Conclusion

This book has told the entwined stories of marriage transformation and class formation in Fransfontein, a rural community in northwest Namibia. It is part of a small but developing field of research that sets out to revive the study of marriage in anthropology and African studies. Until the 1980s, marriage was a main concern for anthropological research: it was viewed as a central way through which many small-scale societies studied by anthropologists ordered their social and political life. David Schneider's (1984) critique of such structural-functionalist approaches to kinship in the 1970s and 1980s led to a decline of research on kinship and marriage within anthropology. In the late 1990s, an interest in kinship re-emerged. New concepts like "relatedness" (Carsten 2000) helped to rethink the meaning and practice of kinship in everyday interactions. Kinship was not studied as an abstract system of rules and regulations anymore but as an open-ended process of negotiations and activities. One would assume that marriage would be an especially apt subject for this new research agenda as it is all about processes and practices of becoming kin. Nevertheless, until recently, little attention has been paid to marriage in contemporary kinship studies (e.g. Alber et al. 2010; Carsten 2004; Franklin/McKinnon 2001).[1] This is all the more remarkable as marriage not only offers intriguing insights into how individuals actually "do" kinship but can also tell us something about broader societal transformations, such as changing political regimes, class dynamics and demographic patterns. Marriage is formed by these wider dynamics and at the same time initiates changes in these (Pauli/van Dijk 2016).

In parallel to the general paucity of anthropological studies on marriage, little anthropological research has been undertaken on marriage in Southern Africa since the 1980s. The Introduction summarized how different anthropological traditions

1 An explanation of this research hiatus is still outstanding. Much kinship research of the late 1990s and 2000s has focused on filial relations, often created through new reproductive technologies or adoption.

have perceived and researched African marriage. As a heuristic device, I identified four metanarratives of African marriage: stability, destruction, change, and plurality. The order of these narratives does not imply any sort of development. Indeed, the metanarratives should not be drawn together to form a meta-metanarrative, a story that might run like this: *In pre-colonial times, African marriage was stable and universal. With colonialism, kinship and marriage structures were destroyed. This led to change and eventually plurality of marriage.* Historical research has cautioned us against such simplistic assumptions as "traditionality" being substituted by some sort of "modernity" (Ferguson 1999; Guyer 1994; Hobsbawm/Ranger 2003 [1983]). Not everything that is perceived as change is indeed novel. Jane Guyer (1994: 249) thus suggests that it might be more insightful to search for "continuities with shifting emphasis". This implies interrogating how universal and stable African marriage had indeed been in pre-colonial times. Catherine Allerton (2007: 3) has observed that while anthropologists have extensively debated how to define marriage, they have "rarely asked the question of whether marriage is universal within particular societies". Universality of marriage within a given society is often simply assumed. These insights are also crucial for understanding an emerging, fifth metanarrative on African marriage: the exclusivity of marriage.

Research shows that throughout Southern Africa marriage rates are declining, in some cases quite sharply (Claassens/Smythe 2013; Pauli/van Dijk 2016; Posel/Rudwick/Casale 2011). Despite this, the *value* of weddings and marriages has not declined. To marry has become an indicator of elite status, one that less affluent people also aspire to but, lacking the financial means, often without success. While this emerging metanarrative does not address the universality of marriage in pre-colonial times, it illuminates what the end of universal marriage and the spread of exclusive marriage mean in contemporary Southern Africa. It is this metanarrative that has informed this work.

The fifth metanarrative asks why marriage is declining and what the meaning of marriage is when only few marry. Not colonialism but class is viewed as the main reason for the decline and the reconfiguration of marriage. Like the study of marriage, the study of class has experienced a remarkable revival in anthropology (Lentz 2016). Until the 1980s, class was thoroughly analyzed in anthropology, most often researched through the lenses of the African elites and working classes. In the late 1980s and during the 1990s, this interest receded. A focus on class returned to the anthropological agenda in the 2000s, though now it is mainly the emergence of local and global middle classes that stirs anthropological interest (Heiman et al. 2012a; Kroeker et al. 2018; López/Weinstein 2012; Melber 2016; Southall 2016). The new middle classes are often approached on the basis of their consumption habits and lifestyles. However, only few studies so far have tried to understand African class in combination with marriage

transformations.[2] This is remarkable as weddings are especially well suited for the study of lifestyles and class distinctions (Argyrou 1996; Kendall 1996; Lankauskas 2015; Pauli 2018). With this book on the entanglements of marriage transformations and class formations in Namibia, I wish to add to this literature.

African class formation is part of more general political processes, especially colonialism and postcolonialism. One thus has to ask how varying colonial and postcolonial histories have shaped class formation processes. This helps to understand what is specific about the Namibian situation. Countries such as Ghana (Behrends/Lentz 2012; Budniok/Noll 2018; Lentz 1994) or Kenya (Spronk 2012, 2014) similarly experienced class formation and the emergence of elites, and later of the middle classes. But these countries gained independence from colonial rule much earlier than Namibia. Namibia's independence in 1990 was very late. Thus, the dynamics I am describing in this book are arguably a lot more in the making than for countries with longer histories of independence. Additionally, Namibia is characterized by a unique history of white settlement and apartheid. The emergence of new local elites in the 1970s and 1980s is a direct outcome of racist apartheid and homeland policies. After independence, class formation processes have continued. Namibia's class formation thus took place in a comparably short period of time. Unlike countries such as France that have very pronounced and long-term class differences (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]), the markers of Namibian class distinction are still rather incipient and not yet well established. They are, nevertheless, very effective, as my analysis of marriage shows.

The book started with a vignette: Anna's and Josef's joy and triumph on their wedding day, leaving church, and the envy and frustration experienced by some of the unmarried spectators watching them. This single moment captures the story of this book: class formation through marriage, leading to *exclusivity of* marriage for the elite and *exclusion from* marriage for everybody else. In Fransfontein, marriage rates have substantially declined over the course of the last 60 years. While the majority of older people (over 60 years of age) is married, younger Fransfonteiners are mostly unmarried. Overall, in 2004, only 30 per cent of all Fransfonteiners had ever been married.

For analytic reasons, I structured my interpretation of the decline of marriage into three parts. The first part tackled Namibian class formation and the wider ethnographic and historical background of my case. The second part of the book looked in detail at how wedding rituals have changed over time and examined of the demographics of marriage over the last 60 years. I explored how the decline of marriage

2 This lack motivated Rijk van Dijk and me to bring these two research traditions together and publish a special issue on marriage and class in Southern Africa in *Anthropology Southern Africa* (Pauli/van Dijk 2016/2017).

might be explained. The third and last part of the book focused on the consequences of the decline of marriage. Before discussing these consequences here, I briefly summarize my findings on why marriage has declined in Fransfontein.

While I criticized the assumptions underlying the stability and destruction metanarratives of African marriage, in rather general terms these metanarratives do apply to the Fransfontein case. Colonialism had tremendous effects on the lives of Fransfontein people. It was impossible for most to survive in the so-called reserves and later homelands. Many were forced to migrate and work under racist conditions on white settler farms. Marriage and family life were clearly reconfigured by colonialism. Unfortunately, not much is known about Fransfontein kinship and marriage in the precolonial period. The weddings and marriages I have described for the oldest generation of Fransfontein women and men, which took place between the 1940s and the 1970s, were "colonial" weddings. These weddings have been my empirical starting point. As my analysis of three generations of Fransfonteiners has shown, most people continued to marry during the colonial period, despite the terrible living conditions they had to endure. Thus, while colonialism without doubt changed marriage and kinship, there is no direct link between this period of colonialism and the decline of marriage in Fransfontein.

The decline of marriage commenced in the late 1970s and with the establishment of homelands. It was the apartheid state that fostered the emergence of a local elite of politicians, administrators and professionals in Fransfontein, then part of the newly established "Damaraland". I have shown at length how this rural elite reconfigured weddings and marriages. Conspicuous and expensive weddings became their central field of class distinction. At their weddings, they staged their new lifestyles, their power and also their creativity. These performances of elitist distinctions allowed this local elite to legitimize its privileged position (Cohen 1981). One can interpret these dynamics as an example of the unanticipated consequences of purposive social action (Merton 1936). The elite's intentional changing of how weddings were celebrated in Fransfontein made it increasingly impossible for people to marry. Most Fransfonteiners just could not afford it anymore. These historically situated class formation processes are a major explanation for the decline of marriage in Fransfontein.

But there are other reasons too. The class formation processes of the 1970s and 1980s also reconfigured gender relations in Fransfontein. Gender relations of the oldest Fransfontein generation, couples who married before the 1970s, were relatively egalitarian. This changed with the new elites of the 1970s. Now, a few individual men advanced into powerful positions. Their economic power enabled them to marry women who then became housewives, a new gender role at the time. These male leaders often practiced a variation of polygyny. Although polygyny was (and still is) prohibited in Namibia, it was common for wealthy and powerful men to engage in

several concurrent intimate relations, very often fathering children with several women. During the 1970s and 1980s, the government built infrastructure, such as a school and a hostel, in Fransfontein, which made low-skilled but permanent jobs as domestic workers available. Male elite leaders allocated these jobs to their female lovers. Most of these women deliberately decided against marriage. They argued that it is better to remain single (and involved with married men) than have to cope with unemployed husbands living off their income. Hence, most Fransfontein men lacking a stable income became "unmarriageable" (Bourdieu 2008: 82). Another reason for the decline of marriage in Fransfontein is thus the enhanced agency of some women who purposefully decided against marriage, and the loss of agency of most men. Therefore, if non-elite men today decide to marry, it is going to be a substantial struggle (Pauli/Dawids 2017). This leads me to the consequences of the decline of marriage in Fransfontein.

I focused on questions of conjugality, reproduction and parenthood to understand how people have coped with the decline of marriage in Fransfontein. The concept of generation has proven useful to compare how marriage and the fertility of women (and to a lesser extent men) have varied across time. I distinguished three generations: women who married and had children before apartheid (the older generation, born before the mid-1940s); women who had children and conjugal partners during apartheid (the middle generation, born from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s); and women who started their conjugal and reproductive lives after apartheid (the younger generation, born from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s).

Women of the older generation had many children from one partner to whom they were in most cases married. This pattern substantially changed with the middle generation, changes that are linked to the transformations in the political economy that started with the 1970s. Class formation through apartheid fostered the emergence of two very different groups of women. Women who from the 1970s onwards became the wives of the new male elite continued to have many children with only one partner. Jane Guyer (1994) has classified the "logic" of this type of reproductive behavior as "linear". Women secured their own and their children's livelihoods through marriage into one kin group, one lineage. In contrast, the increasing number of Fransfontein women who, from the 1970s onwards, did not marry and thus could not rely on the "linear" support from one husband and kin group secured themselves and their children through "lateral" network building. They had children with several fathers, none of whom they married. All fathers and their kin were supposed to support the unmarried woman and her children. Guyer calls this "polyandrous motherhood". Although the younger generation is still in childbearing age, it appears that the split into these two groups of women – wealthy married women having many children versus more destitute polyandrous mothers – endures.

Compared to marriage and the linear logic of fertility, polyandrous motherhood is more flexible but also more insecure. Unmarried mothers appreciated their intimate and economic freedoms. They stressed that for them it is much easier to separate from a partner than for a married woman to separate from her husband. But polyandrous mothers also complained how difficult it was to receive support from their children's fathers and the fathers' kin groups. In terms of inheritance, they felt that they and their children were often not receiving their fair share. In most instances, children born out-of-wedlock and their mothers did not inherit from fathers who had legitimate wives and children. Wives and children born in-wedlock argued that polyandrous mothers and their out-of-wedlock children lacked the legitimacy to make a claim. Legitimacy is hence the key concept to unravel how the decline of marriage has produced new forms of exclusion and inequality.

Legitimacy creates morally charged categories with clear boundaries. In Fransfontein, several new forms of legitimacy and illegitimacy have emerged in the course of class formation and the decline of marriage. Couples living together without being married are negatively described as living in "black cow marriages" (*ǂnu gomas !gameb*). These couples are treated with less respect than married couples. They are excluded from rituals that only married people are allowed to perform. Further, stigmatization of children born out-of-wedlock now occurs in Fransfontein, most obvious in the increased use of the prerogative term "sin child" (*/ai-/gôan*) to refer to them. Finally, the sexual and reproductive behavior of young, unmarried women is increasingly being scrutinized in moral terms. Motherhood is highly valued and marks the entrance into adulthood. An early age at first birth of 19 years is the norm. However, this norm is progressively being questioned. Younger women from elite Fransfontein families now define their entrance into adulthood not through pregnancy, but through non-pregnancy. Their chastity and non-motherhood is being rewarded through a new ritual called "the key" and the celebration of a splendid party at their twenty-first birthday. The new ritual and celebration undermine the credibility and legitimacy of all young women who have given birth before the age of 21. All three instances – black cow marriages, sin children and early pregnancies – have in common that they happen outside marriage. Legitimacy of sex, relations and children is thus being achieved only through marriage. The boundaries of legitimacy separate the married elite from everybody else.

Boundary-making is an essential feature of class formation processes. Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár (2002) differentiate symbolic and social boundaries. Where symbolic boundaries are necessary to categorize and distinguish entities, social boundaries are "objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities" (ibid: 168). Black cow marriages, sin children and early pregnancies

are all expressions of symbolic boundaries that have developed into social boundaries. They manifest how unmarried Fransfonteiners are excluded from material and nonmaterial resources and opportunities. By belonging to "illegitimate" categories, the immediate consequences of the decline of marriage are felt by unmarried Fransfonteiners.

After having described the immediate consequences of the decline of marriage in Fransfontein, I now want to reflect on some of the long-term consequences. In Fransfontein, weddings continue to be the central field for the performance of class distinctions. Yet other fields are gaining in importance. Class distinctions can now also be observed during funerals, in house construction and in the ownership of livestock.

My analysis of marriage transformation exhibits some similarities to research on elite formation and funerals (Cohen/Odhiambo 1992; Fumanti 2007; Lentz 1994). Mattia Fumanti's (2007: 482) detailed description of the burial of E.S., a high ranking official in the town of Rundu on the Namibian-Angolan border, unravels practices of class distinction comparable to the ones I have shown for weddings: "In fact, 'the logistics', as the elite put it, demanded remarkable efforts. The funeral service, the food for the feast, the programme, the invitations, the mourning tents, the transport vehicles and the formal and informal announcements, all presented pressing requirements for co-ordinated activity on an exceptional scale to represent and embody the height of distinction". In Fransfontein, practices and costs of funerals have also changed. In September 2003, an Afrikaans-speaking South African businessman started selling coffins in Fransfontein. Business went so well that, in 2005, he moved to the nearby town of Khorixas and opened a bigger shop. Already in 2003 a Fransfontein teacher told me that the wealthy were ordering expensive coffins for their own funerals. The cost for the cheapest coffin was NAD1800 while expensive coffins lined with lace started at NAD3000. Conspicuous consumption thus also happened at funerals. Nevertheless, I want to argue that there are significant differences between the transformation of marriage and that of funerals.

While only a fraction of the Fransfontein population marries today, everybody will die and need to be buried. In fact, because of the dramatic spread of HIV/AIDS, death and funerals were very prevalent during our fieldwork. For those people who died as pensioners (60 years and older), as Fransfonteiners told us in 2003, a family received a state grant of NAD400 to pay for the funeral. All other burials had to be financed by family and friends. Many Fransfontein families were forced to go from door to door to ask for financial support for the burial of a relative. Funerals thus also express economic stratification and inequality. Nevertheless, the financial and personal investments that the elite put into weddings are on a substantially larger scale than what is being done for funerals. Conspicuous weddings have ongoing

and long-term returns in the form of symbolic and economic capital for the couple and their kin (Bourdieu 1984 [1979]). The celebrating couple is often in the prime of their lives. Conspicuous funerals have a different return structure. The one "celebrated" or honored at a funeral is dead. The symbolic capital acquired through a conspicuous funeral thus goes to his or her kin group. Wealthy kin groups have indeed started to appropriate funerals of their deceased members to express the kin group's distinctiveness. Thus, where until recently gravestones were modest in cost and décor, some of the elite's gravestones are becoming more expensive and expressive.

Two other fields that are being reconfigured by class formation are house construction and the ownership of livestock. Both phenomena are linked to migration. Successful urban migrants continue to invest into belonging to Fransfontein. Although they live urban middle-class lives in Windhoek or in towns on the coast, they continue to celebrate their weddings in Fransfontein, keep large herds of livestock in the area, want to be buried in the village, and build conspicuous houses there at which they wish to spend weekends, holidays and their retirement. The migrants' houses represent new architectural styles, informed by global middle-class aesthetics (Mercer 2014). These houses contrast sharply from the common Fransfontein houses that lack water, electricity, multiple rooms or color. Similarly, many migrants enjoy being "weekend farmers" (Schnegg/Pauli/Greiner 2013). The livestock of these part-time pastoralists consume a large share of the communal pasture, leading to conflicts with pastoralists who live in the region full-time and rely on grazing livestock for their livelihoods.

For the long-term reproduction of class in Fransfontein, the transmission of property, such as houses and livestock, but also of education will be crucial. Material assets are increasingly being inherited by legitimate children (*!game /gôan*). In addition to the privileges obtained through inheritance, legitimate children also profit from the class position of their married parents by receiving a much better education than their non-elite peers. Elite class positions are thus passed on to the next generation. A further way to reproduce class is through marriage choices. It remains to be seen whether the privileged younger generation will develop some sort of class consciousness in their marriage choices. Apart from teachers, who have tended to intermarry since the 1970s, the spousal choices of the middle generation of the Fransfontein elite were not based on similar considerations of class status. Yet interviews I conducted with elite and middle-class members of the younger generation in Windhoek in 2015/2016 suggest that class background may indeed be becoming more important in the choice of a marriage partner (Pauli 2017b).

How will marriage and class develop in Namibia? Many scenarios are imaginable. One possibility might even be a disentanglement of marriage and class, a reappropriation of weddings by the non-elite and a rise in marriage rates. Time will tell.

For now, the vantage point of marriage has enabled me to understand how, over the last 60 years, class formation has been entangled with a decline in marriage in Namibia.