Fransfontein fieldwork

> The white men named places after themselves, and after the women they were with or the women whom they had left behind, after the men they wanted to placate or impress: Salisbury, Muriel, Beatrice, Alice Mine, Juliasdale, West Nicholson.
> And they gave some places hopeful names: Copper Queen, Eldorado, Golden Valley. And obvious names: Figtree, Guinea Fowl, Lion's Den, Redcliff, Hippo Valley. And unlikely, stolen names: Alaska, Venice, Bannockburn, Turk Mine.
> In 1896 the Ndebele people had rebelled against this Europeanness.
> *Fuller/Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*

Right from the start of our fieldwork we realized that claiming property through naming is a very common practice in Namibia. It was mid-May 2003, and my colleague and husband, Michael Schnegg, and I had just arrived at Windhoek airport for the very first time, together with our one-year-old daughter, Liliana. Already the half-hour drive from the airport to the city filled us with amazement. We were struck by the vastness of the countryside and the incredible varieties of shades, colors and forms. But our positive impressions were disturbed, at least in our perception. Along the road we were travelling on, tall fences framed our view on either side. Later we learned that most of these fences had been built during apartheid, when labor was still cheap and easily available for 'white' commercial farmers. From time to time we saw large signs announcing the names of the farms we passed. As Alexandra Fuller's (2003) description above of how Europeans appropriated the Zimbabwean landscape by naming, Namibian farm names contained a strange mix of African names, female European names, English animal names, and borrowed names of Western regions,

countries or cities. Later, and with some irritation, I even encountered a farm called Paderborn, the name of the provincial German town where I grew up.

This European appropriation of land does not cover all of Namibia. It is not applied in those areas that the Germans first called "reserves" and the South Africans later remodeled into "homelands". Today, these areas are referred to as "communal areas", distinguishing them from the so-called "commercial farming areas". Unlike in the commercial areas, where farm names mark the division of the land into privately owned plots, in the communal areas only settlements have names, but not the land itself. Fencing is almost nonexistent in the communal areas. Thus, these varying practices of naming the landscape are also expressions of borders dividing the country and its different inhabitants. Very early on it became apparent to us that if we wanted to do field research in a "communal area", we would have to cross the border between what was considered "white" areas (i.e. most commercial farms and those parts of towns and cities mainly inhabited by people of European descent) and what was perceived as "black" territory (i.e. the communal areas and "townships"). Our landlady in Windhoek told us that for her such a crossing-over would be unimaginable. Living in the country as a Namibian of German descent in the third generation, she perceived the divide between herself and her "black" workers as insuperable. However, she assured us that, as foreigners, the passage across might well be possible for us.

We had not identified a specific research site before arriving in Namibia. In 2002, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, Germany's national research foundation) accepted my research proposal for a project on demographic, economic and social transformations in a multiethnic community in the former Namibian Damaraland, from a historic and ethnographic perspective, as subproject C10 of the interdisciplinary special research project Arid Climate, Adaptation and Cultural Innovation in Africa (ACACIA) based at the German universities of Cologne and Bonn.[1] In 2003, and after a few days in Windhoek, we thus started a two week tour through the former Damaraland, today part of the Kunene and Erongo regions, in search for a suitable community.

We had defined the criteria for such a community rather loosely. Given the scarcity of research on Damara culture (Barnard 1992: 199), we had decided to focus on the former Damaraland and to work with people that perceived themselves to be Damara. Within the ACACIA project itself, the lives of Damara people had until then only been investigated from a historic but not from an ethnographic perspective (Gockel-Frank 1998). The few sources on Damara culture and livelihood available to us at the time clearly indicated that despite apartheid's attempt to territorially divide Namibians by ethnic categories within so-called homelands, the lived reality in

1 For an overview of the research program, see ACACIA (2011).

most communities in the former Damaraland was multiethnic and multilingual (Fuller 1993; Gordon 1972; Kuper 1995; Rohde 1994, 1997; Sullivan 2000, 2003).

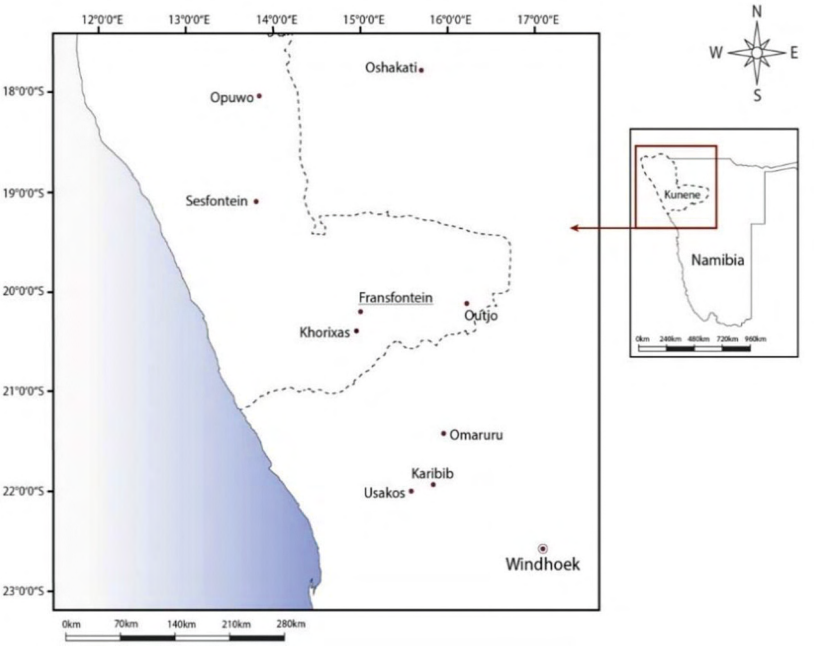
Another criterion was the presence of a certain historic depth, especially in terms of the availability of church registers. In a previous research project on ritual change in Tlaxcala, Mexico, Michael Schnegg (2005, 2007b) had successfully analyzed church registers to understand historic-demographic processes. Similarly, a group of Finnish researchers working in the former Namibian Ovamboland had used church registers to analyze population dynamics that would otherwise have been impossible to reconstruct (Notkola/Siiskonen 2000; Shemeikka/Notkola/Siiskonen 2005; Siiskonen/Taskinen/Notkola 2005). We were thus looking for a community for which there were church records and that had a long history, possibly back to the German colonial period or even earlier. Because of previous visits to the archives of the Rhenish missionary society in Wuppertal, Germany, we knew that several communities in the former Damaraland provided such a long-term perspective.

Finally, after visiting Omaruru, Karibib and Usakos in central Namibia, we added another criterion. Several Namibian towns, such as the three we had been to, are still largely divided into "white", "colored" and "black" areas.[2] In the town of Omaruru, we stayed in a guesthouse run by German pensioners. The couple had moved to Namibia roughly ten years earlier. In Germany, the wife had worked as a clerk and the husband had been unemployed. In Namibia, the wife's German pension money plus the extra income generated by the guesthouse allowed them a relatively affluent lifestyle. They employed two men from the Omusati region, northern Namibia, and treated them in an almost preposterous imitation of an imagined colonial lifestyle. One of the two middle aged, married men was called the "garden boy", the other one the "house boy". Here too, naming was used as an expression of appropriation and power. The landlady called the man helping with the domestic work "Serane", even though he had told her over and over again that his name was "Matthias". Yet the landlady thought it ridiculous of him to expect her to start using a different name than the one she had memorized. The behavior of these Omaruru retirement migrants might be extreme (but also see Widlok 1999: 193-194),[3] yet the vignette points to the racism that continues to be widespread in postcolonial Namibia.

2 The terms "white", "black" and "Colored" to differentiate between groups of people on a racial basis are very problematic. However, the classification into, for example, "white" commercial farms and "black" communal farmland, which stems from colonial times, is still being used today. I use the terms because of their continuing applicability in present-day Namibia, though realizing their political context and racist origins (see Kössler 2005: xiv).

3 There is a significant community of German retirement migrants in Omaruru. They can be rather challenging to approach for research purposes. Ulrike Winkelman, a journalist friend

Figure 1: Map of Namibia with Fransfontein



Source: Figure reproduced with permission by Michael Schnegg.

In this situation, the boundaries separating the different Namibian groups did not appear very permeable to us. We could not imagine staying in the white part of town and commuting daily to work in the township, locally often called the location. We explored living in the location itself, but warnings from all sides that this might be too risky with a small child dissuaded us from pursuing this further. Thus, a rural community in the communal area that was not marked by these stark ethnic (and also economic) forms of segregation, seemed most suitable for us. All of this we encountered in Fransfontein, our last destination on our exploratory tour (see Figure 1).

Fransfontein is located on gravel road C35, one of several routes from Hentiesbaai on the coast up to Ruacana on the border to Angola. It is a quiet road; mosttraffic to the north of the country uses the tarred B1, which runs further to the east of Fransfontein. Because of the way unpaved roads are constructed in Namibia, the road is elevated above the level of the village. A driver passing by only sees a few mud huts with

who visited Namibia in 2004, was unable to conduct interviews with them because they were afraid of being classified as "racist".

Figure 2: Fransfontein, southern Kunene region

Source: Photo reproduced with permission by Tara DiTommaso.

corrugated iron roofs, a newly built and brightly painted government building, an old, decaying government building and a bewildering wooden cabin surrounded by barbed wire. The latter are the remains of a Norwegian development project that tried to enhance the livelihoods of Fransfontein's women. The project ceased to exist years ago, and all attempts at reviving it ended in internal conflict. During our research, the building was sometimes used for official celebrations, like on Independence Day. The center of the village itself is, however, not visible from the C35; one has to leave the road and drive into the village. The Fransfontein community is located at the foot of the Fransfontein Mountains, a chain running in east-west direction. Most buildings are made out of local materials, such as cow dung and mopani poles (a locally cultivated timber). Unlike cement buildings, these houses are hardly visible on bird's-eye photographs. The one shown here (see Figure 2) is taken from the Fransfontein Mountains and captures the vastness of the landscape and the isolation of the community.

The Fransfontein community is surrounded by 25 settlements, where most of the inhabitants' livestock are kept. These settlements can range quite widely in size: some

are rather small, with only a handful of households, while others are large with several dozens. All of these communal settlements are permanently inhabited, often with larger numbers of older and retired people residing there. The research on which this book is based concentrated in particular on Fransfontein village, and less on these surrounding settlements. Michael's research on water management, institutions and nature conversation, in turn, focused primarily on the settlements in the communal area (Schnegg 2016b; Schnegg/Bollig/Linke 2016; Schnegg/Linke 2016). Our research collaborators Clemens Greiner and Theresa Linke conducted ethnographic research in different settlements in the communal Fransfontein area (Greiner 2008; Linke 2017).

Most of the settlements to the north of the Fransfontein Mountains are inhabited by people who classify themselves as Damara, while the settlements to the south of Fransfontein are more multiethnic, including people who identify themselves as Ovambo, Herero, Nama and Damara. About 30 kilometers to the northeast, the Fransfontein communal area borders commercial farmlands, still mainly owned by white Namibians. Approximately 20 kilometers to the south lies Khorixas, the regional capital with a hospital, several stores, schools and a petrol station. Here Martina Gockel-Frank, another research collaborator, conducted her field research on HIV/AIDS and reproductive decision making in 2005 and 2006 (Gockel-Frank 2007, 2009).

It was early June 2003 when we were driving north on the C35. At Fransfontein we turned off the road and entered the village for the very first time. We had had to rule out all of our other possible research sites and were quite nervous, uncertain whether this one would work out. We did not know anybody in Fransfontein. So, after driving through the village and seeing all its buildings, we decided that the local church might be a good place to start. The Protestant church had recently been renovated and was easy to spot. The resident priest turned out to be very friendly: he directed us to one of the church elders, Sara Jod. She and her grandson Hasafa were also extremely helpful – not just at the outset, but throughout the fieldwork. Sara accompanied us to the local school and arranged for us to rent one of the empty wings of the hostel as accommodation (after Namibia achieved its independence in 1990, the number of pupils in Fransfontein steadily decreased and two of the four wings in the hostel were no longer in use). The school principal, Mrs. Hanabes, helped us out with beds, a table, several chairs and other furniture. This accommodation offered us a good position from which to start our fieldwork and we stayed there for two months. Yet living there also showed us that the location and circumstances of the hostel meant that we were too detached from the community. Although primary school and the hostel were situated in the middle of the village, they were fenced in by barbed wire, creating an undesired border. When the local nurse offered us an alternative,

a house with electricity and running water that was intended for the resident nurse but that she did not wish to use as she felt it was too run down, we took the opportunity to move. Agreeing to paint the inside walls, hang up curtains and install a toilet and a shower, we were able to rent the house, living there from mid-2003 until October 2004. During shorter periods of follow-up research in 2005 and 2006, in turn, we stayed in the house of Bisey /Uirab and his family who were living in Windhoek but retained a second home in Fransfontein. Because this house was located in the north of the village, whereas the nurse's house was in the south, the combination provided us with a good insight into the various living arrangements of different parts of the community.[4]

During our first days in Fransfontein in 2003, Sara Jod also introduced us to the local governor, who is in charge of the water and electricity services and some of the traditional authorities. The political situation in Fransfontein is complicated, filled with tensions and strongly shaped by colonial and postcolonial history (see the next chapter). Sara accompanied us to meet Festus Aseb, the Damara *dana khoeb* (headman), a friendly and astute elderly man. Headman Aseb greeted us, then smiled and said that he would now give our daughter a name. Liliana should be called *oa !naas* (investigation) because her parents had come to live in Fransfontein to do an investigation of the local culture. This was our third encounter with the practice of naming in Namibia. This time the connotations of the name given were rather positive: by calling Liliana *oa !naas*, he provided us with a role and a position in the community. Later we learned that naming – each other or oneself – is a widespread practice in Fransfontein. Unlike the arrogant and racist naming by the German migrant couple in Omaruru or the appropriation of land by white settlers by applying names, both ways of excluding or controlling others, naming in Fransfontein is a way to start, value and sustain relationships. Fransfontein naming does not create borders but overcomes them, as we learned that day.

After a brief return to Windhoek, we began living in Fransfontein permanently from mid-June 2003 onwards. Our first days were dedicated to cleaning and home

4 In 2010, Michael received funding from the DFG for a long-term research project on local institutions and water management. (cf. LINGS n.d.) In the course of establishing this project, Michael renovated a local house in one of the settlements, returning to the communal area at least twice a year. I only returned to Fransfontein again in 2015. Having received a DFG grant to conduct research on love, marriage and intimacy in urban Namibia, I followed up on the life stories in Fransfontein from my previous research. I spent most of my time in Windhoek (August 2015 until January 2016), with only brief visits to Fransfontein. Data from this new research project will not be included here. The ethnographic present of this book are the years 2003 to 2006.

making. The hostel wing had not been used in years and the conditions were accordingly. The next step was to search for field assistants and for a teacher in Khoekhoegowab.[5] Again, we were very lucky. We found Jorries Seibeb, a pastoralist who had worked as teacher in adult education. He became our language teacher and field assistant and, soon, also our friend. Eventually, our Fransfontein fieldwork was conducted in four languages: Afrikaans (which we had begun learning in Germany before moving to Namibia), English, German and Khoekhoe. Of course, our fluency in the four languages varied considerably. Most young people spoke English with us, several of the elder people spoke German, and some Fransfonteiners spoke Afrikaans. Khoekhoe is the language most frequently used in everyday conversation. For most interactions in this language we needed the assistance of Jorries and, later, of Valery Meyer, who became my field assistant. When Valery joined me in 2003, she was in her mid-twenties and mother of a small son in my daughter's age. In 2004, Valery moved away, so when I returned to Fransfontein in the summer of 2005, I employed Emma /Uiras. In 2006, in turn, Emma had moved away and her sister Lydia /Uiras stepped in as research assistant.

The importance of reciprocity for successful ethnographic field research is acknowledged by many anthropologists (Pauli 2006). Edward Evans-Pritchard (1940: 13) informed his readers that the Nuer demanded tobacco in exchange for all his questioning. During his fieldwork in a school in the United States of American (USA), Robert Everhart (2001 [1997]: 180) observed: "My steady integration into their world revealed the importance of giving as well as taking in long term fieldwork […] I had, at last, recognized the place of reciprocity in productive fieldwork". What exactly will be exchanged varies, depending on context and persons involved (Pauli 2006). Reciprocity was an everyday topic during our fieldwork as sharing (*augu*) is a central social institution in Fransfontein (Schnegg 2006b, 2015, 2016a). We participated in several *augu* networks, giving small amounts of sugar, tea, meat, bread or matches and receiving, in a long-term perspective, the trust and ideas of our neighbours. All people who worked for the research project on a more regular basis received a financial compensation. Besides the four field assistants mentioned above,

5 *Gowab* means language, *khoe* human being. Often, Khoekhoegowab is referred to in an abbreviated form as Khoekhoe. I also use the two terms interchangeably. Both Damara and Nama (and also Hai//om) share Koekhoegowab, a Khoisan language and the main language spoken in the Kunene region where our research area was located. Khoekhoegowab is a so-called click language. Four primary clicks are differentiated: / (affricated) dental click; ! (implosive) alveolar click; ǂ (implosive) palatal click; and // (affricated) lateral click (for more details, see Haacke/Eiseb 2002).

13 other Fransfonteiners helped us in this way.[6] Most of them supported us with the ethnographic census and survey, both discussed in more detail below. It was positively viewed by the local population that we employed people from the Fransfontein area. Finally, all of the 750 persons who participated in the ethnographic census and survey received a mug filled with some sweets as a token of thanks. All qualitative interviews, though, such as life stories and expert interviews, were not directly reciprocated.

Another form of reciprocation was our involvement in a publication project with our local friends. By October 2004, at the end of our first long-term stay of one and a half years, we had learnt quite a bit about tensions and conflicts within the community. Although most people had stressed over and over again that the differences between ethnic groups were small to nonexistent in daily interactions, local political groups often used ethnic discourse to create and emphazise difference and achieve certain political goals. Together with local friends, especially with Otto /Uirab's input, we began to develop the idea of writing a book, but rather than focusing on the differences between people and living apart, we decided to focus on similarities and on living together. This led to *Living Together. Culture and Shared Traditions in Fransfontein, Namibia* (Dawids et al. 2007), a co-authored publication between five Fransfontein locals – Francois Dawids, Fiona Ilonga, Titus Kaumunika, Jorries Seibeb and Otto /Uirab – and Michael and myself, financially supported by the German Jutta Vogel Foundation. In addition to making the book openly available on the web (Living Together 2007), we provided printed copies to local schools, traditional authorities, churches and the local government office.

REFLECTIONS ON FIELDWORK WITH A FAMILY

Khoekhoegowab became our daughter's first language. Metaphorically speaking, this opened many doors for us. People were amazed how well this little blond girl pronounced the clicks. It was never a problem to start conversations. Most ethnographies today include a section with reflections of the field situation, including children and/or partners (van Maanen 2011: 77), and fieldwork as a family or a couple is increasingly being discussed in anthropology (e.g. Cassell 1987; Flinn/Marshall/Armstrong 1998; Gottlieb/Graham/Gottlieb-Graham 1998). Similar to the experiences of

6 Goldine !Ases, Alexia Gertze, Elly Gertze, Gideon /Goagoseb, Dina /Goagoses, Ivonne /Goagoses, FriederiTereska Kana //Gowases, Rheinhardt Haraeb, Perpetina Jod, Hubert Kahono, Ferdinand /Nanubeb, Brigitha Pietersen and Maria Philips.

many of these authors, I view the presence of a child with ambivalence. To explain this, I need to look at the fieldwork in its context.

Compared to my Mexican field research (Pauli 2000, 2008b, 2013), which I did mostly alone and with only a few visits by Michael, I felt emotionally much more at ease in Namibia. Loneliness and sickness were much less a problem for me in Fransfontein. This emotional stability was the result of my family being present during the fieldwork. Another critical difference between the two experiences was that I had run my PhD research in Mexico on a very meager budget, without transport or any other amenities, whereas we had sufficient funds to buy a reliable four-wheel car for the project in Namibia. Because both Michael and I had achieved our doctoral degrees, we were treated with respect in the field. This was very different from my research in Mexico, where I was treated as young and naive female student – which of course I was at the time.

The presence of our daughter Liliana underscored our adult status in Namibia. We were very lucky that in terms of health, everything went well during the research: there were no severe illnesses, and the snakes and scorpions left us untouched. Yet, especially at the outset of the research, I felt anxious and concerned about being in the field with my family. The following small episode gives an impression of my worries. Several weeks after moving to Fransfontein, we were visiting a family, sitting outside, chatting and enjoying refreshments. Liliana was playing in the sand with the other children. A man next to me coughed insistently, looking thin and quite sick. When we walked back to the hostel wing, we discussed what might be wrong with him and Michael suspected that the man might have TB. The next day Michael returned to the house and our host confirmed the suspicion: it was open TB, a highly contagious illness. Was Liliana in danger? We called different medical doctors and pediatricians who eventually calmed us down.

Although Liliana clearly felt very happy in Fransfontein, there were moments when I felt more uncertain. The very common practice of severe corporal punishment of children in all sorts of contexts (at school, at home, among peers) caused me great concern. I realized that my role as mother and that as researcher were coming into conflict with each other. Other anthropologists have reported comparable dilemmas (Flinn/Marshall/Armstrong 1998). Joan Cassell makes an observation that I share: having one's own children in the field makes it more difficult for the researcher to hold back personal information (1987: 258). This has positive but also negative corollaries. A "socially embedded" researcher is more likely to being perceived as a "normal" human being by the community he or she studies (Flinn/Marshall/Armstrong 1998: 9), a status the "lone researcher" might have difficulties obtaining. Yet the worries that the researcher will experience in relation to the health and security of especially small children lead to additional stress and tension.

It is difficult to say in what ways the presence of our daughter directly influenced the research process. Michael, however, strongly inspired and influenced my research in very positive ways. In her classic volume on women in the field, Peggy Golde (1986: 78) describes an ideal field situation: "If the goal of research is unbiased understanding, two people working together, preferable one of each sex, would provide the balance, the necessary check of objectivity, and the control of sex-determined or personality factors that one person, however artful, cannot accomplish alone". Our constant exchange of thoughts, observations and ideas has been the most important input throughout my research. I believe that the balance Golde mentions worked especially well during our Namibian research because we were in comparable social, academic and economic positions. During our Mexican research projects this had been different. When I did my PhD research in Mexico in 1996-1997, Michael established some close relationships with several men of my research community. However, it was always evident for everybody that I was doing the research and that Michael was just visiting me. Similarly, when Michael did his PhD research in Tlaxcala, Mexico in 2000-2001 (several hours away from the community where I had done fieldwork), it was very difficult for me to accept that the community did not perceive me as a researcher but mainly as the wife. In Namibia, it was clear from the beginning that we were both researchers and that we were jointly engaged in the research.

Reflecting on the research process, it is almost impossible to say who first had which idea and when. This intellectual density and fuzziness shows the advantages of joint field research. But conflicts may also appear if intellectual property becomes a contested terrain. Because of our previous Mexican research experiences, Michael and I knew that collaboration can also mean competition and even conflict. We agreed early on that only a constant attempt to discuss issues, including our own vulnerabilities, would lead to satisfying research for both of us. This does not mean that everything always went smoothly. Hurt feelings because the other had rejected an idea and discarded a research suggestion were as much part of the research process as ongoing discussions on the best methodological approach. But difficult debates also resulted in many positive tradeoffs: the high level of reflexivity produced an ethnographically sounder research approach, including the posing of questions and making of observations that one person alone would have missed.

For both Michael and me, the final topics of each of our research projects were not set when we started the fieldwork. I knew that I wanted to focus on cultural embeddedness of demographic processes, due to my previous research interests and the project (subproject C10) I was then heading within the ACACIA research group. Michael, in turn, aimed to focus on issues of social and economic security. We continuously helped each other with data collection and shared data. It took weeks in the field for me to realize how substantially marriage and non-marriage were shaping the

lives of people in Fransfontein. The idea to run a marriage questionnaire, which became essential to demonstrate the decline of marriage and the transformation of marriage rituals, was motivated by Michael's previous research on community celebrations in Mexico (Schnegg 2005, 2007b). Michael also inspired me to think more deeply about the entanglements involved in the decline of marriage and how it affected generations differently. This was triggered in particular by a small event in early 2004 when Michael and Jorries were conducting interviews with older married couples on marriage. On their way to one of the communal farms in the outskirts of Fransfontein, they met one of Jorries's relatives. The old lady stopped her donkey cart. She had heard of the interviews from other relatives. With a bitter undertone she said that one should better ask the young people what had happened to marriage: "They have ruined the whole thing". Our later reflections of the episode centred on the question of whom this old lady in her seventies meant when she spoke of "young people": was she referring to the generation of her children, born in the middle of the 20th century, or that of her grandchildren, born after the 1970s? Or was there even another group that she perceived of as "young"? And when exactly did this group of "young people" ruin marriage? In our discussions I recognized that in order to fully comprehend the changes that had happened in terms of marriage, I had to set the lived experiences of individuals within a larger historical timeframe.

STUDYING MARRIAGE OVER TIME: CONCEPTS, METHODS, DATA

Participant observation at weddings provided essential insights into the complex practices of class distinction and struggle. Michael and I systematically observed the ritual process in a dozen engagements and marriages. Two of our field assistants, Francois and Jorries respectively, got married during our fieldwork. Both Francois and Jorries were very close to us and integrated us into their marriage processes, as they did their relatives. This meant financial but also social and emotional obligations for Michael and me. And when conflicts emerged, we were directly drawn on to solve them. Yet not only the collection of ethnographic data, but also the analysis of marriage was a collaborative effort with our local assistants: in *Living Together*, Francois wrote a chapter in which he analyzed weddings and marriages in Fransfontein (Dawids 2007). In a joint article, he and I took his marriage as starting point for an examination of what we classified as "struggle marriages" (Pauli/Dawids 2017). In addition to the data elicited through participant observation, Michael and I collected information through an ethnographic census, a questionnaire on marriages, the examination of church registers, and the collection of life stories.

From March to July 2004, Michael and I conducted an ethnographic census (Pauli 2008a) in the wider Fransfontein region. Francois and Jorries assisted with translating the English census questions into Khoekhoegowab and Afrikaans. To ascertain the quality of the translation, two different translators retranslated the Khoekhoegowab and Afrikaans questions back into English. Michael and I have both used this census data for our respective projects and publications. The census questionnaire was split into two parts: a household questionnaire that dealt with the whole household and an individual questionnaire that addressed individuals. One central challenge in constructing a household questionnaire is the definition of a household (Hammel/Laslett 1974; Lang/Pauli 2002; Pauli 2008a; Rössler 2005: 174-176). Different criteria might be used to distinguish one household from another: co-residence, specific functions of the household or certain kinship ties that connect household members. These criteria can but do not necessarily need to overlap. The applicability of the concept of the household has been repeatedly questioned for African societies. While economists (and also demographers) prefer the household as a central social and economic unit, also in the African context, some anthropologists have insisted that lineages are the more centrally meaningful social unit (van de Walle 2006b: xxi). In the Fransfontein area, however, the lineage is not an applicable concept: rather, it is the household that is perceived locally as the central social unit, regardless of the fact that even here it is difficult to establish a uniform definition of what a household is.

To construct a culturally sound definition of the household, we discussed our ideas with different assistants and locals. There are several components to this definition. First of all a household is seen to be a residential unit. Despite the existence of dense exchange networks between geographically distant households, these units are not perceived as one "multilocal" household but as two separate, albeit closely related households. If in doubt about whether a person belonged to a certain household, we were told to probe where the bulk of a person's possessions were located. Further, Fransfontein households are consumptive and in almost all cases also productive units. Those who eat at the same fireplace on a regular basis are part of one household. In general, these people also share their incomes. Finally, most of a household's members will be linked through kinship ties. In this, the head of the household and how this figure is defined is critical for how to understand the relationships between household members, an issue that has also been thoroughly discussed (Pauli 2008a; van de Walle 2006b: xxxiii). In most cases, it was not difficult for our Fransfontein informants to name a household head: mostly they either named the eldest productive male person or, if there was none, the eldest productive female person.

The household questionnaire included questions on household composition, the standard of living (e.g. sanitation, type of dwelling), and economic strategies, including questions on social embeddedness and networks of household members. It elicited

basic demographic information (relation to household head, marital status, age, religion, education, occupation) for each member of the household, including of all children. In general, a household questionnaire would be answered collectively by several household members.

There were two versions of the individual questionnaire: a female and a male version. Most of the questions were the same for both, such as questions on migration, education and occupation, gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Both male and female marital, conjugal, reproductive and birth histories and the use of contraceptives were elicited. The female questionnaire included an additional section on pregnancy, lactation, sterilization and abortion. The individual questionnaire always followed the household questionnaire and all household members of 15 years and older were asked to participate. The reason for this age mark was demographic: we did not expect and also did not encounter any women having a child before the age of 15. In all individual interviews, only the interviewed person and the interviewee were present.

Almost all households in the area agreed to participate. In total, we visited 329 households. For two households, the basic information remained incomplete. Thus, for some issues only 327 households can be analyzed. 750 individuals participated in the individual questionnaire (see Table 1). We visited all households of the Fransfontein community plus all households in the 25 settlements in the communal grazing area surrounding Fransfontein. We also visited four commercial farms bordering the Fransfontein area and owned by white Namibians, where we interviewed the workers and their families living in the worker locations on these farms. Contrary to Fransfontein and the communal area, both clear geographic units, the commercial farm sample is arbitrary and many more locations could have been included. The four commercial farms we visited were chosen because of the many links that their workers maintained with households in Fransfontein and its communal area.

Of the 844 possible individual interviews, 89 per cent (i.e. 750 interviews) were completed (see Table 1). Only roughly 1 per cent (7 interviews) of all possible interviews was refused. All people who refused to be interviewed were living in Fransfontein. Most of them were men who did not want to talk about the children they had fathered. Ten per cent (i.e. 88 interviews) of all possible interviews were incomplete for a variety of reasons: most often, and despite repeated visits, we were unable to find a specific person so that these interviews were in fact never begun. In other cases, interviews were incomplete when the interviewee had to leave and we were unsuccessful at rescheduling a follow-up meeting.

Before we started with the interviews we trained 13 local interviewers, all living in Fransfontein or the communal area and all well known to us. All spoke fluent Khoekhoegowab and English; some were also fluent in Otjiherero and Afrikaans. In

Table 1: Response rates in households and individual questionnaires

	Questionnaires				Refusal to participate		Total	
	complete		incomplete					
	HH*	**Ind***	**HH**	**Ind**	**HH**	**Ind**	**HH**	**Ind**
Fransfontein	137	353	0	27	0	7	137	387
Communal farms	161	338	2	60	0	0	163	398
Workers on Commercial Farms	29	59	0	0	0	0	29	59
Total	**327**	**750**	**2**	**87**	**0**	**7**	**329**	**844**

***HH** households; **Ind** individuals.

Source: Ethnographic census, July 2004.

April 2004, the local primary school allowed us to use some of their rooms for the course of interviewer training. At the end, we conducted a one day trial run in the nearby town Khorixas. This helped to further check the quality of the interviewers and the validity of the questionnaire. All of the interviewers received two T-shirts with the ACACIA logo to identify them (and to initiate interest in them and the ethnographic census), a financial compensation and a daily food allowance for the duration of the training and the interviewing process.[7]

We began conducting interviews in Fransfontein and then gradually expanded our interview radius. Some of the communal settlements were very remote and it took more than an hour to reach them. During the evenings we checked all interviews and, where unclarities arose, revisited households and individuals. Many people appreciated that we only worked with local assistants and some even gave this as the reason why they decided to participate. In total, the ethnographic census generated information on 3738 persons, though many of these were dead or absent.

In 2004, Michael and I also administered a questionnaire on marriage to elicite information on wedding practices and marriage support networks. From January 2004

7 The interviewers were Goldine !Ases, Francois Dawids, Alexia Gertze, Elly Gertze, Gideon /Goagoseb, Ivonne /Goagoses, Rheinhardt Haraeb, Perpetina Jod, Hubert Kahono, Valery Meyer, Ferdinand /Nanubeb, Maria Philips, Jorries Seibeb and Emma /Uiras.

until September 2004 we were able to collect information on 132 marriage celebrations. We either interviewed the couple or one of the spouses. Often, children of the couple were also present. In general, people were very open to discuss their marriage celebrations with us. Expensive and elaborated marriages were presented with great pride. More simple marriages were discussed against the background of the decline of marriage. As the elderly lady mentioned above driving a donkey cart, older women lamented this development in particular, stressing that it used to be so much easier to tie the knot: all one needed was a ring, a goat and some singing in front of ones' house.

Several marriages are excluded from the sample due to incomplete information. For the earliest marriage celebration that we were able to record, celebrated in 1938 in Outjo – a town approximately 150 kilometers east of Fransfontein (see Figure 1) –the date and place are missing. For eight other marriages, the interviewed couples could not remember their marriage dates and other basic information. Almost all of these couples were born in the 1920s and 1930s. These marriages are also excluded. This reduces the sample to 123 marriages.

Another way to reach historical depth was through an analysis of church registers from the three parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) in the region: Fransfontein, Khorixas and Outjo. The ELCRN grew out of the work of the Rhenish mission, one of the most influential missionary organisations in Namibia in the 20th century. During this period the parish responsible for the people of Fransfontein changed several times. From 1892 until 1907 church registers were kept in the Fransfontein church. These documents are nowkept at the ELCRN's archives in Windhoek where they can be consulted. Between 1908 and 1967, all records were kept in Outjo but the registers from 1960 to 1967 are missing. One complication with these Outjo materials is that they do not list the Fransfontein congregation separately from the other congregations in the parish. From 1968 to 1972, the Fransfontein church registers were archived in Khorixas, due to South Africa's implementation of the homeland system and the town's growth as regional center. From 1973 to 1983, Fransfontein had its own pastor stationed in the village, Pastor Hendrik Jod, who kept the church registers in the community. The registers for Fransfontein for the years 1984 to 1993 have proven untraceable, creating a second gap in the data. Since 1994, the church registers have been kept at the Fransfontein church and the current pastor and elders kindly allowed us to consult all records up to 2002. In total, the available church registers provide information on 1461 marriages for the period 1892 to 2002. As I discuss in more detail in the following chapter, the majority of the Fransfontein population consider their religious affiliation to be Lutheran. However, there are also a number of other churches present, especially the Roman Catholic Church. This means that the ELCRN church registers do not cover the entire population.

Both Gerd Spittler (1980) and Trutz von Trotha (1994) have stressed the problematic quality of church registers or state administered census data for varying political contexts (see also Kertzer/Arel 2002). Although their critique of the validity of this kind of abstract "power knowledge" (*Herrschaftswissen*) is more than justified, church registers as well as national census data nevertheless provide an important access to past demographic processes in Africa. Both African census data and church registers are understudied and more insight could certainly be gained from them (Notkola/Siiskonen 2000; Siiskonen/Taskinen/Notkola 2005; van de Walle 2006a).

My final approach to the study of marriage over time was through the collection of life stories. Because I wanted to compare the construction, perception and interpretation of specific essential events and rites of passage, for instance how women experienced their first love, their first sex, their marriage or their first birth, I collected the life stories of 20 Fransfontein women. My focus on women's lives has been a conscious choice. I believe that due to my focus on women and their narratives, women trusted me and were more willing to narrate from their own experiences. An equally in-depth treatment of men's lives would have been desirable. In parts, Michael has provided such insights. However, the focus of his research was different from my research questions. I have elicited several life stories from men well-known to us. Yet these insights are more limited when compared to the information I collected on women's lives.

The life stories provide information on how the women constructed and perceived crucial moments of their lives in hindsight, in comparison to the experiences of their agemates but also their grandmothers, mothers or daughters. I agree with Faye Ginsburg (1987: 626) who has stressed that "life stories can be seen as the effort of individuals to create continuity between subjective and social experience, the past and current action and belief". Life stories create personal continuity despite wider social change and even turmoil. In her work on discourses and activism for and against abortion in a US town, Ginsburg uses the life stories of pro-choice and pro-life women to understand their political positioning. At the beginning of her analysis, Ginsburg is puzzled why she is unable to interpret the women's positioning by "classic" social categories like religion or education. Only when she takes time into account an interpretation emerges. Ginsburg combines the way the women reflect the development of their own life courses, especially crucial events like giving birth, with her own classification of women by different birth cohorts and generations: "In the negotiation of critical moments in the female life course with an ever-shifting social environment, the contours of their own biographies and the larger cultural and historical landscape are measured, reformulated, and given new meaning". (ibid: 625) Ginsburg's approach is inspired by Karl Mannheim's (1952) classic essay on "The Problem of Generation" and his idea of "fresh contact" in the formation of generations (Alber/van der Geest/Reynolds Whyte 2008; Cole 2004; Fumanti 2016: 79, 238). Like

Mannheim, Ginsburg wants to understand the nexus between individual life cycles and larger historical forces. She distinguishes between the women's interpretations of transitional events in their life courses (like giving birth) and what she calls "the historical moment shaping the culture when these key transitional points occur" (Ginsburg 1987: 626). Ginsburg's approach will help me to interpret why the elderly woman with the donkey cart was so angry with the "young people" who have ruined marriage. Ginsburg's and Mannheim's uses of the concept of generation offer a fruitful approach to analyze change in marriage over time.

LIVED EXPERIENCES AND HISTORICAL EVENTS

> Our concern is not whether to study change in society but how to study it.
> *Wilson/For Men and Elders*

After a static – timeless – view of culture was thoroughly discarded, several anthropologists, like Monica Wilson, asked how to study "the intersection of personal history, general history, and the changing structures of developmental processes" (Rosaldo 1980: 110).[8] Although functionalists and structural functionalists like Bronislaw Malinowski (1929) and Meyer Fortes (1971 [1958]) introduced a perspective of time into their anthropological thinking, in the end their conceptualization remained quite static. While Malinowski's so-called biographical approach appeared to overcome the short time span of fieldwork, his construction of a "typical life" nevertheless created "the illusion of a static and homogeneous primitive society" (Rosaldo 1980: 109). Similarly, Meyer Fortes's concept of the development cycle of the domestic group was not historically embedded.

Renato Rosaldo (1980) was one of the first anthropologists who tried to overcome these theoretical and methodological shortcomings when he incorporated the demographic concept of cohort analysis as a master concept into his ethnographic approach.[9]

8 Elizabeth Colson (1983: 1) has discussed how "the thrust of time" has entered anthropological thoughts and methodologies. She argues that one important impetus has been given by repeated returns to the same research site over time, as she had been doing since the 1940s. By the second half of the 20th century, this approach had become quite widespread because of easier and cheaper travel opportunities.

9 Rosaldo (1980: 110) commented on anthropology's general disinterest (and other disciplines' interest) in the cohort concept as follows: "Although the concept of cohort analysis has hardly entered anthropological discourse, apposite though it may be, it has been widely

Through the notion of a cohort, Rosaldo (1980: 110) tried to understand "individual biographies in their historical, cultural, and social structural context". He thus broadened the anthropological perspective of time, similar also to Johannes Fabian's considerations: "As soon as culture is no longer primarily conceived as a set of rules to be enacted by individual members of distinct groups, but as a specific way in which actors create and produce beliefs, values, and other means of social life, it has to be recognized that Time is a constitutive dimension of social reality". (Fabian 1983: 24) Rosaldo's use of the concept of the cohort was inspired by Norman Ryder's (1965: 859) seminal article that proposed the cohort as a "macro-biography", thus "the aggregate analogue of the individual life story". For both Rosaldo and Ryder the cohort offered the possibility to go beyond a collection of autonomous life stories and a limited understanding of history based only on periodic events. In this, they were both influenced by Mannheim's (1952) and José Ortega y Gasset's (1933) thoughts on generations. Ortega y Gasset (1933: 859) viewed the cohort as the most important concept in history because of its "dynamic compromise between mass and individual".

Ryder provided the following demographic definition of the cohort: "A cohort may be defined as the aggregate of individuals (within some population definition) who experienced the same event within the same time interval". (Ryder 1965: 845) In demography, the event that is often taken to form a cohort is birth (Glenn 1977: 8; Ryder 1965: 845). However, the approach can be applied to cohorts identified by any significant and enduring event in the life course (Ryder 1965: 847). Other examples of events that form cohorts are marriage cohorts (people marrying in a similar time period), or school cohorts (people starting or finishing school at the same time). Cohorts are not only summaries of individual lives but have distinct characteristics and compositions, such as varying sizes (like the baby-boomers). Because of this historic situatedness, each cohort experiences the world differently from its predecessors (Ginsburg 1987; Rosaldo 1980: 112).

Cohorts can be used to analyze two types of dynamics: intercohort variations (comparisons between cohorts) and intracohort variations (comparisons between members of one cohort). Intercohort analysis tries to understand in how far subsequent cohorts differ, on the basis of the understanding offered by Elizabeth Colson (1983: 4): "To be young is to be young at a particular time and place; each age-cohort is unique". One might, for example, ask in how far the divorce rate was lower for women born in the 1950s, because of a more conservative socialization, than for those born in the 1960s, brought up under more liberal circumstances. Unlike a periodic analysis that focuses on the distribution of specific events during specific times

discussed in other disciplines". Exceptions to Rosaldo's general remarks were anthropologists working on demographic issues, like Elizabeth Colson (1983).

(e.g. the number of divorced women in 1980 compared to 1990), cohort analysis tries to understand social change (e.g. an increased practice and acceptance of divorce) embedded in the lived experiences and historically singular circumstances of a specific group of people defined by their birth dates (see also Ginsburg 1987).

Ryder and Rosaldo differed in their understanding of the cohort, not in how they applied the intercohort analysis but in how they treated intracohort variation. This disparity stemmed from the fact that they defined and used the concept of the cohort differently. For Ryder (1965: 847), cohorts were structural categories with comparable analytic power as other central social categories, such as class, ethnicity or gender. That a cohort exhibits some kind of collective identity is possible but not necessary. Thus, Ryder's cohort is an analytic category: "Commonality is likely but not community". (ibid: 855) He discussed the peer group as a subset of the cohort, defined as a group of people of the same age with attitude-forming relationships among each other. This definition had similarities to Mannheim's (1952: 304) concept of the "generational unit", which he understood as subgroups within a generation that are often in conflict with each other. Thus, as Mannheim's generational unit, Ryder's peer group is only a small fraction of the total cohort. In this situation, intracohort variations might show that a peer group significantly varies from other cohort contemporaries. Consequently, Ryder (1965: 847) stressed that the comparison between cohorts always had to be supplemented by an analysis of the variations within cohorts: "Different subsets of the cohort have different time patterns of development. Youth of manual and nonmanual origins differ in length of educational preparation and age at marriage". As examples of intracohort differentiation, Ryder listed education, occupation, marital status and parity status.

Rosaldo approached the cohort very differently. He stated: "The point of entry in cohort analysis is an inquiry into the extent to which a number of individuals have become self-conscious about their identity as a group in the face of life chances terribly different in appearance from those of their elders and their juniors". (Rosaldo 1980: 111) Thus, to apply the cohort concept, the ethnographer has to search for those political, economic and social events that cause "life chances to terribly" differ so that individuals become self-conscious about them. In the case of the Ilongot, amongst whom Rosaldo did his research, a number of historical events had these effects on a marriage cohort of 20 men who were loosely related through inter-marriages that took place in the period from 1955 to 1958. Katherine Newman (1986) suggested a very similar kind of application in her comparison of US "women of the depression" and "women of the Sixties" and their experience of postdivorce downward mobility. Newman preferred to use the term "generation" to highlight the shared consciousness: "A generation is a special kind of birth cohort: a group of similarly aged people who share some important formative experience. The focus of the term 'generation' is on the shared experiences,

Table 2: Overview of time-structuring concepts

Macrobiography	Cultural Patterns	History
Cohort as an aggregate of individuals experiencing the same event within the same time interval [general definition]	**Age group** as a temporal, culturally defined stage in life (e.g. based on norms and values) [general definition]	**Time periods** structured by (significant) events
This includes	**This includes**	
Generation as a group of people sharing a formative event (Newman)	The concept of the life cycle	
Peer groups as a group of similarly aged people with attitude-forming relations (Ryder)	The genealogical concept of generations	
Cohort as a self-conscious group experiencing very different life chances from other groups (Rosaldo)		

not on age". (ibid: 232)[10] For both Rosaldo and Newman the focus was thus not on intracohort variation but on intracohort homogeneity – the groups they studied were purposefully formed by two events: age (birth) *and* historic event(s). In constrast, for Ryder a cohort was defined by just *one* event – often birth.

Nevertheless, the differences between the varying conceptualisations of the cohort are not that large. What Newman termed "generation", Rosaldo "cohort" and Ryder "peer group" were all just variations and extensions of the basic concept of the cohort: a cohort is an aggregate of individuals who experienced the same event within the same time interval (see Table 2). The three authors simply varied in the level of group consciousness, namely the level (and necessity) of awareness as to how far a similar lived experience leads to group cohesion. For my own application of the cohort and the generation concept, I combine these approaches.

10 One problem with Newman's definition is that the span of a generation is fuzzy. Kertzer (1983) discussed in detail the many problems associated with the imprecise and polysemic use of generation in the social sciences. Because of these difficulties he suggested not to use the concept but instead to analyze age, cohort and periodic effects (ibid: 130-131).

Cohort analysis thus offers a strong and flexible tool to understand and analyze change both between and within specific groups formed through specific, time-bound events. Yet not everything changes. To analyze what might remain similar despite varying cohort experiences, the concept of age groups and the life cycle is helpful. In her research on abortion, Ginsburg (1986: 625) observed: "In the narratives, all the women are struggling to come to terms with problematic life-cycle transitions, but in each group, the way they experience those as problematic is associated with very particular historical situations". Specific norms and values are closely linked to the life cycle: "Age ascription is the cross-sectional counterpart of cohort differentiation. Similarities of experiences within and differentiation of experience between age groups are observable in every culture". (Ryder 1965: 846) Of course, age specific norms are also dynamic. However, the coherence of the life cycle and the norms and values ascribed to certain life stages can counter the potential for change. In my research on reproductive changes in rural Mexico, I described that the number of women taking modern contraceptives strongly increased for certain birth cohorts (Pauli 2000). However, before the birth of a child, not a single woman – independent of her birth cohort – took contraceptives. Regardless of whether a woman was born in 1950, 1960 or 1970, she did not use contraceptives before the age of twenty-two. Yet, women born from 1970 onwards took more and more diverse contraceptives than women born before the 1970s. A combination of cohort and life cycle/age group analysis makes it possible to analyze these changes and continuities together.

The concept "generation" can also be defined in a way that resembles more closely the mechanisms through which age groups and the position in the life cycle structure time. Parallel to Newman's definition of generation as a group of people sharing a formative event, another common use of the concept in anthropology is genealogical in nature (for an overview, see Whyte/Alber/van der Geest 2008). Generations in this respect are temporal units of kinship structure. Like age groups and the life cycle, this definition of "generation" highlights cultural patterns rather than temporal variations. Table 2 summarizes this discussion of the different concepts.

So far I have discussed what Ryder (1965: 859) summarized as *macrobiographies* and *cultural patterns* and only briefly mentioned the periodic concept (the third column in Table 2). Before Ryder's path-breaking work, the periodic perspective with its focus on points in time (e.g. comparing the number of marriages in 1950, 1960 and 1970 in a population) was the most dominant one in demography. Today, cohort (or macrobiographic) and periodic approaches are common in demography. In anthropology, ethnographic studies conducted over a period of time have fruitfully applied the periodic approach for comparisons. A good example is Jane F. Collier's (1997) study over time of a Spanish village. She compares village life in the 1960s

and the 1980s and discusses in how far her findings extend or even contradict popular "modernization" discourses. There are thus different ways of thinking about and conducting research into the intersections of lived experience and historical event. For my analysis of the decline of marriage, I take generations and cohorts as my starting point. To this I later add reflections on how generations and cohorts are entangled with formative historic events and the life cycle.

GENERATIONS AND COHORTS OF FRANSFONTEIN WOMEN

I distinguish three generations of women.[11] The lived experiences of the women are tightly connected to the colonial and postcolonial situation in Namibia. Until the mid-20th century, Fransfontein women's lives were framed by the exploitation they experienced by white settlers. Many of the elder women worked on commercial "white" farms, underpaid and on very insecure terms, for substantial periods of their lives. The overwhelming majority of these women later established themselves as communal farmers. I classify this group of women the "older generation" (born between 1915 and 1944). With the establishment of apartheid and the Damaraland homeland in the 1970s, the lives of the next generation of women (born between 1945 and 1964) differed substantially from the lives of their mothers. I label this the "middle generation". During apartheid, economic stratification gained momentum. A small group of newly elite women profited from these developments. But the vast majority of women (and men) continued to live lives in economic and political limbo. Finally, in the 1980s and accelerated further with independence in the 1990s, the political and economic context changed again. The new-won freedom brought new opportunities for women, especially for women of the "younger generation" (born between 1965 and 1994). However, new threats and insecurities also emerged, the most tragic one being HIV/AIDS.

The way I construct the three generations thus resembles Newman's (1986) approach to the concept of generation. I classify Fransfontein women into three generations based on the observation that they form groups "of similarly aged people who share some important formative experiences" (Newman 1986: 232). In how far these three generations of women "have become self-conscious about their identity as a group

11 Detailed information on the political and economic history of the region follows in the next chapter. Here, I only give some basic information on the livelihoods of the women in order to construct the different generations and cohorts that this study focuses on.

Table 3: Birth cohorts and generations of married and unmarried women

Genera-tion	Number of women		Birth cohorts	Number of women		Number of life stories	
	All	Married		All	Married	All	Married
Older generation	78	59	1915-1924	11	10	4	3
			1925-1934	26	25		
			1935-1944	41	24		
Middle generation	106	36	1945-1954	47	14	6	2
			1955-1964	59	22		
Younger generation	180	20	1965-1974	65	15	10	1
			1975-1984	89	5		
			1985-1994	26	0		
Total	**364**	**115**		**364**	**115**	**20**	**6**

in the face of life chances terribly different in appearance from those of their elders and their juniors" (Rosaldo 1980: 111) is debatable. Above, I cited the lady in her seventies who commented on "young" people ruining marriage. In their life stories, women of one generation had markedly different experiences from those of other generations. Yet, the generations did not really perceive themselves as self-conscious groups. My classification is, thus, also influenced by Ryder's (1965) more analytic approach. Further, I also consider Ryder's call to analyze both inter- and intracohort variations. As Table 3 shows, marital status strongly varies not only between generations and cohorts but also within them.[12]

Whereas 76 per cent (59 out of 78 women) of the women of the older generation are or have been married (and are now widowed), only 34 per cent (36 out of 106 women) of the middle generation are married (Table 3, columns two and three). For the younger generation, women born after the mid-1960s, only 11 per cent (20 out of 180 women) are married. A late age at marriage leads to high numbers of unmarried

12 The data discussed here were collected with the help of the ethnographic census and the life history interviews.

women in the youngest cohorts. After classifying the women in Fransfontein into three generations, I then apply a finer classification to divide the three generations in 10-year birth cohorts (Table 3, columns four to six). These birth cohorts correspond to Ryder's definition of a cohort. The classification is not based on any formative event or self-conscious group; it is simply a grouping of the three generations in terms of time periods as method to grasp more subtle changes within one generation. The oldest woman in the whole population of 364 women was born in 1916, the youngest in 1990. After an analysis of the distribution of all 364 women by age, a division into eight 10-year birth cohorts, starting with the 1915-1924 cohort and ending with the 1985-1994 one,[13] seemed most appropriate. Demographers analyzing large datasets often use one-year birth cohorts, yet the present study did not offer enough cases to group women into such narrow categories. Ten-year birth cohorts are more appropriate for our data. For each of the eight birth cohorts, I conducted at least one and often several life story interviews. Half of all "life story" women belong to the youngest generation.

The classification into generations can be fuzzy at the edges. This becomes evident when one takes a closer look at Olga, born in 1942. By age, she should be assigned to the older generation. Yet, because she was one of the very first women to work as a domestic worker for the state, her economic (and also reproductive) autonomy was very different from the lives of the women in the older generation and I decided to assign her to the middle generation.

In the following chapters, a combination of cohort (plus generational) and age grade (plus life cycle) analysis is used to understand the conjugal and reproductive dynamics in Fransfontein throughout the 20th century. In addition, periodic analysis is applied, especially in the chapter on the decline of marriage in Part 2. I analyze changes in the performance, economic implications and meanings of marriage over different time periods (e.g. marriage in the 1960s, in the 1970s and in the 1980s). I also examine closely the practices of weddings, focusing on the lived experiences of different generations and cohorts of women and men. The different approaches on the intersection of lived experience and historical events discussed so far thus help us understand continuities and changes in marriage and reproduction from an individual, a macrobiographic and a historical perspective.

13 Only women who were 15 years and older in 2004 were interviewed. This means that the youngest women interviewed were those born in 1990, and that the last birth cohort (1985-1994) does not include any women born between 1991 and 1994.