governmental actions concerning Namibian nation-building, as well as possible threats to the unification of Namibia’s people. We will now turn to the analysis of the interviews conducted in Namibia.

The Interviews

In this section our main undertaking is to analyse and theoretically anchor the 22 interviews we conducted in Namibia for this essay. Thus, the voices of our respondents are in focus although the issues of the historical, and the contemporary parts will to some extent be commented on and analysed in relation to the interviews. The analysis will be divided into four themes that allude to four theoretical key concepts/elements presented in the theoretical framework. The themes of analysis are: (1) Nationalism, (2) Ethnicity, (3) National versus Ethnic Identity and (4) Postcolonial Nation-Building. Moreover, as formerly clarified, fragments of postcolonial theory persistently permeates the entire essay. Before analysing we will present our focus groups in a somewhat more detailed manner than before.

Thesis Focus Groups

As presented above, we have chosen to focus on two different ethnic categorisations in Namibia, the San and the Owambo. In this section we will give a short but inclusive presentation of the two groups, since there is a lot more to convey than presented in this section. Before we embark on our presentation, we want to address the importance of being cautious with the taxonomy when labelling and categorising people into distinct grouping. As we have said before, the situation regarding this might well be complex and sensitive, especially in Namibia as a cause of apartheid and white domination when the colonial powers divided people into suitable and rational categories, for the satisfaction of Europe and the
colonisers. Evidently, as will become clear throughout the course of this essay, the issues of ethnic categories in contemporary and independent Namibia is complicated and multifaceted.

The Owambo Groups

Eleven distinct language groups have been (evidently) identified in Namibia, and it is from those that eleven generic ethnic groups have been classified as well. The by far largest group is the Owambo group who makes up approximately half of the Namibian population\(^{46}\) (as well as the most of the political, ruling SWAPO party). Thus, the Owambo groups, or as Suzman writes in *Minorities in Independent Namibia* (2002) the Owambo language groups, denoting people who speak some of the dialects of the Oshiwambo language, is the majority group in Namibia. However, to make it even more complicated, the language Oshiwambo is divided into approximately seven different subgroups with their entirely own dialects of the Owambo group\(^{47}\). Before the South African authority gained power over Namibia, the Owambo groups were made up of several independent “kingdoms” that were not always at ease with each other even though they, to a great extent, shared a common culture and languages. Today however, Suzman claims that broadly speaking most of them “identify themselves as Owambo”(2002:6). The majority of the Owambo people reside in the northern part of Namibia still known as “Owamboland” or “the Owambo” even though many, especially young people, have left the countryside for a (sub)urban life, mainly then in the ‘black’ shantytowns outside the larger towns. Today Owamboland is divided into, what usually is called the 4 'O' regions: Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshana and Oshikoto (www.namibian.org). The Owambo people are originally farmers and they practice both agriculture (mahango [maize] or millet) and cattle farming and even today self-supporting farming (agriculture and cattle breeding) is a common source of income. They are however rarely involved in commercial farming (www.afrikagrupperna.se). The farming is complemented by fishing from the shallow pools (the oshanas) that characterise the region. Additionally, one other source of income for many Owambos today is the cuca shops (small bars) and the food markets.

\(^{46}\) Appendix 5.

\(^{47}\) In Namibia, those are roughly: Kwanyama, Ndonga, Kwambi, Ngandjera, Mbalanhu (Mbalantu), Kwaluudhi and Eunda according to the CIA factbook and http://peopleteams.org, in Angola however there are about four more subgroups.
Upheld by customary law for many years, the Owambos have traditionally practised a matrilineal system for matters of inheritance and succession, however during the last decades the system has shifted towards a patrilineal society. This shift occurred along the lines of the introduction of the colonial system, in which women suffered a subordinated roll. Thus, during many years, the wife lost everything, property and resources, to the family of the husband, in the event of his death. Today that system is shifted once again so that the woman would not be left with nothing but children and their necessities in an extremely exposed and vulnerable position (www.namibian.org).

**The San Groups**

“The indigenous people at the centre of this book do not see themselves as a single integrated unit, nor do they call themselves by a single name; it follows thus that the notion and image of the “Bushmen” must be a European or settler concept” (Gordon and Sholto Douglas, 2000:4). Our second focus group is the San, or the ‘Bushmen’ as they are commonly labelled. The authors Robert J. Gordon and Stuart Sholto Douglas in *The Bushman Myth, The Making of a Namibian Underclass* (2000) even claim that practically everybody in Namibia uses the term ‘Bushmen’. In most academic discourses, however, the term Bushmen is left on behalf of the term San, which we as well have chosen to employ in our essay. Yet, as the above quote equally suggests, the group labelled as San or Bushmen is not in any way one single integrated group or unit, the misleading label hides numerous different groups of different cultures, speaking different languages. The homogenisation of groups according to Gordon and Sholto Douglas is based on an image invented by the colonisers. Accordingly, Gordon and Sholto Douglas focus precisely on that invented image of the Bushmen and what that construction has implied for the people who are believed to fit in to that category (2000:5).

During the colonial era the term ‘Bushmen’ was seen as a “‘lumpen category’ into which all those who failed to conform or acquiesce were dumped” (2000:6). Evidently, the term carries very bad connotations as a consequence. However, Gordon and Sholto Douglas emphasise that one have to be aware of that merely changing the name to, for instance, ‘San’ does not mean that racism and discrimination automatically gets diminished or vanishes. As a consequence Gordon and Sholto Douglas have chosen not to apply any other term than Bushmen. Correspondingly their focus on the meaning of the term was developed because of the need, for a modification of the racism and bigotry that the San still have to endure, to take
place. Yet, ‘San’ is, in fact, also a derogatory name\(^{48}\). Thus, as seen through this essay there are several complex aspects involved in the labelling of our second thesis group that we, as well as the reader, have to bear in mind throughout the essay. Although we, will continue to use the term San, among other things because we did not want to use ‘Bushmen’ in our interviews when speaking to people directly. Throughout the essay we will still be aware of all the complicated aspects entailed in the issue.

According to James Suzman in *An assessment of the Status of San in Namibia* (2001), Namibia is home to between 30 000 and 37 000 San, who comprise less than 2 percent of the national population\(^ {49}\). The majority of the San groups are located in the north and east of Namibia and, Suzman claims, most of them reside as minorities in Namibian “commercial farming areas” and “communal areas”\(^ {2001:xvii}\). According to Suzman, in particular during the South African authority (but also prior to that) the San groups became extensively marginalised. Almost all their land was seized by the colonial authority and by 1970, Suzman holds, less than 3 percent had (“even limited”) *de jure* rights to land in Namibia (2001:5). During the South African rule, the situation for the San differed quite distinct from other ethnic groups, Suzman holds. While other groups were contracted with so-called ‘home lands’, most San groups (outside Nyae Nyae and Bushmanland) did not get the concession to be appointed an “own” ‘Bantustan’ to live in. Instead they had to reside in commercial farming areas, in areas that were allotted to other ethnic groups, as in “game reserves or national parks” \(^ {2001:5}\). The first (non-racial) government of Namibia has undertaken some initiatives to improve the situation for the San but with few positive results and for many San communities the status actually has been worsened after the dawn of Namibian independence.

A large gap between the San population groups and other Namibians persists. The per capita income of San is the lowest among all population groups in Namibia. San life expectancy is some 22 percent lower than the national average. Few San can read and write and among children very few have access to schooling.\(^ {50}\) Only one fifth of the San population have *de jure* rights to land. Many San individuals are socially stigmatised, and according to Suzman (and others), prejudice and negative stereotypes about the San are still persistent in Namibia. Moreover, none of the San communities are recognised by the government as a minority

\(^{48}\) Meaning ‘outsider’ in the khoi language Nama.
\(^{49}\) See appendix 5.
\(^{50}\) See Table one, on page 65 in *Ethnic Tensions* section.
They say: divided we fall, united we stand…”

Carolina Hamma
Johanna Sixtensson

In the same manner as Suzman, Daniels declares the San as a highly marginalised minority that, by far, are “worse off” and in greater need of support than any other group in Namibia (2003:49).

The South African Defence Force (SADF) started to incorporate people from the Vasekele and Barakwena San groups, labelled as Bushmen, into the Force as soldiers by “aggressive recruitment” in 1974 and hosted then in the “village” called Camp Alpha in the Caprivi strip (Gordon and Sholto Douglas, 2000:183-5). In 1976, Camp Alpha was renamed Omega and was at the time home to the “Bushman battalion“ or the “31 Battalion” and by means of this SADF thus declared an abolishment of racial discrimination within the force(!) (2000:186). The relationship between the bulk of Namibians, particularly SWAPO affiliates and the San groups was clearly worsened through this recruitment of “Namibians”, and “the high media profile enjoyed by Bushmen soldiers added to a common perception among black Namibians that all Bushmen were SADF traitors” (2000:185). This perception was gladly added to by the SADF officers, one stated “A Bushman’s hate for SWAPO will give you the shivers….They hate SWAPO because they enslaved them and took their daughters for prostitutes” (2000:188). However, according to Gordon and Sholto Douglas, although this statement is probably true to some extent, it is evident that SWAPO contested the SADF exploitation of the San soldiers and declared instead that they had no resent at all against “Bushmen”, saying that unfortunately the poor “Bushmen” had to receive the fire from SWAPO soldiers as they were in the frontline in order to shield the white South African soldiers (2000:189). In 1990, five days before the Namibian independence, SADF resettled 3,915 “Bushmen” who did not dare to stay in Namibia, to Kimberley in South Africa, and granted them with a South African citizenship (2000:199). Allegedly it was this whole account that summoned up to the secessionist movement in Caprivi and the Caprivi uprising in 199951.

The abuse of alcohol is a widespread and serious problem among the San groups in Namibia. Unfortunately it is not given much attention in reports. Suzman and others doing research on the social and economic situations of the San, or who are working for the rights of San do mention the problem but it is rarely elaborated on, at least not to any significant extent. Suzmans and others preference not to focus on the problem we think originates in that a common and widespread stereotype in Namibia is that “San are alcoholics”, a notion that of

51 See Ethnic Tensions, page 64.
course is far from true. However by highlighting other issues such stereotypes might diminish in favour of the position of the San in the society.

**Analysing the Interviews**

Thus, an important part of our aim is to investigate the positions and experiences of our respondents concerning their sense of national identity and nationalism in opposition to the ethnic affiliation and with reference to Namibia’s historical background and the fact that Namibia is a postcolonial state.

Before embarking on analysing the interviews we would like to remind the reader that even though we used a form of semi-structured prepared interview questions (appendix 6) we allowed the informants to elaborate on the questions. Sometimes we also had to reformulate questions in order to avoid misunderstandings and to get the most out of the respondents as possible. We will however present the questions in their original form not to confuse matters. Even though we have not made any comparisons of age (groups) of the respondents, we think it is interesting and relevant for the reader to know the age of the respondent. Hence, the age of our informants is stated within parenthesis when quoted, otherwise we write the ethnic marker a well as the sex. Their answers will be presented in *italics*.

1. Postcolonial Nationalism

In this the first section of the analysis we will start off with the concept of *nationalism* (in relation to the concept of nationstate and national identity). Our intention here mainly is to see how our informants respond to questions that allude to aspects of nationalism and national affinity. Thus the voice of our informants will be in focus. Their responds will to some extent be interrelated with other material and the theory.

We have learned from among others Hylland Eriksen (1993) that a fundamental element of the nationstate is that political and cultural boundaries should coincide. Namibia has a state, and a central government, but the nation is a more complex issue. A nation, according to Anderson (1991), must be seen as an *imagined community*, in the way that most members of the nation will never meet, or even be aware of each other’s existence, and also seeing that the limits, or borders of the community or nation will never show. Despite that, feelings of unity and alliance still endure inside the nation. A nation is further imagined as having fixed
boundaries. Beyond the imaginary borders lie the ‘other’ nations, indicating who ‘us’ is and who ‘them’ is. Feelings of nationalism then, as we recall from the theoretical framework implies the conciliation of political and cultural boundaries and the solidarity with people within the borders of what is perceived as a state. As recognized through the contemporary chapter of the study, nation-building or the construction of nationalism/national consensus has been a prioritised issue since Namibia obtained its liberty. In relation to this Laakso and Olukoshi (1996) emphasise the challenges that the former colonies are faced with when processing the construction of a new nation-state, and in that way transforming multi-ethnic countries into ‘one nation’. Moreover, in the theory we saw that Smith (1991) holds that there are two focal ways of nation-building in postcolonial states, either by applying the “dominant ethnie” (implying that the foundation of the new state’s national and political identity is made out of the culture of its dominant ethnic community) or by applying the “supra ethnic political culture” (implying different ethnic rivalries or the construction of a super ethnic national consensus). This will be further elaborated in the analysis.

In theory, and as Europe left few alternatives, Namibia is a nation and a state; a nationstate, and clearly the government strive towards a solid and firmly established nationstate. Unity is a central word in the pragmatic rhetoric of the Namibian governmental SWAPO party. The question however is how the Namibian population respond to such intents, considering the fact that Namibia consists of 11 language or ethnic categories and numerous subgroups that have been separated for so many years as an effect of the apartheid structure and the colonial method of ‘divide and conquer’. Thus to be able to obtain an idea of how people are affected by Namibian nation-building, or rather how our two informant groups are affected by it, we found it central to pose some questions relating to their feelings concerning a Namibian nation.

Thus, the first question we put in relation to nationalism and national affinity is interview question 6, \textit{is there anything that you would consider as “typically” Namibian?} As a sub question we asked if there is something that could be said to “unite” the/all Namibians. Most of the Owambo respondents mentioned \textit{culture} or something relating to culture such as \textit{traditional food} and \textit{drinks, clothing}, or the way people dress. A few were of the opinion that
meat must be something that is typically Namibian. Quite a few also mentioned language as typically Namibian. One Ovambo man thought that the Namibian languages are unique and therefore typically Namibian while an Ovambo woman (22 years old) uttered: “it is the way people talk, we understand each other, but the pronunciation and the accents are different.” This is an interesting statement since there are at least 11 distinct languages each with numerous different dialects. Our respondent, having her language Oshiwambo with all the dialects in mind, was not thinking about that they do not understand each other in between the languages in Namibia, even tough most people speak several languages. We will return to this. One Ovambo man (24 years old) said, as so many others, that the culture is typical for Namibia and that the culture needs to be protected. In relation to this he expressed his concerns for an increased influence from western cultures: “Here in Namibia we have different ethnicities. That makes us proud, we have culture [...] it is only that nowadays people are getting attracted to western ideas [...] especially the youths. At my college we have an annual cultural festival so we are trying to keep our roots and not forget because without a culture [...] if you do not know where you are from you will not know where you are heading either, so you need to know your past”.

A few times the liberation struggle and the division of people under apartheid in relation to the independence were mentioned as something not perhaps typically Namibian but rather as a unifying factor. Three Ovambo informants could not think of anything that is typically Namibian, one Ovambo man said: (50): “I do not think that there is something really Namibian” and an Ovambo woman (elderly) said: “nothing seems to be Namibian, all things we do is African”. Most of the San informants could not give an answer on this question even though we elaborated on it and gave examples. A few answered different kinds of food, and a few meant that everything in Namibia is Namibian. However, the clear majority did not know what to say or simply could not relate to the question.

Even though the Ovambo respondents did give answers to this question, the aspects most mentioned as typically Namibian, or that they saw as factors unifying the Namibian people tended to be features and traditions deriving from their own culture, the “Ovambo culture”. Almost all of them mentioned traditional food and drinks clearly alluding from their culture

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52 Meat is a one of Namibia’s most important export products. Moreover a very essential element in every “proper” meal.
(Owambo or one of the Owambo subgroups), and their close surroundings and not Namibia as a whole. Most San respondents on the other hand, could not relate to this question at all.

With question number 7 we asked **what does Namibia mean to you?** Answers and thoughts were varying but the great majority of our respondents expressed themselves with a positive terminology. Several talked about *pride, happiness, freedom* and even *love* when describing their feelings. An Owambo man (60) uttered: “I am born in Namibia, I live in Namibia, I love Namibia because it is my motherland”. A young Owambo woman (28) in the same way expresses her feelings for her motherland: “it is where I belong [...] it is where I will die”. Positive expressions were quite often mentioned with reference to the Namibian independence and the liberation struggle. A San man said, “Namibia means united, it is a unit”, another “To me Namibia means a free country, we are independent and we have freedom”. A third San man in the same manner said that Namibia means *unification* and *not apartheid*, as before.

Despite these three stated examples, a clear tendency was that informants from the Owambo groups expressed their feelings for Namibia in a more relaxed, "natural" or easy manner. Many of our San informants either did not have a comment or only gave a short and neutral answer such as “I feel good about Namibia”, “It is not a problem”, “it is our country” or only, “it is good. It is okay”.

Some informants either did not feel anything in particular, nor had a specific view in this issue. An old Owambo woman in her seventies was quite indifferent towards Namibia as a country and held that Namibia just is one out of many other African countries. On the whole she refers to herself as African and this may well be due to Namibia’s late date of independence, she has lived the great majority of her life in what was South Western Africa.

An Owambo man (around 40) gave away the following phrase: “Namibia is like an umbrella, covering everything that belongs to us. Our parents however do not know about this country [...] the country have not existed for a very long time, before it was South Western Africa and they [parents] were simply Owambo. For them Namibia is not a country”. Another Owambo man (34) also expressed a lack of national feelings on behalf of a larger African context. He said: “To be honest, Namibia does not have a real meaning to me. It only has one meaning to me and that came after independence [...] It is a symbol of freedom. But in reality it was South Western Africa, it had another name before, Namibia is just a name, but the continent itself, Africa, is the important thing to me”.

Thus most of our informants did convey positive feelings for Namibia. Especially the
Owambo respondents, but also a few San, were proud and gave expression to positive opinions. Many of the San answers were, however, rather short and the respondents frequently did not want to or knew how to elaborate on the issue. We also perceived it as some of them did not dare to speak their thoughts on this issue.

On question number 8 our informants were asked **are there any characteristics that are typically Namibian, in your eyes?** With this question we wanted examine if our informants could think of a behaviour or physical feature that could be said to be Namibian, or if it in their opinion is possible to claim that Namibians behave or look in a for Namibia specific way. Importantly to make clear here is that we are aware of that stating that all people of a nation all have common behaviours or looks that are specific for that nation are pure generalisations. However, such generalisations or stereotypes do exist and that is what is essential here. As Hylland Eriksen claims, stereotypes are used to categorise and distinguish one group from another, they are employed to make sense of the world, to justify differences and make distinctions between people so that we can distinguish the ‘self’. This is evidently important for the sake of nationalism and national identities, it helps us categorise and distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them’ and strengthen the feeling of belonging together.

Our informants were very uncertain of this question. Again the San respondents could not at all relate to the question. Some of the Owambo informants mentioned *culture* once again but were seldom more specific. A few mentioned *skin colour*, for example an Owambo woman (28) said: "most of the Namibians are black, even though we have a few white…". Similarly when the same informant brought up culture she said: “*Our culture is a little bit the same, even though there are slight differences...*”. Someone else said that Namibians are *helpful* and *friendly*. Besides that, our respondents could not put their finger on any typically Namibian characteristics or behaviours. The fact that our respondents could not relate to this question at all evidently signifies a rather weak sense of the perceived ‘we’ supposed to separate and distinguish Namibia from other nations.

By posing question 9, **who is a Namibian?** we wanted get an idea of where people seem to stand in relation to questions of national membership and belonging. Most of our Owambo
informants answered something similar to: “the people who are born here, the people whose parents are born here” or “people who live here”. Some meant that if you are a citizen of the country you are a Namibian, while others were of the opinion that it was enough to feel as a Namibian, to be one. Quite a few, and only San informants, derived from him- or herself or the close surroundings to describe who is a Namibian, “I am a Namibian; we are Namibians; us; we are; or; everybody in Namibia are Namibians”. One Owambo woman mentioned behaviour as a factor helping to decide who is a Namibian. She meant that people who have the behaviours of Namibians are Namibians. Two of our respondents, one San man and one Owambo man, were of the opinion that the “original inhabitants”, who are often considered to have been the people from the San groups, are the true Namibians. Even though the answers differed on this question, the difference between the Owambo and the San answers is clear. While the San emanated from the nearby setting, the self and the own group using pronouns such as “me” or “us”, referring to the nearby community, the Owambo informants more frequently placed themselves inside the context of a nation, “people born in Namibia are Namibians as a consequence”. Several informants thought the questions were difficult, a sign that may be comprehended as an indication of that many were unfamiliar with such thinking.

After the question concerning who our respondents think is a Namibian, we found it relevant to with question 10 ask our respondents what does being Namibian mean to you? What does it imply? Many of the Owambo respondents were of the opinion that being Namibian is important or very important and that the fact that they are Namibians mean a lot to them. One Owambo man (40) claimed: “I was born here. Namibia is my whole life and it colours the way I am […] I am also protected by the law and the constitution, I have rights”. An Owambo woman (28) declared: “It means a lot to me, it means I belong to a nationality”. A San man (28) in the same manner held: “I am very proud to be a Namibian. The struggle we have had to come to where we are today makes me proud […] I know the system in Namibia, if I go abroad it is difficult”. Others had difficulties with putting words on their feelings, an Owambo woman (22): “I cannot express that really…but I feel proud”. Another Owambo man talked about the importance of taking part of and contributing to the Namibian society. As seen in the above quotes, references are already made to the liberation struggle, in the same manner an Owambo man meant that being a Namibian indicates that he is the last “child of independence” in Africa. A few San expressed similar feelings as the Owambo, but yet again most of them said that they did not have much to say on the issue.
On the following question, number 11, we asked: **do you consider yourself as a Namibian?**

**Is it important for you to be a Namibian?** Here we wanted to know whether or not, and to what extent, our respondents considered themselves as Namibians and how they expressed such feelings. Most Owambo informants answered straight away that yes they were Namibians. Additionally, that it is “important” or even “very important” to be a Namibian.

One Owambo man (40) gave an example of why: “It is very important. I make a contribution. I fought for independence and now I help developing schools”. Another Owambo respondent, a woman, also expressed pride and said that it is very important. She thought that maybe this was because she had never experienced any other countries and had nothing to compare with.

One Owambo woman (20) said: “yes it is important. I adopt to everything in Namibia, and I belong to a tribe. It is very important”. Moreover in relation to this question we asked an Owambo informant (17) if he thinks that it is important to feel that you belong to a country. He replied that yes, to him it is “very important” because when a person belongs to a country he can work and do things for the country and not only for the self. He further held that if a person feels like he belongs to a country he stands up for it at all times. That same informant also said that the reputation of Namibia is important for all Namibians since if Namibia is taken for a ‘good’ country, all Namibians will be taken for ‘good’ people too. Only two of our Owambo informants did not consider themselves as Namibians but instead as Africans. All except one San informant said that they considered themselves as Namibians and that the fact that they were Namibians was important to them. From this we understand that it is important for many of our informants to belong to Namibia. Our respondents felt something even if they could not express it in words and at many times they referred to the liberation struggle.

Thus, the last question concerning nationalism and our respondents’ feelings for Namibia was question 12, **is there any specific occasions when you feel especially or “extra much” Namibian?** Most of our informants could not think of a special moment when they felt “really” Namibian or as we explained it “extra much Namibian”. One Owambo woman (33) said: “Maybe when I visit the traditional ceremonies or if I wear traditional things... yeah then I feel that am a Namibian”. Another Owambo woman (22), a college student, explained that she felt Namibian at times of cultural festivals, when people from different groups dress up in their traditional clothing and show each other what their culture encompasses. Some respondents held that they did not have a special moment when they felt especially Namibian.
but rather that that was a feeling they had inside constantly. A few mentioned the election that took place during our stay in Namibia. A San man (28) said: “I think I feel especially Namibian in times of voting, on the elections” and later he also mentioned public performances: “special occasions such as public performances that are specific for my culture, such as dancing performances, specific for my tribe”. An Owambo man (17) claimed: “when people are demonstrating together against for instance HIV then I feel that I am also Namibian and I want to take part in what is going on”. A San man (52) also referred to public gatherings: “when I am invited to meetings giving my points and opinions and advise, I know that I am counted as a Namibian, then I feel special, that I am somebody”. A San woman staying in Windhoek, instead claimed that she felt especially Namibian at the day of independence, when all Namibians were celebrating the Namibian independence together. Quite a few, yet again the majority of them San, could not think of an answer or said that they felt Namibian anytime or all the time.

After revealing and analysing the answers on the seven questions specifically relating to issues of nationalism and how our respondents feel about being Namibians, a clear tendency is that the Owambo group is much more aware of their position as Namibians in the Namibian nation. Most of them moreover, state that they are proud to be Namibians. However, on the other hand only a weak sense of ‘we’ referring to the Namibian nation seems to exist even among the San respondents but also among the Owambo informants. A second tendency that relates to the first is that our Owambo informants frequently, when answering our questions and discussing the issues, tend to emanate from their own traditions and culture. This then is an indicator of a possible dominant position of the Owambo groups when it comes to the construction of a national identity and a national consensus, which could be compared to Smith’s “dominant ethnie model”. In turn, in the next theme of analysis the concept of ethnicity is in focus.

2. Ethnicity

“Ethnicity means power and control and it needs to be addressed” (San man, 29). As we have seen, ethnicity is a very complex matter. Among other things it is, according to Rex (2001), multifunctional attachments to a community. Not only in form a psychological membership but also a sort of sacred feeling anchored in for example the language, the territory, and the narrations. Peoples do not merely define themselves, but they are certainly also defined and
designated their positions by other groups. Hence, as seen through the works of Rex, ethnicity in this way is ascribed characteristics by others, many times with the help of the majority group in power and/or the authorities, and it is not easily self-chosen, but the features of a certain ethnic category gets reproduced in this dualistic aspect. This could be compared to Smith’s theory concerning the “dominant ethnie model” for postcolonial nation-building. In the context of Namibia then, this would imply that the Ovambo group is the strongest for establishing the experiences of other groups, especially for minority groups like the San. A fact that according to Smith then also could influence the Namibian nation-building. Hence, this theme of analysis will address questions relating to ethnicity and ethnic identity as well as how our informants perceived the rights, possibilities and obligations of the own ethnic group in comparison to the other ethnic group (San/Ovambo).

On question number 3 we asked: **what language do you speak at home?** The respondents answered as expected, since we selected our informants depending on amongst other characteristics, their language. Eleven of our respondents are from the Oshiwambo-speaking group, mainly Oshikwanyama and Oshindonga (the national language(s) of Namibia after the official national language English). The remaining eleven are from the San language groups, as ‘!Kung’ and ‘Haiǁom’, as well as other smaller language groups. However, some people answered that they spoke English, Damara and Herero at home as well. One San informant answered that he spoke Damara and “Bushman”. As ‘Bushman’ is a derogatory name we refrained from using that word in our interviews, and used ‘San’ instead. However, as we have claimed before, ‘San’ is actually also an offensive (Nama) name, though not with the same derogatory connotations and associations that ‘Bushman’ entails. The one informant who used this as a label of his own language was in a subjugated position, dependent on the company he worked for and his employer, on which grounds he and his family were living at the time. His Afrikaner employer did not know the term ‘San’ and used ‘Bushman’ when speaking about him and his family. For that reason we believe that he as well used the term to define him and his family. In that way he was putting himself and his family in a suppressed minority position and reproduced that idea of repression. It has been made clear that those in power set the rules for the representation of knowledge as well as for the language. The authoritative representation of the San minority then, is clearly within the context of the construction of the savage ‘other’. Even the names of San and Bushman are upholding this

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53 Meaning ’outsider’ in Nama.
perceived savagery. In this way, the “Bushmen” are carrying what others, the authorities, whatever they may look like, are ascribing them, and containing all those characteristics that exist within the own culture but are feared within it as well. In this context, the concept of hegemony becomes relevant. Hegemony, which core meaning implies that the power of the ruling class is exercised in such a way that it convinces other classes that the interests of the ruling class are common interest, or in the interests of all.

Question number 4: what does the notion of ‘ethnicity’ mean to you? What do you think about the concept of ‘ethnic group’? had many variations of answers, though they were not entirely discrepant in ideas. Many of the interviewees said that it meant difference (in language and colour) and traditions, some pointed out that it was a clear division of people. One Owambo woman (24) said that “some do not really like each other”, and “some are treated like they are not important, like the San, they are like being forgotten by the government”. A few argued that it was not their own will to be in that division, or the will of their parents, but that it is creations of the foreign colonial rule and the system of apartheid, and as so inherited, and thus that people are merely falling under circumstances and are obliged to accept it. On the other hand and quite contrastingly, some held that it was just nature and that the groups were designated by God and depending on the territories or homelands and the languages. Though they also admitted that there is segregation at work between the groups. Some found it important to note that one should not discriminate or be racist, and instead respect should prevail amongst the groups. One Owambo man noted quite rightly that the terms are within an English context, that they do not really exist in his language (Oshindonga) and that they were established by others: “to me there are no ethnic groups”. One San man (29) said that ethnicity is still “very strong” in Namibia, that it implied power and control and that it needs to be discussed. He claimed that since people still identify themselves with the help of their ethnic group, it is still evidently very important to them. He also noted that the “different groups are too specific today, maybe later on they will be more general, more like one”.

There is a clear difference between the answers of the two groups. The informants from the San groups responded more often then the informants from the Owambo groups on these questions with short answers that everything was fine: “good, no problem” (San man, 33) “it is fine, just fine” (San woman, elderly), “in the past we were not having communication
between the different tribes, now we are united” (San woman, in her 20s), “even if there are a lot of groups and tribes here in Namibia we are one by spirit” (San man, 52). However not all San informants thought so: “no good, I feel not good about it because we have no communication between the different groups” (San man, 20), and some were quite plain about it: “that is how everyone identify themselves” (San man, elderly), “it is the specific language group” (San woman, 25).

Over all, everyone is clearly not familiar with the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic groups, at times due to language deficiencies. However, all are familiar with the concept of ‘tribalism’. This corresponds exactly to the idea of how the concept of tribalism was planted into the African context by the Europeans in order to divide and conquer and thus to set Africans apart from the rational, civilised norm of Europe (as presented in the theory chapter). Namibians know ‘tribalism’ because they were put in that context at first by the German colonisers and then reinforced and crudely systematically maintained by the South African apartheid system. Thus, inevitably this is now the system in which they see themselves to exist. It is to tribalism they refer when speaking about these issues, not ethnicity.

In question number 5, we asked if they thought it was a difficult or sensitive subject to discuss, all our interviewees answered differently and there was no trend to be deciphered that depended on the different groups. Some said a blank no, some held that it could be a difficult subject to talk about but that it really was dependent on the person with whom you were speaking. A few of our respondents repeated that it was the nature and the reality. Clearly, if they are not really familiar with the concepts, it is difficult due to that. Though as they compared it to tribes and tribalism, they clearly had a good understanding of what it meant to them. A few of the respondents said that it was really difficult and that it needed to be discussed. Others responded that since they were under this system, there was nothing that they could do about it but to accept it, and that’s why it did not really matter to them, but at the same time that there was a danger with this, because membership in one group might make it impossible to see other perspectives. In the same way, some argued that it was not difficult because the ideas were “already planted into their minds” (Owambo man, 34) by the apartheid system, but that it simultaneously was that biggest problem in Namibia today because “it divides you and me” (ibid). Further on, that the concepts are “bad because the

54 In that way ascribing the ’other’ with a feared distinctiveness.
vision I have is one Namibia, one nation, one people” (ibid) Some held forth the African identity, saying things like: “I don’t like to call myself an Ovambo or somebody a Herero or a Kavango” (ibid).

Hence, several were in doubt and not really sure what to answer. Arguing different factors: “because the colonial government divided us into different locations, that’s why we cannot meet each other, but now we are free in one home in one country, one Namibia” (Owambo man, 65). Some claimed that it might be a problem in the future if people do not respect each other and instead discriminate other groups. Others held that people did not dare to talk about it, for which fear was one reason, and bad communication between tribes another. One San woman (25) said: “Yes, I think it is sensitive, people regard it as some sort of racism, it is a really sensitive subject”. In the same line of thought, a San man (29) repeated that it was a sensitive and difficult subject to discuss because of the implication of power involved in the concepts. Evidently, people regard the terms of ethnicity and ethnic groups in different ways. However, we found the notions to be loaded with charged but different feelings and experiences. At times we felt that the interviewees wanted to bestow us with a harmonious picture of Namibia’s ethnic relations. Other times, and this cannot be said enough, we experienced that some informants from the San groups did not dare to speak their true feelings and share their thoughts with us. One of the San informants was indirectly employed by SWAPO and we really sensed that he was careful not to speak bad about those in power (of his life).

With question 18, we asked: **would you say that you as San/Owambo have the same rights as other Namibians? Or the same rights as persons of the San/Owambo communities?**

Every one of the Owambo respondents said yes to this question, referring to the Constitution and asserting that as long as you are Namibian, everyone has the same rights. The San on the other hand were not as convinced, most said yes, but some of them said a clear no, “no, its different, its not the same as for others, we don’t even get jobs, we are powerless” (San man, 20). Many of the San respondents, both those who said that they had the same rights and those who said that they did not, spoke about the lack of jobs and education as the reason for why they maybe could not experience it in the same way, “I have rights, according to the constitution of Namibia everyone has rights, yeah we have not experienced it though because it is for the other side, not for us 100% as we are the San, we just don’t understand it, we need
to be educated but we don’t really understand education, if we would and went to school then I think that we can have the same rights...” (San man, 52), and “Yes because no one has exceeding rights, no ones rights are above another’s, it is only that all do not know about them, but it is in the constitution and in the Human Rights, and that’s why they are called Human Rights, rights are for all and it is up to the people to realize that, education is needed” (San man, 29).

We asked both some of the Owambo informants as well as some of the San interviewees, who thought that all had the same rights, if they thought it was still the same if you compared their rights to the rights of the San/Owambo groups. One Owambo man (40) answered: “They (San) have the same rights but maybe not practically, I feel a bit sorry for them”. One Owambo woman referred at first to the Owambos as the majority group who had the political power, “I can say that they [Owambo] have the same rights because they [Owambo] are also the tribe in Namibia who have a say in society... let’s start from the beginning, sorry...yeah I can say that Owambo have got the same rights as other tribes, yeah but not in all the chances, you may have a right to say things but if you are threatened or forgotten about, then... [and when we asked about the San:] …they haven’t the right to say anything. They are like “useless people” when you think about it, but they are not useless only that the tribe is having been discriminated, they have been poor...” Hence, with the upcoming election in mind she talked about that it was not always possible to vote as you wished because you could be intimidated, and give your vote to those who held the political power in that area, this was, we found, experienced in both the Owambo and the San community, wherein we did most of our interviews. She also gave her self away by saying that Owambo is the tribe in Namibia who has got the possibility to have a say in society and then changing it as if she said too much, as if she did not think it was appropriate to proclaim their power. Another Owambo man (34) said about the rights of the San: “they have the same rights as other Namibians but they don’t have someone from their own tribe who can come out and speak for them, and the problem is also that politics destroy what we are, ...like coming and saying; to live like that is primitive, to live like that you are poor is wrong. ... the bushmen could become doctors but because of the certain system that is put besides them, I call this shit! Let the bushmen go and hunt that it is their life, that’s their culture, just like we go into the field and make mahangu, why don’t you stop them [Owambos] from doing mahangu like that?” On the question if the Owambos had the same rights the same man said: “You see, Owambo is not me, Namibia is me. But as I
They say: divided we fall, united we stand…” Carolina Hamma
Johanna Sixtensson

“...other Owambo interviewees spoke about the election and universal suffrage as evidence of that all Namibians had the same rights. These questions made it clear that prejudices and stereotyping of the minority group, San, were still prevalent, and that they experienced as somewhat uncomfortable or unfair to be compared with other groups of people. All the questions in this theme of ethnicity are significant for this exact reason. Let us see what the respondents answered on the question on possibilities, responsibilities and their future. What differences are there between the different ethnicities?

On question number 19: **would you say that you as a San/Owambo have the same possibilities as other Namibians? Or as persons of the San/Owambo communities?**, again the Owambo respondents were more convinced than the San interviewees. Only three of our Owambo respondents were in doubt on this question, but of the San informant most said no, they did not have the same possibilities. One Owambo man (50) told us, concerning the possibilities of the San that they had the same right but that they were different from the Owambo groups “yes it is only they don’t have, they are not the same as all others [about the Owambos being farmers] they don’t plough or whatever, this way you can see the differentiation between us and them, see, they don’t plan, they don’t know how to, they know how to survive but this does not say that they cannot do the same as we do […] maybe they have not been given the chance or time to understand themselves that they can be as others, these San people, they hide themselves out there, what I’m saying is not that they have got the responsibility although that to… everyone have got the same responsibility”, even though he might not have meant to, this displayed strong prejudices towards the San groups, as “hiding out in the bush” and only living in the same manner as they did hundreds of years ago, this prejudice was furthermore also displayed by the most recent mentioned Owambo man in the last question, saying that people should let them hunt because it was their life and culture. Well evidently, it is not the culture of many San people today. Yet the same Owambo man held, quite rightly, in this question, that alcohol was destroying their ways of life55: “…those people are destroyed because people put up alcohol in between them […] those people will never survive, Bushmen don’t have their rights, Owambo, Himba Herero, no one have the right to live the way they must, maybe because only that the Owambos get the advantage

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55 We experienced this issue as one of the most alarming problems in this San community.
because they were most used as the stronger people, most used in mines and offices, because they were also maybe clever...” though he was still somehow reinforcing the idea of that they might be different in some ways, an idea that many other Owambo informants shared. Yet, he was one of our informants who had been fighting in the liberation war with SWAPO, and this might well have influenced his view, since most of the time he repeated that we are all the same but that the colonial rules have destroyed his comprehension.

Many of the interviewees claimed that the possibilities depended on the family and above all, on the education gone through. Some claimed that you have to fight for your possibilities. One San man said: “yes, we do. It is only that some do not know about them because they are not educated, education in the native language is needed and it is one opportunity that everyone does not have, but they all need to stand up for themselves and not wait for others to do things for them, the San are used to get things served on a silver plate so now they don’t know how to do things for themselves, but education is needed, maybe the San does not have the support to have the same possibilities as others but we all have them”. We experienced that this man was somewhat frustrated because had had been working for the cause of Human Rights and elevating of the San groups. He was of the opinion that it was time for them to make some effort of their own if they want to change the situation. He did not want to see them living as in the old days, or somewhere in between that, and the modern society, where many do live today. He wanted to see the San groups get involved, and take up an active part in their future, to see them get educated and go to universities. However, it seemed like some of our San respondents did not see a way of doing this: “we are not having the same possibility to have those things, we are behind, and it is not okay”, (San man, 34) this was furthermore one of the statements that we felt were more correct than his other assertions, of the San man who we saw as very dependent on his employer. One San woman said “we do but... we don’t really have a lot... ” (in her 20s), another San man said “no, we are in different categories, yeah, sometimes my tribe, my culture is a problem, if we stayed at one place they could be developed maybe but we go around and move from place to place and then it is difficult to reach goals” and then he turned to speaking about the resettlement program that was forced upon them, resettling San groups and allocating them to a new and restricted area “some groups are not from here but moved here [...] and we said –if we are moved here, then what will you provide, what are we going to do, and they said –yes, yes everything will be fine
“They say: divided we fall, united we stand…”

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(San man, 52). Clearly the San saw their own culture as an obstacle for having the same possibilities as others.

Question 20, would you say that you as a San/Owambo have the same obligations and responsibilities as other Namibians? Or as persons of the San/Owambo communities?

All of our Owambo respondents said yes to this question, but some of our San informants were in doubt since they did not see that they had a chance to be responsible, but stated that they would like to be if they got the chance, referring to education as one of those chances to be responsible. “I have a good idea about my obligations and responsibilities but I have no way to get any way to help me, but I am sending my children to school and helping my community, that I think that I can do” (San man, 52), and “we can try to but we don’t have a chance” (San man, 33), and another “we are not equal. I don’t have a job. We have no jobs and no school. We have been applying to the government to have some more projects, like maybe repairing and gardening. But since we sent the papers of compliant nothing came back. It is difficult to be responsible and obligated if you don’t have education or income” (San man, elderly). One San man however said: “yes, with obligations comes responsibility and vice versa. But you have a responsibility to know about your rights and opportunities. People have to stop thinking that others will do things for them they have to stand up for themselves and do things for their own. I have done so much now it is time for them to do things on their own, again this showed this man’s frustration of the situation and the wish he had that people would organise themselves.

One Owambo man said in sort of the same line of thought, that people need encouragement: “yes, unless you are ignored, now the most important thing is to give encouragement, but everyone have the same” (Owambo man, 50). One Owambo woman (elderly) held, “you are free but there are some laws and restrictions, and many people are still down pressed”, and then we asked if she thought that the white Namibians had the same responsibilities, she said, “I don’t know any, the ones who get here are visitors like you…”, which was a rather disturbing comment, as visitors like us were the only white people she met, yet many white people resided in her country. This was one indicator of the segregation that still permeates the country, she never meets the white population of Namibia. Another Owambo answered the same enquiry with “yes cause now… there is a reunion, its a unification so we are like combined, you can study wherever you want…” [then talking about that during colonial times
only whites could go to these schools]... as long as you are not financially stranded, but that is the thing affecting the black people the most” (Owambo man, 24) this was what he rightfully saw as the variable separating the whites in Namibia from the blacks. The financial gaps are gigantic⁵⁶. Still, however, the sense of unification amongst the Owambo is wide, as our respondents say that it should be the same for all: “we are all human beings, with minds to think and we are all clever, we cannot say San people are not clever while Owambo people are, of course we are having the same whatever, that’s why I’m expected to be treated the same and have the same obligations” (Owambo woman, 28). One Owambo woman (22) referred to the government concerning responsibilities and opportunities in Namibia: “Okay... people are now saying no you are not good, because if you are not from this party which is the ruling party in Namibia, then you are not going to get the opportunity to for instance work... [but she did not really think it was entirely true]... okay the government is one ruling party which is the SWAPO party and most of the people in the SWAPO party is the Owambo people and because of that, other people think that they will not accept them, but they never tried, its just their believe”. Most respondents, however, said that they took care or their responsibilities, which did not merely include themselves but other people in need of help as well. One Owambo woman said, concerning the German Namibian responsibilities, “they are like having the opportunity but they don’t really give that responsibility [of education] to people. Yeah, I’m a Namibian so I have much responsibility, especially towards the people in need and not looking at the tribe or the colour, because I see the people, they are the same” (Owambo woman, 22). With these three questions on rights, possibilities and obligations we wanted to see how they see their position in society as member of a certain group. From most of the answers we could discern a clear sense of ‘we’ inside the group, above all from the San respondents. However, this sense of ‘we’ was the position as a minority group, a bit outside the regular society, within which most Owambo respondents, moreover, could see themselves. The Owambo respondents could easily see themselves and their ethnic group as a part of a nation, and even of a greater community, namely the African.

With question 22, we asked what they thought about future for the San/Owambo groups. Over all the Owambo interviewees were positive towards the future, whereas the San respondents were not so positive. Although, there was a further difference, the San respondents living in a rural area were much less hopeful towards the future than the San

⁵⁶ See page 65, table 1. in Ethnic Tensions.
informants living in Windhoek. One rural San man (52) said downheartedly, “I cannot see it, but it seems like it is going down, it is not moving very well, I cannot see that we will be developing equal, the children even don’t want to go to school they lack some kind of understanding for it. Again many respondents claimed that it is hard to know anything about the future since you cannot “see” it. One urban San woman (25) said more hopefully, “In the future the San will also come on the same level as the other groups. I think that the young people will realise that they are equal as other young people and that they can achieve everything that others do, going to studies”. Still, in the rural area the poverty was so palpable it might be hard for them to see any way out of it, “…we have a very serious poverty here, when the food is finished we have to walk long distances to work in houses belonging to Kwanumas and Ondongas [two Owambo ‘tribes’] and maybe get a plate full of mahangui that you can bring to the kids, sometimes it is not enough” (San man, elderly). One rural San man (in his 40s) however had some ideas of a better future, “okay, so what I want is to keep this project that we have here, so that we, me and the other San here, can contribute something and give something back. What we need is transportation for our deceased and money in a bank that we can use for funeral services, when somebody dies sick in their homestead, with money we could get a coffin and transport”, since as it was at the moment, their deceased sometimes spent several days inside the homestead before they were able to bury them, and in this put others in danger by contamination and spreading of diseases.

The Owambo respondents, in contrast, continued to talk about unification and the importance of culture in this, within their positive view on the future for the Owambo groups, “I think that it will be good and bright. We have a lot already, like roads and water [...] and maybe in the future, in 10-15 years people will unite more. Maybe we will only have one language that everybody speaks” (Owambo man, 40). “I consider the future for Owambo will be only fine if we are keeping our culture to give to the young generation, because a nation without a culture is not a nation” (Owambo woman, 22). However, one Owambo woman said that she thought the Owambo people to be distinguished in a problematical way: “what I want them to do is to change, because really the Owambo people they are a little bit selfish, they can be very rude, yeah that is not good, I don’t like it, so I think that it should change a little because we think like we are having higher rights than others but that is not true, everyone has got the same, equal rights ” (Owambo woman, 22). However, others thought that they already were

57 Maize, see page 69, in Thesis Focus Groups.
united and equal, “I think the very best way is to keep the bond that we are in now, not only the Owambos but between all ethnic groups in Namibia, because once we are not united... they say: “divided we fall united we stand” so I want us to keep that tight bond to avoid any conflict in the future because we want to live in the independent world and to fight this epidemic which is like among us and my hope is to see all Namibian to have access to education...” (Owambo man, 24). Some Owambo and San respondents expressed that they thought that everything would be better for the future generation, since Namibia now is a peaceful country.

As the San man said then, ethnicity seems to be extremely important still in Namibia, even tough there is also a strong will for unification, equality and the disregard of ethnic markers. But as a sticking, prevailing gift of the apartheid system, the categories do not yet seem to surrender. They still, through prejudice, stereotyping and actual designated situations, demarcate who you are, what you should be like and therefore also your destiny. The Owambo culture, accordingly, is the one who sets the scene in Namibia (clearly notwithstanding the prominent Western and European culture).

3. National versus Ethnic Identity

From the theory chapter we have learnt that ethnicity and nationalism are two interconnected concepts difficult to separate from each another. Neither of them indicate rigidity but they are instead fluent and shifting. According to Rex (1997) they are highly complex concepts that imply some sort of symbolic unity amongst the members of the ethnic group or the nation, a unity that presumes the imagined, experienced limitations that separates them from other groups of people. It is, however, through the common past and the continuity that ethnicity is linked into the national project. Clearly, the shared history is of great importance in Namibia, different occasions for commemoration are frequent, at least among the people who were subjugated to the apartheid regime. Affirmative action is for instance one of the aspects that bear the marks of colonial and apartheid rules. However, the Owambo groups and the San groups do not share an entirely common history. Both the Owambo and the San groups were severely discriminated during the colonial rule and the apartheid system, but the San groups have always been even further marginalised and despised. Though the Owambo groups might well have been the ones to suffer most from direct racism of the whites, due to the, for them, rational idea of apartheid; that really dark blacks were the “lowest” on a “human scale”.

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Furthermore, as presented above, some of the San groups did cooperate with the SADF and the South African regime during the liberation war, and therefore they are still at some point connected with *treason* for those involved in the liberation movement. Such prejudices do not get eradicated easily; it needs work. Still, we can only connect the different events in history to the present; we cannot make any actual and general conclusions. Evidently though, the San have been looked down on by both blacks and whites in Namibia, and we wonder what consequences this has had for the ethnic and the national identities of the San groups.

Along the same line of thought Hylland Eriksen (1993) also marks the clear relationship between national identity and ethnic identity, as both are cultural and social constructions not given by nature. Anderson (1991), as well, affirms the sensed solidarity between all people within the borders of a nation, which nationalism involves. The nationalist ideology is based on the idea that political and cultural boundaries should match and overlap each other. Subsequently, both ethnic and national identities are, according to Anderson, constructed in relation to the ‘other’. Moreover, the nationalist dichotomisation that nations are experienced through the existence of other nations. In this way, people in Namibia stress their national belonging with means of the ethnic membership, claiming their traditions as the culture of the nation. That they did this in Namibia was furthermore evident in the questions about nationalism in the first theme of analysis. Since the Owambo culture is in majority, this ethnic tradition easily becomes the mainstream culture for every citizen. While Namibia is defined through the differentiation from other nations as well as through the postcolonial status as ‘other’ from the Euro- and ethnocentric idea of nation and state, as well as worldview, the San is defined by means of ‘othering’ within Namibia. Anderson holds that even though nationalism and ethnicity are interrelated, the relationship is multifaceted and it occasionally involves conflicts of interests. A nationalistic ideology is an ethnic ideology that requires a nation for one ethnic group, and therefore, nationalistic feelings are repeatedly marked by ethnicity. In correspondence to Smith’s theory of the “dominant ethnie model”, through the SWAPO rule then, the Owambo traditions become the national culture, at least in part.

Symbols and signifiers like the flag, the national anthem and the official language (English) that are not specific for one ethnic group are thus highly significant for nation-building and the unification of all peoples with the Namibian nation.
As Hylland Eriksen notes there is a danger with ethnic clashes when they compete for the sake of the nation, though it is not an entirely impossible ground for non-ethnic identity building. The complexity of, and interrelationship between, nationalism and ethnicity makes tensions and conflicts of interest hard to disregard, unmistakably, it has evolved as difficult problems of war and unrest in many multiethnic, postcolonial societies. These instances of severe conflict are contributable to among other things, the destroyed pre-colonial structure and development and the lack of alternatives to the idea of the nationstate. Due to this, it is safer to focus on the similarities instead of the differences when discussing the different ethnic groups within the nation in order to build it up. Let us see what our respondents have answered to the relating questions.

Who are you? Could you give us a short presentation of yourself? Was our first interview question and the answers were needless to say, manifold. Most of our informants began with saying; my name is…(name), I was born in…(name of village), I grew up in…(name of village), and then explaining their type of schooling; saying for instance which grades they have completed or did not have had the opportunity to complete, or alleging that they had very bad grades. Then some of them turned to explaining the composition of their families and which child in line they are. Still, their education, in all instances came before family, which tell us something about what is prominent in Namibia at the moment. Lastly, the respondents spoke about work and what they were doing.

A few of the Owambo informants then explained the meaning of their Owambo names, and some then turned to speaking about their interests in life. None of the San informants did this. Though, we doubt that not one of our San interviewees had an interest in anything, nor that their names did not mean anything to them. Furthermore, it was much more common for the San informants to present themselves with the name of their tribe, than it was for the Owambo informants. This indicates that the ethnic identity might be stronger for the San respondents than for the Owambo interviewees. Some of our interviewees spoke about that they were very proud to be Namibians and/or Owambo, and one Owambo woman said that she was proud to be a Woman. “I am proud to be Owambo because it is from God’s creation so I have to be thankful for what I am. I cannot change it.” (Owambo woman, 22) Though, none of the San respondents actually said that they were proud to be part of the San tribes. Thus, it seems like it is more difficult for the San respondents to be proud over their ethnic membership. All of
They say: divided we fall, united we stand…” Carolina Hamma Johanna Sixtensson

the San informants gave short answers to this question, while most of the Owambo informants gave much longer answers. This might be an indication of a lack of self-confidence among the San interviewees shown by the unwillingness to speak so much, and freely, about themselves. It might also indicate suspiciousness, and a lack of confidence and reliance, or that they have not argued around their different identities as much as the other groups. However, the lack of confidence and self-esteem about their persona is what we experience as the most likeable clarification.

One Owambo man who later on held that he did not want to identify himself as an Owambo or categorise anyone using the ethnic taxonomy said notwithstanding that: “my mother and father are pure original Owambo people”. Three of our Owambo informants and one of our San respondents stated that they fought in the war of liberation. All three of them had also been forced into exile. Interestingly though, the one San informant was also the only San individual who was employed, in his whole community. He was the only one in his community who had been in exile due to the struggle and he was also the only one in that community with a salary indirectly paid by the SWAPO party. Though, a few had work to do in specific places, they were not paid for it. Furthermore, we found him to be very restrictive in what he was saying and it felt as if he was really careful not to speak bad about the authorities. After all, he had been involved in the war on behalf of SWAPO. He was subsequently very keen on speaking about his work. Many of the Owambo interviewees mentioned the HIV/AIDS virus as being one of the biggest problems in Namibia now, at some time during the interviews. Two of the Owambo informants told us that due to the deaths of their fathers, they were forced away from their homes and mothers, since according to customary law the mother loses the property and all assets (like animals and money) to the deceased’s family, and then the mother has trouble with affording the care of the children (the patrilineal right of inheritance). One of the San women marked that she was a Christian. Some of the San interviewees told us, when we asked them of their age, that they did not know their age. Two of our San informants were part of different committees and boards and they were particular with pointing that out in this question, noting in that way that they were important people for that community.

58 See, page 70 in Thesis Focus Groups.
The only answers that one San man gave to this question was: “my life here in Namibia is very nice. I have no problems” (San man, 33 years). Now this answer did not really correspond to his situation in Namibia, as he was extremely poor, exposed and subjected to conditions of which he had no control over what so ever. Either he is a very positive man, or and as we experienced, he was very cautious with us and careful not to say anything that later on could possibly harm him and his family in some way. As formerly stated, he was living on the grounds of his employer who clearly did place him in a lower position, he was unmistakably dependent on his work and his employer, and he did not (want to) say anything that could endanger his situation, notwithstanding our attempts to ensure him of our independence, impartiality and the anonymity that we bestowed on him. Later on in the interview he relaxed a little bit but it was clear to us that he never spoke his true mind.

On education, one Owambo man (24) declared that he was not really doing what he wanted with his life: “…since teaching is the cheapest career in Namibia, because we are given a loan. Actually it is not my intended career it is only that I don’t have a choice, because of money”. This same man told us that he had been a “street child” for three years, and that he was in any case thankful that he had been given a chance to come out of that. Another Owambo man (65) answered the question of who he was with saying among other things: “Namibia is free. I’m feeling very, very proud about that Namibia is independent, accept for the killer virus HIV, we have a big problem about the young people, we are feeling sorry that there are no jobs in here in Namibia”, clearly these issues are of great significance for many people in Namibia.

Question 2 ensued; how would you identify yourself, or what would you call yourself if you would put a name on yourself? Again the San informants answered with a few words, whereas the Owambo informants answered with longer sentences. All of the San informants answered this question with conveying the name of their tribe: “I’m Hai //om, that’s my tribe” (San man, 29); “A !Noma” (San man, 20) “I am San and Hai //om speaking” (San woman, 25) or saying simply ‘San’: “San, I’m a San” (San man, in his 40s). The one San man who did not answered the question with an ethnic marker, simply said: I’m...(name). This man is the same man we discussed earlier, he lived in a very exposed and vulnerable situation on the grounds of his employer, he never mentioned his San language group or tribe, during the entire interview.
The answers that the Owambo interviewees gave were much more diverging, some spoke about their work, or their interests, some said something about their education or proclaimed that they were poor, and/or that it was difficult to manage if you were poor and/or uneducated. Only two from the Owambo groups referred to their ethnic categories (both were in their early 20s), one claiming to Owambo and the other to the tribe within: “Okay I’m proud to be African and Owambo, my African dialect is Oshikwanyama, so that is my tribe, where I’m from, and I am very proud to be part of that group it’s like my roots, so I’m proud to be an Owambo speaker” (Owambo man, 24). Several of the Owambo respondents stated that they were Namibians, others that they were Africans, and one held that he was a human: “I’m human being, like all other people” (Owambo man, 50). “As an African because I’m a Namibian, I’m proud to be an African because it is where my family is and where I was born, where my parents live. And I’m happy with our life in Namibia and the way we are” (Owambo woman, 22)

Question 13 was: what would you say that you could identify yourself the most with, being Namibian or being San/Owambo? Explain. Of the Owambo answers there was a clear predominance of those who responded Namibian and only three said that they identified themselves with the Owambo identity the most. Some of the informants explained this by saying that others (read foreigners) only know the Namibian identity and it is the identification that they will assign to them, while a few of all our informants said that the ethnic category was more important since you can change citizenship but always remain Owambo/San. “Namibian, because clearly people tend to know Namibia before Owambo. And even on my ID it does not say Owambo it says that I’m Namibian. And I feel that if we were calling each other that one is a Herero and one is a Kavango it is a sort of discrimination, which we are trying to destroy in Namibia. We are all Namibians” (Owambo woman, 29). This reference to identification cards was reinforced by some of the other Owambo informants, though only by the individuals over 28 years, none of the younger informants told us anything similar. Obviously, those who referred to it was those who had experienced it during the Apartheid regime, when everyone was obliged to carry an identification card with their ethnic identity printed on it. The younger Owambo informants were also the ones to claim their ethnic identity more often and as being more important. The older informants could also claim that the labels for the ethnic identity were all wrong and
forced on them by the colonial rule and the Apartheid regime: “it was never called Owambo by us but Ambo, but the colonial system divided people into these groups that exist today [...] and then the apartheid reinforced it. I’m not Owambo and not Namibian, I’m African” (Owambo woman, elderly). Again this is a declaration of their Africanhood. The younger respondents, however, also debated the discrimination that the labelling would denote. One Owambo respondent (22) asserted that she had many different identities and it was hard to say which one was the “strongest” “I’m saying that I belong to the Owambo because I inherited the culture. Sometimes I can say that I identify as a Namibian, or Owambo but I can also identify as others”.

As alleged in Delimitations, HIV/AIDS is a gigantic problem in Namibia, though not the one of concern in this essay. Some of our interviewees, in accordance with the overall tendencies in Namibia, were infected by the HIV virus, and as so they carried a further identification that still can be connected to their identities as Africans or Namibians: “A Namibian, I am completely a Namibian, I have the infection you know, this identification that I’m having, is something that gives me a name, that I’m Namibian” (Owambo man, 50).

Again, the answers of San interviewees were much, much shorter. Though in this question, there was no trend to be read from the responses. Some said Namibian and some said, San, some could not answer at all, saying that it was two entirely different matters. “San is a tribe; Namibia is a country” (San woman, elderly). The explanation of that citizenship could be changed was also indicated by one San man: “San, because of the in heritage, it is who I am and where I come from, ‘Namibian’ can change if a change my citizenship” (San man, 29). Furthermore, the San informants always seem to be aware of their position as minority and different in some ways: “I can say with pride that I am a Namibian, but my colour is different from others” (San man, elderly). However, their comprehension of their national identity was in this way not at all as systematic as for the Owambo respondents.

With question number 14 we asked: what is most important for you to be, Namibian or San/Owambo? Most of the Owambo informants claimed that their Namibian identity was most important, however two said that being African was most important, and only two said that their Owambo identity was most important, and those were both under the age of 23. Again, some of the Owambo informants claimed to the Namibian identity as they held that the
ethnic categories were forced upon them in order to restrain them even further: “Namibian is more important because Owambo is just a... long ago they called us Owambo, they graded us. I’m just a Namibian, we have not Owambo ID-cards, or Herero, just Namibian, just the same” (Owambo man, 65), and “this word of Owambo and those kind of words are words that might be colonial errors that can be doomed out, they did not want us to meet in order to discuss things that could help us, or give us rights, or develop Namibia, when we were still under the colonial system. We were not Owambo from our forefathers but then they divided us, now we can do it in order to know who belongs to what” (Owambo man, 50). The Owambo identity does not, in this way, indicate a connection to their ancestry, or any common history for them.

For the San respondents the identity as being San was certainly more significant than being Namibian. “San that is who I am, Namibia is just a country, San, or Hai //om is my tribe” (San man, 29) Some of the answers of the San interviewees, though, indicated that there was some sort of confusion of what they might have thought that they ought to say, and they responded instead of which identification that they thought was the most significant to have. In that case, with reference to the minority position that they are in, Namibian is clearly the finest one to possess, all individuals identified as San are thus, not as important as others (for instance Namibians). One of the most prominent, yet still extremely poor and exposed, of our San informants for instance, claimed the Namibian identity: “Namibian is more important than to be San” (San man, 52), however this man was, as mentioned, prominent in his community since he was in all committees and boards concerning his community (like the school board and the church committee). But the confusion with seeing one identity as more important than another was not restricted to the San informants: “Namibian, not to be Owambo because if you think that Owambo is most important then it is kind of racism to other tribes. I think that all tribes are as important as Owambo” (Owambo woman, 22).

Again, the connection to discrimination was apparent, but it was far from how we perceived that the San informants understood the question and their answers.

Question 21 stated: what do you think about the future? How do you consider your future? The answers were certainly multiple, and the Owambo answers were longer, as was the trend throughout our entire bulk of interviews. The Owambo informants, young and old, were additionally also much more positive towards their future: ”I’m going forwards,
straight, I have courage and commitment. We don’t want to go backwards, where we come from. It’s like the law, the constitutional, people who move backwards, like in law making and then there is people who wants to go with the traditional objects [she was working with development of culture ] in the past no one wanted to develop the culture like this here. That was a sick community” (Owambo woman, elderly), though it was easy for us to understand this, her respond startled us somewhat since we knew that she was a close relative to a person who has a very high position in the government. Hence, we had thought that she would be positive towards the government and Namibia. Instead, she was quite the opposite, as she indicated that those in the government were not really representatives for her, and that she felt nothing in particular for Namibia, as she was an African. Thus, our presuppositions were dashed, which was, we think, quite healthy for us, since assumptions and prejudices was nothing that we wanted to convey to our informants.

Most other Owambo informants also saw their future in a positive perspective, “I think it is going to be good, because I’m studying on a high level and I’m doing my very, very best, I’m going to be a doctor so that I can help people and at the same time get something for me because then everyone will consider me as a person” (Owambo man, 17). With this they displayed some kind of confidence, which they also spoke of as a prerequisite for maintaining a positive prospect of their future, “I will be someone very big. I am growing on a daily basis, and I will also be studying as from next year” (Owambo woman, 28), and “it will only be fine if I have self-confidence and self-esteem and if I’m interested and educated and take responsibility of helping those who need” (Owambo woman, 22). One Owambo man said that he wanted to be a famous artist and contribute to the young generation by spreading the culture and make way for them. Another, that he wanted to be someone responsible. Still, some Owambo respondents held that it was a difficult question and that you never know what will happen “Ahh, ha ha, the future is like this; tomorrow is Sunday, tomorrow I will go to church, and maybe tomorrow I will get sick and not go. Future is a big thing. It includes thing of which I know and don’t know” (Owambo man, 65). The references to HIV/Aids were also pronounced, “Okay, about my future, eh... really I cannot talk about this now (Owambo woman with the HIV virus), another Owambo man with the virus said that even though you make plans, you cannot know what the future holds.
The San informants as well said that the future was not possible to “see”, though they were not as positive as the Ovambo informants about their own future: "it is very small; it’s not big" (San man, 33). Some were really concerned, though we got the feeling that they wanted to show us that they were, despite everything, not as worried, "I am wondering about my future, I’m not employed and I have no income. I find it difficult. I cannot see my future. It is difficult to explain it" (San woman, elderly). Yet, there were some San respondents who thought that the future may be good, “if I could be upgraded and I have the same skills then I could be somebody in the future” (San man, elderly) still, though this was an additional comment on that they did see themselves as lesser worth, or not as significant as other people, "I really want to raise the awareness of importance in my community where people feel that they are less important than everyone else” (San woman, 25). Being in a San community, the extreme poverty with all its implications was a tangible and intense feeling, which overpowered us completely. Thus, when one San woman answered this question with: “the future is like this, what is around” (San woman in her 20s), it somehow became a very powerful statement that conveyed us with feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. This was the life they had, and due to the severe poverty, she saw no way that it was going to change. At one point, a SWAPO representative came into the homestead of one of our San informants during our interview. The representative was (this was right before the election) one of the “leaders” of the village and also the owner of the bar that opened at around six in the morning and thus one of the reasons for the palpable severe alcohol abuse in the community, even among children. Anyhow she walked in and placed herself looking down on the respondent and us while we were doing the interview. This made the interview turn in no time. This man had opened up to us and answered our question with reliance, but the next respond then came our shortly: “fine the future will be fine” (San man, 52), whereas the other answers not had been as positive. We then, broke off the interview until the SWAPO – representative was gone again. For us it was clear that this man did not dare to say what he wanted in front of his neighbour. She was an authority to him, not only by being “not San” but certainly also by being a representative of the highest authority in the country, and also in charge of the alcohol (mis)use (and abuse) in the community, as she owned the bar.

Furthermore, she represented the instance that did provide some food and programs in order to help the community, and you do not easily cut off the hand that feeds you. Two of the San interviewees said that they wanted to go to the university, one in order to get money for

59 As the people did not have work to go to during the day, and only some children went to school, this was the alternative, and the soothe of their problems.
animals so to be able to leave something for his children when he dies. For the Owambo respondents the ethnic marker bears negative connotations, and hence they prefer to be called Namibians. For the San however, the ethnic markers is so consequent and implies the subjected position that they are subjected to as members of a minority group and is therefore hard to disregard.

4. Postcolonial Nation Building

The concept and meaning of nationstate was indisputably invented in Europe, an “invention” that was seen, according to Davidson (1992), as an ultimate solution for the “world order”. As Laakso and Olukoshi (1996) assert, the official view of a nationstate as a culturally and politically homogenous state was transmitted to Africa with colonialism. Davidson ironically calls it ‘Europe’s last gift to Africa’. In line with what Davidson says, after independence, there was not much choice for the ex-colonies than to organize into the model of ‘European nation-statism’. However as recognized in the theoretical framework, many theorists agree on that postcolonial nation-building, along the European model, implies many challenges for the new states. It is extremely difficult to try to conform to European standards, as the contexts are completely different. However, Namibia, in contrast to most other African postcolonial states, went through a liberation war to reach independence. In the view of Herbst (2000) this shared struggle or shared national trauma might then develop into nationalism, a prerequisite for a nationstate, since, due to the colonial domination over Namibia and later liberation struggle, Namibians do have a common history and shared memory, something that otherwise often is lacking in postcolonial states striving towards nation-building. We also noticed this sense of commemoration during the interviews when our respondents often have referred to the liberation struggle, the time of independence and the fact that Namibia now is free.

Although such utterances were almost always given by our Owambo informants, and seldom by the San, a fact that undoubtedly weakens the Namibian nation under construction since feelings of the “imaginary us” must stem from all people as well as the applicability of Herbst theory. In this the last theme of analysis we will see how our informants respond to questions alluding to Namibia’s status as a postcolonial and pre-independence state.

Hence on question number 15 we asked: **do you think that your identity or the way you identify yourself has changed since independence? In what ways?** Almost all our respondents did not speak specifically about themselves or how they might have changed as
individuals since independence, instead they tended to more generally speak about and give examples of what according to them has changed on a more general basis, for all Namibians.

An Owambo man (17) said for instance: “today people feel that they are brave, because in the past their rights to say things were not recognised. Now people are respected and they feel that they are real people, not animals or something like that”. Our respondents often logically mentioned freedom, for instance freedom of movement and freedom of speech, “I can have open thoughts now”, as one Owambo informant said or “now we can visit our fellow sisters and brothers and families in neighbouring countries” an elderly Owambo woman uttered.

Some emanated from their own feelings and said that they have changed in the way that they do not have to be afraid anymore, or that they and others do not have to suffer any longer. A few Owambo as well as San respondents pointed out that independence signified the end of the forced division between the Namibian people, and the beginning of a more mixed Namibia. One respondent, an Owambo woman (22) said: “before independence we were separated into different ethnicities. The Owambos were here in the north, the Namas in the south, the Himbas and the Hereros in the east and so forth. We are all over now, the Namibians”. She further brought up the changed relation between whites and blacks as she said: “Independence has changed a lot. Now things are fair, like in the colleges [...] before you could only find Boers there, but now you will find mostly blacks. After independence most of the Boers did not want to share things with us. But they are not chased out of Namibia, they are the ones that want to move [...] But really I get so happy if a Boer share anything with me [...] It is over, forget about the past, get over it and forgive”.

Many of the Owambo, but also a few San respondents, referred to the fact that Namibia is united now. A San man (around 40) in relation to this uttered: “It is different now [...] the new government say we are all united, as Namibians [...] we have a unity now with all people”. One of our Owambo informants derived even more from himself and his feelings that have changed since independence, he said: “What has changed for me since independence is that the feelings of hatred against white persons has gone away”. Only a few of our informants, mostly San, said that they had not changed or that conditions around them had not changed.

Next we wanted to investigate where our informants stand regarding SWAPOs decision not to uncover and deal with crimes committed by the South Africans (SADF) or within the own ranks during the apartheid era. The question of reconciliation is an important element in the
Namibian nation-building as could be understood from the section about reconciliation in the contemporary section of the essay. Thus we posed question 16: in South Africa they have had a long and thorough process of reconciliation. What do you think about that sort of process for Namibia? A common opinion among our informants when responding to this question was that apartheid and all the crimes committed during that era belong to the past, it is all over, and Namibia must move on. A common utterance of our respondents was something similar to: we have to forgive but not forget or the past is the past. One informant held that the Namibians definitely will not forget but they will gradually learn to forgive. Thus many were of the opinion that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and trials as done in South Africa would only bring back old memories and could trigger instability and even civil war.

Berg also writes on the issue of reconciliation in his recent book, which title in fact partly carries the saying “forgive but not forget” (Förlåta men inte glömma. Röster om rasism, nationalism och det mångkulturella samhället I Namibia. Och i Sverige, 2004). In the writing, Berg, discusses among other issues, how it has been possible for the Namibians to move on without seeking revenge or even justice for all the crimes that were committed against them during apartheid. According to Berg, one possible explanation might be that by not seeking revenge even though the opportunity was given, a greater triumph was secured, namely the victory of morality over immorality and depravity, an action that according to Berg, is far superior to the method of violence that the colonial authorities exercised on the Namibians during apartheid. This then is, according to Berg, a “human and moral triumph”. Though it might contain some accuracy, it is important to remember that the decision not to follow the example of South Africa was a decision entirely made by the government, the SWAPO party led by Nujoma. Even though many of our informants agree on the slogan forgive but not forget, there are quite a few who reason differently. A San man living in Windhoek (29) said: I think that reconciliation as in South Africa should start. We should make the government start it. I think it is necessary so we can move on. People have to talk about what happened to be able to reconcile with each other. As revealed in the contemporary chapter the government is firm in their aim to move on in unity, a message that is frequently repeated. Many of our informants had submitted to that message and said things similar to: “it is going well we are united now” or as a San man said (52): “we were told that we had to forget and forgive what happened, nowadays we unite and go together, since reconciliation was
announced by the president [...] We just follow the words of reconciliation which was given after independence, that people have to unite and be one Namibia”. Throughout the interviews it was evident that our respondents (too) simply submitted to government sayings, without questioning them, that is at least our impression. Here, yet again the concept of hegemony, or “domination by consent” is appropriate. Namibia is a postcolonial state subjected to oppression and apartheid, thus the structure of colonialism is since long ingrained in the system as well as in the minds of people. As Landström (2001) claims patterns of domination are still prevailing in former colonies (taking on other forms) even though states in practice are free. In line with this one of our Owambo respondents said, “we must seek independence in the minds”.

One Owambo man (34) claims that for Namibia and the Namibians to reconcile, the divisions between all groups must be diminished otherwise Namibia will not develop. Moreover, he states that the whites in Namibia must contribute to this: “For the Boers and the Germans, if they reconcile themselves and say: ‘we did really something wrong to those people [blacks and coloureds] after independence we thought they would kill us or chase us out, but they did not do that’. In other countries in Kenya and in Zimbabwe, the countries that were free before us, they did chase the whites out, but not in Namibia. Therefore, the whites in Namibia have to say to themselves: ‘we have colonised those people and we have done bad things and now we have to give something back to them’. That means they have to work together with us and develop Namibia, not make the distinctions between ethnic groups even firmer, the whites and even the rich black people have to give something to the poor, if not, reconciliation will never work. At independence the land was free but not the minds of people, it still is not free”. From this we understand that opinions are rather divided, some think that it is good as it is, and that reconciliation is happening right now, it only takes on another forms than in South Africa. Others on the other hand wished that something should really be done on this matter.

The question, number 17 posed: how do you experience your own position in the Namibian society? This is an important question, in order to get a picture of how our informants look upon themselves as members of the Namibian society, and crucial for the comprehension of aspects of Namibian nation-building. The answers differed between our informants groups. Most of the Owambo informants were quite confident. Again a reoccurring feeling when interviewing our San informants was that we felt and perceived it, as
they just did not dare to speak their minds. This salience and reluctance to speak certainly “speaks for itself”, we will return to this again. On this question the great majority of our San informants said again, *I am fine, everything is fine* or *Namibia is good* although as many times before their eyes and body language spoke a different tune. Considering also the status of the San groups in the Namibian society such statements must be reassessed. A San man (33) uttered the following unusual and ambiguous but striking line: “we are animals (laugh). *In my society I feel very nice, there is no problem*”. He knew that people saw him and his group as being animals, and so he jokingly answered with this, reinforcing that discrimination.

Two other San respondents, living in an urban society, expressed distress about their and other San people’s position in the Namibian society. Thus, in relation to how they positioned themselves in the Namibian society one urban San respondent said: “*I would say that I am still at the bottom…the other groups are far ahead of us. I see myself as a person on the lower level and I really want to change that*” (San woman, 25). The answer from another urban informant was a somewhat similar: ”*[My position in the Namibian society is] sometimes very difficult. People are not always so nice to other tribes, they say that they think of everyone as the same but that is not true, a lot is going on under the surface. Maybe we will unite for real in the future but now we are still in different tribes and ethnic groups*” (San man, 29).

Many of the Owambo respondents on the other hand, gave positive statements of their position in the Namibian society, or rather of how they assessed their own position. One Owambo man (17) said, “*I see myself as an important person in the society*”, another Owambo informant, a woman (28), similarly claimed: “*I play a major role in the uplifting of this country’s development*” a third Owambo woman (22) in the same manners said: “*I am contributing to the development*” and an Owambo man (33) declares: “*my aim is to be a role-model for the young*”. On the whole and in contrast to the San respondents many used the words *development* and *future* when explaining their perceived position. Although also some of the Owambo respondents were unhappy or displeased with their position in society, one Owambo man (40) said, “*my position is low, not last but perhaps second from behind*”.

The last question posed during our interviews was **What do you think about the future for Namibia?** A question suitable to end with since it makes room for overall reflections concerning Namibia. Most of our informants were very optimistic to the future of Namibia.
Many said something similar to if we continue like this it will be fine or it will be bright as long as we stick to what we are practising now. Several, even though optimistic, mentioned that there are threats to the Namibian development and stability. HIV/Aids was frequently referred to as a major problem and a serious threat to the Namibian development. An Owambo woman (28) said: “[the future looks] bright, even though there are things that might challenge the development, like HIV/Aids, we already have a small population and a lot of people die in HIV/Aids, the birth rate is going down and the death rate is going up”. An Owambo man (17) likewise claimed: “I think it [the future for Namibia] will be good, the country is developing, but HIV/AIDS is a threat to the good development”. Several as well said that the future will be good, if only stability and peace is maintained. An elderly San man expressed his concern for the people in his community as he said to us: “I understand Namibia is developing. But poverty is all over and there are few that suffer like us. I just feel that we are the last born with this poverty and starvation, with no food and clothes. We are completely behind, like a dog”, a quote that reveals a great deal about the perceived prospect of future for our San informants. Another San man (20) thought that things are better now than before because it is peace, he said: The future will be fine and we do not fight anymore. Because in earlier times, if they saw me in the bush, they wanted to beat me and kill me.

One of our Owambo respondents, a woman (34) is one of the few that openly showed disloyalty towards the governmental SWAPO party. She was worried about the future and said: “I think that maybe in the future it will be civil war or something in Namibia because of the SWAPO party. I think the...sometimes they are not good. Something is needed”. An Owambo man (40) also carefully states that the development depends on the leaders “It is difficult with the ruling party”. Even though some Owambo individuals expressed their heavy concerns to us we have reasons of believing that they did not “dare” voting on another party in the election. Similarly, we find it hard to believe that it was possible for the voters in the San community to vote on some other party than the SWAPO party.

After finishing our interviews, two of the San respondents (both were some sort of leaders of the community) asked us questions. They wanted to know how we saw them saying things like: “Do you think that I have rights? Am I a real Namibian?” They said that they thought that we had posed some very good and important questions, and so they welcomed us. One of

Being a lastborn, the child born last in line, meant in the Namibian (Owambo) society that you got your needs fulfilled last, as the firstborns, being more important, came first.
they claimed that they had a problem with ethnicity, as two of the Owambo groups fought over the land on which the San community lies, he also said, “the way you find us, they way you see us, we are like human beings, but different”. This statement really underscores the problems of marginalisation that was so tangible in this community.

Conclusively, the other San man furthermore posed the important and well justified question: “you are students and you come here and asks us questions, will you go back and keep quite or will you be to some help for us?” We would really like to do that, though we do not really see how.

We will now turn to a discussion and subsequent conclusion of our findings of this study, wherein the answers to our research questions, linked to the purpose and aim of this essay, will be elucidated.
5. Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Our aim with this essay has been to examine the Namibian construction of a national identity and national consensus, with reference to Namibia’s historical background and the fact that Namibia is a postcolonial and postapartheid state. The focus is on how people from two different ethnic backgrounds (the San and the Owambo) experience their situation as Namibians in one of the youngest countries in Africa. The purpose has subsequently been to, from a critical angle, comprehend and present a process of nation-building and national identity in the making in the postcolonial Namibia. By method of interviewing, we wanted to grasp how people from the San and the Owambo groups experience this process in relation to their subsistent ethnic identity. The employment of postcolonial theory and a range of interrelated concepts as the theoretical framework for our study have been crucial since the central location of our field of research is accurately within a postcolonial context.

The attitudes and experiences concerning the national identity clearly differ between our two focus groups. Over all, the San respondents were not proud over their identity as being members of a San community, however, many of them claimed to be proud over their national identity as Namibians. Their minority and inferior position as San in the Namibian society, a position that they themselves are aware of, could explain this. Though, the San all did identify themselves as ‘San’ and not as Namibians. Most of our San informants were not at all positive towards their future, or the future of the San communities. Yet, they on the whole saw the future of the whole of Namibia as bright and flourishing. Most of our respondents from the Owambo community however, seemed rather satisfied with their position within the Namibian society, they are positive towards their own future, the future for the Owambo groups, as well as the future of Namibia. Moreover, their identity as Namibians is more important for them than the ethnic identity as Owambo, their Owambo identity should however, certainly not be underestimated. Their ethnic affiliation is still of outmost significance as they tend to identify themselves by means of their ethnic membership rather than their national, this might have to do with the lack of national symbols founded in the everyday lives of most Namibians. The respondent groups seem to lack the sense of a real ‘us’ that includes all ethnic groups in Namibia, as well as they lack a sense of ‘them’ when meaning people of other nationalities. The categories ‘them’, for many Namibians, are still
They say: divided we fall, united we stand…” Carolina Hamma
Johanna Sixtensson

frequently other Namibians instead for other nations and nationalities. The ethnic categories, brutally reinforced by the apartheid system, still influence people in Namibia to a great extent, and in some cases they have substantially distorted their view. Some of our respondents were clearly very conscious about this. The Owambo respondents, who claimed that the ethnic groups were categorised by the colonial rules and thus had disturbed their understanding, often identified themselves as Africans. Many of the Owambo respondents referred to their identity as Africans, whereas none of the San informants did this. Notwithstanding, our Owambo respondents had strong aspirations of a national identity and the unification around a national agenda; they saw themselves as Namibians and were proud to be so. Most Owambo respondents were also proud of their membership in the Owambo community.

As has become clear throughout this essay nationalism, national identity, ethnicity and ethnic identity are complex issues. For Namibia and the Namibians perhaps even more complex than for many other countries and peoples due to the fact that people were kept separated from each other during the colonial and apartheid era. They had to learn how to keep to their own “ethnic group” or the categorisation marked on them by the colonial rule. ‘Ethnicity’ as we know it, was through that forced on them and planted in them, eventually the colonial authorities’ taxonomy of ethnic groups became reality. Today, the ideas of apartheid and racism are brought to end and Namibia is one nation, with one new official national language, one national flag and one democratic government. Namibia is now officially striving towards harmony and unity, wherein which the ethnic distinctions no longer should matter. However, even though ethnicity was forced on people during apartheid and even though people are highly aware of that and seek to change it such identities are difficult to demolish for the sake of an all-embracing national identity.

Thus, what we have tried to examine is if ethnicity and tribalism really are matters of the past. We recall Magnus Berg’s quote, “Namibia is not a federation of ethnicities, but a nationstate in which the identity as Namibian is more salient than the sense ethnic affiliation” (own translation, 2003:43). By this study we have seen that it is not quite that simple, even though it might be true for some. In no doubt, the national identity is more important for many of our respondents, but it is more complex than that. Ethnicity does matter for our informants and moreover, it affects the Namibian nation-building and the construction of the Namibian nation. The ethnic categories are so ingrained in people that they become extremely hard to
disregard. Language and territory, location of living, are markers of ethnicity that still separate people in Namibia, furthermore, these ethnic markers are in times of hardship what people tend to rely on and find comfort in, and in that way they reinforce the categories. However, some sort of sensed solidarity between the people of Namibia seems to be present and almost all our respondents conveyed that they were happy and proud to be Namibians. Still, the nationalist ideology based on the idea of political and cultural boundaries as toning and overlapping, does not really correspond to the Namibian society. Surely, the political and cultural boundaries overlap to some extent, but they still follow the long-time ingrained system of segregation. As we have shown, many Namibians still to a great extent vote along ethnic lines. Most of the political parties have their target group within one or more ethnic categorisations. Except for the CoD primarily, as the party does not target themselves to specific ethnic categories, but quite contrary, it has a multifaceted focus of unification. Of further significance is that a clear majority of the SWAPO members are Owambo and the clear majority of the Owambos votes for SWAPO, a fact that naturally influences the nation-building and the construction of a national identity.

Our respondents did stress their nationality with means of their ethnic affiliation, claiming to their culture as ‘typically’ Namibian. Ironically for us, since we are vegetarians, meat was one of the “not ethnically marked” things that came up as typically Namibian. Meat is an extremely important commodity, both traditionally as well as in the modern society. Maybe ‘meat’ can succeed in the unification process, where the national anthem fails. Though we have also seen in the contemporary chapter about the issue of land in Namibia; it is still the whites in Namibia who hold the economic power, and who owns land, thus also the commercial farms, and they are as so in charge of the Namibian cattle breeding. Hence, it is the whites that own the meat that could possibly ‘unify’ Namibians. This surely disturbs the hypothesis. Is there then something that unifies the people of Namibia? The Namibians do, to some extent, share a common history and they have shared memories through the liberation war and the many years under the colonial rule, however, they still lack a joint history outside the independence struggle, a history that unites the different ethnic categories around a national project. Clearly, not all people share the same experiences. The whites have never experienced the oppression on the side of those who were subordinated to it. Moreover, the San groups have been and still are regarded as traitors by some, due to the 31 battalion, the cooperation with the SADF and the subsequent secessionist movement in Caprivi.
Besides meat another rather paradoxical but possible ‘unifying element’ for the Namibians is the struggle against HIV/Aids. This disease affect (if not infect) the great majority of the Namibians and it is undoubtedly a major social problem and national concern that threatens to hamper the Namibian development tremendously, something that in the end will affect all and every citizen in Namibia. Many also seemed to be aware of that. While in Namibia, we frequently witnessed national information campaigns and commercials on the subject of HIV/Aids and almost all our Owambo informants mentioned HIV/Aids at some point during the interviews. Yet again, none of our San informants mentioned the disease. Someone in Namibia told us that the San are so marginalised that they do not even get HIV/Aids. This is certainly a racist mislead and not entirely true today, but the statement does contain some seriousness and an amount of accuracy in the way that the San are not really within the official or medial HIV/Aids debate, in the same way as they are marginalised from the society and in the periphery of the national project as a whole.

Strikingly, education was one of the most important issues for all our respondents. Education determined their future, both young and old. The young had to get educated in order to be able to have an income in the future, and the old were also dependent on that income. Some elderly people were now also given the chance of education for the cause of abolishing illiteracy and in order to learn the new official language, English. It was thus with education that they, in both of our focus groups, saw possibilities and chances for development. Education might then be a mean for unification; since this is something they can (and do to some extent) share. However, brain-drain and the absence of white students at UNAM, might hamper the idea of education as a unifying mean. The elderly (Owambos) were furthermore the ones who could not relate to Namibia and the national project. They have only spent a fragment of their life in ‘Namibia’. The young, however are the ones that will (continue to) build the Namibian nation, and they were also the ones who saw Namibia as much more important and had the national project within sight.

Since the Owambo culture is in majority, this ethnic tradition easily becomes the mainstream culture for every non-white citizen. While Namibia is defined through the differentiation from other nations as well as through the postcolonial status as ‘other’ from the Euro- and ethnocentric idea of nation and state, as well as worldview, the San are defined by means of
‘othering’ within Namibia. A nationalistic ideology is an ethnic ideology that requires a nation for an ethnic group, and therefore, are nationalistic feelings repeatedly marked by ethnicity. In correspondence to Smith’s theory of the “dominant ethnie model”, through the SWAPO rule then, the Owambo traditions become a national culture, at least in part (the Western culture in certainly significant in this as well but not the focus of this essay). Symbols and signifiers like the flag, the national anthem and the official language (English) that are not specific for one ethnic group are thus highly significant for nation-building and the unification of all peoples with the Namibian nation. The Owambo respondents also often emanated from their own culture when referring to Namibia on the whole. Not surprisingly, for them ‘Owambo’ is Namibia. Our experience is also that even though the San refer to their culture in the same way, their minority status makes it impossible to claim it for the whole of Namibia. For the sake of nation-building it is perhaps both safer and more important to focus on the similarities instead of the differences. As we now know, the ethnic groups were at least up to apartheid but even after that fluid, shifting and overlapping. Hence, many groups share similar features and a focus on similarities instead of difference is favourable. Still, it is evident that the respondents see their culture as significant and important to preserve. One Owambo woman said that friendliness and greetings are qualities that characterises Namibians and differentiated them from other nationalities. Another Owambo man equally said that it is easy to recognise a Namibian since Namibians always greet each other on the street. Being helpful and seeing it important to greet everyone, are also characteristics that we experienced as typically Namibian.

Conclusion

Thus, from a critical angle and with the employment of postcolonial theories that have inspired us and imbued this entire essay; we have reached the conclusions that ‘ethnicity’ is still an important mean of identification in Namibia. Moreover, the fact that Namibia is a postcolonial and postapartheid state strongly affects the Namibian nation-building and the politics of SWAPO as well as the construction of a national identity. Ethnic categories are still ingrained in people and consciously or unconsciously such distinctions are used for identification and also as signifiers of difference between of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Simultaneously the segregation has made ethnic categories looser, since such distinctions are connected with apartheid and therefore dismissible. However, at present, the Owambo culture is dominant while the San culture is pushed out to the periphery. The San groups are in an inferior
minority position, a situation that they are well aware of. The Ovambo groups on the other hand are conscious of their own culturally dominant position as Namibians (not including the whites and Western culture), and are also aware of the subjected position of the San groups. The Ovambos seem to identify themselves as Namibians. The San groups, in contrast identify themselves with their ethnic or tribal group. Moreover, in this essay we have shown, that ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nationalism’ are social (and cultural) constructions that can be ‘enforced’ on people by a more dominant part. The colonial authorities in Namibia hegemonically divided and separated the Namibians into groups, holding that such a division was in the best interest of all. At present a national identity is under the making and reconciliation and unity is announced under the lead of the SWAPO party, given that unity is a prerequisite for a successful nation-state and a prospering future, as one of our respondents declared, "they say: divided we fall, united we stand".

By this essay and through the 22 interviews that we conducted in Namibia, we cannot make any conclusions valid for the whole of Namibia’s population. However, we do find it possible for us to point out some tendencies for our two focus groups. We have found that there certainly are differences in attitudes and experiences of national identification between the two groups. The Ovambo group is much more confident about their situation, and they know that their confidence is a prerequisite for nation-building and progress, while the San group is more anxious and generally lack self-esteem to speak much about their situation at all. Although both groups seem to be proud of their identity as Namibians, the San group know that as Namibians they are more eligible in society, than what their ethnic maker can bestow on them.

Our area of research certainly has been intriguing and complex, nothing is as simple as it looks at first glance, but there are many layers that need to be discovered and dealt with. From the outset, when still at the planning stage, Namibia was not our first choice. In due course however, it turned out to be the ultimate choice for our area of research. When we were in Namibia, the relevance of this sort of research was palpable. For future research, interesting and possible fields of investigation could, among others, be to relate this focus to one linked to the white population in Namibia and how they perceive their situation, as well as how they are affected by the ongoing process of nation-building. Moreover, to compare Namibia to one or several neighboring countries in terms of nation-building and national identity making is
as well an intriguing, though broad, area of research. Another important issue for further research is certainly why national identity is a significant construction in Southern Africa, compared to the problems of nationalism (and the many negative aspects) in Europe and the rest of the countries on the African continent.
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Appendix 2.

The Populations Registration Act, No. 30 of 1950

Excerpts

2. There shall, as soon as practicable after the fixed date, be compiled by the Director and thereafter maintained by him, a register of the population of the Union.

5. Every person whose name is included in the register shall be classified by the Director as a white person, a coloured person or a native person, as the case may be, and every coloured person and every native person whose name is included shall be classified by the Director according to the ethnic or other group to which he belongs. [The term 'native' was later changed to 'Bantu'. In 1961 the Act was amended, with the Coloured community divided into Cape Coloured, Cape Malay, Griqua, Indian, Chinese, 'other Asiatic', and 'other Coloured'.]

1. The Governor-General may by proclamation in the Gazette prescribe and define the ethnic or other group into which coloured persons and natives shall be classified in terms of sub-section, and may in like manner amend or withdraw any such proclamation.

2. If at any time it appears to the Director that the classification of a person in terms of sub-section (1) is incorrect, he may, subject to the provisions of sub-section ...

7) of section eleven and after giving notice to that person and, if he is a minor, also to his guardian, specifying in which respect the classification is incorrect, and afford such person and such guardian (if any) an opportunity of being heard, alter the classification of that person in the register.

6. The Director shall assign an identity number to every person whose name is included in the register.

7. There shall be, in respect to every person whose name is included in the register, other than a native, be included in the register the following particulars and no other particulars whatsoever namely:

1. his full name, sex and ordinary place of residence;
2. his classification in terms of section (5);
3. the date and place of his birth;
4. his citizenship or nationality, and in the case of an alien, an indication of the fact that he is an alien;
5. his marital status;
6. in the case of a registered voter, the electoral division and polling district in which he is registered as a voter under the Electoral Consolidation Act, 1946 (Act No 46 of 1946);
7. the date of his arrival in the Union, if not born in a part of South Africa included in the Union;
8. a recent photograph of himself, except in the case of a person who has not yet attained the age of sixteen years, or who has been admitted to the Union for a temporary purpose; and
9. his identity number.
(2) There shall in respect of every native whose name is included in the register, be included in the register the following particulars and no other particulars whatsoever, namely;
(1) his full name, sex and ordinary place of residence;
(2) his citizenship or nationality, the ethnic or other group and the tribe to which he belongs;
(3) the date, or if the date is not known, the year or reputed year, and place, or if the place is not known, the district of his birth;
(4) his marital status;
(i) the year of his arrival in the Union, if not born in a part of South Africa included in the Union;
(ii) a recent photograph of himself, except in the case of a person who has not yet attained the age of sixteen years, or who has been admitted to the Union for a temporary purpose; and
(iii) his identity number.
Upon the death or permanent departure from the Union of a person whose name is included in the register, the date of his death or departure from the Union, as the case may be, shall be recorded in the register.

Source: Dr David Dorward, South African History Guide, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia
Appendix 3.

Group Areas Act, No 41 of 1950

Extracts

The Population Registration Act defined the population into so-called racial/ethnic 'groups'. The Group Areas Act defined where members of a group might have legal rights to property and residence.

2 (1) For the purposes of this Act, there shall be the following groups:
(1) a white group, in which shall be included any person who in appearance, obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a white person, other than a person who although in appearance obviously a white person, is generally accepted as a coloured person, or who is in terms of sub-paragraph (ii) of paragraphs (b) and (c) or of the said sub-paragraphs read with paragraph (d) of this sub-section and paragraph (a) of sub-section (2), a member of any other group;
(2) a native group, in which shall be included;
(i) any person who in fact is, or is generally accepted as a member of an aboriginal race or tribe of Africa, other than a person who is, in terms of sub-paragraph (ii) of paragraph (c), a member of the coloured group; and
(ii) any woman to whichever race, tribe or class she may belong, between whom and a person who is, in terms of sub-paragraph (i), a member of a native group, there exists a marriage or who cohabits with such a person;
(3) a coloured group, in which shall be included;
(i) any person who in fact is not a member of the white group or of the native group; and
(ii) any woman to whichever race, tribe or class she may belong, between whom and a person who is, in terms of sub-paragraph (i), a member of a native group, there exists a marriage or who cohabits with such a person; and
(4) any group or persons which is under sub-section (2) declared to be a group.

(2) The Governor General may by proclamation in the Gazette:
(a) define any ethnical, linguistic, cultural or other group of persons who are members either of the native group or of the coloured group; and
(b) declare the group so defined to be a group for the purposes of this Act or of such provision thereof as may be specified in the proclamation, and either generally or in respect of one or more group areas, or in respect of the controlled area or of any portion thereof so specified, or both in respect of one or more group areas and of the controlled area or any such portion thereof.

(3) A proclamation under paragraph (a) of sub-section (2) may provide that only persons who have in accordance with the regulation been registered on application,
or who have been registered under any other law, as members of the group referred to in the proclamation, shall be members thereof.

(4) A member of the native group or of the coloured group who is or becomes a member of any group defined under paragraph (a) of sub-section (2) shall, to the extent required to give effect to any proclamation under paragraph (b) of the said sub-section, be deemed not to be a member of the native group or the coloured group, as the case may be.

3. (1) The governor-General may, whenever it is deemed expedient, by proclamation in the Gazette:
(a) declare that from the date of the proclamation, which shall be dated not less than one year after the date of publication thereof, the area defined in the proclamation shall be an area for occupation by members of the group specified therein; or
(b) declare that, as from a date specified in the proclamation, the area defined in the proclamation shall be an area for ownership by members of the group specified therein.

4. (1) As from the date specified in the relevant proclamation no disqualified person shall occupy and no person shall be allowed any disqualified person to occupy any land or premises in any group area to which the proclamation related, except under the authority of a permit.
(2) The provisions of sub-section (1) shall not render it unlawful for any disqualified person to occupy land or premises in any group area:
(a) as a bona fide servant or employee of the State, or a statutory body or as a domestic servant of any person lawfully occupying the land or premises;
(b) as a bona fide visitor for a total of not more than ninety days in any calendar year of any person lawfully residing on the land or premises or as a bona fide guest in a hotel;
(c) as a bona fide patient in a hospital, asylum or similar institution controlled by the State or a statutory body or in any such institution in existence at the commencement of the Act, which is aided by the State, or as an inmate of a prison, work colony, inebriate home or similar institution so controlled; or
(d) as a bona fide employee (other than a domestic servant) of any person (including a domestic servant or employee) who is lawfully occupying such land or premises: Provided that the provisions of this paragraph shall apply in respect of any group area or any part of any group area only if the Governor-General has by proclamation in the Gazette, declared them to apply in respect of that group area, or that part thereof, and only to the extent and subject to the conditions (if any) which may be specified in the proclamation.
(3) Any provision in the title deed of an immovable property situated in any group area referred to in sub-section (1) prohibiting or restricting the occupation or use of such property by persons who are members of the group for which that area has been established shall lapse as from the date referred to in the said sub-section, and no such provisions shall thereafter be inserted in the title deed of any immovable property in such group area.

(19) No person shall acquire or hold on behalf or in the interest of any other person any immovable property which such other person may not lawfully acquire or hold in terms of the Act.

(20) (1) If any immovable property:
(a) is acquired or held in contravention of any provision of this Act or is dealt with or used contrary to any condition of the permit under the authority of which it has been acquired or is held; or
(b) has at the commencement of this Act been acquired or is at the said commencement held in contravention of any provision of any law repealed by this Act or in pursuance of any agreement which is null and void in terms of any such provision
the Minister may, after not less than three months' notice in writing to the person concerned and to the holder of any registered mortgage bond over the property, cause the property to be sold either out of hand, or then by public auction upon such terms and conditions as the Minister may determine.

Source: Dr David Dorward, South African History Guide, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.
Appendix 5.

SOURCE: 1961 NATIONAL CENSUS.
(www.minorityrights.org/admin/Download/pdf/NamibiaReport.pdf)
Interview Questions

With reference to our main research questions; is a Namibian national identity more important and weightier than the ethnic identity for our informants of these two groups? Is there any difference between the two groupings? Considering the different positions of Owambo and San in the Namibian society does the attitudes and experiences concerning national affiliation and identity differ between the two groups? Moreover, throughout the interviews we also keep in mind the general question; how are the two ethnic groups Owambo and San affected by the making and construction of a Namibian national identity?

We will explain the general idea of our project work for each informant, and we will also explain the questions shortly in order to avoid misunderstandings and miscomprehensions. We will also let the interviewee speak in a as free manner as possible, giving them room to express themselves as they choose to and elaborate as much as they want. Key words for us to keep in mind while conducting the interviews are: clarity, sensitivity, ethnicity, apartheid, nationalism, anonymousness, colonialism, tribalism, and honesty.

1. Who are you? Could you give us a short presentation of yourself?
2. How would you identify yourself? (What would you call yourself?)
3. What language do you speak at home?
4. What does the notion ‘Ethnicity’ mean to you? What do you think about the concept ‘ethnic group’?
5. Do you consider ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic groups’ as a difficult subject in your surroundings? Why?
6. Is there anything that you would consider as “typically” Namibian?
7. What does Namibia mean to you?
8. Are there any characteristics that are typically Namibian, in your eyes?
9. Who is a Namibian?
10. What does being Namibian mean to you? What does it imply?
11. Do you consider yourself as a Namibian? Is it important for you to be a Namibian?
12. Is there any specific occasions when you feel especially or “extra much” Namibian?
13. What would you say that you could identify yourself the most with, being Namibian or or being San/Owambo? Explain.
14. What is most important for you to be, Namibian or San/Owambo?

15. Do you think that your identity or the way you identify yourself has changed since after independence? In what ways?
16. In South Africa they have had a long and thorough process of reconciliation. What do you think about that sort of process for Namibia?

17. How do you experience your own position in the Namibian society?
18. Would you say that you as San/Owambo have the same rights as other Namibians? Or the same rights as persons of the San/Owambo communities?
19. Would you say that you as a San/Owambo have the same possibilities as other Namibians? Or as persons of the San/Owambo communities?
20. Would you say that as a San/Owambo have the same obligations and responsibilities as other Namibians? Or as persons of the San/Owambo communities?

21. What do you think about the future? How do you consider your future?
22. What do you think about the future for the San/Owambo groups?
23. What do you think about the future for Namibia?