

# **Women's Adult Education as a 'Site of Struggle' in Marriage in Mozambique**

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis I have adopted a feminist ethnographic approach to explore how women's adult education in Mozambique is influenced by perceptions of their gendered identities and roles as wives and mothers. Adapting narrative analysis I examine the case stories of four women who met resistance by their husbands when they went back to school as adults and one woman who was supported by her husband. I explore how they make meaning of their experiences and position themselves and their husbands in relation to dominant discourses on masculinities and femininities.

I found that in the context of rapid economic and social change, the formal job market offered new opportunities for women, where completing 7<sup>th</sup> grade was a prerequisite. I argue that education can be seen as a '*site of struggle*' in marriages where husbands tried to hinder their wives from studying. I found that the dominant femininity entailed being '*submissive*', '*cultivating*' and taking care of children and the household. I suggest that some men saw their wives' education as a threat, fearing they would subsequently leave them. They also seemed to fear that if their wives became educated and employed, this would threaten their masculine position as '*head of household*' and '*provider*'. Some women resisted dominant discourses and drew on their families for support. At the same time, they seemed to see education as a '*fall-back*' position in cases where they felt abused by their husbands but unable to leave for lack of external support.

I argue that the needs of women who wish to pursue education beyond adult literacy programmes have been somewhat forgotten and suggest the need to promote women's adult education as a human right and pay more attention to the gendered constraints many women meet at different levels of education.

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## ACRONYMS

ADPESE	Danish Support to Education Sector Strategic Plan
AEA	Alfabetização e Educação de Adultos [Literacy and Adult Education]
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AL	Adult Literacy
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute
EFA	Education for All
EGSE	Strategy for Gender Equality in the Education Sector
EPA!	An exclamation for emphasis of an expression
EP1	First level of primary education, 1 <sup>st</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> grade
EP2	Second level of primary education, 6 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> grade
ESG1	Primary level of secondary education 8 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> grade
ESG2	Pre-university level 11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grade
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FG	Focus Group
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICEIDA	Icelandic International Development Agency
INE	National Institute of Statistics Mozambique
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MINED	Ministry of Education
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OMM	Organization of Mozambican Women
PARPA	Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty
PEE	Education Sector Strategic Plan (Plano Estrategico da Educação)
PEEC	Education and Culture Sector Strategic Plan II <sup>1</sup>
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques

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<sup>1</sup> The First Education Strategic plan was abbreviated PEE. When the name of the Ministry changed from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Education and Culture the abbreviation became PEEC

SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLSA	Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa: Governance, Institutions and Policy Processes
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UN	United Nations
UNCSW	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USA	United States of America

## GLOSSARY

<u>Analfabeto</u>	An illiterate person
<u>Bairro</u>	Neighbourhood, smallest administrative unit
<u>Capulana</u>	An essential piece of clothing for women, used for various purposes such as wrapping as a skirt and carrying children. Capulanas were also necessary for rituals and events such as marriages and funerals.
<u>Curandeiro</u>	Traditional healer
<u>Esteira</u>	A mat woven from palm leaves. Used for sitting outside. Many people did not own a bed and slept on an esteira.
<u>Ganhar</u>	To gain or to earn
<u>Lobolo</u>	Brideprice
<u>Machamba</u>	Plot of Land, family farm, usually around one hectare
<u>Mãe</u>	Mother
<u>Metical/Meticais</u>	The Mozambican currency. In April 2013 the exchange rate for 1 metical was 2 pence
<u>Negócio</u>	Small scale business
<u>Obrigada</u>	Thank you in Portuguese
<u>Tia/o</u>	Literally aunt or uncle but it commonly used to show respect for those who are older, for example by children to grown women and men or by adults to elderly women or men.
<u>Vila</u>	A small town

## PREFACE

*A woman is married to a certain man. Let's say that the man has 10th grade and the wife was in 7th grade but what happens was that the man created conditions for the wife to study more and he helped, helped, helped and helped until she got the same grade as the husband. So they are already getting equal, the husband with 10th grade and the woman in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. So from then on there are arguments. When there is a small problem at home the wife does not value the husband, saying things like: "You have the same level as I do; we are equal in terms of knowledge". So she is already arguing at home, creating a problem. But if the husband is willing to help more or if the wife gets a certain job and starts working, there will be more problems. If the man says: "Do this woman, do that"! [She responds] "Epa<sup>2</sup> don't bother me I am working now, I am studying, I have a lot of money you can stay or you can leave". Or she could go and complete 12th grade while the husband has 10th grade. So she stops thinking about her husband, does not value him. This is the problem that exists here in our community more here in Maganja. You see! She forgets who it was who helped his wife. Who was it that helped her have this level of education? Who was it that helped her get this job? So practically the men start to be violated. So a man who has 10th grade will only allow his wife up to 7th grade because they are afraid of not being valued. (Carlos, interview 28/5/05)*

This hypothetical narrative was told to me, an Icelandic woman, by a young Mozambican man when I asked him: "*Why do some men prohibit their wife from going to school*"? This was the problem I set out to investigate when I embarked on my fieldwork. From this narrative I learnt certain things about how Carlos<sup>3</sup> perceives gender relations between a husband and a wife and how he assumes that education and a paid job will affect these relations. He assumes that the husband should be more educated than his wife and that if she gets an equal level of education,

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<sup>2</sup> An exclamation used for an emphasis when something is too much. I cannot think of a corresponding phrase in English.

<sup>3</sup> All names are pseudonyms

problems will arise in the marriage as this will mean that she will lose respect for him. Furthermore, if the woman then gets a job she will stop doing what her husband tells her to do. If she gets more educated than her husband this will mean that she will no longer take him into consideration. It can be understood from Carlos that the woman would not have been able to study or get the job without her husband and therefore should be grateful. He concludes by explaining that this is why a man will only “allow” his wife to study up to a certain level of education, well below his own. The narrative thus reflects ideas about power relations in a marriage between a husband and a wife and their relative positions vis-à-vis each other. These are what I call gendered relations as they are based on assumptions about the proper social positions and behaviours of men and women. They are based on ideas about how to be a wife and how to be a husband, in other words about femininity and masculinity.

So why do I start my thesis with this narrative? The aim here is to orient the reader to what to expect. I used a feminist ethnography as a research approach, drawing on narrative analysis to explore the issue of women's education as a site of struggle in their marriage and how this links to perceptions about gendered identities, masculinities, femininities and education. I see narratives as drawing on cultural discourses and thereby as a ‘window’ into perceptions about gendered identities. By that I do not mean that I see identities as innate and stable and residing in the narratives, but rather that by engaging with certain discourses, people create their particular identities in social interaction.

I have also chosen to include some of my own narrative about doing the research. As such, the thesis can be read as the meeting of different discourses on gender and education and of different cultural contexts, based as it is on fieldwork in a rural village in Mozambique, conducted by an Icelandic woman based at a British University.

## **CHAPTER 1 – FINDING MY FEET: A RESEARCH JOURNEY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis explores the research question: *How are women's experiences of adult education influenced by perceptions of their gendered identities and roles as wives and mothers?* Upon its submission, nine years will have passed since I enrolled on my PhD course. Similar to many of the women in this study, my multiple identities and roles have influenced the turns my educational path has taken. An unexpected career opportunity presented itself after my fieldwork which involved working for three years in Mozambique for the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA); I cared for my mother when she became seriously ill, and decided to become a mother myself. Inevitably, the academic context within which the study is located and I as a person have changed through these experiences and over the long process of doing fieldwork, data analysis and writing. This has influenced both my research focus and approach to analysis. In this chapter, I reflect on this process. I discuss some of the research and theories on gender and identities that have informed my thinking and explain how I came to adopt a feminist ethnography using narrative analysis. I introduce the context in which the fieldwork was carried out and outline some historical developments in relation to gender, marriage and family in Mozambique. I conclude by outlining my research questions and structure of the thesis.

### **1.2 The Onset of a Research Journey**

When I enrolled in 2003 I had just completed an MA course in international development with a focus on gender and education. For my dissertation I had done fieldwork in Mozambique on the barriers to girls' education. I liked the people and culture and had learnt Portuguese up to a proficient level. As it takes a long time to develop an understanding of a different culture, especially when having to first learn a new language it made sense to return to Mozambique for my PhD research. Mozambique is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world (ibidUNDP, 2013) and among the 28 countries that were in 2002 considered unlikely

to reach any of the quantitative<sup>4</sup> EFA goals before 2015 (UNESCO, 2002a). I was concerned with the large gender gap at all levels of education (INE, 2003c; MINED, 2002)<sup>5</sup> as I saw it as a sign of unequal gender relations. Although there has been improvement since, the gender gap in grades 1-5 was 22.2 in 2002 (INE, 2003b). It should also be noted that even when the gender gap in enrolment decreases it does not necessarily mean that there is equality in education outcome. As an example, the gap in learning achievements between girls and boys in 6<sup>th</sup> grade widened in favour of boys between 2000 and 2007 (SACMEQ, 2012).

Some of the barriers that had been identified to girls' education in Mozambique were social issues such as domestic labour, early marriage, sexual harassment in school, and the favouring of sons' over daughters' education (Walker et al., 1996). I was interested to know how these social issues impacted on the learning of adult women. At the time the female illiteracy rate in Mozambique was estimated at 74 per cent compared to 45 per cent for men (Patel et al., 2000) and was among the highest in the world<sup>6</sup>. With the established links in the development literature between illiteracy and poverty (e.g. Lauglo, 2001) and the various benefits of women's basic education (e.g. Egbo, 2000; Medel-Añonuevo, 1997; Schultz, 2002) the research proposal for my PhD was about ways of measuring women's empowerment through literacy. I positioned myself with feminists such as Nelly Stromquist and Sara Longwe, who saw education as a tool for challenging gendered norms. Getting equal access to schools or literacy programmes was not enough in itself as educational systems were transmitters of cultures and could therefore enforce or maintain unequal gender relations (Bunwaree, 1999; Sweetman, 1998). Schools and literacy programmes should instead teach women to think critically and challenge oppressive structures (Longwe, 1998; Stromquist, 1997).

Having two supervisors prominent in the field of adult literacy I soon became interested in the 'New Literacy Studies' an ideological model of literacy emphasizing

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<sup>4</sup> The so called quantitative EFA goals are: universal primary education, gender parity and halving adult illiteracy (UNESCO, 2002b).

<sup>5</sup> During the course of the research the name of the Ministry of Education (MINED) was changed to the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and then back to the Ministry of Education. MINED and MEC are therefore both used as acronyms in the thesis.

<sup>6</sup> In 2003, Mozambique was number 193 of 207 countries in terms of female literacy levels according to [http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/edu\\_lit\\_fem-education-literacy-female](http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/edu_lit_fem-education-literacy-female).

that literacy is embedded in politics, language, discourse, social contexts and power relations (Barton & Hamilton, 1997; Street, 1996, 2001a). Ethnographic studies adopting this approach have demonstrated how women's literacy practices are influenced by perceptions of women's roles; identities and 'place in community' as defined by social norms (see Gibson, 1996; Kalman, 2005; Puchner, 2003; Rockhill, 1993; Zubair, 2001). For example, Puchner found that even when women in Mali became literate through literacy classes they were not able to use these skills to improve their socio-economic status, as tasks that required literacy skills were traditionally allocated to men (2003). Rockhill found in her research on Hispanic immigrant women in the USA, that some husbands perceived schools as a threat to their masculine authority, as they were places where their wives met other people and were exposed to different ways of thinking and living. She concluded that men exercised power over their wives by forbidding attendance of literacy classes, often with the threat of violence (1993). Zubair similarly found in Pakistan that there were power struggles within marriages, linked to women's literacy and concluded that men felt threatened by women's literacy (2001). In Mexico, Kalman concluded that women's subordination to men was an obstacle for their participation in literacy classes and linked this to domestic violence: "Husbands may not only be unsupportive but may also be violently opposed to their wives attending classes outside the home" (2005:205).

This was the issue that caught my attention when I went to Mozambique to do a pilot study in April 2004. According to some participants in literacy programmes I observed, and interviews with literacy facilitators and others working within the educational sector, men sometimes prohibited their wives from attending literacy classes. This issue had been reported by research carried out in Mozambique: "Some husbands will not allow their wives to study, especially at night" (Fleming, 1998:16). The authors of a report on the status of adult literacy in 2000 found that few women had access to literacy programmes and that those who did:

Do not stay and finish...One of the factors is that to be able to attend classes they need approval from their families, especially married women, since their role is seen as being wives and agriculturalists, confined to the home. (Patel, et al., 2000:27)

I found, however, that the issue was mentioned in passing and treated as a part of the local culture, without further analysis. I felt that research was needed that explored how men and women understood gender identities and gender roles (masculinities and femininities) and how those might influence conflicts over education between husbands and wives. This is why I went to Mozambique to do a feminist ethnographic study (see chapter 4), with the aim to explore the links between women's literacy learning and domestic violence. I positioned myself here within the capability approach to development (Sen, 1999). Sen sees development as not only about decreasing levels of economic poverty but also about “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (1999:3). According to this view, restricting women's access to literacy classes would be an ‘unfreedom’ and thus a concern in the field of development.

### **1.3 Seeking a Balance between ‘Northern’<sup>7</sup> and ‘Southern’ Feminist Perspectives**

#### ***Questioning the Universality of ‘Northern’ Frameworks in the Field***

I embarked on fieldwork with a toolbox of concepts from my previous gender and development course and life experiences, some of which have remained useful. I still see gender relations as essentially power relations (Cornwall, 1997) that are produced in discourses, as will be discussed further in chapter 2, but also through nondiscursive practices such as violence (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). I agree with feminists such as Hollway (1984) and Silberschmidt (2001) that marriage is one of the most important relationships in terms of the production and reproduction of gender difference. When men and women marry they have certain expectations of marriage that are rooted in beliefs about masculinity and femininity and a gendered division of labour (Riessman, 1990). Many feminists have pointed to the importance of the gendered division of labour in creating and maintaining unequal power relations between men and women (e.g. Whitehead, 1984; WLSAMOZ, 1998; Young, Wolkowitz, & McCullagh, 1988). In the context of development studies, Whitehead has argued that the family is: “A site of subordination and domination”

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<sup>7</sup>Although I realize that the terms North/South and Northern/Southern are still problematic and carry a notion of a dichotomy and difference I prefer them to alternatives like Western and Third-World as I feel those carry a stronger notion of the “West” being superior to the “rest”.

where conflict of interest between family members can be found, “especially between husbands and wives” (1984:97). Men and women have different interests that are influenced by their gendered roles and responsibilities. When those interests clash, negotiation needs to be undertaken and Sen refers to the allocation of labour and resources within the household as a ‘cooperative conflict’ (1990).

Research has demonstrated that women exercise their agency in various ways to bargain and negotiate within marriage (Arnfred, 2011; Carney, 1988; Kandiyoti, 1988). Sometimes, however, women have little bargaining power in relation to men (Agarwal, 1997) as it depends on how their value is perceived by themselves and others, and on perceptions about femininities and masculinities. Husbands may not believe that women have the right to bargain and negotiate and see their efforts as nuisance and a threat to their authority. Therefore violence may be used to deny women voice and put them in place. The bargaining position within the household depends on the household members’ ‘fall-back position’ defined by Agarwal as: “The outside options which determine how well-off she/he would be if cooperation failed” (1997:4). An improved fall-back position leads to a better bargaining position within the household. An independent income has been seen as a source of power for women within the household whereas family forms where the man is the sole ‘breadwinner’, while the wife stays home and takes care of the children has been seen as oppressive for women (Finch, 1996).

Although during fieldwork much of what I observed fit notions such as the above, there were other occasions where I felt that what I was observing did not fit my feminist concepts and frameworks. One example was my interaction with a woman I call Fátima who was the same age as I. She had four children by a man she said she had left because he was physically abusive and did not contribute anything towards the household. She was in a relationship with a man who was already married and as gossip travelled fast, I knew of another woman he had also been sleeping with, without Fátima’s knowledge. When I heard that she was pregnant by this man I felt sorry for her. I assumed that the last thing she wanted was another mouth to feed as it seemed to me that the father of the child was taking their relationship rather lightly. I was surprised when Fátima told me how happy she was to be having another child

because children were a gift of god. I also learnt that she felt sorry for me because I did not have children. She felt that I had not fulfilled my role as a woman as being a mother was the most important thing in any woman's life. So she assumed that I must be having difficulties becoming pregnant and found it hard to understand that I wanted to study and travel first. Growing up in different societies with different societal norms and discourses on femininity, marriage and education had influenced our identities as women. Consequently, we had different beliefs and values and made different life choices. Our different backgrounds also influenced the way in which we made assumptions about each other's choices or lack thereof. Such encounters made me more reflexive and critical of my assumptions and beliefs. As will be further discussed in chapter 4, concerns of voice, representation and power are all key questions in feminist ethnography (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). At the writing up stage I grappled with how to analyse and present my findings. How should I, for example, write about what I understood as domestic violence when a woman I interviewed did not call it that? She might talk about being beaten as abuse, but not necessarily in my terms, as something her husband did not have a right to do. She might feel that beating a wife was normal behaviour from a husband, although in her case unjustified, as she did not deserve it.

### *Postcolonial Critique on the 'Northern' Concept of Gender*

Well into the writing of the thesis I came across a book edited by the Danish sociologist Signe Arnfred (2004c) which was particularly relevant to me as she had done extensive fieldwork in Mozambique and had an approach to gender and sexuality in Africa that resonated with my experiences (see chapter 2). Her edited volume criticises the portrayal of African women as passive victims and calls for an approach allowing for an examination of women's agency. Arnfred's book led to my discovery of African feminists, such as Oyèrònké Oyewùmí (1997; 2000; 2002; 2003b; 2005) and Idi Amadiume (2000; 2004) who question the way in which feminists generalize Northern (or Western) frameworks and apply them to other cultures and contexts as if they were universal. Also relevant in this context is post-colonial literature by writers such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty. In her landmark article "Under Western Eyes" (1986) Mohanty criticized "Western feminists" for

constructing Third-World women as “The Other”, and portraying them as victims, while portraying themselves as the feminist “sisters” coming to save them.

Oyewùmí suggests that Northern scholars tend to see what they believe and as they interpret life from preconceived notions they misunderstand and misinterpret African reality. She takes an example based on fieldwork on her native Yorùbá land in Nigeria where names are not gender specific. In historical records rulers are referred to as ‘*oba*’ which could be of either sex. She argues that historians could not know by looking at the names of rulers whether they were male or female, but with the biased notion that rulers had to be male the position of ‘*oba*’ came to be translated into ‘*king*’ in the English language. Only by revisiting oral history did it become evident that some of the ‘*kings*’ had actually been women (Oyewùmí, 1997). Oyewùmí goes so far as to claim that the concept ‘*woman*’ did not really apply in her native Yorùbá tribe and was a concept introduced in Nigeria by its colonizers. She argues that social hierarchy was primarily based on seniority and as such always relational to others, rather than residing in particular bodies (ibid). I wonder, however, to what extent Oyewùmí’s analysis is applicable to contemporary Africa, as it is partly based on pre-colonial societies. Through colonization and later globalization, African societies have been influenced by Christian norms and Northern neoliberal discourses (Ifi Amadiume, 2004; Arnfred, 2003). I also wonder to what extent a model from one African country such as Nigeria can be applied to another one with a different history, such as Mozambique. If gender is a social construct, how has this amalgamation of different ideas and conditions influenced gender relations in Mozambique, particularly those within the marriage? As Arnfred points out, ideas about gender are fluid and change. As an example she argues that patriarchal Northern notions of wifeness being a prerequisite for motherhood have been introduced to former African colonies where this was not necessarily the case (2003).

Another African feminist, Amina Mama, has criticized Oyewùmí and argues that gender has been and still is one of the central organizing principles in African societies. She holds that women are more controlled by customs and community than men and less able to realise the rights afforded to them by law (2001). Everjoice

Win, writing within the context of development, similarly argues that women in the North and in Africa are dealing with the same “principal villain...patriarchy and power relations” (2007:84). Unlike Oyewùmí, she feels that women in Africa do have something in common based on their gender and that they share this with Northern women as well. She criticizes Northern feminists, however, for their focus on the “poor, powerless and pregnant” women. She argues that the voices of middle-class African women have been silenced although they also suffer from problems such as HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. Therefore she calls for a focus on human rights by those working in Africa in the context of development research. She states that: “What matters is the denial and/or violation/s of rights, which is based on nothing other than sex and gender” (Win, 2007:84). As I see it, feminists from the North and South agree that in modern African society, research into gendered power relations is important. The key issue to learn from the critique mentioned above is that Northern (and Southern) researchers need to be aware of their own assumptions and biases and be open to alternative local interpretations.

### ***Using Narrative Analysis to Bridge the Gap between North and South***

Although writers such as Oyewùmí and Mohanty criticize the “othering” of Northern writers, by doing so they are in a way reproducing the same dichotomies of ‘we/other’, ‘North/South’, and ‘Western/Third-World’. They continue to emphasize differences across cultures rather than similarities. Oyewùmí for example tends to portray “African Women” and “Northern Women” as two homogenous groups and seems to be suggesting that there is a single Northern feminist discourse, rather than multiple feminist discourses. By doing so the construction of difference between the North and South is maintained (Arnfred, 2002). Such dichotomies do not only suggest that people are separate and different from each other but also that some are above or better than others (Arnfred, 2004b). Although through the process of writing this thesis I have become more aware of dichotomies of North and South, doing away with them has proved challenging, as they are so inscribed into discourses. Writing from the viewpoint of comparative and international education Cristine Fox argues that such dichotomies and divisions can be broken down through narrative research as it goes beyond statistical and decontextualised data and “captures the lived experiences of human interaction” (2006:48). Fox maintains that:

There is a need to embrace narrative as a method of listening to and heeding the voices of experience across borders; a method of dissolving the artificial boundaries that divide one culture from each other (2006:48).

The best way I found to bridge the gap between Northern and Southern discourses on gender was to adopt a narrative approach to my analysis and presentation of data. The term '*narrative*' can refer to a topic of study, a theoretical orientation, a method of investigation and a method of analysis (Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008). I am using the term in this thesis as a topic of study and a method of analysis. Narrative analysis is about using stories as a primary source of data and analysing them in terms of their content, structure, performance or context (Wells, 2011). When one enters a new context one seeks to understand it by comparing it and contrasting it with what one knows already. Then one way to communicate this new understanding, to audiences that are not familiar with that particular culture, is telling stories. I take culture here to be "both about what people think and do and how we describe and evaluate those beliefs and actions" (Stephens, 2009:27).

Narrative methods have increasingly informed ethnographic research in the last two decades (Riessman, 2008). I became aware of narrative as a method of analysis when I started writing up my data as case stories of women. I was trying to solve my dilemma of how to tell stories of women with enough detail to do justice to the complexities of their lives and of how I could translate their context into the completely different worlds of my readers, whilst getting across not only what was different but also what was similar. At the same time I was trying to draw out certain themes from these stories and link to theory. Reading my drafts, my supervisors encouraged me to look at narrative as a method of analysis. They felt that by using this approach I would be better able to explore some of the complexities of gender identities and education than by attempting to fit these realities into theory induced themes. My focus therefore changed from trying to establish some general facts about women who were not allowed to study, towards exploring the experiences of women in context, and what their stories could tell us about underlying discourses on gender relations and women's education. Another reason why I chose to use narrative analysis was my worries that my data was getting too old and that my findings would be irrelevant. Narrative analysis emphasizes lived lives in a particular historical

context and the case stories in chapters 6, 7, and 8 should therefore be read as portraying the experiences of these women at a certain point in time and the ways in which they made meaning of these experiences. In light of the need to provide ample context for these stories, I now go on to providing a brief historical and geographical overview of Mozambique.

#### **1.4 A Brief Historical and Geographical Overview of Mozambique**

Mozambique is a country of 799.380 km<sup>2</sup>, situated in South-Eastern Africa. It is divided into 11 administrative provinces and had 20.2 million inhabitants in 2007 (INE, 2009). Roughly 47 per cent of the population is younger than 15 years old (INE, 2009). Portuguese is the official language owing to former colonial ties with Portugal. There are about 13 main Mozambican languages apart from Portuguese, some of which have one or more dialects (Chilundo, 2006).

An armed struggle for independence from Portugal started in 1969 and the country achieved independence in 1975 forming a government led by Frelimo, the party which had led the struggle for independence (Van den Bergh Collier, 2007). The new government adopted a Socialist political system and allied itself with the Soviet Union and other countries in the “Eastern Block”. Shortly after independence, a civil war broke out between Frelimo and the opposition, Renamo (Van den Bergh Collier, 2007). The war was brutal and had devastating social and economic consequences. Almost one out of seventeen million Mozambicans died; around two million people fled to neighbouring countries and four million people were estimated to be internally displaced (Waterhouse, 1996). After the signing of a peace treaty in 1992, and the restructuring of the economy with Structural Adjustment plans, Mozambique has shown remarkable economic growth but it is questionable to what extent this growth has benefitted the poorest (James, Arndt, & Simler, 2005; Waterhouse, 1996). In 2003, it was estimated that 54.1 per cent of the population lived in absolute poverty (Republic of Mozambique, 2006; UNDP, 2006). Levels of poverty are higher in rural than in urban areas (Republic of Mozambique, 2006).

As I mainly focus on gendered relations within the marriage in this thesis, I now go on to discuss what I mean by marriage in the Mozambican context and how gender identities and roles have changed over time in relation to its history.

## **1.5 Gender, Marriage and Family in Mozambique**

### *Defining Marriage and Household in Mozambique*

When talking about marriage and being married in the context of Mozambique, care needs to be taken not to interpret marriage to necessarily mean a legal union between a man and a woman. There are at least four different marriage systems in Mozambique: “Customary/traditional marriage, religious marriage<sup>8</sup>, civil marriage and mutual consent union/cohabitation” (Arnaldo, 2004). I found that people frequently simply moved in together and said that they were married. Some women were also together with a man who had a formal first wife and referred to him as a husband although they had not been formally married. It seemed to me that women often did not find it meaningful when I asked them whether they were officially married or not. I have therefore chosen to use the term as my respondents used it, to refer to any of the four marriage systems described above.

Marriage is not the same as a household and definitions of a household vary between cultures. Friedmann defines it as: “A residential group of persons who live together under the same roof and eat out of the same pot...blood-related or not” (1992:32). Functions within the household include co-residence, economic co-operation, and reproductive activities such as food preparation and raising children (Varley, 2002). The National Institute of Statistics (INE) in Mozambique defines a household as “the collection of people who live in the same house and share the expenses” (2009). I found this definition somewhat deficient, however, as men might have multiple wives living in different houses and alternate their time and expenses between them. As an example, Fátima referred to herself as single and talked about how her husband had left her with five children. Later in the interview, however, she talked about her husband who was actually the father of her fifth child. He had a job in the village and spent most of the week with Fátima. She was renovating her house and

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<sup>8</sup> Christian or Muslim

complained that he was not contributing, yet I once ran into him bringing home some materials. So at least he helped her transport the materials. It was clear that Fátima saw the house as her house as she had not given him a key to the bedroom door. She studied at night and he would have to wait for her to be able to go to bed. His official wife lived in the provincial capital and he spent weekends there. The two women knew of each other and Fátima's 'marriage' was recognized in that his sister would come and stay with her and Fátima referred to her as her sister-in-law. Fátima complained that he used most of his salary for the other family and that she had to ask him for money to buy clothes for their child and that he refused to give her money to buy things for her older children. Thus, households and marriages are somewhat fluid in Mozambique and power relations likely to be different depending on each case. I therefore prefer the definition of household used by Rosário et al:

One or more persons - not necessarily related by kin and who do not necessarily live under the same roof - who share and use the same resources. (Rosário, Tvedten, & Paulo, 2008:31)

This definition better reflects households where men have multiple relationships and families such as the one I lived with who resided in three separate huts but shared resources and labour to some extent. It should also be noted that the idea of shared expenses might be different between households, but typically in Mozambique, each party has a separate source of income and resources are not pooled, but each party has certain responsibilities in regard to the household (Pfeiffer, Gloyd, & Li, 2001).

### ***Changing Gender Relations in Mozambique***

Gender relations in current Mozambique need to be understood in the context of globalization (Aboim, 2009). Based on her work in Maputo, Aboim distinguishes between the different "worlds" in which men and women try to locate their values and practices. There is the "old days" of pre-colonial traditions where she takes the example of bride price or lobolo as an ongoing practice. Then there is the "colonial period" that had wide ranging influences which will be discussed later and the "modern" post-colonial society with multinational capitalist economy and influenced by "Northern" ideals through means such as international development policies and mass media (Aboim, 2009).

Traditionally a matrilineal system dominated the Northern part of the country, and patrilineal in the South, divided by the Zambezi River. The two systems have different sets of rules, norms and morals, “not only governing kinship relations but also the very structures of society” (Arnfred 2001b:4). In patrilineal kinship systems, family descent is traced through the father while in matrilineal systems it is traced through the mother (Arnfred, 2001b; Van den Bergh Collier, 2007). It has been argued that, in Mozambique, women's position in marriage is stronger in matrilineal societies as the house and children belong to the woman in the case of a divorce, whereas in the patrilineal system the house and children are seen as belonging to the father (Arnfred, 2011; Van den Bergh Collier, 2007).

Arnfred has done extensive research in Mozambique over the last 30 years and I base the following section mostly on her work (1995, 2001a, 2001b, 2004b, 2011). In the matrilineal North women stayed with their kin after marriage. Husbands came from a different kin and moved into the household of their future wives. It was common practice that they stayed for a probation year and provided free labour on the land of her family to prove that they treated their wife well and were not lazy. Husbands were to a big extent seen as procreators. Although the chief was usually a male he always had a female by his side for major decisions, in this case a sister or mother. In matrilineal societies women held key positions as the providers of food. This gave them power that they could use for bargaining and resisting their husband's power. Older women controlled the granaries where food was kept and rationed and the young couple would usually have to work for some time for the mother's family until they were allowed to get their own land and store their own granary which the woman would then control. Arnfred argues that in this type of society it was young men rather than women who were subordinated. Polygamy was uncommon as the man would have to establish another home in a different place and travel between them. Women tended to dislike polygamy as they saw the other woman as a competition for the man's affection and resources, without the benefit of a shared labour. As divorce was easy, a woman would often tell her husband to leave if he took another wife.

According to Arnfred, in the South, where a patrilineal and patrilocal system prevailed, marriage was seen as an exchange between families and was more formal

as lobolo or bride price had to be paid to the bride's family, often in the form of cattle. This was seen as a symbolic recognition of the importance of women, as it signified that the family was being paid for the loss of their daughter's labour. Polygamy was more common than in the North as it was seen as a status symbol: better off men had more cattle and acquired more women, which again meant prosperity as women and children did the main work on the fields. The different wives lived on the same compound and often women preferred to have co-wives as they could then divide labour and keep each other company.

Arnfred argues that when the opportunity arose for young men from Southern Mozambique to migrate to South-Africa for paid labour in the gold mines, the system of paying lobolo gradually changed. Young men started paying lobolo in cash, which meant that they no longer had to adhere to the control of the elders in their kin and marital relations became more individualized. It also meant that the price of lobolo increased and the symbolic meaning changed from being recognition of the labour of the wife to meaning that the man had bought the wife. Consequently it became harder for her to leave an unhappy marriage as her family might have difficulty returning the lobolo. Without returning the lobolo they would have to leave their children behind as by the payment of lobolo the children belonged to the husband's kin.

Arnfred maintains that with colonialism, the power relations in the household started changing as "Northern" ideas of the different roles of husbands and wives started to have influence through the colonial government as well as the Catholic Church. Men were constructed as the 'heads of household' and 'provider'<sup>9</sup> while the women's role was seen as having children, cultivating the fields and taking care of the household. Women's role in agriculture was ignored by the Portuguese who employed men to work on cash crop fields as well as in factories. With the position as 'head of household' men gained the role of providing commodities available for cash such as certain food items, clothes for the wife and children and later, school fees. Following independence, the socialist government led by the Frelimo party government actively promoted gender equality. The formal labour force remained mostly male however,

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<sup>9</sup> Many researcher refer to it as the 'breadwinner', but I find the reference to bread a bit out of place in Mozambique as a big part of the population rarely eats bread.

partly because very few women had received any education. In 1980 only 10 per cent of employed labour was female (Månsson, 1995).

In 2003, agriculture accounted for 93 per cent of rural employment. Wages tend to be low and seasonal especially for low-skilled labour working on small farms. While men have left the sector for better paid activities (World Bank, 2008), 91.3 per cent of women have remained in agriculture (Van den Bergh Collier, 2000). Their opportunities are more limited as they generally have only two years of formal education (World Bank, 2008). Due to less access than men to technology, fertilizers and the credit needed for cash crops and due to workload related to household responsibilities, women depend largely on subsistence agriculture which can leave them at a disadvantage in controlling household income (World Bank, 2008).

Rosário et al. (2008) suggest that the increasing importance of money in social relationships leads to marginalisation and social exclusion where young single mothers and the elderly are particularly vulnerable. At the same time many young men do not participate in agriculture, but cannot find work outside the “saturated informal economy”. Rosário et al suggest that these young men may become a new “lost generation”.

Arnfred (2001b) argues that the values promoted by Frelimo and the Christian Church were based on patriarchal norms and did not take into consideration the different kinship systems in the country. She holds that as a result the position of women in Northern Mozambique has weakened in the last decades:

With so-called modernization, extended families break up, and nuclear families little by little become the norm: just one husband, just one wife, individualized relations. The structure of gender relations has changed, from relations of gender groups to relations between individuals. And at the same time, promoted by the changes introduced with paid work and greatly supported by the patriarchal ideologies of the Christian missions, male dominance has increased (Arnfred, 2001b:19-20).

Arnfred concludes that although women in Northern Mozambique have had gains as a result of the process of ‘development’ and ‘modernization’, they have also lost out

on some of their previous positions and power. As she puts it: “Ideology may become nicer to women but reality does indeed become harsher” (Arnfred, 2001b:25). One of these changes is a rise in polygamous unions in Northern Mozambique since independence (Arnfred, 2001b). Chapman argues that the decrease in formal marriages and the increase in the polygamous marriages in the former matrilineal part has contributed to an “erosion of women’s social security” as co-wives do not live near each other for sharing of household and company but at the same time men’s financial resources have to be divided (2004:237). Arthur argues that nowadays there is a power hierarchy that leaves no doubts about the place of men and women in the family:

It is up to the head of household, a man, to take the decisions and the women should be taught to respect their decisions and to be discrete, useful but submissive (2004:9).

Before the New Family Law passed in 2003 (Aboim 2009), *de facto* marriages<sup>10</sup> were not recognized, as the Mozambican legislation was based on Portuguese colonial law that only recognized marriages registered by the State (Waterhouse, 1996). At the same time, the majority of couples lived in a *de facto* union (Waterhouse, 1996). For example, in 1981-1982 only 10 per cent of newly established marriages over the last two years had been registered (Arnfred, 2001b). Until the New Family Law, men had been firmly based as the ‘head of household’ (Aboim, 2009). A large part of family conflicts and issues have been resolved by the family and traditional leaders adhering to the customary law. Therefore it has not been uncommon for men to take everything from the marriage in the case of divorce, even if women had a legal right to an alimony and in the case of a man’s death, his family would take everything (Waterhouse, 1996). According to Aboim, the New Family Law tries to “combine modern views on the universality of individual rights with customary law, which traditionally governed family organization and gender relations” (2009:203).

Other research has found that norms and values around sexuality and marriage are seen to be changing both in rural areas (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005; Vilén, 2006) and

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<sup>10</sup> De facto marriage was the term used for any kind of a marriage based on local tradition and not registered (Arnfred, 2001b).

in urban areas such as the capital (Hawkins, Price, & Mussá, 2009). The young generation is criticized for not respecting the values of their parents' generation. Increased consumption and ideas about 'modernity', such as wearing nice clothes, and costs linked with pursuing education has led to an increase in relationships where (older) men pay girls for sexual favours (Hawkins, et al., 2009). This puts young girls at risk of diseases such as HIV/ AIDS, but can also be seen as an attempt to break free from restricting norms and agency of women to make use of their sexuality as has similarly been observed in Botswana (Helle-Valle, 2004) and Tanzania (Haram, 2004). Mozambique is among the 10 countries with the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world, estimated at 16.2 per cent in the age group 15-49 in 2004 (UNDP, 2006). Women account for 57 per cent of those infected and in the age group of 15-24 years, twice as many women as men are infected (UNDP, 2007). This is attributed to the dominance of men in sexual relations and the inability of women to negotiate condom use, combined with interplay of social factors such as; poverty low levels of education and practices such as polygamy and "inheritance" of widows by other men (ibid).

Resulting from the war and later structural adjustment policies, many of the factories and agricultural projects the government had taken over from the Portuguese were destroyed or went bankrupt, resulting in mass unemployment persisting to date. For many men the reality of low wages and unemployment has meant that they are not able to fulfil their role as 'provider', while women have maintained their role as food producers (Arnfred, 2001a, 2001b, 2004a, 2004b, 2011). Tvedten et al. similarly conclude that in Northern Mozambique:

There are emerging signs that unemployment and poverty have implications for the ability of men to maintain their 'manhood' and position as household heads, particularly in urban areas. (2009:4)

A recent study by Groes-Green in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, found that generally both young men and women subscribed to the ideal of the man as the provider but that this ideal was becoming impossible to live up to for men in impoverished suburban areas. Some young women were enacting a new femininity, that of the 'modern and independent' woman, which involved engaging in sexual relationships in return for clothes, school fees and other commodities. Often these

men were better-off, older men, so called 'sugar daddies'. In competition with these men, the young men felt frustrated and were increasingly defining their masculinity in terms of sexuality and violence. Groes-Green concludes that it is worrisome that they saw violence against their girlfriends as an alternative to and substitute for economic powers (2009).

## **1.6 Research Aims**

As discussed above, I originally set out to explore links between domestic violence and women's participation in literacy programmes, domestic violence having been defined broadly to include the issue of when a man hinders the education of his wife. However, things did not work out as I had planned. Due to presidential elections, the literacy classes were interrupted shortly after they started, as the new government had not secured payments for the subsidies paid to literacy facilitators. No one knew when they would start again, if at all, for the school year 2004-2005. This meant that I could not use literacy classes as the place to look for research participants. The completion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the literacy programme allows women to enter 6<sup>th</sup> grade in the formal school system, in contrast to many other countries where literacy classes are not linked with the formal school system. As time passed I heard women in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade in evening school and at university, describe similar problems with their husbands as women in literacy classes. Given the gap in the literature regarding women's education in Mozambique beyond the basic literacy level, I decided to look at women's education more broadly. To that effect, the case stories in chapters 6-8 span a spectrum of educational levels from Isabel (chapter 8) participating in the adult literacy programme, to Maria (chapter 6) pursuing a post-graduate course.

In the light of my discussion about changing gender relations in Mozambique, I agree with Cornwall (1997) that in order to improve women's status in gendered power relations, men and masculinities need to be taken into account. Although my focus in the study is on women, references to masculinities kept coming up in women's (and men's) narratives. Research into men and masculinities is growing in Sub-Saharan Africa, but according to Groes-Green (2009), little has been done in Mozambique. To my knowledge, no research has looked specifically on how

education might be seen to relate to femininities and masculinities. This thesis is intended to help fill that gap.

The main questions that guided my research during fieldwork were “*why are some women prohibited from studying by their husbands?*”, “*what motivates women to study?*” and “*what are the main barriers to women's adult education?*” By adopting narrative analysis I do not seek to provide “an answer” to these questions but rather to explore how four women, studying at different levels, make meaning of education and the experience of being prohibited from studying by their husbands. Furthermore, I investigate how this is linked to gendered identities, masculinities and femininities. I make the assumption that storytelling serves the purpose of making meaning of troubling experiences and constructing identities, rather than just giving ‘facts’ (Menard-Warwick, 2006). Therefore, by analysing narratives we can gain an understanding of how people understand their experiences (Trahar, 2006) and how they perceive and portray themselves to others as “whatever else a narrative is... it is also and *always* a narration of the self” (Patterson, 2008:29). I have therefore formulated the main research question in the following way:

*How are women's experiences of adult education influenced by perceptions of their gendered identities and roles as wives and mothers?*

Within this main research question I explore the following sub-questions:

- *How do women at different levels of education make meaning of education?*
- *How do women position themselves and others in relation to discourses on education, gendered identities, masculinities and femininities?*
- *Why are some women prohibited from studying by their husbands?*
- *How do these women make meaning of being prohibited from studying?*

These questions are not treated individually in separate empirical chapters, but rather underpin my analysis in chapters 5-8 as a whole, where they both shaped the analysis and were shaped by the themes coming out of observations, focus group activities and individual women's narratives.

## **1.7 Summary and Outline of the Thesis**

In this chapter I have described my journey from being interested in how literacy programmes empowered women, to examining links between adult women's literacy and domestic violence, and ending up looking more broadly at links between perceptions on gendered identities and adult women's education. I have also given a brief introduction to the historical context of Mozambique and discussed literature relating to gender relations within marriage. I will now briefly describe the outline of the thesis.

Chapters 2-4 provide the conceptual framework and context of the study. In chapter 2 I define and discuss further the main theoretical concepts that have informed my research. In chapter 3 I describe the context of education in Mozambique and of Maganja da Costa. I also describe the process of selecting Maganja da Costa as the site of fieldwork. In chapter 4 I discuss my methodological approach, followed by a description of the research methods, the process of carrying out research and analysing and writing up the data. I then examine the ethical aspects of the research and my position as a researcher in a foreign land.

Chapters 5-8 are the empirical chapters of this study: In chapter 5, I draw on ethnographic data; however, the focus is not on individual lives, but rather, on exploring how people in focus groups and informal conversations talked about gendered identities and roles in relation to women's education, along with the issue of men prohibiting their wives from studying. In other words, I did not ask about why a particular husband forbade a particular wife, but on why some men in general did not allow their wives to study. Looking at gender relations, I focus specifically on discourses of femininity and masculinity as linked to marriage. In chapter 6 I discuss the case story of Maria. Unlike the other women in the study, she had a university degree, a well paying job and lived in a city. Maria can be seen as an example of a 'modern woman' and the chapter explores how she positioned herself and her husband in relation to discourses of masculinities and femininities, education, work and marriage. In chapter 7 I examine the case stories of two women who said they had been 'prohibited' from studying by their husbands, as well as looking at the contrasting case of a woman who had a supportive husband. These

women were all doing 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade at evening classes. Thereby, they had studied beyond the literacy level and were working towards completing the minimum requirements for a formal job. I explore how they understood their experiences and the discourses of marriage, education, femininities and masculinities they drew on. In chapter 8 I focus on Isabel, who was participating in the literacy programme and lived from subsistence agriculture. I examine her narratives of marriage and education and look at how she made meaning of her life and constructed identities of herself and others.

Chapters 9 and 10 reflect on the wider implications of the study: In chapter 9 I bring together the main narrative themes coming out of the research and reflect on their implications for policy and practice. I conclude in chapter 10 by briefly reflecting on the use of feminist ethnography and narrative analysis.

## CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

Defining a theoretical framework has been one of the most challenging aspects of this study. What has made it particularly difficult has been the multidisciplinary nature of my research and my multiple identities as an academic, having had previous training in psychology, international development, gender, and education. There has also been a tension between my identities as an academic, international development practitioner and feminist activist. The fields of international education, gender studies and international development are in turn all multidisciplinary and I therefore found myself reading widely both before and after fieldwork. The more I read, the more confused I became and unsure of which theories and concepts to apply to best make sense of my data. In chapter 1, I described how my research question was modified along the way and how it linked to the toolkit of concepts that guided my data collection and analysis. I see the combination of these concepts as my theoretical framework. It initially illuminated the choice of research questions and methodology, but was then revised and developed through research and the writing up process (Sinclair, 2007) and the research questions then adapted accordingly. In chapter 1, I reviewed some of the literature relating to the main concepts I draw on, namely *gender, power, identity, masculinities, femininities, and discourse*. I see those concepts as interlinked and all a part of exploring the issue of gender relations within marriage in Mozambique in the context of education as a '*site of struggle*'. In this chapter I discuss and define these concepts further and explain my particular understanding and use of them, or in other words, I position myself in relation to the research (Holliday, 2007).

### 2.2 The Gender Concept

Gender is one of the most pervasive ways to group and stereotype human beings. People almost always identify themselves as male or female (Gergen & Gergen, 1993; Plantenga, 2004) which is referred to as a 'gender identity' (Beal, 1994). According to Wodak (1997) there are three models of gender; the biological, sociological and constructivist. The biological and sociological models are based on a dichotomous notion of men and women as distinct and different groups of human

beings. In the biological model, these differences are seen as resulting from people's 'sex', or biological differences. In the sociological model 'gender' refers to the sociologically constructed roles and behaviours acquired through the different messages men and women get through education, toys, the media and so on (Ryan, 2001). In Northern feminism, this view of sex and gender as dichotomies has prevailed. The difference between men and women can be seen as residing in the body, where the male body is seen as the norm and the female body as the other (Arnfred, 2011). This underlies the notion of a universal system of patriarchy where women are subordinated by men.

Social constructivist theories see not only gender, but also sex as socially constructed and produced through discourse (Wodak, 1997). Judith Butler argues that there is no natural sex but that: "'biology' and 'sex' itself are social constructions, and the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' turns out to be no distinction at all" (1990:11). Butler argues that gender is performative, that you have to act like woman to become a woman:

The action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and a re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established. (1990:178)

### ***Conceptualizing Gender in Mozambique***

In this study I draw on Arnfred's conceptualization of gender. Drawing on Butler and Oyewùmí (see chapter 1), Arnfred argues that in Mozambique, gender does not fit neatly into the Northern paradigm of a patriarchy. She suggests that through her ideas she turns the: "usual sex/gender conception upside down" (1995:5). She argues that in matrilineal, rural society, sex followed from gender but not the other way around. She understands society as consisting of two separate gendered domains or worlds of women and men, where time and space, songs, dances, rituals, gifts, tools and even crops, trees and fruits were gendered. Time was gendered in the way that women spent time with other women during work and leisure and men with men. Even when men and women were together on the field, women would be working together on separate tasks from men. An example of how space was gendered is that there would be a specific space for men to meet and socialize, receive guests and so

on. An example of a woman's space was her kitchen where men were not welcome. Arnfred then sees sexual bodies as fitted into these different gendered domains to eventually produce a "man" and a "woman" (1995, 2011).

Arnfred sees these gendered worlds as separated by borderlines not physical but normative with "restrictions and rules, distinctions and definitions of male and female" (1995:8). She says that learning how to respect the boundaries of these two worlds was an important aspect of the process of becoming a man or a woman and initiation rites that took place after the girl's first menstruation were an important event in this aspect. In the initiation rites, girls were transformed into grown women. They learnt respectful behaviour which was: "Restricted behaviour, respecting the norms and rules of male and female worlds" (Arnfred, 1995:9). Drawing on Butler's performativity, Arnfred suggests that by behaving in female ways such as sitting with legs together and extended, carrying home water on the head, wearing a capulana, cooking and so on, you became a woman. But also by respecting the boundaries and not behaving in the restricted ways, such as sitting with spread legs if you were a woman or carrying water on your head if you were a man.

Arnfred holds that women's identity was strongly linked with their sexuality. Starting years before the initiation rites, girls learnt to pull their *labia minora* in order to elongate it. The purpose was to increase the pleasure of sex for both men and women. During the initiation rites girls learned how behave in appropriate ways including gestures, positions and movements. They were taught to be respectful particularly towards men and elders. Initiation rites have been seen by the Frelimo government and many Mozambican feminists as the act of teaching women to be submissive and accept oppression and the rites have been actively campaigned against with the '*down with initiation rites*' slogans. Arnfred argues that this was not the way the women themselves saw it. She holds that it was a woman's affair, controlled by women and an important aspect of their creation of female identities. She suggests that with the abolishment of these rights, woman have lost some of their power (1995, 2011).

Arnfred questions the common feminist notion that men universally dominate women, based on their different sexual bodies. Like Oyewumi (1997, 2002) she

suggests a more complex system where domination lies in certain positions within a power hierarchy, such as seniority. In matrilineal society, this was an important marker of power where older women subordinated younger women. She also points out that hierarchical relations are not always oppressive:

I do not want to disregard elements of oppression, but I do want to point to other possible aspects of hierarchical relationships, like for instance parent/child relationships, older/younger brothers and sisters, and relationships of apprenticeship. Under certain conditions hierarchical relationships may be benevolent and supportive. (1995:14)

Arnfred is not denying that certain positions of power are linked to certain capacities and that some hierarchical relationships can be oppressive, but she points out that women have means to exercise power. She takes food as an example of a female domain and “A basis for female authority” (Arnfred, 2011:258). She furthermore argues that sexuality is another source of power for women:

Women show their pleasure and gratitude to their husband by cooking for him and by inviting him to have sex...conversely to refuse to cook and to refuse sex are women's weapons when they are dissatisfied with their husbands. (ibid:261)

Arnfred points out that during initiation rites girls learn how to perform sex, it is not seen as something that comes naturally but something that has to be learned and they take pride in sexual proficiency. Men are expected to reward a satisfactory sexual encounter with a gift or money, also within marriage. Thus, unlike in the Northern, Christian context where such an exchange is seen as immoral, it is expected in Mozambique.

Arnfred argues that in light of the changes in men's and women's positions and roles (see chapter 1) conflicts can be expected:

It is to be expected that men as well as women will fight to maintain new positions, or to re-establish old positions, whatever the case may be. Gender struggle is indispensable in the process of change of gender relations (2011).

I find Arnfred's idea of gendered domains interesting, as the idea of men universally dominating women also did not fit my observation. As she argues, power seemed instead to be exercised in hierarchical relationships. As further described in the following section, in such relationships, power seemed to be understood and described as '*power over*'.

### **2.3 Power**

Power is not something that exists somewhere out there in its own right but exists only in power relations (Alberti, 1999). The question is how it operates in power relations. I found two, seemingly contradictory, models of power useful for the purposes of this thesis. The contradiction derives from adhering to post-structural ways of defining identity and narrative as multiple and co-constructed, corresponding with a Foucauldian notion of power as relational, as being "everywhere and ultimately nowhere" (Townsend, 1999:23). I felt, however, that this understanding of power did not fully reflect the perceptions of some of my respondents. They seemed to perceive power within marriage more as '*power over*' (Townsend, 1999). This is a common understanding of power, in which individuals, groups or institutions are seen as having '*power over*' other individuals, institutions or groups (Kabeer, 1994, 1999; Rowlands, 1998; Townsend, 1999). Power is seen as a 'sub-zero game', that is, if one party has more, the other has less and if one gains power, the other loses it (Rowlands, 1998; Townsend, 1999). Townsend holds that this notion derives from male dominated, hierarchical societies (1999) and it could explain why men would find women gaining power threatening as they might face "not only losing that power, but also the possibility of having power wielded over them in turn" (Rowlands, 1998:13). 'Power over' can be enforced through violence or through social rules, where the weaker have to accept the will of the stronger (Townsend, 1999). Based on her research in Mexico, Alberti argues that the household is the place where it is most difficult to change '*power over*' relations and feels that that this type of power relation causes the greatest conflict within marriages, as the resistance to it will grow when women become aware of their rights (1999).

The understanding of power as 'power over' has been criticized for portraying women as victims and denying them agency. Alberti, Rowlands, Kabeer and Townsend, however, acknowledge that where there is power, there is also agency and resistance.

Ewick and Silbey propose a relational model of power that I find useful as they do not only theorize about power but also about how narratives play a part in resisting it:

Resistance is enabled and collectivized, in part, by the circulation of stories narrating moments when taken for granted social structure is exposed and the usual direction of constraint upended, if only for a moment. (Ewick & Silbey, 2003:1329).

Building on the work of scholars such as Giddens, Lukes and Bourdieu, they see power as the "outcome of social transactions" and therefore "not a thing that can be possessed" (ibid:1333). As they see it, power is exercised "by drawing upon the symbols, practices, statuses and privileges that have become habitual in social structures" (2003:1334). Thus, there are certain norms in society that prescribe certain hierarchies within which power is exercised. This suggests that women as a group cannot be oppressed by men as a group; a woman may be more powerful than her teenage son, but less powerful than her husband as a result of complex practices and attitudes in society.

Ewick and Silbey argue that although individual acts of resistance are not seen as changing the status quo in the same way as collective action such as a revolution, they still warrant attention, as they represent the ways in which persons who are relatively powerless "accommodate to power while simultaneously protecting their interests and identities" (Ewick & Silbey, 2003:1329). They do not see resistance as "outside of and opposite to" power and merely a response to it, but rather derived from the regular exercise of power. As people are familiar with a particular social organisation they "identify the crack and vulnerabilities of institutionalized power" (Ewick & Silbey, 2003:1330). In other words, people are aware of power and limitations but at the same time they are aware of certain strategies they can use to resist it. Although their theory is based on the institute of law, I see it as applicable to the institution of marriage as an important institution where both power and

resistance to it are exercised. I see women who resist or openly challenge their husband's power as showing agency, even though they may have a lower probability of getting the outcome they wish for when their interest clashes with that of their husband.

Since the ways in which people understand, use and react to power are based on norms, culture and history, I find these two models of power useful. The model of 'power over' has been influential in the North, linked with hierarchical and unequal power relations. Although the winds of freedom and equality have since swept the North, it does not mean that the more hierarchical power relations do not exist elsewhere in the world, perhaps even promoted by the introduction of Northern norms to other cultures. Townsend, for example, finds that the understanding of power as 'power over' is much closer to the understanding of rural, poor women in Mexico (Townsend, 1999) than the more relative notion of power.

How power is exercised in relationships such as marriage is prescribed by perceptions of gendered roles (masculinities and femininities) and identities. These are therefore central concepts in the thesis.

## **2.4 The Concept of Identity**

The concept 'identity' is rooted in psychology and sociology and refers to our sense of self and to how we are seen by others (Gee, 1999, 2001; Plantenga, 2004). In other words, identity refers to the question of 'what kind of a person' we are (Gee, 2001:99), not only what kind of person we think we are but what kind of a person we want others to think we are:

People tell others who they are, but even more importantly, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with stronger emotional resonance for their teller, are what we refer to as identities (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998:3).

Feminist writers not only use the concept identity, but also the term ‘*subjectivity*’ and the distinction between the two is often not very clear. Henriques et al<sup>11</sup> define ‘*subjectivity*’ as “individuality and self-awareness or in other words being a subject<sup>12</sup>” (1984:3). They see the subject as “dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to a particular discourse and produced by these” (ibid). This is a post-structural understanding, seeing subjectivity as constructed, and is a critique of the modernist notion of identity as something inner and stable. Influenced by post-structuralism, much current research on identity also understands identities as multiple and situated (i.e. Plantenga, 2004; Speer, 2005). As an example, I am a daughter, but I am also a mother. I perceive my responsibilities and roles differently depending on whether I am interacting with my child or my mother and my behaviour can vary accordingly. Interacting with people, I can emphasize one or the other of my identities depending on the situation.

The term identity tends to be used in literature on women’s literacy and adult education in the South (see Bartlett, 2004; Bartlett, 2007; Bartlett & Holland, 2002; Basu, Maddox, & Robinson-Pant, 2008; Gee, 2001; Holland & Skinner, 2008; Kalman, 2005; Robinson-Pant, 2008). It is also a central term in narrative research. As my thesis is written within the realm of education, using narrative analysis, I have decided to use ‘identity’ rather than ‘subjectivity’, drawing on Gee (1999). Gee distinguishes between ‘core identities’ which correspond to the traditional terminology in psychology and ‘situated identities’ which he sees as the same as subjectivity (1999). ‘Core identities’ are relatively stable and continuous aspects of ourselves whereas ‘situated identities’ are: “Different identities or social positions we enact and recognize in different settings” (ibid:12). In this thesis I use identities to mean the broader sense as used by Gee to include both core and situated identities.

Taking an example from my fieldwork, I see being white as a ‘core identity’ as it is unchangeable. Based on my whiteness, people often made certain assumptions about what “kind of a person” (Gee, 2001:99) I was. Some people assumed that I only ate bread but not the local meal made of cassava flour. In this case I did not have much

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<sup>11</sup> Their book ‘Changing the Subject,’ published in 1984, can be seen as groundbreaking in regards to the term subjectivity and how it is used in feminist literature.

<sup>12</sup> They use *the subject* for what psychological theory calls *the individual*

choice about how people perceived me, which also serves to point out that people may be positioned by others in a different way from how they position themselves. On the other hand, I see my identities of 'student' and 'teacher' as situated identities as I could emphasize those aspects of my identity differently, depending on the situation and people I was interacting with. In the village where people had a much lower level of education, I would position myself as a student and downplay my education, to try to avoid them feeling shy or embarrassed around me. Visiting the primary school, I would position myself as a teacher as I then had something in common with the teachers I was interacting with. This differential taking up of subject positions might not have been calculated or even conscious at the time as people tend not to be conscious of their identities (Plantenga, 2004). I will return to what I mean by positioning and subject positions later in this chapter.

## **2.5 Masculinities and Femininities**

The term '*gender identity*' is closely linked with the terms '*masculinity*' and '*femininity*'. While a gendered identity is your understanding of being a woman or a man, '*masculinity*' and '*femininity*' are the terms used about the way of performing or being a man or a woman (Duvvury & Nayak, 2003). The term masculinity has succeeded the notion of a male sex role and is usually preferred to terms such as manhood or manliness (Connell, Hearn, & Kimmel, 2005). Masculinity and femininity are important concepts in this thesis. As seen in the narrative of Carlos in the opening of the thesis, struggle over education was linked with assumptions of certain ways of behaving as a wife and a husband. Raewyn Connell has been prominent in theorizing masculinity. She argues that there is a particular masculinity in society that is more linked to power and authority than others (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). She calls this the 'hegemonic masculinity'. It is not necessarily the most common form of masculinity but reflects the 'ideal' type and traits of a man collectively understood in any given society (Paechter, 2006).

Connell (1987) argues that hegemonic masculinity always exists in relation to a femininity that is subordinated to it. She does not refer to this as the '*hegemonic femininity*' as she takes 'hegemonic' to mean a super ordination and argues that women do not have the same power over other women as men do. Instead she speaks

of the '*emphasized femininity*' as the type of femininity that best serves the interests of men. Thus, she defines emphasized femininity around compliance with women's subordination by men. Neill Koborov (2010) has then theorized about the relationship between '*emphasized femininity*' and '*hegemonic masculinity*' and Mimi Schippers (2007) about the relationship between '*emphasized femininities*' and what she calls '*pariah femininities*'. These are alternative to emphasized femininities but not seen as inferior. She sees them as "contaminating" as they disrupt the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity.

I feel that the idea that femininities are necessarily and always subordinated to the hegemonic masculinity is very much based on the Northern understanding of patriarchy and gender relations critiqued above. Where I use the concept masculinity and femininity I therefore refer to the masculine and feminine sex roles, without implying that one is universally subordinated to the other. I see masculinities and femininities as multiple and fluid, as social constructs formed within specific discourses (Connell, et al., 2005).

## **2.6 Defining the Meaning of Discourse**

The term *discourse* can be used in the narrow linguistics sense as "verbal exchanges, the flow of speech in conversations" (Grillo, 1997:11). In the broader Foucauldian sense discourse means:

A group of statements linked to a '*referential*', itself consisting of '*laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied in it*'.  
(Foucault, 1972:91)

Various discourses exist at any give time that can be overlapping and contradictory (Robinson-Pant, 2001). Different discourses about gender "offer the means to analyse how it is that people take up particular ways of seeing themselves and relating to others" (Cornwall, 1997:10). We are at the same time the products and producers of discourse as ideas are both reflected and constructed through language (Weatherall, 2002; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995). We are born into certain

discourses that have developed over time and link our futures with the past (Gee, 1999).

Discourses shape identities (Moore, 1994), but as Gee (1999) points out, language is rarely the only thing used to communicate or understand identity. You also need to get right the “other stuff” that creates meaning of who you and others are. By “other stuff” Gee refers to people’s body and outfit; attitudes, beliefs and emotions; ways of using symbols, tools and technologies; and gestures, actions and interactions. This “other stuff” also has to be performed at the appropriate places and times. Thus, what Arnfred (1995) refers to as restrictions and rules about belonging to the male and female gendered domains can be seen as discourse in the broader sense used by Gee here. Discourse is a means through which ideas about gender are expressed and maintained, but gender is also constructed through discourse (Potter & Hepburn, 2007; Weatherall, 2002; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995). In this sense discourse is both constructed and constructive. It is constructed in the sense that it is “put together from different elements such as words, categories, commonplaces, interpretative repertoires and other elements” and it is then constructive in the sense that “versions of the world...are put together and stabilized in talk” (Potter & Hepburn, 2007:161).

Any particular culture does not offer a singular discourse of gender but a multiplicity of discourses (Moore, 1994). New or alternative discourses such as feminist discourses are produced or introduced into a new setting and offer a possibility for change (Hollway, 1984) although such change tends to occur slowly. Although alternative and sometimes contradictory discourses allow men and women to identify with different masculinities and femininities (Hollway, 1984; Moore, 1994), they tend to be gender differentiated as certain positions and behaviours are seen as appropriate for men and other positions and behaviours for women (Hollway, 1984). Societies differ in how flexible they are with regard to gendered identities; in most societies there are certain normative ways of being a man and a woman and social pressure of conforming to these normative masculinities and femininities (Kabeer, 1994; Silberschmith, 2001). Thus, some ways of being a man and a woman are more recognized socially than others.

When people choose between multiple discourses available it is referred to as taking up a 'subject position' or as positioning which is defined in the following way by Davies and Harré:

The discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. (Davies & Harré, 1990:48)

Women (and men) take up subject positions in different and often competing gendered discourses and thereby create their unique identity or sense of self (Moore, 1994).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed my understanding and use of the main concepts guiding my research. I see gender, gender relations, identities, masculinities and femininities as multiple and produced in discourses and cultural processes that vary across contexts and time (Silberschmith, 2001). People do not only position themselves in discourses but are positioned by others as they try to categorize and make sense of what sort of people they are. By taking up subject positions in gendered discourses women (and men) create their unique identity or sense of self (Moore, 1994). When people come into contact with new discourses, such as development discourses around education or gender equality, this creates a space for taking up alternative identities with alternative subject positions. This can lead to an imbalance in traditional power relations between men and women and lead to conflicts. I assume that in Mozambique, in the context of colonialism, globalisation and a neoliberal economy, Northern ideas of gender relations and sexuality have mixed with local ideas, which has created multiple discourses and subject positions. These are limited however, by social context since certain forms of masculinity and femininity are positioned as above others. Therefore, when women (and men) take up new subject positions, this can lead to power struggles within the marriage.

## **CHAPTER 3 – EDUCATION IN MOZAMBIQUE AND CONTEXT OF MAGANJA DA COSTA**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Education plays a big role in this thesis, as the case stories discuss the experiences of women who had conflicts in their marriage linked to their studies. Therefore, in this chapter I discuss the system of education in Mozambique and issues that had affected women's access to and outcome of education. I also describe the adult literacy and education programme referred to in the empirical chapters. Isabel in chapter 8 had participated in the programme and so had Nielete and Sonia in chapter 7, as well as the focus group participants referred to in chapter 5. I then go on to describe the process of deciding upon Maganja da Costa (hereafter Maganja) in Zambezi Province as the site of my fieldwork and provide background information on education and gender in Maganja.

As data was collected in 2005, I have used information that reflects the situation in Mozambique as closely to that time as possible. The schooling and educational history of the women concerned was affected by the status of the school system from their childhood to the time I interviewed them, rather than changes happening since. However, statistics available at the time were mostly based on a census in 1997, which was shortly after the civil war ended. Mozambique underwent rapid social and economic changes until the next census taken in 2007 and I have therefore used more recent information when deemed appropriate.

### **3.2 Education in Mozambique**

#### ***The Objectives and Organization of the Education System***

In the Mozambican Constitution, Education is seen as both the right and duty of each citizen (MEC, 2006). In PARPA I (Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty for 2001-2005) education is seen as one of the central pillars for poverty reduction in the country (Government of Mozambique, 2001) and PARPA II (for 2006-2010) states that: "Education is a fundamental determinant of well-being" (Government of Mozambique, 2006:17). The central objective of the Strategic Plan

of Education for 1999-2003 (PEE I) was universal access to primary education in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Other objects were improving the quality of education and strengthening institutional, financial and political capacity. In the following Strategic Plan of Education and Culture (PEEC II) for 2006-2011 primary education was still seen as pivotal, but it also emphasized vocational and technical education as well as secondary and tertiary education (MEC, 2006). Given that in 2012 the goal of providing universal primary education had not been reached and that a large proportion of children enrolling in 1<sup>st</sup> grade left before completing the primary level, the PEE for 2012-2016 continued to prioritize primary education. The strategy also emphasized ensuring inclusion and equity in access to school and school retention, improving the quality of learning, and ensuring good management of the school system (MINED, 2012).

### ***The Organization of the School System***

Primary school officially starts at age six and is divided into two cycles: EP1 from 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and EP2 consisting of 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Secondary school also consists of two cycles: 8<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade (ESG1) and pre-university level 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade (ESG2). There are also three levels of technical/vocational education (UNDP, 2000). Higher education is offered to those who have completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Mário, Fry, Levey, & Chilundo, 2003).

### ***Portuguese Colonialism and Expansion of Schools after Independence***

At independence, only seven per cent of the Mozambican population had received formal schooling (UNDP, 2000) and Mozambique had the highest illiteracy rate in the world of 93 per cent (UNESCO, 2000). Prior to independence, the few school places open to Mozambicans were reserved for *‘assimilados’*<sup>13</sup> and the aim of the education was to *‘civilize’* Mozambican children and train them as human capital for the employment needs of the colonist government. As it was seen as the men’s role to take part in paid employment, education was not encouraged for girls who were

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<sup>13</sup> “Africans with some education who conformed to who had attained some education (primarily becoming literate in Portuguese), whose lifestyle conformed to Portuguese lifestyle and who formally applied for this status (Sheldon 2002).

expected to stay home and care for their families (Sheldon, 2002). This paved the way for a gender gap in education, remaining to date.

During the struggle for independence, the opposition party, Frelimo, set up schools and literacy classes in the rural areas under its control. After independence, Frelimo put primary schooling and adult education among its primary goals (Waterhouse, 1996). Education was nationalised and free and primary school enrolment doubled in the first six years after independence<sup>14</sup> (ibid). A massive national literacy campaign was launched and together with the explosion in primary school access this had led to a decrease in illiteracy rates to 72 per cent by 1980 (MINED, 2000c).

### ***The Effects of the Civil War***

During the civil war, more than 3000 schools were destroyed, reducing the school network by half. Attending school became dangerous for students; teachers were targeted and tortured and murdered (Global Campaign for Education, 2002). In 1987, the Mozambican government adopted a structural adjustment programme in return for credit (Waterhouse, 1996). This required changing to a neo-liberal economic policy and abolishing the policy of free education. School fees were introduced and a big part of the immensely poor population, could not afford to pay for school fees and school materials. The policy particularly affected girls, as parents who had to choose between educating their children preferred to send their boys to school<sup>15</sup> (Waterhouse, 1996).

### ***The Inefficiency of the School System and Gender Gap***

With the push for Education for All (EFA), providing universal primary education has been one of the priorities of the Mozambican Government, resulting in an explosion in enrolment rates. In 2004, the net enrolment rate in the lower grade of EP1 (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade) had risen to 75.6 per cent from 43.6 per cent in 1999 (UNDP, 2006). The school system had difficulties coping with the growing number of students. The school system already had a history of insufficiency with high

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<sup>14</sup> The annual secondary-school intake increased from 20000 to 135000 students (Waterhouse, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> In 2005 it was estimated that 660 000 children or 22 per cent of school aged children between the ages of six and twelve were out of school (MEC 2006).

repetition and drop-out rates (Takala, 1998)<sup>16</sup>, particularly for girls, reflected by the difference in school life expectancy: 5.4 years for boys and 3.8 years for girls (UNESCO, 2003). Girl's participation decreased at higher levels of the education system, both in school and school management (Walker, et al., 1996). There were also great gendered disparities between rural and urban areas and between and within provinces (Mário & Nandja, 2006a). The large majority of students in 1<sup>st</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade were in the first five grades of primary school. Based on information from 2003 the ratio was 83.7 per cent and 11.1 per cent were in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade which means that only 5.2 per cent were attending 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade (Mário, et al., 2003). According to information from 2005, out of every 100 children who started in 1<sup>st</sup> grade only 37 reached 5<sup>th</sup> grade and only 15 remained until 7<sup>th</sup> grade (World Bank, 2005).

### ***Literacy and Adult Education***

The number of participants in literacy programmes fell drastically between 1980 and 1995 (Mário & Nandja, 2006a). The civil war was a major factor, but also the structural adjustment policies, as primary schooling became the main focus of the government (Mário & Nandja, 2006a; Waterhouse, 1996). The initial success of the literacy campaigns was also partly due to initial 'targets' mostly being formally employed urban people, some of whom had already acquired some literacy skills elsewhere, or in their local language. Teaching in Portuguese privileged men because they had been more mobile and were more likely to speak Portuguese (Johnston, 1990; MINED, 2000c).

At the Education for All convention in Dakar in 2000, halving adult illiteracy by 2015 was identified as one of the six international education goals. Accordingly, adult education was put back on the agenda of the Mozambican government. As a part of the Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty (PARPA) the government set a goal of reducing the illiteracy rates from 60.5 per cent to 40 per cent, between 2000 and 2009 (MINED, 2000c). The target group is illiterate people between 15 and 60 years old, prioritising rural areas, girls, women and the disabled. The aim is that 60 per cent of participants should be women.

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<sup>16</sup> According to UNDP (2006) repetition rates were 21 per cent in 2004 and according to UNDP (2000) the repetition rates had been around 25 per cent for the last 15 years. They were close to 33 per cent at the upper primary (EPF2) and lower secondary level (Takala, 1998).

It is the policy of the Mozambican government to provide in all districts what I would call a 'formal' literacy and adult education programme as it has a standardized curriculum provided by the government and as at the end of the programme there is an exam testing whether students have acquired the equivalent knowledge of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students (UNESCO, 2000). The official name of the programme is Alfabetização e Educação de Adultos (AEA) or Literacy Learning and Adult Education. In the first year, learners are expected to acquire basic skills in literacy, numeracy and the official language, Portuguese. In the second and third year, learners build upon these skills and study Maths, Portuguese and Natural Science up to the level of a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student in primary school. The programme is open both to adults<sup>17</sup> who have never been to school and to those who dropped out of the formal school system, without completing the primary level. Students themselves can decide whether they want to start in the first, second or third year. After passing the examination at the end of the 3rd year, learners have the equivalent of a 5<sup>th</sup> grade school certificate and are allowed to enter the formal school system and continue studying. Where there is electricity, many primary schools offer 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes at night for adults, where those who come from the literacy programme study together with those who come from the formal school system. Some secondary schools also offer 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade at night. Many of the NGOs offering literacy programmes as part of their development programmes follow the government curriculum. Other NGOs have introduced their own programmes, for example Action Aid offering REFLECT programmes or added non formal courses geared towards livelihoods, such as sewing classes.

The official illiteracy rate in Mozambique was 53.6 per cent in 2004, higher in rural (65.7 per cent) than urban areas (30.3 per cent) (Mário & Nandja, 2006a). There is a subsector of literacy and adult education within the Ministry of Education and Culture<sup>18</sup> (MEC) and it is seen as an integral part of the educational system although it is not given as high a priority in terms of resources and status as primary and secondary education. As an example the AEA sector received only 3 per cent of the

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<sup>17</sup> Defined as 15 years and older

<sup>18</sup> Also referred to as the Ministry of Education (MINED) in this thesis as the name has undergone changes.

total education budget between 2006 and 2007 (MEC, 2008) and although 4.1 per cent were allocated to it in the 2003 budget only one per cent actually went to the adult education sector (Mário & Nandja, 2006a).

### **3.3 The Process of choosing a Research Topic and finding a Research**

#### **Location**

Kurt Lewin is quoted as saying that research that only produces books is inadequate (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Coming from a background of international development, I wanted to do research that had the potential of becoming useful for policy and practice as well as for my degree. The Mozambican Ministry of Education and Culture had expressed the need for research on adult literacy in Mozambique, (MINED, 2000a) which made my research relevant in terms of future use of the findings. During my preparation for fieldwork I was concerned with the critique that ethnographic researchers primarily did research “on” their participants (Bryman, 2001). Although I was not sure how, I wanted to do research which was also “for” and “with” my participants (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1992). During the preparation phase of my field research I came to the conclusion that I would not have much power as a PhD student to change lives of women through my research. However, I felt that by going to Mozambique and visiting literacy classes and talking to women, I could at least adhere to the feminist principle of asking questions relevant to my participants. Therefore, I went to Mozambique and did a pilot study. As well as going to define my research questions, I wanted to visit different provinces to decide where to do fieldwork. The pilot study was carried out over 6 weeks from May-June 2004. I observed literacy classes in three different provinces, in both urban and rural settings. I also interviewed participants, literacy facilitators, staff of local NGOs and bi-lateral organizations working within adult literacy, academics and people from the district, provincial and national level of the Ministry of Education and Culture<sup>19</sup>. Furthermore I visited the Ministry of Women and Social Action and three women’s organizations to get their perspectives. Based on these visits, I went to Mozambique with the aim of looking at the link between

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<sup>19</sup> At the time it was called the Ministry of Education, but has since been changed into the Ministry of Education and Culture.

women's participation in literacy classes and domestic violence, as discussed in chapter 1.

I was initially planning to compare participants in “formal” literacy programmes (AEA) with participants in classes using the REFLECT approach, which was developed by the NGO Action Aid. REFLECT programmes are designed to address local problems and empower participants (Archer & Cottingham, 1996). The method had been promoted in developing countries by Action Aid and had been taken up by various other NGOs. One of the components of the REFLECT programme was addressing the unequal gender load of men and women and I was interested in whether participation in these classes had different effects on marital relations than in the government programme. I approached Action Aid and they gave me permission to do research on their classes, as long as I did not need them to allocate resources towards the research such as the use of a car. At the time of my fieldwork Action Aid was running REFLECT circles in two provinces in Mozambique, Zambezia Province and Maputo Province. I chose Zambezia Province as it is the second most populous province<sup>20</sup> and had one of the highest official illiteracy rates<sup>21</sup> in the country (INE, 2012), especially for women. In 2004 it was estimated that 80.6 per cent of women in Zambezia were illiterate (Província de Zambézia: Direcção Provincial de Educação, 2004). Zambezia was further away from the capital than Maputo Province and poorer in terms of resources and infrastructure and less research had been carried out than closer to the capital. I therefore found Zambezia more interesting in terms of research.

Zambezia Province is divided into 17 districts, and Action Aid had REFLECT circles in three of those: Maganja da Costa (from now on referred to as Maganja), Namarroi and Pebane. The provincial co-ordinator of Action Aid advised me to choose between Maganja and Pebane as Namarroi was more difficult to get to and it was difficult to find a place to stay. In order to choose between Maganja and Pebane, I visited both and talked to Action Aid staff, after which I chose Maganja. To a big extent the choice was built on practicality. As a lone researcher, I was concerned about access to hospitals in case of an accident or falling ill with endemic diseases

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<sup>20</sup> With 3.850.000 inhabitants according to the 2007 census.

<sup>21</sup> 63 per cent according to the 2007 census.

such as malaria. There was a hospital in Maganja providing basic care and the provincial capital Quelimane could be reached in 3-4 hours by public transport, while the journey from Pebane took 6-8 hours. This was convenient as I would need to go to Quelimane occasionally to go to a bank, access the internet and so on. Maganja was also an area with approximately the same proportion of Christians and Muslims, whereas Pebane was predominantly a Muslim area. I saw this as an advantage in case I wanted to compare Muslims and Christians over the course of the research. Another contributing factor was the helpfulness of the Action Aid staff in Maganja. When I first came there the co-ordinator offered me to stay in his house while I found a place to live in the local community as he was going away on a holiday. He also offered me access to the Action Aid office which was one of the few places in Maganja that had a generator providing electricity by day. This meant that I could write up my fieldnotes on my laptop and recharge the batteries. In terms of my research questions, I could see no reason why Maganja would be less interesting than Pebane.

### ***A Brief Introduction to the Field: Maganja da Costa***

Maganja da Costa district is located on the Eastern coast of Zambezia. It has an area of 7597 km<sup>2</sup> and in 2002, the estimated population was 256 978 (INE, 2003a). The district is divided into four administrative posts: Bala, Mocubela, Nante and Bajone. The main livelihoods are subsistence agriculture, fishing and hunting (Dzimba et al., 2011). In the past, commercial agriculture was a source of employment in the area. Due to the war, bankruptcy and the economy, there is now mass unemployment (SLSA, 2002).

I carried out my research in and around Maganja, which is the main vila of the district. Vila could be translated as town but I prefer to refer to it as vila, since town would create an impression of a more urban place. I would define Maganja as semi-urban as, closer to being a village than a town. It had structures of a town such as an administrator, a hospital and a secondary school. It was located on a 'corridor' between the provincial capital of Quelimane and the coast. At the time, however, it lacked infrastructure such as electricity and telecommunication that would usually be associated with a town. A generator provided up to four hours of electricity at night,

which meant that the schools could provide evening classes, but it was often broken for days or weeks at a time. Only those who lived in the centre of the vila had access to the generator. There was a small establishment where phone calls could be received or made. There were only two phone lines and opening hours were limited to certain hours per day. There were daily buses to and from Maganja, but no newspapers were sold in the vila. The ‘bairro’ or neighbourhood I lived in was located approximately 2.5 kilometres out of Maganja vila and I would define that area as ‘rural’: people lived from subsistence agriculture, had no access to electricity and had to go to the vila for the services described above.

### ***Gender Relations in Maganja***

Little research seems to be available on the Nharinga people living in Maganja vila. Their language Nharinga is categorized as a sub-group of the Tchuabo/Chuabo. One of the very few sources I managed to acquire was a term paper by a group of students at the Catholic University on which the following information is based. The Tchuabos/Chuabos are thought to be a mixture of various ethnic groups. Their customs are influenced by both the Lomwe and Makua to the north and the Sena to the south; their tradition is therefore a mixture of matrilineal and patrilineal customs. Marriages can be initiated because of a mutual interest of a girl and a boy or by the parents of the boy. Virginity is valued and polygamy is common where the latter wives are submissive to the former. In the case of divorce there are no strict rules about whether the children belong to the mother or father and it depends on an agreement (Malave, Chacuamba, & Nacaramuno, 2003). Dzimba et al. (2011) conclude that in Maganja, women are placed in a position of dependency on their husband and are often impeded from participating in social, political and financial affairs if they do not have his permission.

### ***Education in Maganja***

Maganja is one of the districts in Mozambique with the poorest education indicators, lowest enrolment and completion rates and highest gender gap (UNICEF, 2009). On that basis, it was selected as one of five districts to benefit from the UNICEF Child Friendly Schools commencing in 2005, a year after I completed my fieldwork.

Access to primary school in Zambezia province was limited during the civil war and the number of students almost doubled between 1997 and 2003. The quality of education is limited, however, by large class sizes and lack of teachers. Of the teacher work force, 38 per cent in EP1 and 41 per cent in EP2 have received no teacher training. Only 17 per cent of teachers in primary school are female, which is seen as detrimental to girl's participation, both because female teachers are seen as role models for girls and because they have been found to be less likely to sexually harass or abuse their students than male teachers (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005).

The availability of schools in Maganja is primarily concentrated in the first five years of school (EP1). There are 110 schools in the district offering EP1; 9 schools offer 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade and only one school offers 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade; there is no technical school or teacher training institute (INE, 2003a). This means that access beyond 5<sup>th</sup> grade is difficult for students living outside Maganja *vila* and studying beyond 10<sup>th</sup> grade requires moving to one of the large towns in the province, which is beyond the means of most families.

Table 3.1 demonstrates how the ratio of girls to boys in school gradually decreases from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In 1<sup>st</sup> grade 40.7 per cent are girls compared to only 17.8 per cent in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The table also shows that the ratio of girls to boys is considerably lower in Maganja than at both provincial and national levels. There are high repetition<sup>22</sup> and dropout rates<sup>23</sup> in school, particularly among girls (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005).

Grade	National Level	Zambezia Province	Maganja da Costa District
1 <sup>st</sup>	48	47	40.7
3 <sup>rd</sup>	45	41	29.5
5 <sup>th</sup>	41	32	17.8

Source (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005)

**Table 3.1: Percentage of girls in primary school, by grade and location**

<sup>22</sup> 27.7 per cent in EP1 and 25.1 per cent in EP2 in Zambezi Province

<sup>23</sup> 12.8 per cent in EP1 and 11.7 per cent in EP2

Table 3.2 lists the main barriers to education in Maganja da Costa district. These findings correspond to findings elsewhere in Mozambique (see MINED, 2011; Walker, et al., 1996).

- Long distance to schools
- Lack of access to upper primary level (EP2)
- Low quality and relevance of education
- Sexual harassment and abuse in schools
- Early pregnancy and marriages
- Poverty
- Parents' perception of schooling
- Aspirations for a modern lifestyle, particularly in semi-urban settings
- HIV/AIDS

Source (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005)

**Table 3.2: The main barriers to girls' education in three districts in Zambezia**

In 1995, UNICEF launched a Gender and Education Project<sup>24</sup> in Mozambique that aimed at sensitising the community to girls' education and bringing the school and community together (Klees, Matangala, Spronk, & Visser, 1997). It also aimed at building the capacity of education staff and carrying out gender sensitisation of teachers through pre-service training and short in-service courses (Walker et al., 1996). School-Community Liaison Committees were formed that encouraged parents to send their daughters to school and promoted the idea of girls and boys sharing domestic tasks (ibid). Provincial gender units have also been formed within the educational sector as a part of the ESSP II and the gender strategy of MEC to coordinate and initiate activities in order to decrease the gender gap in education (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005). Gender units were formed at the district level to:

Coordinate all gender related activities within the education system and to raise the general awareness of the importance of gender equity at schools and in communities" (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005)

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<sup>24</sup> The project was originally called the Girls' Education Project. It is financed by the Canadian Government (CIDA) and executed by UNICEF.

Maganja was one of the districts where gender units were formed but when I arrived to do my fieldwork the female staff member of the unit had passed away and she was not replaced during the period of my stay. A woman had recently replaced the former male district director of education and she voiced her concern to me about sexual violence in school. She told me that despite it being illegal, it was notoriously difficult to fight. She said that when the authorities followed up claims of teachers impregnating their students, the girls in question and their parents often denied it because they had been paid off by the teachers. Without proof she said she could not do anything about it. Apart from the risk of pregnancy, she was concerned about teachers infecting students with HIV/AIDS, as teachers had been one of the most affected professions by the disease in Mozambique.

At the time of my research, the official illiteracy rate in Maganja was 79 per cent. There were large differences between illiteracy rates of men 61.5 per cent and women 93.8 per cent (Direcção Provincial de Educação, 2004). It should be noted, however, that these statistics are based on self-reported knowledge and do not necessarily mean that those categorized as 'illiterate' did not have any reading, writing and calculating skills, as the following example from my fieldnotes shows:

*On Sunday Laila sat with Natalia's<sup>25</sup> book and did her calculations. It had occurred to me before that Laila knows how to read and write numbers although she had told me: "I did not study". She was doing simple calculations like two plus two are four and didn't seem to have any difficulties writing the numbers. I asked her: "So do you know the numbers?" and she just looked at me and said "yes". Then I asked her: "Where did you learn them"? And she responded: "As if I didn't study", as simple as that and it seemed to be unnecessary on her behalf to discuss it any further. So she apparently knows some literacy skills although she doesn't seem to put much value in them as she didn't spend years in school. I also came to realize that as soon as there was some reading materials in the area I started observing skills that I hadn't seen the women of the home use before (fieldnotes 25.07.05).*

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<sup>25</sup> Natalia was her daughter who was in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and had recently been given her first school book in Portuguese and mathematics.

In this extract from my fieldnotes I described how after living with Laila for 5 months (see the following section) I discovered that she could both read and write numbers and make simple calculations. She had told me she had left in third grade to help her mother on the machamba<sup>26</sup> and I had thought of her as illiterate. My fieldnotes do not say whether this was something she told me or something I assumed after she told me she had left school in third grade to work on the machamba with her mother. Laila's daughter had been in first grade for six months when she received her first school books and as I had never seen any reading materials around the house, it was not until then that I realized that she actually had some literacy skills. I am telling this story here as a reminder that self-reported information on literacy and schooling may not reflect those skills as measured on a test. I find it likely that women would tend to underreport rather than overestimate their abilities. This might be because like Laila they would tend not see their limited years of schooling as education and because they might want to show themselves in a disadvantaged manner in case the researcher might be able to offer some help. This was probably why she had previously emphasized her lack of education to me, whereas here when we knew each other better, she chose to position herself as a mother capable of helping her daughter with homework.

### **3.4 Finding a Community to Live in**

Before going to Maganja I had consulted some people about getting access to a community and finding a place to live. A European researcher who had lived and done research in Mozambique for years warned me that people in rural areas might be suspicious of foreigners and advised me to contact the education authorities and ask them to help me find a place to stay. She also warned me that I should make clear that I was not linked to an aid project, as people might have an experience with foreigners in that context. A Mozambican researcher advised me to make sure I went through all the official channels as otherwise I would not get access to people and institutions. Thus, I first got a letter of authorisation for my research from the Ministry of Education. I took that letter to the Provincial office of Education in

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<sup>26</sup> A small plot of land usually around a hectar. Most women had a machamba and some men also.

Quelimane and got a stamp from them. Then I took that letter to the district office of education in Maganja that gave me permission to visit literacy classes and schools.

Another matter was getting permission to go and live with a local family. I felt that I would get more insight into community life by living with a family and observing family interaction as a part of the family rather than as an outsider. I had been advised to negotiate access to a community through an organization as it would be best that someone people trusted introduced my intentions to the local authorities. It was staff from Action Aid who introduced me to the Administrator of Maganja and he in turn sent me to meetings with power structures beneath him who all gave their consent. I asked staff at the district educational office to advise me on finding a place to stay in a village where REFLECT classes were being taught. They felt that I should ask Action Aid as they had brought me into the community. I was hesitant to do that as I had agreed with the provincial co-ordinator to take care of myself. I also did not want to be perceived as Action Aid staff or aid worker. Most people told me I should rent a house in Maganja vila as the “conditions” in the villages were not good enough for someone like me. Meanwhile I lived in the vila and used the time to brush up my Portuguese and try learning some of the local language. A woman who worked there then invited me to come and visit her family who lived around 2.5 kilometres from the vila. She introduced me to people who had huts to rent and after I had made it clear that I was looking for a family to live with, she invited me to live with her and her daughter. I therefore ended up living on the outskirts of Maganja vila, rather than in a more remote village. One of the reasons was the question of language. I realized that there would be more people speaking Portuguese, the official language there than further away. As I did not have the time to learn the vernacular language, this was important. During this period I also learnt that an American friend of mine who worked in a village had died of malaria. Furthermore, I felt that this location might be more interesting in terms of my research as I was told that men were more likely to prohibit their wives from studying in vilas and towns where there were possibilities of studying at night, than in villages where there was no electricity and women only studied by day. So I decided to stay in Maganja and move to another village later if I wanted to look at REFLECT. As my focus later changed towards looking at women's education more broadly I decided to stay in

Maganja. I also noticed that after three months people had started relating to me differently:

*For some reason people have all of a sudden started to look me up and ask for my help; the sick man yesterday and the two orphan organizations. This did not happen the first months and I don't know if people have been shy or if they have been waiting to see what kind of a person I am or if the word is getting out that sometimes I help people or give people something.  
(Fieldnotes 13/5/05)*

As I took this to mean that I was starting to have a role in society, I did not want to move to a different place. A third reason for staying was practical, as the extreme heat and humidity was proving to be a challenge when cycling from my home to the vila so the idea of moving further away was not appealing.

I could not move to Laila's house until the beginning of February as I had to get approval from the local chief and be introduced officially to the population first. I lived with Laila and her 8 year old daughter for 7 months. They lived in a joint household with Laila's sister and her daughter of 12 years and two sons of 15 and 18 years. Each sister had their own hut and the older son had his own small hut where he slept. The huts stood on a small plot of land that had belonged to their mother. I formed close relationships with the sisters and their families and they served as my entry point into the community. Laila was a key informant as she helped me to get in touch with various people, find women to interview and gave me various insights into the community and people living there. My home was typical for the area, around 20 m<sup>2</sup>, made of mud bricks and covered with a roof made out of mats woven from coconut palm leaves. It had a mud floor and consisted of a small living room opening into my bedroom; a small corridor leading into another bedroom and a storage room for water, crops and my bicycle, cooking utensils, tableware etc. Laila and her daughter slept in the other bedroom although she often preferred to sleep on a mat on the living room floor as it was cooler than her bedroom. Outside of the house there was a bathroom consisting of four coconut palm walls. There were two wooden boards in the middle to stand on while showering by pouring water from a bucket with a cup. I shared the bathroom with Laila and her daughter, although they

often took baths in the nearby river. The family did not have a latrine, but one was dug out for me.

### **3.5 Time-Frame**

I spent ten and a half months in Mozambique, from November 13<sup>th</sup> 2004 to end September 2005. I flew into the capital and spent some time there to get background information and materials on education and gender issues from the Ministries of Education and of Women and Social Affairs. I visited the Adult Education department of Eduardo Mondlane University and NGOs working with gender issues. I also had to take care of practical matters such as arranging my visa and opening a bank account.

I got to Quelimane, the capital of Zambezia Province, in the last week of November but was advised to postpone going to Maganja because of possible outbreaks of violence during presidential elections occurring in the first week of December. I stayed in Maganja from mid December 2004 to the mid September 2005. I left Zambezia province three times for three, two and one week respectively as I had to leave Mozambique every three months to renew my visa.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have provided background information about the system and level of education in Mozambique. This is important as the colonial history and civil war in Mozambique has led to limited educational opportunities for Mozambican citizens, particularly for girls, since boy's education has been prioritised over girl's education. This background is important in relation to the case stories discussed later. I have also described the process of defining a site for my fieldwork and provided background information on gender and education in Maganja da Costa in order to better locate the individual case stories that follow. In the following chapter I describe my methodology.

## CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

In the first half of this chapter I discuss my methodological approach and the process of carrying out research. Specifically, I explain the ways in which I see this as feminist ethnography and what I consider to be the characteristics of a methodology that purports to be 'feminist'. I then explain the choice of research methods and selection of participants and discuss the issue of translating language and experience between cultures. After that I define what I mean by 'narrative' and discuss the use of narrative as a framework for analysis.

In the second half of the chapter I then discuss some of the challenges linked with doing research across different cultural contexts. In any research it is important to provide the reader with information on the researcher in the field, perhaps even more so in a feminist ethnography as it is concerned with reflexivity and the relationships between the researcher and those he/she interacts with. I reflect on some of the challenges when entering a different culture, on my own identities and positioning and on issues related to carrying out research in an ethical manner.

### 4.2 Feminist Ethnography as a Methodological Approach

As discussed in chapter 1, I initially located myself within the New Literacy Studies (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996; Street, 1995) which influenced my decision to use an ethnographic research approach. Brian Street argues that looking at literacy from this perspective:

necessarily entails an ethnographic approach, which provides closely detailed accounts of the whole cultural context in which those practices have meaning. (1995:29)<sup>27</sup>

As my research was concerned with exploring the ways in which gendered roles impacted upon women's participation in literacy classes, I wanted to be able to get to know the participants over an extended period of time and understand the cultural

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<sup>27</sup> For an example of edited books on literacy drawing on ethnographic research see Robinson-Pant (2004) and Street (2001b).

context within which they lived. I wanted to understand the perceptions of the people I interacted with in the field and therefore an ethnographic approach seemed ideal, as it is holistic and seeks to understand and represent local views rather than answer a set of prefabricated questions (Cohen, et al., 2000). I agree with Warriner that:

Ethnographic methods are uniquely suited to the task of analyzing the ways in which gendered practices influence individual actions, choices, and identities. (2004:282)

Ethnography therefore remains well suited to my current research question:

*How are women's experiences of adult education influenced by perceptions of their gendered identities and roles as wives and mothers?*

As discussed in chapter 1, I have, from the outset of this research, positioned myself as a feminist researcher. Although many feminists do ethnographic research, not all ethnography is feminist (Bryman, 2001). According to Pillow and Mayo, feminist ethnography emerged when feminist researchers critiqued earlier ethnographic work for lack of concern for women's lives, and for what some saw as misrepresentations of women's lives. They argue that feminist ethnography has influenced how ethnographers:

think about research relations in the field; practices of data collection, analysis and writing; ethical considerations; and the purposes of research. (Pillow & Mayo, 2012)

They suggest that feminist ethnography starts from a different point than traditional ethnography, in questioning the "power, authority, and subjectivity of the researcher as it questions the purposes of research" (ibid:190). I refer to my research as feminist ethnography since I see myself as carrying out ethnography from a feminist perspective. What I have drawn on from feminist research practice is a focus on the experiences of women, and trying to understand those experiences from the women's perspective (Maynard, 1994; Reinharz, 1992); being concerned about ethical questions and my role in the field (Maynard, 1994); and avoiding exploitation by giving as well as receiving during fieldwork (Bryman, 2001). I also identify with the view that, ultimately, the purpose of a feminist ethnography is to point to areas of inequality in order to promote change (Phillips, 1995). Another hallmark of feminist

ethnography I identify with, is the concern with reflexivity and the relationships between the researcher and those he/she interacts with (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). I understand reflexivity as both the process of reflecting on and questioning my own assumptions and research practice; and as the process of sharing my views with research participants and acknowledging the mutual impact we have had on each other (Hesse-Biber & Brooks, 2012; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Trahar, 2011).

### **4.3 Research Methods**

In both feminist and ethnographic research, multiple methods are used for collecting data and methods are refined during fieldwork (Cohen, et al., 2000; Reinharz, 1992). My main research methods were participant observation, focus group activities and semi-structured interviews, all common in both feminist and ethnographic research.

#### ***Participant Observation***

Bryman distinguishes between the terms ‘ethnography’ and ‘participant observation’ pointing out that they are often used interchangeably. He suggests that while ethnography is the methodological approach and resulting written product, participant observation is the method whereby a researcher engulfs him/herself within a particular community, observes behaviour and listens to what people say to the researcher and each other (2008). I wanted to be able to get to know the participants over an extended period of time and understand the cultural context within which they lived. In order to explore the issue of literacy and domestic conflict, I needed to explore gender relations more generally: the division of labour, women’s understanding of marriage, and so on. For the first couple of months my strategy was to not mention domestic conflict but to see to what extent it came up in discussions. I found participant observation appropriate as I felt that the best way to research women and men living in such different material and historical contexts from myself would be to spend extended time in their society and try to listen to and watch what was going on around me with open eyes (and ears). As I aimed to look at conflicts within marriage linked to education, I was looking into potentially ‘sensitive’ topics (Lee & Renzetti, 1993). I needed to stay long enough in the community to get a sense of how to approach these issues in a locally appropriate

manner and to gain trust as these might be seen as issues not appropriate to discuss with strangers. Establishing trust takes time (Pickup, 2001) and there are no shortcuts to establishing relationships (Maguire, 1998). Devereux and Hoddinott suggest as a general rule, that the longer time a researcher spends in the field the better (1992).

In order to get a better understanding of the community and to get to know people, I participated in various daily activities such as agricultural activities of women; funerals and ceremonies; going to church; fetching water from the stream and from the well; cooking; washing clothes in the river; buying necessities at the market and so on. I used informal conversations to get a broad picture of the research area and people's views on education, gender roles, identities and gendered violence. Women cooked, ate and socialized outside their huts in an open social space and sometimes they also processed food collectively. I also learnt a lot by just hanging around the family I lived with and participating in their daily activities and leisure. People would pass by on their way to the market, mosque, river, well and so on. Often they would stop for a chat.

As explained in chapter 1, I could not carry out my plan of observing literacy classes as they were interrupted and did not resume until the end of May, resulting in a change in my focus towards adult education more broadly. A feminist ethnography allows for research questions to be developed according to the data being generated and the situation in the field (Pillow & Mayo, 2012). After the literacy classes resumed, I observed the class in the neighbourhood where I lived, although not every time they met. I also visited another literacy class which was using the government curriculum as well as some REFLECT classes in other villages.

### ***Focus Group Activities***

I felt that using focus groups was a good way of exploring issues as I could talk to many people at the same time and debates would bring out different viewpoints. I also felt that this might be a good way to discuss potentially sensitive topics such as why men would not allow their wives to study, as women could speak in general terms rather than disclosing their personal experiences. Furthermore, I saw focus

group discussions as a venue where I could find women to interview later in more depth. I draw on focus group material in chapter 5 when discussing gender relations and education in more general terms than in the case stories in chapters 6 to 8.

Bryman defines the focus group method as: a form of group interview with several participants who are believed to have knowledge of the topic in question; where the topic is fairly well defined; and there is a focus on how the participants interact and create meaning (2001). It is this interaction between participants that distinguishes focus group activities from other research methods (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001; Kane, 1995) such as a community interview where the discussion is more researcher led (Kane, 1995). According to Bryman, three main aspects make focus groups compatible with the aims of feminist research: they emphasize group interaction, which is a normal part of social life and therefore less artificial than many other research methods; participants are treated as a part of a social context and therefore there is less tendency for decontextualization than with most methods; and participants have more scope to influence the direction of the discussion, which makes it more likely that the views of participants are revealed (2001). As discussed later in the section, the focus group activities were difficult to organize. Sometimes I ended up with different participants than I expected; in some cases there were language issues or issues with recording. The dynamic within the groups also differed: in some cases debates took off while in other instances, participants seemed to expect a more researcher led encounter. Although the focus groups did not always meet the requirements defined above of being mainly about group interaction, I have chosen still to refer to the activities as focus groups.

I carried out 10 focus group discussions, with a total of 85 participants: 66 women and 19 men, with some participating in more than one focus group. The shortest session had only three participants and took 40 minutes and the longest sessions took two hours and 18 minutes. Most took around two hours. In the text, I refer to focus groups as FG, followed by the number of the focus group. Below is a brief description of the purpose and participants of each FG.

### **Focus Group 1 – Women from the Village**

The purpose of FG1 was to ask women in the neighbourhood what they felt were the main problems women in Maganja faced and how these issues influenced women's education. When the local chief introduced me to the local population, he asked for volunteers from the women's organisation Organização da Mulher Moçambicana<sup>28</sup> (OMM) to be a sort of a link to the village life. They were supposed to take me to events in the village and I could turn to them for assistance. Six women volunteered and after meeting with them once, I decided that they would be a good start to my first focus group activity. I discussed it with the chief who said he would let them know. The result was that only two of the six women from the OMM group showed up. The activity took place at the site of the AEA literacy class in the village. Later we were joined by one of the AEA participants and a woman from the village who was in sixth grade and had previously invited me to her house. She brought along three other women. So the 7 participants ended up being a mixture of women invited and women who had heard about the discussion and showed up to participate.

### **Focus Group 2 – Women from the Village**

In the first FG session we never got to the point of women's education as the women had so much to say about the problems of women in the community. So I invited the same group back later to discuss reasons for not participating in literacy activities. The focus group activity was held outside the hut where I lived. The meeting date coincided with a ceremony held in the neighbourhood to commemorate the death of a neighbour's father. Some of the women going home from the ceremony wished to participate in the activity and also the women I lived with. In the end, the composition of participants ended up being somewhat random, consisting of 12 women, some of whom did not speak Portuguese. The women I lived with ended up dominating the discussion somewhat and recounting what women said who did not speak Portuguese.

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<sup>28</sup> The Organization of Mozambican Women

### **Focus Groups 3, 4 and 5 – Literacy Facilitators**

Three focus group discussions were held with literacy facilitators in order to hear their views and experiences regarding barriers to women's learning. When literacy classes resumed in May, the literacy facilitators were called for an information meeting at the local education office. I obtained permission to address the group of facilitators and invite them to participate in focus group sessions. I asked for facilitators who had taught for at least one year, as I felt it was important to involve people who had experience of the topic and could participate actively in the discussion. I assumed that those teaching for the first time would not yet have much knowledge of women's reasons for not registering or dropping out of classes. I set up three focus groups during weekends when facilitators did not have lessons. There were 22 participants in total (15 men and 7 women)<sup>29</sup>, 11 in the first group (6 men/5 women), 6 in the second group (5 men/1 woman) and 5 in the third group (4 men/1 woman). My questions were general and I did not disclose that I was interested in the issue of husbands prohibiting their wives as I wanted to know whether the issue came up and what importance they gave to it. To that effect, I asked the facilitators to rate the importance of barriers they mentioned at the end of the session.

### **Focus Group 6 – Adult Education Learners, OMM, Facilitators and Passers-by**

After the discussion with literacy facilitators I felt I had reached a theoretical saturation (Bryman, 2001)<sup>30</sup> in regard to what were the barriers to women's participation in literacy programmes, as the same things kept coming up. In this focus group I therefore decided to discuss specifically the issue of husbands prohibiting their wives to study. I planned to meet with the OMM members and had asked one of the women to inform the others. We had decided to meet where the literacy classes took place. The meeting coincided with the day the literacy classes were supposed to resume, but when I got there, few participants had showed up and the two literacy facilitators asked if they could participate in the group discussion. Some of the literacy participants then joined and also passers by. Therefore the group ended up consisting of some people I already knew through OMM and observing

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<sup>29</sup> The majority of literacy facilitators in Mozambique are men partly because more men than women have completed the required level of education.

<sup>30</sup> Bryman defines theoretical saturation as “the point when emerging **concepts** have been fully explored and no new insights are being generated” (2001:508).

literacy classes and some passers by of both sexes. There were 16 participants, 12 women and 4 men.

### **Focus Groups 7, 8, 9 and 10 – Women in 6th and 7th grade (28 in total)**

I set up focus groups in the primary school with women who participated in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes at night. I chose women who had graduated with the equivalent of 5<sup>th</sup> grade from the Adult Education programme, rather than women who had continued from 5<sup>th</sup> grade in primary school. That way I could compare their experiences from being in the Adult Education programme to studying in 6th and 7th grade. As I was interested in having a debate, using a focus group seemed the most appropriate research method. The vice principal compiled a list over all those who had previously studied in the Adult Education Programme. He then asked them to participate in my research and divided them into three groups. I subsequently had focus group activities with 28 women in total. There were three groups of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, with a total of 21 women and one group of 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, with 6 women. These were all of the women who had previously studied in the programme, who were able and willing to participate in the research.

### ***Procedure of Focus Group Research***

At the outset of the focus group sessions I explained who I was and briefly what my research was about. I stressed that participation was voluntary and that there would be no payment for the sessions. As is common practice in meetings and seminars in Mozambique, I offered refreshment usually consisting of sodas and biscuits or bread. I also gave participants a pen as a small token of gratitude. These were well received.

I recorded the focus group discussions on a digital audio recorder and filmed them on a video camera as well. I felt it was safer to have two recordings as one device often did not pick up the voices of those who sat further away from it. I therefore positioned the two devices in different locations. The aim with recording on video was also to enable me to discern later who was talking and look at body language (Bloor, et al., 2001). I asked for permission before recording and people seemed happy to be recorded. It did not seem to bother them or make them self conscious. It

turned out to be difficult to arrange the video camera so that it recorded the participants, especially as there was a tendency for participants to show up at different times. When arranged further away to catch all the faces, the audio quality suffered. I also tried to keep the camera close to me and move it to record the person speaking, but found this too distracting for me and possibly for the participants as well. In the larger groups I decided to sacrifice the possibility of recording exactly who said what, as this would have required a second person to administer the equipment and I felt this would distract the participants.

From analysing the focus group material, I came to the conclusion that people tended to first bring up issues that they had personal experience with, although speaking about them in more general terms. I especially noticed this when I used some kind of a rating system to encourage people to rank issues in order of importance. As an example, one of the women in FG1 kept emphasizing that infertility was a serious problem for women in Maganja. Another woman then remarked that this was because the woman herself had this problem. Therefore FG activities seemed to be a good way to discuss personal issues that might be sensitive without the women having to disclose that they were talking about themselves.

***Some Challenges using the Focus Group Method:***

As Bryman points out, one of the limitations of focus group activities is that they are more difficult to organize and plan than individual interviews (2001). One aspect that made my focus group activities complicated was that people tended to show up at different times as they generally did not wear watches and the concept of time was rather fluid. Thus I might carry out the introduction of myself and explain that people were not going to get paid and that they were free to leave if they did not want to participate. Then other people would show up in the middle of the discussion. Rather than repeat everything, I then tended to explain in one sentence what we were discussing and that they were free to not participate.

When focus group meetings were held outside in open spaces (FG1, FG2 and FG6), participants always ended up being different from the ones who had been invited. There is a tradition for public discussions in Mozambique and I did not find it

appropriate to refuse people who showed up and wanted to participate. I decided to be flexible in my research methods and adapt to local traditions. In FG6, I felt in retrospect that the discussion had turned out better because it consisted of men as well as women and I therefore got the added dynamic of men and women debating the topic. When I held meetings at the primary school, with well-defined groups such as literacy facilitators and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, it was easier to control the composition of the group. Participants sometimes showed up to different groups than they had signed up for which made the groups uneven in size, but at least they consisted only of those who had been purposefully invited.

Arranging focus group meetings with women in the village proved difficult as I did not know where they lived and at the time there was no phone network in Maganja. I therefore relied on information being passed to them through other means. Usually I spoke to the local chief and asked him to spread the message. This meant that when women I had invited did not show up I did not know whether it was because they had not received the information or whether they had been unable or unwilling to participate. In FG2 and FG6 different people turned up but did not contribute to the discussion. I did not know to what extent this was because they did not speak Portuguese and to what extent there were other factors leading to non-participation.

It was difficult to facilitate a focus group activity and take notes at the same time, as writing risks destroying the flow of the conversation and missing opportunities of probing further when opportunities arise. In the first two sessions with facilitators I used the help of two different young men who had offered to be research assistants. I did not find it very useful, however, as they did not follow my instructions of writing up what people were saying. Instead, they made summaries of the points being discussed. Thus, I decided to do the remaining focus groups by myself and rely less on written notes as I recorded the interviews and could go back to them later. I also felt that in focus group activities where the participants were only women, it might be detrimental to have a man present as they might be less willing to share their experiences. I wrote as much down during the sessions as possible without disturbing the flow of conversation. Then I wrote the notes up in more detail as soon as the sessions were over, along with a preliminary analysis. I transcribed parts of the focus

groups and interviews during my fieldwork, but as it was very time consuming I chose to rather focus on gathering data while in the field.

Before going on fieldwork I had decided to combine a focus group and a PRA activity. I tried this in FG1 where we first had a discussion and I wrote down the problems under headings and then we discussed the issues and rated their importance by placing beans on the headings. The participants seemed to find the activity confusing as they were not familiar with the method. Some of them were illiterate and not able to read the headings so it would have been better to use a more visual representation of the issues. So I asked them to rank the problems as a group, in order of importance from one to five. In the end there seemed to be a congruency between what they had discussed and how they rated the problems, both by the beans and the ranking. I used the same method in the first group with literacy facilitators. The ranking activity was very time consuming, however, and I did not feel it added corresponding value in terms of additional information. Therefore I decided to only have discussions in the remainder of focus groups. Reforming the research methods during the research process is important as different methods work in different contexts.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

In this section I discuss interviews that I consider 'formal' in the sense that they were arranged beforehand and recorded. Apart from those interviews, I wrote up conversations with both women and men in my fieldnotes from ethnographic observation and interactions.

### **Women who had been Prohibited from Studying**

In order to explore the issue of men prohibiting their wives from studying in more depth than was possible in the focus groups, I set up interviews with four women who had been prohibited from studying by their husbands. Two had participated in focus groups where I had learnt that they had conflicts with their husbands over their studies. I felt that they might be willing to tell their story in more detail to me alone than to a whole group and that the issue could then be explored in relation to other

aspects of their lives. I was told about the other two women by their teachers, who helped set up the interviews. One of the women was in the Adult Education programme and the other three studied at night. I tried to set up interviews with more women who were being prohibited from studying when I heard their stories from relatives. I was told that one woman did not want to be interviewed; another woman did not show up for a scheduled interview and a third person I never heard from again. I respected that these women might not want to talk about the issue or that their husband might not allow them to do it and left it at that.

I am aware that the women asked to participate by their teachers might have hesitated to say no out of respect for their teacher. I emphasized that they did not have to answer my questions unless they wanted to. One of these women said very little during the interview and was obviously shy. The other one seemed willing to share her story. These interviews were semi-structured in the way that I had a predefined topic for discussion but had not written down exact questions and there was a flexibility to explore issues as they came up.

### **Women in the Adult Literacy and Education programme (AEA)**

Towards the end of fieldwork, I interviewed two women who attended the adult education programme. The aim was to learn about their views on education, personal educational history and how their husbands had reacted to their studies. I found out that one had previously been married to a man that prohibited her from studying whereas her current husband did not (see chapter 8).

### **Women who had Supportive Husbands**

I interviewed two women who had participated in focus groups and said that they had husbands who supported their education, in order to compare their experiences with women who had husbands who were against their education (see chapter 7).

I recorded the interviews on a digital device with their permission, but also took notes and used those to write as much up as I could remember after the session. The audio device did not seem to make the women self-conscious. I decided not to use a

video recorder, however. At the time I was not planning to analyse facial expressions or body language and felt the video recorder might make the women self-conscious as the interviews were about more sensitive issues than the focus groups and unlike in the focus groups, were about their personal experiences rather than a more general issue.

### *Life-Story Interviews*

When I started writing up, I was not sure whether to broaden my focus from being about literacy to being more generally about the education of adult women. I was still in Mozambique at the time, working for the Icelandic International Development Agency but I saw my data as purely the information I had gathered in Maganja in 2004-2005. I didn't realize until 2007 that I could use the stories of some of the women I had got to know before and after I started my fieldwork as case stories as they cast light on some of the issues I was exploring. I had seen the knowledge I had about the lives of these women as separate from the knowledge I had acquired from doing fieldwork and not of equal status or quality as I had not acquired it in a formal way. I had built up an understanding of the lives of these women through various informal conversations and through relationship more resembling a friendship than a researcher – subject relation. Thus, I felt that this information might not be as reliable as information gathered through a more orthodox approach. I suppose I was also limiting myself in the way of looking at the period of fieldwork as the proper time for gathering the information, probably partly as I had already written a draft methodology chapter before going to Mozambique where I described the location of my study, my research approach and methods. I was still very much immersed in the data and could not quite see where to fit additional data. In the end I realized that adding case stories of women I knew over a longer period of time would be beneficial. This would give me the advantage of using a more longitudinal approach where I could better portray changes over time in the lives of these women, than by solely using information based on one or two interviews and observations over the period of 10 months. This also allowed me to get a more in-depth knowledge of the situation of women as I had established a relationship of trust with them and they would tell me things I might not have been told by women I knew over shorter periods of time. It also allowed me to question information and further check up on

details I felt might not be accurate. The disadvantage was my dilemma of how to sufficiently disguise the identity of these women so as not to betray their confidentiality and trust (Silva, Manganhele, & Macie, 1999). This can be particularly challenging when writing up narratives, due to the amount of detail disclosed. It was also an ethical question of whether it was right to use information gained for other purposes than research, for example when drawing on knowledge coming from personally knowing women over a long period of time. Therefore, I made sure to ask permission from the women for using their life stories in the research. I tape recorded interviews with two women and wrote up a third case story from fieldnotes. The latter was the only one I ended up using in the thesis (see chapter 6).

### ***Informal Interviews***

Apart from the interviews discussed above I carried out many interviews during my pilot study and fieldwork with people providing context or practical information for the study. These were researchers and students within the field of adult education, staff at national, provincial and district levels of the Ministries of Education and Culture and Women and Social Affairs, and people working for NGOs in Maganja. I call these interviews informal as I took notes but did not use an audio recorder. In some cases I asked to use a recorder but was turned down. Probably government staff felt that if I recorded the session they might be held accountable for what they were telling me. I did record two interviews that were '*spontaneous*' in the sense that after focus group activities I continued speaking with men and asked permission to turn on the recorder as I felt it might prove useful data (see Carlos's opening narratives in the Preface and chapter 5).

## **4.4 From Field Texts to a Research Text**

### ***Fieldnotes***

I took detailed notes of my observations. On a daily basis I found it rather inhibiting to take notes in a notebook. In the village, people were not commonly seen reading or writing in public and I felt that people would become very self-conscious if I sat

and noted down what they said to me during informal conversations. Interesting conversations also often arose when I was not able to take notes, for example after dark when we were sitting outside the hut eating dinner and conversing. There was no electricity in the area and writing in a notebook with the dim light from the stove was impossible. On those occasions I would normally write the conversations up from memory once I got inside as I kept my laptop with me in the hut. I would then repeat what people had told me and refer to them in third person. On other occasions I would write down exact phrases and put them in brackets, when I thought that the wording itself could be of importance.

Therefore if I was having informal conversations with people, I normally went away and wrote up as much of the discussion or courses of event as I remembered right after or later that day. A lot of these discussions happened around my home and I had stocked up on batteries for my laptop so I could often go into my room in the cottage and write up notes when I needed to. Then I went to the Action Aid office and wrote up and charged the batteries. When participating in events, such as a healing ceremony, community meeting etc. I took notes in a notebook.

My fieldnotes were written up during fieldwork with a laptop, using the NVivo software to organize my documents. When I had made notes into notebooks I wrote these up into a document in the computer. When I did not have a notebook, I wrote my notes directly into the document from memory in as much detail as I could. I wrote in the laptop as often as possible, usually every day and whenever possible, right after an event or conversation. I made a separate document for each interview or major event, a document called 'fieldnotes' divided into periods, a separate document to put in reflections about methodology, and a separate diary for my private thoughts.

Conversations were carried out in Portuguese unless otherwise noted; they have been translated into English by me. In my fieldnotes, I usually wrote up informal conversations directly in English to save the time of later translating the fieldnotes but also because I am more fluent in English and therefore it was easier to word my thoughts in English. Although in terms of expression, Icelandic would have been my preferred language, I felt that I was in most cases fluent enough in English to use it

as a medium and that as I was eventually going to use the fieldnotes to write up a thesis in English it made most sense to think about and express myself about the research in English. When writing my fieldnotes up on the computer I kept Portuguese words or phrases when quoting people directly or when I felt that Portuguese was needed to get the fine nuances of meaning. Interviews and focus group activities were written up in Portuguese and this is how I read the transcripts in the beginning, then translating them at the time of analysis.

### *Translating between Languages*

The greatest handicap I felt during fieldwork was not being able to communicate in the local language, since a big part of the conversations I overheard in the village was carried out in Nyaringa, unless people were speaking directly to me. This excluded direct communication with a number of people. My timeframe and budget did not allow for an extended period of studying the local language before starting fieldwork. I made an effort to learn it during fieldwork, but it proved difficult as it did not exist in a written form and I found it hard to learn orally. I wrote down phrases and words and had family members and neighbours teach me. Although I did not become fluent enough to understand discussions I learnt a number of common words and as time passed was increasingly able to guess what conversations were about.

I found that my efforts to learn the language helped create rapport with the community. As soon as I started saying “nagúmi“ [good morning, how are you] and responding to the traditional greeting in the appropriate way, I became very popular, especially among the children, whose main recreational activity seemed to be to greet me when I passed by on my bicycle. Thus the little I learnt served as an icebreaker and helped break down barriers and gained me increased respect and trust from the community.

A Mozambican researcher I contacted before going on fieldwork told me that when she used a research assistant or translator in the field, she always made sure they were from outside the community. Her experience was that otherwise people would not trust them with information for fear they would not keep it confidential.

Therefore, I decided not to use a research assistant or a translator. Living in the village, people often complained how their friends and family did not respect their family and told their secrets. Thus, I felt that the advice I had been given was warranted. I am aware that by not having a translator I excluded women who did not speak Portuguese, which was more common with women of the older generation and with little education. This was also an issue in focus groups one, two and six where some women joined who did not speak Portuguese. I found that most of these women did not participate and when they did, I had to rely on others in the group to translate. In such cases translations were not direct but by form of paraphrasing or summarizing discussion. Relying largely on case stories, the issue of the vernacular language has become less relevant as all the women interviewed spoke good Portuguese. Likewise, the participants in focus groups with 6th and 7th grade students and facility teachers spoke Portuguese.

#### ***A Note on Definitions and Different Meanings***

I have found the task of translating meaning across different languages and cultures a challenging task. In any conversation in the field, multiple languages were at play. In Mozambique, Portuguese is spoken as a first language by a very small part of the population, mostly in the capital city. All the participants in the study spoke Portuguese as a second language and so did I. I then ultimately had to translate everything into English, another second language. Apart from translating the language, definitions and understandings of concepts can vary between communities and they can be hard to translate between languages and different contexts. In order to aid understanding on direct quotes later in the thesis, the following section discusses some of the terms used in the empirical chapters and how I have chosen to interpret them.

#### **‘Violence’, ‘Abuse,’ ‘Suffering’**

Research on violence has found that although women may find violent behaviour painful and wrong, they may not look at it as violence but as a normal part of being married (Pickup, 2001:15; Schuler, Hashemi, & Badal, 1998). While preparing for fieldwork I consulted a researcher in Maputo who had recently carried out qualitative

research on domestic violence about the terminology used about violence in rural villages. She confirmed that village women spoke in a different way from researchers:

*For us it is violence not for the women they don't use this classification. The women might say that they were suffering and the research team then classified it as violence. (Fieldnotes 19.11.04)*

During my fieldwork I heard many stories about women being beaten. I also witnessed a woman being beaten by her husband and abused in other ways. I found that people generally did not use the word 'violence'. As suggested in the quote above, women often talked about 'suffering' (*sofrimento*). They spoke about husbands 'slapping' (*porradas*) and 'beating' (*bater*) when talking about physical violence. For verbal abuse they used terms like 'to speak badly' (*falar mal*) and 'insult' (*insultar*). Abuse was used both as a verb and a noun (*abusar* and *abuso*) for various violent behaviour as well as 'ill-treating' (*maltratar*). Women talked about husbands who did not respect them (*não respeitam / falta de respeito*). When discussing control, in the instance of men not allowing women to go to school they would say that the husbands were prohibiting (*proibir*) their wives from going to school.

### **Man as the Head of Household**

Within a household, the husband was usually referred to as either '*dono da casa*' or '*chefe da casa*'. According to the Universal Professional Portuguese-English Dictionary, '*casa*' means a house or a home and '*dono*' means 'owner', 'master', 'lord', 'proprietor' or 'landlord' (Dicionário Universal Profissional Português - Inglês, 1999). '*Chefe*' is the same word as used for 'boss' in the workplace. It is also translated as 'chief', 'leader' or 'head' (ibid). I have chosen to use the phrase 'head of household' as a translation for both '*dono da casa*' and '*chefe da casa*'. The term reflects the powerful status of the husband vis-à-vis his wife: "The man is the head of household,' we women do not have a voice in the home" (FG7, 23/7/05).

### **Work**

The reader will find that some women say that they or their husbands '*do not work*' even if they later say that they earn an income by activities such as selling merchandize at the market. Work was generally understood to mean '*paid employment*'. By the same token, even if the women took care of the household and produced food on their '*machambas*' they might refer to themselves as '*doing nothing*' or '*just sitting in the house*'. It has been widely documented that women's unpaid activities, such as household labour are not recognized as work. In the context of my village it was evident that also men's activities in the informal labour market tended to be less valued than formal, paid employment.

### **The question of Age**

Whereas in Iceland age is an important marker of identity, in Maganja it did not seem very important to people how many years they had lived. They seemed to perceive age more in relation to others. Often they said that they did not know how old they were, but then showed me a document with their birth date. Such documents could not be taken at face value, however, as it was common that births were not registered officially and as records were in some cases destroyed during the civil war. In the absence of registered information, people would estimate their year of birth. I saw some examples where the birth year could not have been correct. After a while I realized that when people did not know how old they were, they might give me a number rather than showing that they did not know. The age 25 seemed to be particularly popular.

### ***A Guide to Direct Quotes***

In their storytelling my respondents typically alternated between speaking in third person about what happened and using direct speech when recounting something they or someone else said. Riessman suggests that using direct speech serves to build credibility and draw the listener into the moment (2008). Thus my respondents were '*performing*' or acting out their narratives which also included some verbal cues such as changing the tone of voice, hard to recreate in a written transcript. Because of time limits and difficulties of translating such details between two languages that are not

my mother tongues I have chosen not to attempt such a detailed transcription. I have, however, included some exclamations that are commonly used in Mozambique to emphasize what is being said such as '*aaaa*', '*sjiii*' and '*epa*'. They will convey a meaning to anyone who has worked with people in Mozambique and used Portuguese as the means of communication. I find them very hard to translate for those who have not, but have done my best to convey their meaning in footnotes (see chapter 8).

In extracts from transcripts I have underlined phrases where narrators spoke in first person on behalf of someone else. Once written down it can look confusing when a woman is for example reproducing a past argument with her husband and takes turns speaking on behalf of herself and the husband. In order to avoid confusion I have underlined text where speakers are reproducing the words of another character in the narrative. Direct speech is demarcated with quotation marks, both of others and narrator's own voices. I abbreviate my name in transcripts as ME and use the first letter in narrators' names, for example: I: Isabel.

### ***A Key to fieldnotes***

Extracts from my fieldnotes are printed in italics

- .. A pause for thought
- ... Part of a sentence omitted
- .... A sentence or more omitted
- One speaker finishes the sentence of another speaker
- « An inaudible word
- «« A couple of inaudible words
- ..- Discussion continued
- [ ] My comments as editor of the fieldnotes
- .=. Two quotes edited together to minimize repetition
- \_\_\_\_\_ Words performed by the speaker on behalf of another person

Curandeiro (underlined words): quoted verbatim in Portuguese or Nyarlinga in my fieldnotes

Names of all speakers have been changed and some changes have been made to conceal identities.

Adapted from Robinson-Pant (1997)

## **4.5 Narrative as an Analytical Framework**

### *Initial Steps of Analysis*

During fieldwork I made notes of my interviews and focus group sessions, including my observations of interaction in the group, and hunches and feelings about what I was hearing and observing. I also started coding my fieldnotes using the NVivo software in order to be able to follow up on concepts and themes coming out of this process. Due to limited access to electricity, however, I then decided to focus on writing up my fieldnotes. I also wanted to make the most of my time there interacting and observing, rather than spending it in front of a laptop.

After fieldwork I printed out and coded all my fieldnotes and listened to the interviews and focus group material and transcribed sessions that were relevant to the themes I had identified. I started writing up chapters around themes such as how women and men understood education and reasons given for participating or not participating in literacy and adult education. I also wrote up chapters based on individual focus groups and individual stories. As discussed in chapter 1, I eventually decided, during the writing up stage, to use narrative as an analytical framework. I wanted to give individual stories more space and to look at women's experiences as a whole rather than taking out different themes across cases. That meant first transcribing those transcripts in detail and then translating them into English. I decided not to translate while I transcribed, as I felt that meaning might be lost in the process. I included nonverbal cues such as sounds, pauses and tone of voice as much as possible. I then went through a series of steps as described in more detail below, but first I discuss what I mean by 'narrative'.

### *Defining 'Narrative'*

Researchers in different disciplines vary in their definition of a narrative as a topic of study and why and how it should be studied (e.g. Clendenin & Connelly, 2000; Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Holstein & Gubrium, 2011; Riessman, 2008; Squire, et al., 2008; Trahar, 2008; Wells, 2011). As Riessman points out, narratives are everywhere but that does not mean that everything is a narrative (2008). I found the following definition from Chase useful:

A narrative may be oral or written and may be elicited or heard during fieldwork, an interview, or a naturally occurring conversation. In any of these situations, a narrative may be (a) a short topical story about a particular event and specific characters such as an encounter with a friend, boss, or doctor; (b) an extended story about a significant aspect of one's life such as schooling, work, marriage, divorce, childbirth, an illness, a trauma, or participation in a war or social movement; or (c) a narrative of one's entire life, from birth to the present. (2005:652)

This definition includes data that is collected in naturally occurring conversations and either instigated by the researcher or overheard. It therefore suits the purposes of ethnographic research quite well. It is applicable in my study since the narratives I draw on are both elicited through interviews and naturally occurring in conversations. Another aspect relevant to my study is that this definition allows for an extended discussion of a particular topic, such as education or a particular experience, like being prohibited from going to school. The definition does have limitations in its application, however, that Chase acknowledges in her updated chapter of narrative research. She points to the assumption in the definition above that narratives are about past events (2011), whereas more recent research has argued for the inclusion of so called 'small stories' (Bamberg, 2006, 2011; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2006). Georgakopoulou defines 'small stories' as:

an umbrella-term that covers a gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell. (2006:123)

I draw on this broader definition of narratives because during interviews and informal conversations, stories of others (i.e. non-personal) or hypothetical stories, such as the very first quote of this thesis, were sometimes used to get a point across.

### *Narrative Analysis*

There is no single method for analysing narratives. The number of recent books and book sections on narrative analysis<sup>31</sup> indicate that it is “still a field in the making” (Chase, 2011). I have found Riessman’s distinction between the ‘thematic’, ‘structural’ and ‘dialogic/ performance’ approaches to analysis useful. The ‘*Thematic Approach*’ focuses on the content of narratives, on ‘what’ is said. Language is “seen as a resource rather than a topic of inquiry” (Riessman, 2008:59). I use elements from this approach as I am looking at how women draw on discourses of gender and education and therefore am paying attention to what they are saying. I use prior theory for the interpretation of the narratives, while at the same time looking for novel theoretical insights (ibid).

Like the Thematic Approach, the ‘*Structural Approach*’ looks at content but additionally focuses on ‘how’ the story is told, or how narratives are put together to achieve specific aims. As the Structural Approach relies on thorough linguistic analysis, I did not find it suitable as a main approach. I do not have a linguistic background, and as an Icelandic speaker I find it problematic to apply methods developed in English on material gathered in Portuguese and then translated into English. Still, I do use some insights from this approach, for example when, after living in the community for an extended period of time, I felt drawn to interpreting aspects of speech like intonation

The *Dialogic / Performance Approach* draws on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the thematic and structural approaches, but adds the dimensions of ‘who’ the audience is, ‘when’ the story is told (context) and ‘why’ or for what purpose (Riessman, 2008). It is an interpretive approach that “interrogates how talk among speakers is interactively (dialogically) produced and performed as narrative” (ibid:105). Whereas in the thematic and structural analysis little attention is paid to local context or how the researcher influences the construction of the story, this approach looks at narratives as co-constructed:

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<sup>31</sup> For example Andrews et al (2008), Riessman (2008), Trahar (2008), Gubrium and Holstein (2009), Chase (2011), Wells (2011), Holstein and Gubrium (2012).

We now recognize that the personal account, in research interviews, which has traditionally been seen as the expression of a single subjectivity, is in fact always a co-construction (Salmon & Riessman, 2008:80).

Both the context of the interview or ethnographic encounter and the wider societal context of the participants are seen as important. The Dialogic / Performance approach draws on Goffman's ideas of identity and performativity. Identities are seen as 'situated' and 'performed' with an audience in mind. "One cannot be a 'self' by oneself; rather, identities are constructed in 'shows' that persuade" (Riessman, 2008:106). The researcher becomes an active presence in the text with an active voice, although it is never the only voice. Long extracts from data are typically used to give readers a chance to engage with the text and interpret it through their own lens. Researchers do not offer a final or sole interpretation of the narrative but speculate openly about the meaning of what they are hearing. Thus:

Intersubjectivity and reflexivity come to the fore as there is a dialogue between the researcher and the researched, text and reader, knower and known". (Riessman, 2008:137)

While examining the narratives of women, I had in mind Riessman's dialogic / performance approach. I have also drawn on another researcher who uses a dialogical approach to analysis (Frank, 2012), specifically, his suggestion of thinking about the multiple voices within any speaker's voice and the ways in which people strive to "hold their own" by:

seeking to sustain the value of one's own self or identity in response to whatever threatens to diminish that self or identity. (Frank, 2012:33)

I looked at the content of the narratives, both as individual units and as the whole narrative of the interview. I also considered structural aspects such as tone of voice and non-verbal cues such as pauses and silences. This was limited to an analysis of the audio recordings as I had not videotaped the interviews. As dialogic / performance analysis is about the interaction between researcher and participants as well as the content of the encounter, it would have been good to have videotaped the interviews. However, given the focus on discourses it was not paramount in my case.

Analysing the data, I explored questions like, but not limited to:

- Are there any words or concepts that are repeated through the narrative?
- What themes are coming out of her story?
- How does she make meaning of her experiences?
- What does her story tell me about wider issues of gender, power, equality, inequality?
- Which discourses is she drawing on?
- Why is she telling me this particular story / these particular stories?
- How do I as a researcher influence the stories she is telling me?

I then went through the transcripts and underlined words and made notes of themes coming up within each case story, and made a summary of what I felt the narrative as a whole was about. After that I went through the transcripts and looked for narratives, using what Riessman refers to as the “restrictive definition of social linguistics”:

Here narrative refers to a discrete unit of discourse, an extended answer by a research participant to a single question, topically centred and temporally organized. (2008:5)

This was based on the notion that narratives as a unit convey their own meaning and have certain purposes, different from simple answers to questions. Defining narratives in this sense was not straightforward. As I had not set out to gather narratives, I had carried the interviews out somewhat differently than if this had always been the purpose. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) suggest that in order to encourage people to tell stories during an interview, the researcher should ask open ended questions and then when people start telling stories, to encourage it with nonverbal and verbal cues. In some cases I had done this, by using questions like “what is the story of your education?” and in some cases (like Nielete in chapter 7) the women responded with detailed stories. In other cases (like Isabel in chapter 8) they responded with shorter answers but elaborated when I followed up with questions. I then I looked at the linked answers, including my questions, as a

narrative. Sometimes however, the women spontaneously told me a story to a less open-ended question, which then prompted me to ask myself why they had done so.

Narrative analysis is about listening to the voices within and looking at the story as a whole, but at the same time I ultimately had to serve the purpose of “so what”. I had to decide what “my narrative” was, or in other words, what I wanted to say about these stories. The purpose of the research was to write a doctoral thesis, so I had to contextualize the narratives by engaging with literature in my field. Writing for the immediate audience of my supervisors and thesis examiners, with the purpose of demonstrating that I am capable of doing research on a particular topic, has inevitably influenced my analysis. As Salmon points out:

The audience, whether physically present or not, exerts a crucial influence on what can and cannot be said, how things should be expressed, what can be taken for granted, what needs explaining and so on”. (in Salmon & Riessman, 2008:80)

After I had decided to focus on the issue of ‘*education as a site of struggle*’ and decided upon my research questions, I looked at the case stories again and made decisions about which aspects to stress and in which way to construct each chapter. A strong link was emerging in the data between the different kinds of education and paid employment, so I decided to organize the empirical case story chapters around different levels of education. Therefore, chapter 6 discusses Maria, a university graduate, chapter 7 discusses Nielete, Olga and Sonia, who were in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade and chapter 8 focuses on Isabel, who was in the literacy class. Their level of education was again linked with their economic and social situation. Maria could be considered “urban” and “middle-class<sup>32</sup>”, Isabel as “rural” and “resource-poor”, as she lived in the village on the outskirts of Maganja vila, while Nielete, Olga and Sonia were categorised as “semi-urban” as they lived in Maganja vila. Their economic standard of living was higher than Isabel’s, but far below Maria’s.

Deciding upon this particular focus and the stories of these women meant that I had to leave out some of the narratives, despite feeling that they were no less important. I

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<sup>32</sup> In the 2013 Human Development Report ‘middle-class’ is defined as including “people earning or spending \$10-\$100 a day”, based on “2005 purchasing power parity terms” (p:14).

had, for example, written a chapter about Fátima (who is mentioned in chapter 1) illustrating the changes between generations of women in attitudes and opportunities around education and paid work, as she compared herself, her mother and her daughter. It had a longitudinal dimension, as I followed her over a longer period of time than many of the other women. Another story I had written up as a part of a chapter in a previous draft, was that of Angela who had completed 7<sup>th</sup> grade and wanted to continue but said she could not because her husband was physically abusive and was prohibiting her. Once I had decided to focus on the experiences of women who were in school, linked with conflicts with husbands, neither of these narratives were directly relevant to the logic of the thesis. At this point, I also considerably shortened the narrative of Olga (see chapter 7), as I felt that telling her story in detail would compromise her anonymity. Therefore, I left out some of the interesting details of her story. I still draw on these narratives to some extent in chapter 5, a more ethnographic chapter, which also draws on focus group material and fieldnotes. The purpose of chapter 5 is to provide a context for the case stories by discussing discourses on education, power and gendered identities and relations.

Given the time it takes to transcribe and then translate focus group material, I decided early on to focus on the focus groups of village women and participants in evening classes and leave out the mixed sex focus groups of literacy facilitators. Once the thesis had taken shape, and I realized the importance of the construction of masculinities to the construction of femininities, I would have liked to go back to these focus groups and included more men's voices. Due to time constraint, this will have to wait until another time. Instead I have included men's voices to some extent through extracts from my fieldnotes, the interview with Carlos (see opening quote of thesis and chapter 5) and FG6, which had participants of both sexes.

Thus, the analytic process has consisted of a series of cycles of looking at data, making decisions about the relevance of this data, and based on this, rewriting and reshaping chapters and then going back to the data and so on. This process has been, as Clandenin and Connelly describe it, characterised by “false starts” and “dead ends” (2000:121) and at times filled with anxiety over the lack of clarity or certainty of the appropriateness of the decisions made (ibid). At one point, final decisions had to be made regarding the themes and composition of chapters in order to meet the

looming thesis deadline. Therefore, this thesis does not represent the only possible or necessarily the best analysis and use of this data, but rather, the best I could do within the context of writing a doctoral thesis in a multi-disciplinary context and within a certain time period.

### ***Voice and Representation***

The question of voice and representation is essential in feminist research and narrative analysis (Chase, 2005). Who speaks for whom, why and how? In narrative analysis researchers start by listening to the voices within each narrative rather than locating particular themes across interviews (Chase, 2005). Still, the important question arises of how to present these voices during the analysis and writing up of the text (ibid).

In the thesis I use what Chase refers to as an ‘authoritative’ voice. For example, I reconstruct Maria's narrative (chapter 6) based on what she told me and then make a separate interpretation. I try to speak “differently but not disrespectfully” from Maria (Chase, 2005:664). I use few direct quotes, as her narrative is constructed from fieldnotes based on informal conversations, rather than on recorded interviews. In contrast, the case stories in chapters 7 and 8 are based on taped interviews. Here the main purpose is to give voice to individual women and give my audience an opportunity to engage with them directly. To that effect I have written up lengthy extracts from their narratives. These are interspersed and followed by my analysis, where I look at how they position themselves in relation to the “words and voices of others” (Warriner, 2004:284), both in relation to myself as the researcher and the discourses on gender and on education available to them. As I present direct extracts from focus groups (chapter 5) and include my questions within the women's narratives (chapters 7 and 8), I would argue that I am at the same time using an ‘*Interactive Voice*’ as I strive to display: “The complex interaction – the intersubjectivity between researcher’s and narrator’s voices” (Chase, 2005:666). This is done from the perspective that it is impossible to create an account that is free of influence from the researcher as he/she influences the production of the narrative simply by being present (Etherington, 2006). Therefore, it is important to reflect on

how this influences the research and to make it as transparent as possible to the reader.

Although the reader can to some extent engage directly with my research participants by reading direct quotes (Clandenin & Connelly, 2000) these can never fully portray the whole circumstance of the interview and my interaction with the people involved. As in any human interaction, I looked for “performative” (Riessman, 2008) cues such as body language that would aid my understanding of the stories and the women's motives for telling them. Such interpretations are always to some extent subjective and it is impossible to say whether another researcher would have read them in the same way or differently. When narrating the stories of others, I see myself as an interpreter between contexts and cultures as even when presenting transcript excerpts, these have already been translated from Portuguese.

#### **4.6 Identities and Roles during Fieldwork**

During fieldwork one must work out one's relationships to the field, to the natives, and to one's mind and emotions (as data gathering instruments and as bias-producing impediments). (Sanjek, 1990:90)

The following section reflects on my identities, roles and relationships during fieldwork. Iceland has just over 300 000 inhabitants and like in Mozambique, where you come from is a big part of your identity. I grew up in a valley with 1700 inhabitants and now live in a town of 17000 people. In both of these small societies you are never fully an insider unless you were born and grew up there. However, the longer you stay the more relationships you form and the less it seems to matter whether you originally came from there or from somewhere else, perhaps because you have assimilated to the new place to the extent that people have forgotten that you are not from there. The question then is to what extent being an outsider matters? In Maganja people only had to look at me once to know that I was a stranger, not only from a different tribe but from a different race. There were two other white people in Maganja, both businessmen of Portuguese descent. One was in his sixties and had a Mozambican wife, with whom he had seven children. Although he had lived in the area for most or all of his life he was still largely defined by his skin

colour and referred to as '*o branco*' or the '*white man*'. It was therefore obvious that I would always be an outsider in this community. In ethnographic research much has been written about outsider versus insider roles and how they may influence the research process and outcome.

According to Ellen, the role "researcher" is meaningless to people in what she refers to as pre-industrial societies. Therefore, people will ascribe roles that are more meaningful to them such as 'a friend', 'harmless foreigner' or 'our European' (1984). I do not see being an outsider as necessarily a disadvantage in regard to my study. I would argue that being somewhat an unknown entity allows for more liberty to take up subject positions in discourses that are not usually ascribed to a person of the same gender, race, and education and so on. To some extent you are allowed and expected to be "strange" or "different" because you are a foreigner. The main question becomes whether people accept you and trust you enough to share their lives and information with you (Webb, 2006). In the following section I will discuss the ways in which I positioned myself and was positioned by others, particularly in terms of the three markers of identity I see as most influential; my race, gender and economic position (education, income, and social network). These in turn were multiple and interlinked, being white was for example linked with being affluent.

### ***Positioning Myself and Being Positioned***

Being a foreigner carried with it a notion of power and money. This was what I worried about most before fieldwork. Therefore, when negotiating access I emphasized to the local chiefs as well as to the women I lived with that I was a student on a bolsa (a grant). I also made this clear in the meeting where I was officially introduced to the population of the village. I felt that people could relate to this as most Mozambicans can only pursue further education on a grant from the government. I also stressed that I was not linked to any organization and that I was not bringing any 'project' to the area. Action Aid and other organizations had previously distributed emergency aid and still managed various 'projects' and a large part of the Mozambican budget is to date financed with donor money. I wanted to minimize a research bias caused by certain people seeking me out and talking to me in ways in which they felt might generate funds (see Errante, 2000). I also did not

want to create expectations and hopes that I could not fulfil (see ethics section). Nonetheless it was obvious that even if I was a student on a grant, I was rich in relation to most people in Maganja da Costa. I had clothes and shoes and rode around on a new bicycle. Although I had purposefully decided not to bring the camera, video camera and laptop to the village until a later stage of the research, Laila saw me use them in town. Immediately I started hearing the Portuguese word for taking photos blended into the local language when she talked to the neighbours. My relative affluence in comparison with the blatant and often fatal poverty all around was the issue I found most difficult to deal with during my fieldwork (see ethical section). I had brought more material possessions with me to Maganja in my suitcase than the two women I lived with had managed to acquire in a lifetime. As an example, the only piece of furniture in the two cottages was a wooden bed, without a mattress. One of the sisters used to own a small table and chairs that she sold to pay for treatment when her sister got seriously ill.

People in the neighbourhood initially seemed to see me as a 'friendly foreigner' as suggested by the following comment in my fieldnotes after living with Laila for a few days:

*Bina said to me that she liked Dona Marta<sup>33</sup> as she “brinca muito” or plays a lot. Laila has also said that people like to pass by and talk to me as I “brinca muito”. So I play a lot, but the meaning as I understand it is that I talk to people, that I go and dance and participate in what they are doing. (Fieldnotes 14/2/05)*

I understand the comments as indicating that people did not know what to expect when I moved into the neighbourhood. Bina was one of the neighbours and I understand her comment as a compliment for being social and interacting with people in an appropriate way, rather than being arrogant or whatever they may have expected me to be. I believe that 'brinca muito' also reflects the notion of using humour. My sense of humour seems to fit in Mozambique and I was able to use it in an appropriate way. By joking and making fun of myself, I somewhat created a common understanding and platform that made up for the distance initially felt because of being a foreigner. Although in a different context, Priyadharshini makes a

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<sup>33</sup> She is referring to me in third person in a polite way of speaking.

similar point about how she used humour to break barriers and get behind “standard responses” in an interview situation (2003:431).

At the meeting where I was introduced I was told of another white woman who had done research in the village. She had taken a bath in the river with the women and participated in some of their activities, but lived in Maganja vila. I was the first white person who had lived in the village and some people told me it was an honour for their village. Many people still found it strange that I wanted to leave my comfortable lifestyle to “*suffer with mosquitoes*”. What type of food you ate was also linked with social status and different customs. Some people questioned whether I could eat the local food and people seemed generally happy when they passed by and saw me sharing food with the family I lived with. They seemed to see this as a sign of respect for their culture and way of living. Another, and most important, icebreaker was my efforts to speak the local language. Even if I only learnt the most basic phrases such as ‘magúmi’ (good morning) and ‘obrigada peninju’ (I’m fine thank you, how are you) people never tired of asking me and hearing my response.

I noticed the status of being a foreigner when contacting people of status in the community. A good example is the fact that if I went to the hospital and sat outside the doctor’s office I could get an appointment with him the same day without a referral. I did not realize the extent of my privilege until I asked a village woman why she did not go and see him. She used to ask me for help with administering her medicine as she was illiterate. When she had been ill for a long time and the frequent visits to the hospital did not seem to help, I found out that she was always attended by nurses and not by the doctor. She told me that he was only there three times a week and you had to “be someone” in order to see him. Later she asked me to accompany her so that she could get to see him, which I ended up doing. Such access to the more powerful people in the community was probably a mixture of being a guest that should be well received and of being seen as affluent. I was told that this was how things worked in Maganja, that people who were able to pay were put in front of the queues. If I was expected to pay something on the side I was unaware of it as I was never asked for it and never offered it either. People, especially women, were shy with me to begin with and not speaking the local language was an obvious

barrier. As time passed people became more communicative and willing to initiate a conversation.

### ***Fluidity of Subject Positions and Identities***

The most important and enduring identity and name that African women claim for themselves is “mother” (Oyewùmí, 2000:1097).

This statement rang true in Maganja. Soon after I moved into the village, one of my neighbours asked me whether I was a girl or a woman. I found her question very odd. I was 38 years old and surely it was obvious that I was no girl. “*I am a woman*”, I responded. She looked at me with examining eyes: “*Do you have a child?*” “*No*”, I responded. “*Then you are a girl*”, was her verdict. After that she referred to me as ‘*menina Marta*’ or Marta girl. This was in stark contrast to the respectful title “*Auntie Marta*”<sup>34</sup> children and teenagers called me and “*Madam Marta*”<sup>35</sup> most adults called me. From this I learnt that in Maganja it was motherhood, not age that was seen as the passage from childhood to adulthood. It was difficult to explain that in my country some women postponed having children until their thirties or forties. From discussions and focus group meetings I learnt that it was a serious issue for women if they could not have children and seen as a legitimate reason for a divorce for men to acquire more wives. It is hard to say whether women in the village acted differently towards me because I did not have children. I suspect that some women might have felt that they had more in common with me and more to share had I had children myself as it was such a big part of their own lives.

To some people I then seemed to acquire the role of motherhood. The women I lived with sometimes asked me for assistance or advice with the words that they were asking me as I was ‘*their mother*’. Their own mother had passed away and they said that I assisted them with some of the things she would otherwise have helped them with. Towards the end of my fieldwork I was surprised when one of the leaders at the local mosque, who was much older than I, started calling me ‘*mother*’ (*mãe*). I understood it to be a sign of respect but never knew exactly how I had earned it, probably by helping a girl from his family to buy shoes for secondary school.

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<sup>34</sup> “*Tia Marta*”

<sup>35</sup> “*Senhora*” or “*Dona*” Marta

Although the women I lived with sometimes referred to me as 'mother' I also to some extent adapted the role of the 'provider'. When eating with the family they would arrange the space so that I sat alone on my esteira<sup>36</sup>. The rest of the family would sit in groups on their *esteiras*. By insisting that the others share the esteira with me, this habit eased off a bit, but never completely. They told me that this was a way of showing respect and I realised later that this was the same kind of respect as given to the father and husband. It is the wife who serves the food and at first my food was also always put aside separately and I would get a larger proportion than the others as typical for the man of the household. I would then leave some of the food allocated to me over to secure that the children got a larger share. As this division of space indicates, I was in a way given and adapted the status and role of the 'head of a household' that is usually allocated to the husband or father. I was expected to contribute money to buy food and household items, school materials and clothes for the children, presents such as capulanas<sup>37</sup> for the women; to help solve problems, all roles said to be husband's roles. I was not expected to do what women usually did such as cook, clean or even sweep the floor or porch. When I moved in, Laila said that she did not want me to pay rent but to help out as if I were a member of the family. Not knowing how to do the tasks done by women such as lighting a fire, cooking the local food, carrying loads on the head and so on, but having an income like a man, I quickly slipped into the role of the provider. This is a good reminder of the fluidity of roles and responsibilities and illustrates the point Oyewùmí makes that what is translated into English as 'mother', 'sister', 'uncle' 'husband' and so on does not necessarily carry the same symbolic meaning as it does in an African society (Oyewùmí, 1997). As will be discussed further later, the role of a husband was strongly linked with economic responsibilities. I wonder to what extent being the 'head of household' is based on the ability to generate a cash income as to being male per se. I also feel that through my experiences of being a 'provider' I gained valuable insights into the ways in which women exercise agency when they want financial assistance from the 'provider'.

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<sup>36</sup> A mat woven out of palm leaves

<sup>37</sup> An essential piece of clothing for women, used for various purposes such as wrapping as a skirt and carrying children. Capulanas were also necessary for rituals and events such as marriages and funerals.

In some ways I felt I had more in common with men, which might explain why men seemed quite at ease with me. Agadjanian argues that in Mozambique, men's social interaction tends to be gender exclusive, since men spend most of their time outside the home in activities involving only men and men's issues such as work, recreation and sexual bravado (2002). I sometimes wondered whether men talked to me as if I were a man. One man told me the story of how he had been dining with his girlfriend and barely managed to get her out of the back door when his jealous wife came home. Another time I was invited to join the conversation of three men. They were talking about the time when one of them had picked up a young girl and paid her for sex. In both cases above these seemed to be the kind of stories men would tell each other as a sign of their shared masculinity.

I take these experiences to mean that gender differences are to some extent linked with social positions such as marriage and motherhood and not only biological sex per se. This is what Arnfred and Oyewùmí have argued. Looking at my positioning through Arnfred's idea of gendered domains (1995) it seems to me that in various ways I positioned myself in the male domain rather than in the female domain and was therefore treated like a male. I sat with my legs spread rather than together as women were supposed to do, I went to town on my bike with my laptop and sometimes came home after dark. Perhaps more importantly I had not done what women my age were supposed to do as I did not have any children.

At other times it was clear that I was positioned as a woman in terms of my sexuality as men frequently offered to be my boyfriends. Some were direct, like once when I was cycling home and a young man I did not recognize rode up to me to tell me that he liked me a lot and wanted to be with me. Sometimes the conversations were less direct where the ground was being tested out:

Man: Are you married?

Marta: No

Man: Why not?

Marta: Well in my country it is normal to get married later than here and I am still studying so I don't have time for a marriage?

Man: How long are you going to stay in Maganja?

Marta: Until September

Man: Then you will need a Mozambican boyfriend!

Marta: Why?

Man: Well you are going to be staying here for a long time and you cannot stay without sex for such a long time

Marta: I am sure I will manage fine

Man: No the organism has its physical needs and it is very bad for you not to have sex for months

Marta: I don't think it is so bad for my body

Man: Yes if you don't have sex you will become very nervous

Marta: Well until now it has not been a problem

Man: You may not realize why you are so nervous and moody but you are going to be and it is because you are not having sex!

The conversation above is not a particular conversation from my fieldnotes, but constructed as a "typical" conversation from memory or from what Sanjek refers to as 'headnotes' (1990). Sometimes women also advised me to get a boyfriend as it seemed to be a common notion that a woman my age needed regular sex to remain well. Although having to explain in a friendly way that I was not interested in getting a boyfriend and had come there with other objectives got tiring, I decided not to interpret these encounters as sexual harassment but rather as opportunities to get insights into how men (and women) thought about relations between men and women. I would often use this kind of dialogue as an entry point into discussions about relations between men and women and gendered roles. They could play out something like this:

Man: So are you going to arrange a boyfriend here in Maganja?

Marta: I don't think so

Man: Why not?

Marta (jokingly): Well I know all about you Mozambican men. Here it is normal for a man to have a girlfriend even when he is married, I would not be able to accept that. In my country if a woman finds out her husband is sleeping with another woman she will divorce him.

Man: (Laughter). Here it is normal. There is even the man's night on Fridays when a man leaves his wife at home and goes out with his friends or sometimes his girlfriend"<sup>38</sup>

Such conversations with both men and women often ended up being quite interesting and an insight into how they constructed masculinity and femininity and the roles of men and women. By teasing and joking in this way, I could draw out issues I was interested in such as marital relationships. Such conversation will probably have been influenced by what people knew about me. On the other hand, I believe that as people seemed to talk quite freely about sex this meant that I got information and insights that I would not have got in the same way in a formal interview. Men seemed to enjoy these discussions and were willing to debate when I challenged them. In a context of being seen as a foreign female, men may have told me things they would be more reluctant to discuss with other men or that they would have discussed in a different way. Two men, for example, told me that they shared housework and childcare with their wives and that this was not seen as appropriate male behaviour.

#### **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

My main concern before fieldwork was that of power relations in the field, of making sure that I did not do unintended harm to the people I interacted with. I also wondered about how I could give back to the community and how to react when, inevitably, people came to me for help. In the following section I discuss the main ethical issues relevant to my study.

##### ***Informed Consent***

One of the main ethical issues in research in the North is that of informed consent and as seen by this extract from my fieldnotes this was an issue that concerned me:

*I am wondering about the ethics of what I am doing. So far I have only had informal discussions with people... After I have these discussions I make notes of what people have told me. Some of the things they tell me are very*

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<sup>38</sup> Friday night is commonly referred to as "dia do homem" or "the man's day" and it is seen as the night when the man has a right to take a break from his wife and family and go out drinking or otherwise having fun with his male friends and or extramarital girlfriend(s)

*personal. I have heard about cheating on wives and husbands, dreams and wishes, sorrows and joys. Only once have I specifically told someone that I have written down what they told me and asked permission. Of course I intend to keep the principles of anonymity and protection of information, but how about informed consent? In terms of observations, informal discussions, what are the ethics of conduct? To what extent can I describe what people are doing or how I interpret their lives and what they tell me, without their informed consent? Shouldn't I always say, this what you have told me is very interesting and might be useful for my study. May I write it down and use it, providing I maintain confidentiality? (Fieldnotes, 07.01.05)*

As pointed out by Bryman (2001) it is not possible to ensure during ethnographic research that everyone the researcher comes across is completely aware of the implications of the research. My method to deal with my concerns above was to try to ensure that people in the village where I was living knew who I was and what I was doing so that they could decide how to interact with me based on that knowledge. This was one of the reasons why it was important to go through all the official structures and explain my research and get permission for it. Once I had been granted a permission, the local chief called for a meeting in the community where I got a chance to explain that I was a student and that I was going to stay there and write about the village and the people and that I was writing about education and was interested in the life of women. However, only a small portion of the village people attended the meeting. Furthermore, once people got used to me, I wonder to what extent they saw me as a researcher and to what extent they saw me as a foreigner simply living with them and participating in their lives for a while. Even if they saw me as a researcher, research and a PhD thesis were not a part of their experience. Thus, when they told me about their lives they were probably not fully aware that their words might end up in a written product. At the time, some of the experiences I wrote about did not seem directly relevant to my research so to some extent I myself felt more like a visitor participating in people's life than a researcher. Therefore I feel a great responsibility towards these people who took me in and allowed me to live with them and for not writing anything that might harm them.

I did not ask people to sign consent forms. In a seminar on research ethics before I left for the field, Scholastica, a fellow African research student who had carried out research in a neighbouring African country, voiced her opinion that asking people to sign consent forms made them suspicious of the intentions of the researcher (see Mokake, 2005). Based on my previous experiences in rural villages in Mozambique I felt that this would also apply to my research. I also felt that in the context of doing research with illiterate or semi-literate people, it might embarrass them if I brought a form for them to sign. Later when I decided to do focus group activities with literacy facilitators and 7th grade students I decided to continue to give information and ask for consent orally. Through my previous work in the teacher training college I knew that although students have completed up to 10th grade they still read very slowly. Thus, apart from the issue of potentially making my participants suspicious of what I wanted to do with their signature I felt that the process would take valuable time away from the research activity. In the context of focus groups there was also the practical issue that people tended to show up late and having everyone sign a consent form would have meant repeatedly interrupting the discussions. I felt that in my research context I had to count on mutual trust between myself and my participants rather than a formalized written agreement (Mokake, 2005).

Instead of having each person sign a consent form, I explained briefly at the start of my focus group activities and interviews, who I was and what my research was about. I stressed that participation in the research was voluntary and that people were free to leave at any time. As people might feel hesitant to stand up and leave, I also explained that they did not need to participate in the discussion or answer the questions I asked unless they wanted to. I explained that I would keep information anonymous and confidential and asked participants in focus groups to also treat information shared by other participants as confidential. I also explained to them that I would not be able to pay them for participating in my research as I did not want to raise false hopes. I had discovered that white people were sometimes linked with development aid, probably as NGOs had previously given emergency aid in the area. I wanted to limit the possibility that people saw me as a potential aid donor (see Errante, 2000).

### ***Confidentiality and Anonymity***

When handling sensitive information such as accounts of domestic violence, I took into consideration that talking about power and violence could put my participants in danger of increased violence (Pickup, 2001; Silva, et al., 1999). Therefore I had to make sure that I protected the confidentiality and anonymity of my participants (Cohen, et al., 2000; Silva, et al., 1999). This made it difficult however to triangulate my data as I could not talk to husbands of women who told me about problems of violence linked with their education. I also did not feel free to verify information about violence with for example friends as this was sensitive and confidential information. However, I sometimes heard stories from villagers that verified accounts that I had been told by the women concerned. Triangulation became less important when I decided to adopt a narrative framework of analysis as it focuses more on how women present and understand their life than on the “facts” of their accounts.

As narrative accounts tend to entail more details than other types of research, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity is harder (Squire, 2008). Therefore, in addition to changing the names of all my respondents I have omitted or changed some details to make it less likely that particular stories could be traced to particular individuals. This is common practice in narrative research, although inevitably it can come at a cost to the richness of the data (Squire, 2008). For this reason I make limited references to the family I lived with, although my interaction with them gave me invaluable insights. Although I find it highly unlikely that someone should read this thesis and wish to do so, it would be easy for someone who went to Maganja to ask around and find the family I lived with.

### ***Giving Back to the Community***

Masvawure comments after her fieldwork in Zimbabwe that: “research is a relationship that requires reciprocity on both sides” (Masvawure, 2010:31). As Reinharz points out there is often reciprocity beneath research relationships that seem exploitative, as the researcher may offer help or advice to research participants (1992). I wanted to make sure I did not exploit people or extract information without giving anything in return (Bryman, 2001). I also went to the field wanting to make

research that could lead to changes. This is a pertinent question in feminist research where the idea is that you should not only do research “on” women but also “for” and “with” women (Cameron, et al., 1992). I acknowledge that it was very ambitious and unrealistic to want to do research as a PhD student that would inform policy and practice and thus benefit the group to which my participants belonged.

In retrospect I will have to agree with Wilson that too much value tends to be put on the outcome of research rather than on the process of doing it and that by engaging creatively with the community, researchers have the potential to have a positive impact (Wilson, 1992). Kelly, Burton and Reagan argue that feminist researchers can make it a part of their methodology to create change at the time of doing research by: “Questioning dominant/oppressive discourses”. They argue that this will: “in turn create more complex understandings of resistance to social/individual change” (1994:39-40). Wilson argues that sometimes researchers will feel under pressure to interfere in situations and that as researchers we do not need to suspend our moral code (1992). In this way I sometimes felt that it was my moral obligation to interfere in people’s lives. One such situation was going over to a neighbour’s house on at least three occasions when it could easily be heard that the husband was beating his wife as she was crying and screaming. I took on the role of a mediator and in all instances the violence stopped. In a fourth instance, the man called me over to mediate when he and his wife were arguing, and at that point I felt that I might have created an awareness of the possibility of a dialogue instead of a verbal and physical fight. After the last instance however, he stopped speaking to me and prohibited his children to play with the children where I lived. That time I had sided with the woman and in his view been a “brute”. The woman, on the other hand, always greeted me with a big smile. I parted with him on good terms however and half a year later when I visited the village he came to me to tell me that he and his wife were now seeking counselling.

I don't know by what standards I should evaluate whether I did the “right thing” or not. I only had my moral judgement and was taking the stand that a man beating his wife was not justifiable even if it was to a certain extent condoned in the privacy of the home. These incidents caused discussions with and between the neighbours and although this was not the intention at the time, I gained valuable insights that I would

not have gained otherwise about how this man, his wife and their neighbours viewed the proper roles, responsibilities and behaviours of husbands and wives and how they viewed domestic violence.

One way I felt I could perhaps give back to the community was by giving information. Oakley argues that in a situation where women ask advice from a researcher about issues such as their children's health, it would be irresponsible not to give an answer (1981). I freely offered advice, mostly on health issues when I felt it was needed. My dilemma was avoiding being disrespectful of local customs and beliefs. For example, when children were not being taken to the hospital and I suspected that they had malaria and would not be cured by the *curandeiro* or on their own. I felt compelled to try to convince people to take children to the hospital. In some cases I discovered that they had a problem with paying for malaria medicine and offered to pay it. As I saw it, I could not stand aside and observe where my interference could possibly save a life.

At one point I had become so involved in the health of a woman in the village that I felt it was starting to affect my research as it took up so much of my time. She had asked me to go with her to the hospital as she complained that she did not have access to the doctor. This led to her being sent to the provincial town for tests, which required that I go with her and help her in the whole process. Eventually we found out that she was HIV positive and in need of medication. As it was not available in Maganja at the time I took responsibility for helping her travel and acquire the medicine long after I had left the field and until the medicine became available in Maganja. This is something I am happy about as she is still alive and doing well, whereas I have received news of three neighbours dying of AIDS since I left.

It could be frustrating when people did not listen to my advice. I had to accept that life would go on as usual after I had left the field and that I had done my best by offering help. I tried to contribute towards the community in other ways that I will not discuss at length as it would require too much space such as: providing some English lessons at the primary school, assisting women to write letters to claim their rights at the office of Social Affairs and assisting some children with school clothes and materials.

### ***The Economics of Relationships***

*Talking about using your participants and not leaving anything behind I think that in my case it is the opposite. (fieldnotes 27/5/05)*

This is one of many entries in my fieldnotes reflecting how different people came to see me as someone who could assist them in different ways. I go on to describe how in the course of a day: I was approached by a man and a woman as they thought I might be able to help them get a job at Action Aid; a young man asked me for money as he needed to have an identity card made; on returning home, the local chief was waiting for me as someone had told him that I was going to move to a different neighbourhood and start working with orphans. He wanted to make sure that if I had money for a project I would use it in his neighbourhood.

Fieldworkers soon realise that they cannot be social members of the community without an economic engagement. A researcher who decides to share nothing, give nothing, help nobody and demand nothing will not be considered as a member of that society. The question for most researchers is how to affirm their social membership of a community without distorting it by their peculiar access to wealth and power. (Wilson, 1992:193)

As Wilson points out, reciprocity is important. He also later warns that the researcher should not give more than can be repaid in some way. Otherwise he will create a relationship of the donor and dependant and this may create negative feelings if the dependant expects more than the researcher is willing or able to give. Trying to adhere to this principle was not easy as I sometimes did not know what the appropriate behaviour was and asking sometimes did not get me any answers as this extract from my fieldnotes demonstrates:

*On the way back I don't know how many people said "boas festas" and this is asking for money. I did not know what to say really, but pretended that I didn't know what they meant and said "boas festas" back. I then asked Laila how to respond and she said that if people had money they could give some, if not they said "obrigada" [thank you]. I asked if they would be offended if I didn't give them money and she said they wouldn't. (Fieldnotes 7/4/05)*

I had discovered that on festive days being greeted with the phrase “happy holiday” actually meant that people were asking me for money. I was not sure what the appropriate behaviour from my side was and did not find Laila’s answer that I could either give money or not very helpful. As I had learned that giving away money gave the impression that I had a lot of it and created more demand for my help, I preferred to pretend that I understood it literally and not in the way it was meant. I found such situations stressful as I was caught between wanting to help and avoiding becoming the village donor. I would occasionally become annoyed when asked for money by children or drunken men and respond with a phrase that rhymed: “branco não é banco” or a white person is not a bank. Deep down I felt I was being arrogant, something that I disliked, but felt was necessary in the situation. People overhearing this usually found it funny and laughed. Although I wanted to give back to community, doing so was a two-edged sword and I sometimes felt used: “*Today I feel taken advantage of and am tired of all the people who want to use me in different ways*” (fieldnotes 2/6/05).

Within the family I lived with, I fell into the trap warned against by Wilson, which at times created negative feelings on both sides. Hearing phrases like: “*When Marta leaves I will die*” (fieldnotes 28/4/05) made me worry about the family becoming dependant on me and the ethics of then leaving again. Still, I also saw it as a learning opportunity:

*If subjects manage to “use me” in some way to get their agenda across, can that not be a part of the research data, to recognize their ways of using power, their ways of performing agency, using social capital? (Fieldnotes 23/2/05)*

My solution was to continue supporting the family after I left the field, especially for the three years I was working in Maputo, as it was logistically much easier than from England or Iceland. I have particularly assisted them in regard to health issues and the education of the children. This has extended to some of their extended family members who I also got close to during my stay. Seven years on, the eldest child has completed professional training, got a job and now supports the rest of the family. We communicate regularly by phone, he sometimes calls me ‘*mother*’. I refer to them as: “*My Mozambican family*” and a picture of myself with the family hangs

among my family photos. When people I know in the community die, I am notified via text message, which tells me that by some people I am perceived as “part of family”.

### ***The Possibility of Causing your Participants Harm***

Kelly et al. point out that researchers need to be aware that their research can potentially cause harm and be experienced as an intrusion or imposition. They hold that this is especially true when “in-depth ethnographic methods” are used over a long time period (Kelly, et al., 1994:36). Similarly, Warwick reminds that research should not “cause physical, mental, social, or political harm to participants, including embarrassment, demeaning treatment, damage to one’s reputation, anxiety, or reprisals from the government” (Warwick, 1983:327). What constitutes as doing harm can, however, be different depending on different cultural contexts (Mokake, 2005).

I was aware that discussing experiences of domestic violence might cause psychological stress and suffering for my participants and did my best to be cautious and sensitive during the interviews (Silva, et al., 1999). Pickup suggests that researchers who look into domestic violence could give back to their participants by advising them on legal and other supporting structures they could seek out after the interview (2001). I found out that these structures did not work well in Maganja, so there was little I could do to be of practical help in such instances. The only thing I could do was provide a sympathetic ear.

My main dilemma about the possibility of doing harm regarded the family I lived with. One night I was woken up by a noise in my room that I did not recognize. I suspected it came from a rat, but it was not like a typical rat noise. The animal seemed to be running round and round my mosquito tent and up and along the walls as well. I turned my flashlight on and eventually caught a glimpse of a rat in a corner. The next morning as I was eating breakfast with the family I started telling this story and keeping the story as colourful as it had felt, suggesting that this rat must have been crazy as it had run around the tent like mad. The 15 year old son in the household then commented that this meant that it had not been a normal rat. To make

a long story short he explained to me that some people might be jealous that I was staying with them and might have turned a person into a rat by black magic and sent it to harm me. A few days earlier Laila had been throwing salt on the floor of our house. When I asked what she was doing she said that she did this to keep bad spirits away and I had wondered whether she believed that my stay might be causing them problems. The belief in the spirit world and in the power of jealous others to cause harm by black magic was a big part of social reality where I lived. With these two incidents I realized that although I did not believe in black magic, the people I was living with perceived it as a real threat and I was causing it by living with them. I discussed with Laila whether I should move out. She assured me that if they got sick it would not be because of me and that I should stay. I stayed as I did not really believe in black magic and therefore was not concerned that they would be harmed in that way and as I understood that she was willing to take the risk of having me. I realized that in a way the family had started depending on me or benefiting from my stay to the extent that they preferred to risk the possible danger of having me there.

Another aspect of the possibility of harm regards the researcher. What I was most concerned about was my health particularly in regard to malaria. Another potential hazard was travelling on the local transport. Although most people in Maganja were deeply impoverished I felt safe there, but took precaution not to travel alone very late at night or flash my belongings around more than needed. When I was introduced in the community the local chief talked about how I was their guest and how they had to take care of me and I never felt in any danger.

Health is not only physical but also emotional. Witnessing or hearing about illness, hunger, violence, loss of children, lack of hope and so on was often emotionally draining. I remember thinking that people who carried out this kind of research should have a counsellor back at the university whom they could call. Similar to the mentors that psychologists and psychiatrists often have. Being alone and not able to talk about such experience with anyone (I neither had frequent access to the internet nor telephone) was challenging at times. I was lucky that an Icelandic man and his Mozambican wife lived in Quelimane. Out of a population of just over 300 000 the odds of two Icelandic people in this part of the world are not very high creating an immediate bond. They opened their house and “adopted” me while I was in Maganja.

I made sure to go there regularly and vent to this Icelandic friend who sometimes had his own grievance to share.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

Before fieldwork, I had prepared myself by reading literature, carrying out a pilot study, and consulting people who had done research in rural Mozambique. Ultimately, however, it is impossible to forecast what will happen when going to another community as a researcher over an extended period of time. To some extent it always requires acting according to one's understanding of the situation and one's best judgement (Webb, 2006). In this chapter I have described my methodology and research methods, the process of carrying out research and some of the practical and ethical issues that came up and how I dealt with those. The following four chapters comprise the empirical section of the thesis.

## CHAPTER 5: WHY MEN DO NOT WANT WOMEN TO STUDY: EXPLORING DOMINANT DISCOURSES ON GENDERED IDENTITIES AND EDUCATION

### 5.1 Introduction

*Dr. Marta has a husband, this is an example. You are living in your house, but who works is your husband. You have a low level of education, you did not study, you didn't go to school but your husband has 10th grade and goes to work. At that time when Dr. Marta did not have an educational level, had not studied you constantly washed your husband's clothes, you ironed for your husband. Your husband said: "Lets do this Mrs. Marta" and you accepted everything he said, because he was your husband you accepted. But your husband thinks porra<sup>39</sup> my wife is illiterate let's put her in school. Dr. Marta did her first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eight, ninth, until 10th grade. Your level of knowledge already equals your husband's. So from then on in terms of scientific knowledge there is no difference from your husband. So when your husband says: "Make breakfast for me very early I'm going to work" you say: "Epa I am occupied" and so on. You are already not in agreement with your husband. Your husband...manages to arrange a job for you, you start to work. Then Mrs. Marta receives a lot of money. So when your husband says: "Epa, wash my clothes, polish my shoes" now you will not shine his shoes because you have money. Your husband receives five million Meticaïs; you receive five million, so now already you can not respect your husband. So from then on you can divorce. (Carlos, interview 28/05/05)*

The thesis started with a similar quote by the same young man, Carlos. There the question was why men prohibited their wives from studying. Here I had asked him what people meant when they said a woman would lose respect for her husband when she studied. Again, Carlos uses a hypothetical narrative, here putting me as one

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<sup>39</sup> An exclamation, here indicating that this is not good enough, translation could be in the line of 'damn it'

of the main characters. Maybe because he felt he had already explained this to me and thought that if I put myself in the position of the woman I would relate to the situation more easily. Carlos links education, identity and power and suggests that it is because I am less educated and knowledgeable than my husband that I am submissive and do everything he tells me. Then my husband decides that it is not good that I am illiterate and decides to put me in school, which illustrates the notion that it is up to the husband whether I study or not. The story then portrays how I am transformed from being illiterate to being educated and how this changes my attitudes and behaviour towards my husband. The first change happens when I have an equal educational level as my husband and this leads to my questioning his commands. The second transformation occurs when I get a job. Once I become financially independent, I defy my husband. This is seen as a loss of respect for him, inevitably resulting in a divorce as it goes against established norms about power relations in the marriage.

This chapter can be read as an ethnographic introduction to the case stories that follow. I explore the themes emerging from Carlos's narrative on the issue of men prohibiting their wives from studying. I look at perceptions of gendered power relations within the marriage, of different forms of education and of how education can influence women's femininity and lives. As the focus is not on individual lives, but rather on more general perceptions, I draw on ethnographic data, including focus group sessions and informal conversations, as well as interviews. I am not attempting to create an exhaustive list of discourses but rather, bringing out what I see as the main recurrent themes in focus groups as well as in the case stories. I draw on both the voices of men and women as they might position themselves differently in relation to these discourses, depending on their own gendered identity.

## **5.2 The 'Head of Household' and 'Respectful Wife'**

Carlos talked about respect. It was a term often used in relation to power relations of different kinds. Students were supposed to respect their teachers, younger people those older, employees their employers. It carried a notion of showing submissiveness towards those you respected and in a marriage, it was the wife who

was supposed to be submissive and serve her husband, as illustrated by the quote below.

*The man knows about the woman's rights, but he doesn't want to explain them to her because he thinks that he is the master of the house, he is everything. Because in Mozambique the wife is practically the maid of the house, she has to serve everything to her husband. (Carlos, interview 28/5/05)*

*A man comes home at two o'clock in the morning after drinking and wakes up his wife to cook; he says: "I want to eat". She gets up to cook for him. Later he wants to have sex and she cannot refuse it. (Bernardo, fieldnotes 04/03/05)*

Here two men Carlos and Bernardo portray the relationship between a man and his wife as that of a man and his maid. They suggest that women do not have the power to make decisions over their sexuality but instead have to obey their husbands. Carlos refers to the husband as the master. Both Carlos and Bernardo worked with NGOs promoting women's rights and I found them unusually articulate about injustices in the conjugal relationship.

A husband was commonly referred to as 'head of household'. The following quote by Sonia (see chapter 7) suggests that the power of the 'head of household' is derived from being the 'provider' of cash.

*S: [The man] is head of household, he is the head of household yes because.. I am not working...I am not going to buy anything because I don't have money. He would start to make complications: "With what money did you buy this thing when you don't work"? See! Since he is the head of household, since he works he takes money and buys something for me...now this is a head of household.*

*ME: But if both work, is that different?*

*S: Working is different, yes*

ME: So one day when you start working, for example as a teacher will he continue being the head of household or will it change?

*S: No he will continue being the head, he will continue... You can not say as I am working now you are going to be the head but I am also going to be the head, no then you will not get along...*

ME: Is this the respect that people talk about?

*S: Yes it is respect.*

ME: So when they say that women lose respect is when they come home..

*S: Yes and start fighting. He is the head of household, he is the head of household.*

ME: And when women start saying you are not the head of household?

*S: Then they start fighting saying: "What do you mean I'm not the head of household"? (Interview 24/8/05)*

Sonia portrays the power relationship between the wife and husband in terms of a hierarchy where the man is positioned above the wife as 'head of household'. She talks as if she agrees with this order of things, for example by repeating phrases such as "*he is the head of household*". She appears to be claiming that if women challenge this power, problems in the household ensue. Therefore, the wife should continue showing her husband the same kind of respect, even if she also gets an income.

The following extracts illustrate my interaction with women in FG9<sup>40</sup> when I asked them what they meant by respect. They were probably not used to being asked to explain a concept that to them was obvious. D: Dária, M: Marlene, C: Clara, ME: Marta.

ME: Respecting the husband. I need to know what this means. How do you respect your husbands? How do you speak? What do you do?

*D: Not speaking loudly to your husband*

*M: Also getting along with him well at home*

*C: Getting along well. When the husband comes home from work or travelling, heating water and putting it into the bathroom, putting food on the table, doing everything he asks for.*

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<sup>40</sup> FG stands for Focus Group followed by its number (see chapter 3 for a description of the focus groups)

*M: Even if he wants to beat you, are you going to obey being beaten also?*

[Laughs]

The women in FG9 were all married, except for one who was widowed so I assume that they were speaking from their own pools of experiences. The women cited here emphasize that women should be submissive to their husband and list proper ways of serving him and thereby showing their respect for him. I probe further into what they mean when they say that a woman should not speak loudly.

*D: If he calls for you and you respond in a bad way [shouting out in an angry voice] “ijaa why are you bothering me”. If this happens he will think “ijiii my wife is undisciplined there is a lot of things going on”. If he has a friend, and you respond in this way, wherever he goes he will say that the wife of so and so is very undisciplined, that she does not consider people not even guests.*

ME: umhm, aha, so you must not respond like that, agitated?

*D: You must not.*

ME: You have to say “yes my husband” [acting out in a submissive voice]

[women giggle].

ME: [in submissive voice] “what do you want my husband”?

[Women laugh].

*D: If he comes home angry and you say to him “iiii why are you angry” then he is going to get angry at you.*

ME: You can not be angry at him?

*D: No*

ME: But is it like that? Don't women here get angry at their husbands?

Don't they shout “vavavavava” [acting out in an angry voice]?

*C: Some women do*

*M: Shouting is abusing your husband, acting as if he is not your husband*

ME: So you should not do that?

*M: Some women also beat their husbands*

It is evident here that by not ‘speaking loudly’ they mean that women should not confront their husbands by raising their voices. Especially not in the company of others as this will show them in a very bad light. The giggle and laughter when I mimicked a very submissive wife suggests that my performance of a woman who

does not question anything her husband tells her to do was exaggerated. This is not what they mean. Marlene had questioned what the other women were saying by ironically asking them whether this included accepting being beaten. She also points out that not all women behave according to the ideal the women were describing and that some women may beat their husbands, thus suggesting a more complex reality of gender relations. It was clear from her tone of voice, however, that she saw the behaviour she was describing as unacceptable. I probed into what they saw as disrespectful.

ME. So how is not respecting? Abusing the husband? If he for example asks why the food is not ready and you respond “aaaa don’t bother me I went out”, is this abuse?

*M: yes*

*D: if you say to him “aaaa where were you? Why did you not cook yourself since you were here and saw that I was getting late, you could have cooked the food yourself and eaten”?*

ME: umm

*D: Now when he hears this he thinks: “but this answer she is giving me. Isn’t it the woman who has the right to cook”? He thinks this to himself.*

ME: Where I come from if my husband asked me why I had not gotten home earlier to cook we would say “iee do you think I am your maid, are we not equal? Why did you not do it if you got home first”? Then he will be quiet.

[Women laugh shortly].

*D: If a woman here responded this way he would call for her mother and father and say to them “your daughter talks like this.. she responds like that.. she was not brought up properly, you have to teach your daughter”. It has become a problem, because she answered like that.*

When I give a hypothetical example of telling a man to cook, I am drawing on feminist discourses from Iceland that men should take on some of the work in the household. Their short laughter indicates that they found this out of the question in their own context. The husband would be surprised as it is the woman’s right to cook. As discussed in chapter 1, women in traditional matrilineal societies in Northern Mozambique had control over food (Arnfred, 2011). The kitchen was the woman’s sphere and it was seen as an offence if the

husband interfered. The women explain that these norms stem from women's upbringing and that not behaving accordingly will reflect badly not only on them but also on their parents. The expressive *iiiiie* further emphasizes the inappropriateness of such behaviour.

Although taking care of housework was described above as women's responsibility, some husbands helped out at home as reported by Marlene in a subsequent interview:

*My husband helps me, yes he fetches water, and he bathes the child while I go to the machamba. On Saturdays he stays at home and does housework. So some women say: “No way! This is black magic. It is not possible that a normal [literally a complete] husband is doing housework, that he is fetching water and washing clothes while the wife is present”. I also heard other women when for example a man wants to help them they say “*iii but this is my job. Other women will think that I am not managing*”. (Interview 25/05)*

Marlene sees childminding and housework as her responsibility and appreciates that her husband helps her, as he is not trying take over her responsibilities. She explains that some women would interpret their husband's offer to participate in housework as their sign that they were not doing it properly. Thus, the gendered division of labour is maintained not only by men but by women. Marlene said that her husband was different from other men in Maganja because he came from the city where he had learnt other ways. He was taking up a subject position in an alternative, more 'urban' discourse of men who help with housework.

Going back to FG9, the women reproduced an analogy I sometimes came across that suggests that men having power over their wives is the natural order of things, as it is similar to the ways things work in nature:

ME: So this respect means that the husband is more than the wife?

Wa<sup>41</sup>: *umm*

W: *yes*

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<sup>41</sup> At this point the video tape had come to the end. Each line represents a take in turn, but as I can not tell the women apart with certainty I use W for woman. I can hear that Dária is the same woman as before and Wa is always the same person.

*Wa: Who is the rooster? Who is it that crows?-*

*W: It is the rooster*

*Wa – who crows - [more than one talking difficult to hear]*

*D: You are here because of me, it is thanks to me that you are studying, so why do you not show me respect....What have I not provided for you in this house?*

*Another woman: sjaaa<sup>42</sup>*

ME. And if you respond: “but what is it that you are eating? Are you not eating the products from my field, are you not eating thanks to me?”

*W: sjaaa-*

*D: They do not value the field*

*W: sjaaa-*

*D: -they only want their money in their pocket.*

*Another woman: sjaaa*

ME: “are you not wearing clean clothes thanks to me”? Do they not value that?

*W: sjaaaa*

*W: he will ask you “who is it that buys the soap to wash my clothes, isn't it me, so what is your problem”? You really do not have the voice to respond, if you respond badly he will beat you immediately?*

M: Beat you?

*D: Yes [women laugh embarrassingly]. (FG 9, 20/08/05)*

I did not get an explanation of what the commonality was between a rooster and a husband as people seemed to expect that I understood it. I interpret their analogy to mean that they see the status of husband's vis-à-vis their wives as natural and do not question it. Although when I asked them whether they could not point out their own contribution to the household they suggested that they saw the relationships as unequal: “*You really do not have the voice to respond, if you respond badly he will beat you immediately*”.

The women appear to be linking women's submissiveness in the household to the gendered division of labour. They position women as responsible for producing food

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<sup>42</sup> Sjaaaa is used to emphasize.

on the field, cooking and serving it, while they position men as the providers in terms of cash “*what have I not provided for you in this house*”? In relation to this, they bring up the costs of their schooling and that these are expected to be paid by the husband “*If you are here because of me, if it is thanks to me that you are studying, so why do you not show me respect*”. The women hold that activities done by women are not given as high a value as activities earning cash income: “*they do not value the field; they only want their money in their pocket*.”

So far I have discussed the dominant discourses of the wife as ‘respectful’ and serving her husband and of the husband as the ‘head of household’ and ‘provider’. I describe those as dominant discourses here as they were ‘ideal’ or ‘emphasized’ (Connell, 1987) characterisations of femininity and masculinity, the way women and men were supposed to behave. I have also described an alternative discourse of the ‘disrespectful wife’ who speaks loudly and contradicts her husband. As I explore in the next section, there was also an alternative discourse of men in which they were described as not fulfilling their role as the ‘provider’ but instead ‘abandoning’ women and children.

### **5.3 Men who ‘Run away’ and Women who ‘Suffer’: Changing Gender Relations.**

*He was my boyfriend, but when I got pregnant he ran away from me.  
(Fieldnotes 18/7/05)*

*A student in school conquered me. I got pregnant by him, he talked to his parents and told them it was his child....Then the boy was convinced by his mother, she gave him money and he went to Maputo and abandoned me with the child... Another man showed up and said: “I want to marry you”. I did not have soap; I did not have a house... I had two children with him. Then he left me, he is in Maputo now. He doesn’t even write to me, nor does he give me anything for the children. (Fieldnotes 27/5/05)*

These two quotes reflect a different type of masculinity from the 'provider': that of the father who runs away and does not take responsibility as a husband and a father. Many of the women I talked to were bringing up their children alone and complained about the lack of support. It could suggest that masculinities were changing and men did not see it as their responsibility to take care of children. In the context of unemployment and poverty, it could also be seen as men's inability to fulfil their roles. Divorces are not uncommon in traditional matrilineal societies (Arnfred, 2011) but with changes in family structures, women in Maganja lacked the previous support of extended families. Some people also complained that young girls did not listen to their elders and that norms about sexual mores had changed, resulting in unwanted pregnancies. It was then often the grandmother who took on the responsibility for the child and its mother:

*I would like my daughter to be married. I would like to go to her house and visit and eat there instead of having her living in my house and having to provide for her and her children. Now I don't have any option. I have many daughters who did not study, I also have grandchildren at home, for them to study it is necessary to pay for registration, exercise books, pencils, sometimes the teachers also ask for money. It is because of this that we are full of poverty. (Fieldnotes 21/08/05)*

It was common for men to go to cities or to the mines in South Africa in search of work. As there was no formal infrastructure for transferring money to Maganja and no mobile network at the time, some women waited without support from their husband and without knowing whether he would return. I was told that often men formed families in the new place and forgot about the old one:

*There are a lot of premature marriages here. Eighteen year old they already have many children. Then the man escapes or goes to work somewhere else, for example in Beira. When he sees the development there he doesn't want to return to this woman and leaves her. (Male government official, fieldnotes 3/5/05)*

Here it is suggested that Maganja is undeveloped and that men will prefer to stay with more developed women in cities.

Ana, Bela and Delfina who participated in FG1 all spoke rather bitterly about men and it was clear from the tone of their voices and from how their examples related to their own situation that they were talking from experience. Bela was a widow taking care of an orphaned child, Ana had seven children and had been left by her husband and Delfina was married to a man who had gone to South Africa as soon as they were married and had not come back. A year had passed and she commented that she did not know whether she should call herself married. These women described the suffering of single women.

*Ana: For single women who are not married it is the worst they are suffering a lot.*

*Bela: Sji here in Maganja there is suffering; it is not like in the city. It is worth it being in the city, right!....In the city there is work...when is there work in our district?*

Bela and Ana link suffering with rural unemployment and then went on to describe economic poverty. They described being so hungry that they did not have the strength to work on the field and were unable to feed their children. They also linked poverty with not being able to send their children to school. They described depending on arranging cash from men, if not through a marriage or a stable relationship, then through exchanging sex for cash or goods.

*Bela: Sometimes she [an unmarried woman] does not have an exercise book to give her child to take to school. So she arranges a man to be her friend for at least a day.*

They then talk about how things had changed so that some men nowadays disrespected women by not offering anything in return for sexual favours.

*Ana: The one who sleeps with her leaves her-*

*Bela: -leaves her without giving her anything....*

*Ana: This is suffering*

Coming from a Northern feminist discourse in which women always feel bad if they engage in sex for money, I assumed that it was the engaging in sex for goods per se that Ana referred to as 'suffering'. Later on I learnt that this was not the case:

ME: If a woman has a friend for some time who always gives her money is this suffering as well or not?

*Bela: Not*

*Other woman<sup>43</sup>: This is not suffering because they made you know-*

*Two other women: They made a contract [They laugh] it could be for a year, depends on the contract. It is only this with meeting someone at the market, he says, let's go, you go this once, then he does not give you anything, he abuses you, you leave with nothing...this is suffering.*

The women suggest here that making a 'contract', where the man gives something in return for sex, is not suffering but a survival strategy. It seems that, as Arnfred found, these women saw female sexuality as a source of power (2011), but that the rules of the game were changing in that some men did not respect the tradition of rewarding a sexual encounter with money or a gift, leaving the women feeling disempowered and abused.

#### **5.4 Discourses on Illiteracy, the Purposes of Education and Work**

In Maganja having little or no schooling and being illiterate<sup>44</sup> were often used interchangeably. Illiterate people tended to be positioned as lacking in certain characteristics and qualities. The facilitator of a literacy class I observed told me that he was working with the first year students: "*Those who know nothing*" (fieldnotes 8/2/05). This notion of illiteracy as equivalent with ignorance was also reflected in a meeting held by the local education authorities with literacy facilitators where one facilitator told me that his job was about teaching adults who: "*Didn't know anything about life, but now they were already reading, already learning to speak Portuguese*" (fieldnotes 9/2/05). Another facilitator commented that illiterate people: "*Don't understand anything*". Yet another seemed to think that illiterate people were in the dark as he said that his job was about: "*Lifting the black cloth*".

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<sup>43</sup> When not using names it is because of not being able to make out from the audio recording who was speaking

<sup>44</sup> The term commonly used in Maganja about those who had not studied was '*analfabeto*', which in the Universal Portuguese-English Dictionary (1999) is translated as 'illiterate', 'analphabetic' or as a second meaning 'ignorant'. There seemed to be an assumption that the more you had studied the more you knew although some women said that upon completing 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade they had not known how to read or write.

There was also a notion that those who were not participating in the literacy programme were not doing anything worthwhile: As seen by the words of a facilitator who said that for those who did not study it was a: “*Disadvantage to sit at home and not do anything*” (fieldnotes 9/2/05). I also came across ideas of illiterate people as unsanitary and uncivilized as when a man told me that he could not take his illiterate wife to live with him in Quelimane where he worked:

*She can not go to Quelimane because she did not study, there is another culture there and with the sanitary level from here she will not manage.*  
(Fieldnotes 22/08/05)

Given the stigma of being illiterate, many participants were motivated by the desire to become ‘non-illiterate’ and thereby ‘non-ignorant’. For example, women in both the literacy programme and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades explained their motives for studying:

*“So that we are not left with our faces covered”.*

*“Before people would say ‘you are illiterate you don’t know anything’, now it is already better”.*

*“You learn to do things that you did not manage, you learn to speak like a person, speak better than before”.*

Others wanted to be able to vote without using their thumbprint:

*I went back to school because of this thing of voting. You see Ms Marta when you went there it was necessary to sign. So to sign I had to use my thumb, I did not know how to sign, so I started thinking it is preferable to continue studying to be able to sign.*

As seen here people tended to use the words literacy class and school synonymously, perhaps because the literacy programme was formal in the sense that there were exams every year that were linked to a progression in the formal school system.

Another reason women sometimes mentioned for wanting to study was that they did not want to be deceived by their husbands:

*Our husbands when they have affairs with women who know how to write they bring home letters and leave them around because they know that this one here does not know how to read or write and therefore they bring these*

*letters home. So this is what brings us here to learn to read and to write as well.*

Yet another aspect of becoming 'non-ignorant' was learning Portuguese: "*Because a person who does not study does not know how to speak Portuguese nor understand it*". Portuguese is the official language and the language used in literacy lessons. Although some people I met spoke Portuguese despite little formal schooling, it is here linked with going to school. Thus, becoming literate was linked to women's identity as it was linked with being more knowledgeable and skilled. Even when women did not aim to complete the literacy programme or continue in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, becoming literate was a source of self-esteem and more status in society.

For women who were in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade, the possibility of education leading to a paid job was a strong impetus to study. Rael was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade:

*Rael: A job is important. We are yearning for at least a day's work, to earn the bread for a day, when there is some job.*

*Rael: It is worst that when jobs come up where you work for a day they don't invite us, we have difficulties. It is worst for me, my husband is a teacher and gets a salary and he just likes to drink, he doesn't give his wife money, just drinks. Now I don't work and I am suffering. (FG10 30/08/05)*

When Rael uses the plural "*we have difficulties*" she is referring to women without formal educational qualifications. In the focus groups, some women talked about Action Aid hiring people on short-term contracts so it is probably this is the kind of work she is talking about when referring to a job for a day. I did not take it to mean that she did not have aspirations for full time employment, but that she felt frustrated that without qualifications she could not even get odd jobs that came along and had to depend completely on her husband.

The presence of Action Aid and other local NGOs explains why women often talked about needing education to be eligible for "projects":

*When projects come along, people are needed who know how to write, who have 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade. We are left behind. Those women who studied with us before are already teaching literacy classes. (FG7 23/7/05)*

Having paid employment was seen by many women as necessary, as suggested by the woman above who felt 'left behind', in contrast to the women who went with her to school and completed primary or secondary school. As seen in the example above, being a literacy facilitator was another employment option, since literacy provision was being expanded as a part of the government effort of decreasing illiteracy<sup>45</sup>. Being a facilitator required a 7th grade certificate. Women in FG1 described the hardship of women who had no formal education and had to earn a living by participating in the informal work sector:

*Bela: Who really suffers most it is us mothers; we suffer a lot with children. We have to do 'machamba' to raise children; we have to do 'negócio'<sup>46</sup>. Sometimes the child goes to school...but doesn't have an exercise book. (FG1 13/04/05)*

*Ana: -do 'ganho ganho*

*Bela: -do those things of yours*

ME: What is 'ganho ganho'?

*Bela: Someone has a job to do, "you go and work on my field" so you go and clear a field, are given an amount, the person gives you 10 Meticaís<sup>47</sup>. You take it and go and buy something at the market"*

*Ana: For your child*

*Bela: To provide for the child so the child can go to school.*

ME: Umhm...

*Bela: The problem is that there is no work for us women, many women are without work<sup>48</sup>*

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45 The goal was to hire 485 literacy facilitators in 2005, although they had not managed to fulfil the goal of 400 facilitators in 2004. The main problem was that qualified people did not possess the official identification document BI (SDEJC interview, 06/12/05).

<sup>46</sup> Small scale business.

<sup>47</sup> One USD was 24 Meticaís at the time so 10 Meticaís is less than 50 cents.

<sup>48</sup> Two sentences put together because of repetition

*Ana: don't work*

*Bela: We don't have a way to raise our children. Mothers suffer a lot, sjaaa*

ME: So there is no employment for women, but is there employment for men?

*Bela: There is employment for men.*

ME: but why is there no employment for women?

*Bela: we don't know «*

*Ana: because some don't know how to write.*

The two women here comment on how women are disadvantaged because of the gendered division in the labour market and lack of education. They distinguish between four different kinds of labour. Bela starts talking about how women do unpaid subsistence agriculture or '*machamba*' and '*negócio*' or small scale business. Ana then adds '*ganho ganho*', occasional labour done, such as carrying water or agricultural work for others. After speaking about these different types of labour they conclude that the problem is that there is no '*work*' for women. Thus, what they mean by '*work*' is formal, paid employment, which is mainly available to men. The explanation they offer for this difference between men and women is the difference in education levels. They point out that many women are illiterate, although they don't use that term but say that they do not know how to write.

### **5.5 Education as Unattainable and Possibly Useless for the Poor**

If women saw education as improving their self confidence and position in society, one might ask why so many of the women in my bairro or neighbourhood were illiterate and not participating in the literacy programme. This was one of the questions I explored in FG2, starting with asking whether education was beneficial for women. Marta: ME, Laila: L, Palmira: P

ME: I wanted to ask whether women here gain something when they study.

If they are gaining anything when they go to school or not?

L: “*Nothing*” [translates to the others in Nyaringa<sup>49</sup> and they say]: “*Nothing*”.

P: *Only when there is something, a preoccupation, already being a person, right! Getting far, here at the hospital, it depends, right! I need to ask the people, for them to say it is there that you register and how. When you know it yourself it is not necessary to ask*

L: *Here the person when she studies does not gain anything...even when people go, they don't have clothes. Like this “tia” (auntie) for example [points at an elderly participant], she doesn't have a husband, doesn't have anything... she has only this “capulana”<sup>50</sup> She doesn't have anyone to help her study. But nowadays the government doesn't bring anything, won't acknowledge this one.*

ME: So is it an advantage to study or not?

L: “*It is good*” [There is a discussion in the local language and they then say “*it is good*”. After more conversation between them in the local language Laila continues]: *So we are going to lose more, here it is preferable to go to the machamba than to study a lot, now, you can study and not gain anything, it is preferable to go and cultivate. (FG2 8/5/2005)*

First Laila says that one does not gain anything from studying. Then later on she agrees with other women that it is good to study. Then after a discussion in the local language she concludes that it is preferable for them to cultivate on their machamba, as their time in school might not amount to anything and therefore they might lose more than they gained by studying. This may seem to be a contradiction and it shows that my question whether it was advantageous to study or not was too simplistic for a complex issue. Going to school was seen as an investment in time, school materials and clothes. Therefore, people had to measure their time and resources against the expected gains and evaluate whether or not education was worth their while. Given the cost of educating children, women might prefer to invest scarce resources in their children in the hope they would take care of them in old age. Palmira, for example, had two sons in 8th grade.

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<sup>49</sup> Some of the women in this focus group did not speak Portuguese and Laila translated for them.

<sup>50</sup> Traditional clothing, a cloth wrapped around like a skirt.

Laila had a job as a housekeeper and received a monthly wage, although she was only paid 25 per cent of the official minimum salary. For her the question was probably what she would earn additionally by going back to school. Especially since the word I used in my question, gain, 'ganhar' also means to earn in Portuguese. Palmira, on the other hand, was unemployed and in poor health and often needed to go to the hospital. For her, being educated clearly had to do with identity with "being a person" and not being seen as ignorant when asking for directions and information at the hospital. Later in the conversation they said that even with education, people in their neighbourhood did not get jobs. They said that in order to get a job you had to "know someone, suggesting that it was not enough to study; you also needed to have the right social network. Whilst these women did not see studying as necessarily a way to a job and out of poverty, poverty was clearly seen as a barrier to studying:

*Laila<sup>51</sup>: It is good to study. The possibility for studying is just missing...Lack of materials...you need many things in school...an exercise book, a pencil, a pen. When a person does not have it she cannot go to school. Do you go to school without clothes?*

*The other women: No, no*

*Laila: You will feel embarrassed*

For them literacy class is perceived to be the same as school, where children are expected to wear a uniform. Thus, although in their case the literacy lessons were conducted under the branches of a tree and did not require special clothes or footwear<sup>52</sup> they still felt that they had to dress in a certain way to attend<sup>53</sup>. It seems to be a question of dignity of not wanting to be seen as poor by the other learners. The women suggest that it is not only because they are poor themselves that they cannot attend school, but also because their husbands are poor.

*Palmira: Because men, they don't work- a man with little money is he going to give it to his wife to buy an exercise book?*

*Woman: Our husbands don't work, they are poor.*

*Laila: The one who helps the wife to go to school is the husband.*

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51 Some of the women did not speak Portuguese or preferred to speak in the local language. In these cases Laila summarized in Portuguese what they had said.

52 In this neighbourhood most people could not afford to buy proper shoes. The women are referring to plastic slippers which were the cheapest footwear available.

53 I am not suggesting here that poverty was not a real barrier for women, as participants had to buy a minimum of a pencil, two exercise books and a pen. Buying school materials thus competed with other needs such as food and clothes and it seemed to me that women often preferred to buy school materials for their children than themselves.

*Woman: Exactly!*

*Laila: ...Nowadays men don't work, where is he going to get money for his wife to go to school? You [the woman] have to fetch a coconut to sell otherwise you don't eat.. now are you going to be thinking about an exercise book and a pencil to go school?...Other men here are fishermen...their wives are not thinking about school, they have to run after them with a bale to be ready to sell the catch.*

*Woman: All women are lacking the possibility to study, married or not married.*

*Laila: Each woman, all from here. No one knows how to write here, no one.*

I see this extract as again indicating the differences perceived between the responsibilities of men and women within the household. It is the man who is supposed to provide school materials and clothes for school, not the wife. Her role is to feed the family with what she can earn as in Laila's example selling a coconut from her tree or the catch from the husband. It seemed to me that women would not spend their own income on school materials for themselves unless they were really determined to study and had no husband, or if they had a husband who refused to help, like Olga and Nielete in chapter 7.

Another aspect I see as relevant here is the sense of vulnerability and lack of hope for a better future often expressed by women in the village. As Palmira once said when I asked her why she did not study: "*I could die tomorrow*" (fieldnotes 25/4/05). In other words, why waste my time if I am likely not to live to reap the benefits. In any case, the women did not see themselves as the sort of women who study. They seemed to be suggesting that in order to be able to study, their economic situation would first have to improve. This is the reverse of the development discourse I more frequently came across, for example during a lunch with government officials:

*We need to finish this poverty and we can not do that unless people learn to read and write. People cannot participate in development if they don't even know A, B, C. (fieldnotes 2/6/05)*

Although the women in FG2 said that they were too poor to study, they nonetheless saw studying as essentially good. This view of education as 'good' could of course

have come from the promotion of women's literacy and thus have become a 'regime of truth' in the Foucauldian sense: a discourse one could not contradict as it was seen as the unquestionable truth (Foucault, 1991).

### **5.6 Discourses on why some Men do not want their Wives to Study**

Carlos, quoted at the start of this chapter, claimed that when women became educated they became abusive towards their husbands. This argument was often made.

#### ***The 'Abusive' Educated Wife***

*W: Some women deprecate their husband as if he was not their husband, they abuse him as if he were a child.*

*D: It is because of this that many men prohibit their wives to study, because when they study, they start answering back their husbands. The husband did not study he sells things at the market. You come home from work and your husband says: "ijaa where have you been, why are you so late you finished work a long time ago"? You respond: "Ijaa why are you controlling my life? If I am working and earning money and I do everything for you here, what do you want from me?" It is because of this that some men do not want their wives to study because then they speak like this to their husbands. (FG9, 20/08/05)*

Like Carlos at the beginning of the chapter, Dária above seems to perceive education as changing the power dynamics in the marriage; an association is being made between women who have studied and women who challenge their husband's power. This seems linked to her relative education vis-à-vis her husband who did not study. Education is seen in terms of what it might lead to, in this case, the wife's employment, rather than her education per se. It is worth highlighting that while the husband sells things at the market, he does not have a formal job, again indicating that formal employment was given more value than work in the informal sector. Thus, the woman saying: "*If I am working and earning money and do everything for you here*", implies that it is she who is doing the "real work" and bringing home the

“real income” and that therefore she has crossed over to the domain of the husband as provider. It also implies, however, that he has not crossed over to her domain of taking care of the household, as she is doing ‘everything’. Thus, it does not signify a reversal of gendered roles, but rather that the wife has taken over some of the roles of the husband and thereby some of his power. She has done this, both by being more educated and earning more than her husband.

The following extract from FG6 also demonstrates how education and work are seen as closely interlinked and portrayed as affecting women’s behaviour towards their husband. Eferina is a female literacy facilitator and Nuno is a male participant:

*Eferina: You know Mrs. Marta the majority of men say that when a woman studies or works there will be no agreement in the house.*

*ME: umm*

*Eferina: They say that women abuse when they work*

*Nuno: It happens*

*ME: umm*

*Nuno: It really happens. The woman studies a lot while the husband is illiterate*

*ME: umm*

*Nuno: She starts insulting him*

[Women laugh]

*Nuno: It is true!*

*ME: umm*

*Nuno: Saying “you are nobody. I studied, I am earning money, but you are like this [poor and uneducated]...The woman earning a monthly salary starts to abuse. (FG6 30/05/05)*

Nuno suggests that with an increased level of education leading to a job, the power relations in a marriage change and that the woman then uses this reversal of gendered power relations to humiliate her husband. I found it interesting that Nuno used the phrase “you are nobody” as an example of this as some women I talked to used exactly the same phrase for themselves as an example of verbal abuse by their husbands.

Eferina and Nuno somewhat position themselves into opposite camps, depending on their gender. Eferina suggests that it is men rather than women who believe that women lose respect for their husbands when they study. She suggests that it is unjustified and furthermore states that it is “*the majority of men*”. Nuno defends men by arguing that these things really happen. Women are in the majority in the group and other female participants laugh as if to ridicule what he is saying. After a debate in the local language there then seems to be a consensus that some women abuse their husbands after studying and becoming employed, and that some men prohibit their wives to study to avoid this behaviour, as explained by Karim, a male literacy facilitator:

*Karim: Many husbands prohibit because the woman when she studies or works when she starts to work she starts to earn money then if she buys a pair of trousers and gives to her husband or a shirt then one day when there is a conflict-*

*Eferina: -An argument-*

*Karim: -yes an argument, then at that moment she will have to really bend her husband out of shape: “I went and bought this shirt for you because you were nobody, it was I who bought these trousers for you”...and then when they divorce and their things are divided then-*

*Woman: -she is going to take them-*

*Karim: -insults and I don't know what-*

*Man: -take away his trousers-*

*Karim: -take away his trousers because it was she who bought them*

*Man: -take away his trousers without waiting!*

Judging by the way Eferina and another woman chip in and repeat what Karim is saying, it seems, however, that the women who previously laughed at Nuno now agree that these things do happen. Interestingly, the symbol of the wife’s power in the example above is that she will start buying her husband clothes and then take them away if they divorce. As discussed earlier, it was generally seen as the role of the husband as the ‘provider’ to buy clothes for his wife. I had observed an interaction where a husband forcefully pulled the t-shirt off his wife when she wanted to leave him, with the words that it did not belong to her as he had bought it

for a previous wife. It seems that the perception here is that power is strongly linked with providing cash income; that power is seen as ‘power over’ that cannot be equally shared; and that the person in power is likely to use it to degrade the one with less power.

### *The Educated ‘Unfaithful’ Wife*

Another reason often mentioned for men not wanting their wife to study was jealousy:

*The husbands prohibit them to study because of jealousy. They think that they will go with other men. (Luciano, fieldnotes 13/4/05)*

It was sometimes suggested that women might sleep with co-students or men they got to know once they were outside of their home at night, but most often the teacher was implicated. People also used the word ‘teacher’ for literacy facilitators, although in the education system there was a distinction between the two<sup>54</sup>:

*There is distrust in homes. Men think that when a person goes to study she is not going to study but maybe to have an affair with the teacher. This is how they talk. (Olga, interview 10/06/05)*

When husbands’ jealousy of teachers was brought up in focus groups with women they tended to say that such suspicion was without cause. As one woman said, if she wanted to have an affair she did not need to go to school to find a man, she could just as easily see him at the well. When I asked women in FG8 whether their facilitators had ever hit on them, one exclaimed: “*Yes that is sure to happen, but the person just refuses*”. When another woman said that she thought they were too old, it was not like in school where teachers seduced young girls, the first woman told a story of how her facilitator in the literacy programme had refused to allow her to take the final exam because she refused to sleep with him. She had complained to the school director and had been allowed to take the exam. She concluded: “*It happens, this is how men are*” (FG8, 27/08/05).

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<sup>54</sup>Teachers were employed by the state, whereas facilitators signed a part time contract for a year at a time and did not receive a full salary but a much lower subsidy.

The issue was also brought up in FG6 where Karim, the male facilitator, dismissed such talk as men's misconceptions. Another male participant then stated that he was prohibiting his wife from studying because his former wife had gone to literacy classes and started an affair with her teacher.

*So what happened was that the teacher felt he should have a relationship with a student. So he started being with my wife and I heard from outside...I acted as if nothing had happened but one day I saw the teacher going to his house with my wife and I caught them there together.*

Karim then concluded: *"This is why he is saying that a part of the issue is that our women fail.* Here Karim might be suggesting that women are too weak to resist the teachers or he might be suggesting that women initiate a love affair with their teachers. After hearing this story, another man in the focus group shared a similar account of how his sister-in-law had been approached by her literacy facilitator:

*She comes to school and this teacher was planning to start having an affair with her, a married woman. So as the woman did not want the teacher she went and told her husband: There is a teacher at school who is always going after me... Then the husband caught him and took him directly to the police because the teacher was saying to her that if she did not have a relation with him he would not let her pass the class...The case was resolved there and the girl passed the class.*

The stories seemed to surprise Karim, indicating that sexual abuse of adult students was not an issue frequently discussed among facilitators or by educational authorities: *"I am discovering one thing that our friends... prohibit their wives to study because they are afraid of the teachers.*

An alternative discourse about women leaving their husband for other men as a result of studying seemed to have more to do with the notion that since a husband should be more educated than his wife, a wife would not be satisfied with a husband once she became more educated than he was.

*Marlene: My sister wants to study very much, but her husband is prohibiting her. She really wants to study but her husband says that she can not: "You at this age are going to study what"? She did the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade in the literacy programme.*

ME: And he was not prohibiting her to study then?

*Marlene: He was not prohibiting her.*

ME: And then when she wanted to go to 6<sup>th</sup> grade?

*Marlene: Then he prohibited her.*

ME: Why do you think he did that?

*Marlene: [laughs] He says: "If you go and study, you will run away from me," as he did not study he says: "As soon as you study you will meet a man who also works and will run away from me." So his wife says: "No, that is not true."*

ME: Do you think she would do that?

*Marlene: Iaaa No! (Interview 25/08/05)*

Marlene suggests that her brother-in-law did not mind his wife attending the adult literacy programme but felt it was a threat to their marriage if she continued in evening classes in the formal school system. Here again the issue of becoming educated and getting paid work is intertwined as she quotes him saying that if his wife studies she will meet another man who works. This again indicates the strong economic base of men's power in their marriage. As remarked by a man: "*Here when women earn more than their husbands it does not work*". When I asked why, he added: "*Because women will then stop considering their husbands, they will start doing whatever they like because they have the money*" (fieldnotes 6/5/05). Marlene refutes this generalisation when relating it to her sister. Her sound "Iaaa" suggests that it is a ridiculous notion that her sister would "*run away from*" her husband because she studied.

Perhaps the notion of a woman running away from a less educated husband did not only indicate that she might be less satisfied with her uneducated husband, but also that an educated woman had a better chance of 'catching' an educated man. This was suggested by women in FG9 who talked about how some educated and employed

men would only want a woman who was also educated and had a job. They saw this as a reason to study, as otherwise more educated women might steal their men away:

*H: Some women even say to you “you did not study, I studied and your husband is together with me now” ...Nowadays all men want a wife-*

*D: - a wife who studies*

*M: all men want a wife who works*

*C: who works, umm, who studies*

*H: So where do we get to, those who do not work?*

## **5.7 Discussion**

In this chapter I have drawn on ethnographic data such as focus groups, fieldnotes and interviews, to discuss alternative constructs of gendered identities in relation to marriage and education. The women in FG9, who were married themselves reflected a dominant discourse of women as primarily wives, mothers and agriculturalists. This involved a femininity of being respectful and submissive to their husband and serving him. A corresponding dominant discourse of masculinity was that of the ‘head of household’, the ‘provider’ who gave orders. The husband was positioned as above the wife in a power hierarchy, as having ‘power over’ her (Kabeer, 1994; Parpart, Rai, & Staudt, 2002; Rowlands, 1997). The legitimacy of his power was based on providing cash for the household and on women depending on that cash. The women in FG9 claimed that women's contribution in the home and on the field was not given the same value as cash contributions to the household. There was also an alternative masculinity of men who did not fulfil the ‘provider’ role, instead abandoning their wives and children. The women in FG1, who themselves were widows or had been left by men, positioned themselves in the provider role and as suffering, since they did not have access to formal jobs. Thus, how women positioned men and themselves was related to their own experiences in life.

The women in FG1 did not seem to be contesting the legitimacy of the ‘provider’ ideal, but rather complaining that nowadays men were not living up to that masculinity. Thus, economic and social changes were reflected in alternative discourses about masculinities and femininities. To some extent the “ideals” of the

behaviours of husbands and wives did not seem to have changed as much as individual realities. A similar point has been made about changing masculinities and femininities in countries such as South Africa (Gwagwa, 1998), Tanzania and Kenya (Silberschmith, 2001, 2004), where it is suggested that these are linked to increased male unemployment that makes it difficult for men to live up to their 'provider' role.

I have also discussed multiple discourses on the purposes, advantages as well as uselessness of adult education. These seemed to be related to people's own social positioning. In the cases I discussed, being educated (schooled) was linked with modernity and a better social position than being uneducated or illiterate, which was linked with ignorance and poverty. People talked about participating in the literacy class as going to school and this was linked with gaining self-confidence and the respect of others, as there seemed to be stigma associated with not knowing how to sign your name. Rael felt left behind because of getting married and not finishing school like some of her friends. She was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and linked schooling with getting a paid job with the completion of 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Women in FG1, FG2 and FG9 made links between 'education' and 'work' where formal jobs were seen as work and other activities in the informal sector, whereas activities in the household tended to be positioned as 'not work' and as having secondary value.

Maganja vila was what I would describe as a semi-urban area. It was being influenced by 'urban' discourses, as reflected by Marlene who had a husband from the city who did things differently than the local men. It was also influenced by 'global' development discourses such as illiteracy being equalled with ignorance, and education with modernity. NGOs working in the area and the expansion of the literacy classes had also created new employment opportunities for women. The women in FG2, who positioned themselves as very poor, argued that education was not for them as they had no one to support their studies and lacked the social network to get jobs even if they pursued education. Thus, education was linked with people's identity. Who you were, determined to a certain extent whether or not you studied; and whether or not you studied to a certain extent determined who you became.

New and alternative discourses create room for men and women to take up alternative subject positions. This chapter has indicated that taking up a subject position as an educated woman is sometimes associated with negative discourses of femininities. When focus group participants were asked why some men did not want their wives to study, two such discourses were predominant. One was that of the *'abusive'* wife who would stop respecting her husband once she became educated and the other was that of the *'unfaithful'* wife who might have an affair at school or abandon her husband for another man. The following three chapters will explore this issue further, by discussing case stories of women who had experienced problems in their marriages related to their education, and a contrasting situation in which a woman was being encouraged to study by her husband.

## CHAPTER 6: THE 'MODERN WOMAN' VERSUS 'THE GOOD WIFE'

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Maria, on her educational history and her relationship with her husband. Unlike most of the women I interviewed, Maria could be classified as 'middle-class'. The Zimbabwean feminist, Everjoice Win, has this to say about middle-class women in the South:

The middle-class woman is completely silenced and erased from the images of development and rights work. She is constantly reminded that development is about eradicating poverty and so it focuses on those defined as 'the poor' (read as resource-poor). Therefore her story and her experiences are not a part of the narrative. In essence, this means that women's lives are put in a kind of a league table and it is those that qualify which get addressed. (Win, 2007:82)

Win goes on to argue that the reason why so little attention has been paid to middle-class women in the South is that the "poor, powerless and invariably pregnant" woman is the image most likely to pull resources:

Like the fly-invested and emaciated black child that is so often used by international news agencies, the bare-footed African woman *sells*. Without her uttering a word, this poor woman puts in financial resources. Any researchers worth their salt have to go to the 'most remote' village to find her for their statistics on issues like access to water to be valid". (Win, 2007:79)

When I went to Mozambique I was one of those researchers, not because I intended to raise funds but because I was influenced by the discourses she refers to. For the same reason my interest was in basic literacy rather than higher education or lifelong learning. As Rosa Torres points out, when it comes to the South, the focus is on providing 'basic education' for the poor to secure their livelihoods, whereas in the North the focus is on lifelong learning for the "knowledge society" with the aim of "promoting active citizenship and the necessary knowledge, skills, values, attitudes

toward employment and work” (Torres, 2002:3-4). This leaves out people like Maria as she is one of the middle-class women Win refers to above. When I met her, I had completed my fieldwork and taken up a job in Maputo and she did not fit my perception of a research target. Unlike my research participants in Maganja, she had a university degree and came from the city. However, when she started telling me about how her husband was against her education I realized that it echoed some of the discourses about gender relations and about women’s education that I had heard in Maganja. Therefore, I felt that I was not moving outside the context of my fieldwork by sharing her story. Rather that I was including a voice that was underrepresented in research in the South.

Another aspect of Maria's story that struck me was how many similarities it had with my own life story. We were both in our late thirties. We had both felt a strong drive to study and an ambition beyond the role of a wife and a mother. We had also both been in a relationship where our partner tried to convince us to stop studying as they felt we had studied enough. As I see it, Maria decided to open up to me about her life because I volunteered some personal information about my own former relationship: As noted in my notes from one of our first conversations:

*It wasn't an interview although I asked her a lot of questions related to my research. It was a conversation where I [also] told her things from my life. I found her very open and I was open as well about my life, so it was a sharing of relationship experiences. (Fieldnotes 18/12/05)*

I think that the fact that I was an “other” as a foreigner was the main reason why Maria chose to tell me her story. Maria told me she felt she could confide in me as I understood her. She was not comfortable discussing some of her problems with her friends as she was afraid that they would judge her and possibly gossip about her secrets.

Once I realized Maria's story might be relevant to my research I asked her for permission to use it in my thesis, which she granted, providing that I concealed her identity. To that effect I have changed some facts that I felt were not paramount for the analysis. As I knew Maria over a longer period of time I have more knowledge about her life than

of women I sporadically met and our relationship was also different from women I knew through focus groups or interviews. It was based more on friendship than a researcher and subject relation. This I believe resulted in a more equal power relation between us and more trust. This case story is different from the ones in chapters 7 and 8 in that it is not based on a taped interview. I did not decide to use Maria's story until after I was back in England when it was too late to make a recorded interview. I had made notes of our conversations, usually the same day, but those can never be as accurate as the recorded interview sessions. Our conversations were also more influenced by my own former experiences and beliefs as there was more sharing of experiences and exploration of gender issues than in interviews and focus groups. Where I use direct quotes it is because they were written up as such in my fieldnotes, usually in Portuguese, as certain words or expressions she had used had stuck in my head.

## **6.2 Education against the Odds: Maria's Narrative**

Maria came from a large and poor family on the outskirts of Maputo. Her parents did not have the economic means to send their children to school but she was eager to study and was supported by her uncle who encouraged her to continue. When Maria had completed 10<sup>th</sup> grade, her uncle died. She wanted to continue studying and decided to look for a job so that she could continue studying at night. She found no job in Maputo but was offered an office job in a town in another province by a small NGO. She hesitated as there were few possibilities there to continue her education. Still she decided to take the job as she would be able to retain her independence:

*Even if I had to leave school I preferred to leave and take the job, to staying in Maputo and maybe having to get together with some guy because I could not support myself financially.*

In the town where Maria was working she met Paulo who had a similar level of education and was working for the government. They married and had two children. She was 24 at the time which, according to her, was a rather old age for a Mozambican woman to get married. Maria was doing well at her job and after a couple of years the NGO offered her a scholarship to study at a private institute in Maputo. This was a big opportunity and Maria was very eager to go, but when she discussed this with her husband “*ugly and dirty words came out*”. Paulo told her that

if she left for Maputo she could forget about their marriage. He would divorce her and marry someone else. Maria asked her parents to intervene:

*I said to them I want to study because my husband could die one day and leave me and then my children and I will suffer. So I want to study and I need you to help me convince my husband.*

Her parents said that they could not get involved. If he didn't want her to go she shouldn't. Maria turned the scholarship down. However, as she put it: *"God is great!"* Two years later she was again offered a scholarship and the people she was working with encouraged her to take it: *"People asked why I was not going to go to Maputo to do the course"*. So she took the issue up with Paulo again and as before he was against her going: *"He said that he had already told me that he would marry another woman"*. This time, Maria was not willing to turn the opportunity down and told him: *"Fine! If you want to divorce me divorce me I will get married to my studies"*. Maria took her daughters with her to Maputo and a relative to help with childcare. Her husband stayed behind and did not divorce her, but continued to express his disagreement with her decision. Maria returned home after the course and was promoted. She was now both more educated than her husband and earned more. Although she was successful at work she was *"suffering a lot"* because she was so unhappy in her marriage. Paulo accused her of putting her career ahead of her family. Maria said that she tried to get him to discuss their problems but he would ignore her. Then he would send her text messages with *"ugly things"* like: *"you are not a woman"*; *"you are ugly"*; *"you are nothing"*; *"you don't satisfy me anymore"*. She found these texts very hurtful. Paulo was jealous and accused her of sleeping with her colleagues at work and sometimes checked her mobile phone to see who had been calling her.

Maria had found out that Paulo had been seeing another woman when she was away studying and she suspected that he was still seeing her. She was worried that he might be having unprotected sex with more women and she regularly went for an HIV test but: *"thanks to God I still don't have it"*. Maria said that women in Mozambique did not have the voice to require from their partners that they use a condom, even when they knew they were being unfaithful. Men would say: *"So*

*have you been sleeping with a lot of men then, why do you want to use condoms”?*

According to Maria, in Mozambique men wanted to dominate:

*Here in Mozambique it is the men who give orders. The women are machines, for having sex, cooking food, washing clothes. When a man wants to have sex she has to do it. They don't want to change; they want the women to be slaves.*

Maria and Paulo also had conflicts regarding the division of costs in the household. They had bought the house together, but she had paid for renovations and bought furniture and various household appliances. He was supposed to pay certain costs, but was not keeping to his agreement. Maria said that it was common that when women earned a good salary men would stop contributing to the household and spend their salary on private things such as alcohol and other women instead. Maria felt that Paulo's family and friends played a big part in their marital problems and were influencing him by criticising her: *Your wife is not a good wife, she only wants to work. She doesn't respect us.* A part of this problem seemed to be over money: *A brother comes to us and asks for money. I say: "No, this was not planned, we made other plans with this money we are doing other things". "You don't respect my family, if it were your family...!"* Not respecting the husband's family would mean that the woman was not a 'good wife'.

Maria also felt emotionally neglected by Paulo. She said that she wanted affection and to be recognized for her hard work, but that this was not the case. Maria said she didn't know how she was going to manage to stay in her marriage as things seemed to be getting worse and worse. She was worried about what people would say if she divorced Paulo. She thought that he would say that he had paid for her studies and claim that now when she was more educated and had a better salary than he she felt he was no longer good enough for her. She was worried that everyone would believe this and condemn her. She said that no one would understand her, not even her best friends. Maria was also afraid to divorce Paulo as he had threatened to go to a witch doctor and put a curse on her. She believed this could lead to her losing her job and never getting another one so that she would *"just be sitting in the house"*. Maria also felt sorry for Paulo and feared that his drinking would get worse if she left him and he might end up on the street.

Maria believed that Paulo was unhappy as well. Still he did not want a divorce and Maria believed it was because she was practically paying for everything. She said that the only way for her to get out of the marriage would be to walk out and leave the house and everything in it to him. She suspected that he was trying to be so awful to her that she gave up and left so that he could invite the other woman to move in with him. Maria said she could not afford to give everything up and start a new because she was doing a part time course at the university and this was expensive. Continuing her education was very important to her: *“I need to study, I just want to study...Nowadays everyone is studying and I don’t want to be left behind”*.

### **6.3 The ‘Educated Career Woman’ as Incompatible with the ‘Good Wife’**

Maria seemed to see marriage as somewhat incompatible with being independent as she emphasized that she did not want to get married just in order to have someone to provide for her. Maria also seemed to see wifedom as somewhat incompatible with pursuing education, as she had tried to convince her younger sisters to postpone marriage and study. They had not followed her advice and she seemed pessimistic about their future:

*I was paying for my sister to go to school, but she got pregnant there and had to leave. So now she has two children, the husband doesn’t work and they have no money. They don’t even have shoes. What more can I do? I cannot give money to the mother, child and unemployed father”*.

As Maria saw it, the best way to ensure that her sisters could provide for themselves and their children was to assist them to study so that they could have a job and did not have to depend on husbands.

This was what she had done herself. When she met Paulo he was of a similar age, had a similar level of education and had a respectable and secure job. She talked about how the marriage had gone well in the beginning and as an example of this, she described how he would help her with housework by tidying up while she cooked and helping her clean on Saturdays. Her words that he helped indicate that she saw household work as her responsibility. The marriage had started to deteriorate

after a few years and Maria felt it was constantly getting worse. She thought that one of the reasons was her education and career: “*Mozambican men just want their wives to sit at home and stay in the kitchen*”. She believed that Paulo had an inferiority complex because she was more educated than he was. She had been encouraging him to go back to school and study: “*If he studied he would realize that a lot of women are studying and working and that might open his mind*”. This indicates that she saw his attitude as somewhat backwards and old fashioned. Whereas she had been encouraged to study by her colleagues, who had studied or lived in cities and acquired more ‘urban’ attitudes.

As long as Maria and Paulo had a similar level of education and positions with similar salaries, it seems to me, Maria could still be positioned as a ‘good wife’ as Paulo’s family called it. This seemed to carry similar connotations to the ‘respectful wife’ discussed in chapter 5. Maria fulfilled her role of motherhood by having two children and contributing to the household income. Paulo could still position himself as the ‘*head of household*’ and ‘*provider*’. He could even position himself as a ‘*good husband*’ by helping Maria with the housework. However, when Maria had the opportunity to continue studying, education became a ‘*site of struggle*’ in the marriage. Paulo did not want her to leave for Maputo when she was offered a scholarship. She mentioned that he was jealous and perhaps he did not want live by himself as he was used to her taking care of the home. At first Maria did not challenge his authority as a husband. She sought support from her parents by ‘taking hold of’ (Kulick & Stroud, 1993) instrumental discourses around women’s education that made women’s education legitimate. She argued that she was not studying for herself, but for her daughters in case something happened to him.

Maria’s parents, however, firmly positioned her as a ‘good wife’ who should be subordinate to her husband and not go against his will. At the same time she was being exposed to an alternative discourse by her colleagues who did not understand why she turned down the scholarship and were positioning her as the ‘modern’ educated, career woman. This is the subject position she took up when she was offered the scholarship a second time. She was willing to give up the position of the ‘good wife’ for the position as the ‘modern woman’ “*I told him that I would get married to my studies*”. It seemed that gradually as Maria got more educated and

better paid than Paulo, the power dynamics in the household shifted. The fact that he stopped contributing to the household could indicate that he felt she had taken over his role as the 'provider'.

This was the feeling I got when I once met Paulo. He started talking about how he would like to study but could not as he did not earn enough and his wife was already doing so much that he could not ask her to support his studies as well. Maria on the other hand had told me that she had tried to convince him to go back to school, but he did not see the point in it. Although he worked for the government, he complained about not having a job and lamented that Maria had to provide for him. In my fieldnotes I wrote:

*From all he was saying he seemed to have a rather low level of self confidence and suffer that he was the man and that it was the woman who was earning more and bringing in more money...I think he was also trying to make himself look better as he probably knows that Maria has told me things about their relationship. As far as what she has told me he was not happy with the articles I gave her about domestic violence.*

Paulo was positioning himself as a victim of circumstance. He wanted me to feel sorry for him and see that he was not such a bad guy. After speaking to Paulo, Maria's comments that he did not like her to study and work and that his abusive behaviour stemmed from lack of self-esteem and an inferiority complex rang true. It was probably as hard for him as for Maria to find his way in changing ideas about masculine and feminine gender roles. When Maria went against his will and went to Maputo, she was challenging his authority as head of household and when she got a higher paid job, his status as 'the provider' was undermined.

#### **6.4 Making Sense of Alternative Femininities**

Looking at Maria's story it is clear that she was trying to fulfil what society expected of her as a 'good wife', while at the same time positioning herself as an educated 'modern woman'. In her case these subject positions clashed and in the end she had to choose between them.

Maria said that many people had opinions about her. The women she worked with were surprised at how hard she was working and felt she was making a lot of sacrifices for her job. I understood her to be talking about her difficulty of combining a career with her roles as a mother and wife. She had been criticised for working too much and leaving her daughters with the maid and said this came mainly from her husband's family. She suspected that some of the wives of men she interacted with through her job were jealous of her. Some of her male colleagues had also started making nasty comments to her after she was promoted, which surprised her as she considered them to be friends. She thought they were bitter because she was promoted over them. Thus, Maria had met disapproval because of challenging dominant discourses of women as primarily mothers and wives. Although she enjoyed a certain social status and had a better paid position than most (men and women) around her, this had come at a personal cost. Maria felt she had made a lot of sacrifices for her work and did not ascribe this to a right to 'be someone' in its own right. Instead, she engaged in the instrumental discourses on women's education:

*What I am doing, I am not doing for myself, but for my daughters. My parents couldn't help me. If my daughters don't study I don't want them to say that it was because their mother couldn't help them.*

Maria felt it was important that her daughters studied and wanted to provide them with more choices than she had had. Perhaps she was also positioning herself as a good mother here to justify the choices she had made in light of criticism from her husband's family that she was neglecting her daughters because of work. Maria positioned herself as somewhat a failure as a wife, but still as a good mother. She seemed to have trouble fitting herself within discourses on women and in some ways seemed to identify with men:

*I am in many ways like a man, I fight, I like being in their company, the conversations they have, I have always been like that. So I like having male friends, but it is complicated. We are not as advanced as you Europeans. Here people always think that a woman and a man must be having sex. If I went to my colleague's place once or twice people would start talking about it and think we were having a relation.*

Thus, societal norms somewhat restricted socializing with the men she felt she had more in common with than other women. Perhaps the main reason she decided to confide in me and we became friends was that I offered an alternative discourse of femininity where a woman could be highly educated, independent, single and childless. Writing her case story I asked myself why I wanted to share it and why she told it to me in the first place. It seems to me that when we met we found many similarities and started mirroring ourselves in each other. In me she probably found someone who provided an alternative discourse to the one where she was constantly positioned as failing as a wife and a mother. When she told me about her problems I tried to comfort her and be supportive. As recorded in my fieldnotes, I positioned her as a pioneer and encouraged her to continue challenging the dominant discourse:

*I tried to cheer her up, tell her that she was a pioneer and someone had to be the one to fight the norms and pave the way for others. I also told her that she was a model for other men, for example in the organization to allow their wives to study. I said that I had met men who encouraged their wives and that they always said that they were broadminded because they had travelled around and studied and seen that women could do the same things as men. I also told her that one day she would get out of her marriage and then things would be better. (Fieldnotes 3/5/06)*

As seen above, in relating to Maria, I did not keep my personal opinions to myself. I encouraged her to get out of her marriage as she told me that this was what she wanted. I told her that I saw it as domestic violence when her husband abused her verbally. She did not seem to see his behaviour as violent, although after I had voiced my opinion that this was psychological violence she remarked that: “*psychological violence hurts more than the physical because the words stay in the head*”. I told her I felt she should not have to live with the threat of being infected with the HIV virus by her husband. Even though Maria had acquired financial power and independence through her education and career, there were norms around sexuality and masculinity that gave her husband the upper hand. As she put it: “*in this aspect he manages to dominate me*”. Thus, despite the increased options she had in her life due to education and her job there were still areas where she felt dominated by norms that prescribed certain privileges to her husband within the marriage.

When I moved away from Maputo, I lost touch with Maria. The last time I heard from her she had been offered a well-paying job for another organization based in Maputo and was planning to leave her husband without officially divorcing him. She said she would leave all their possessions behind with him. She was hoping that he would leave her alone and make a new life with the other woman.

## **6.5 Discussion**

Maria belonged to the first generation of women coming from a resource poor background who had a chance to pursue further education and acquire well paid, powerful positions just as men. However, as Pearson has pointed out it cannot be assumed that an increased income will increase power within the household and family in a linear way:

The idea persists, particularly in the world of development organizations, that money in women's hands will directly facilitate women into productive economic activity, which in itself will alter the power dimensions within the household and the family. (Pearson, 2007:207)

Maria's story indicates that her education and paid work had increased her power vis-à-vis her husband, but that this had to some extent backfired as her husband, members of his family, and perhaps some of her family and friends as well felt that Maria had stepped out of the role as a 'good wife' and usurped her husband's perceived role of 'provider' in the marriage. Also similarly to how Win describes the issues of middle-class women in Africa, Maria still felt dominated in terms of not having control over her sexuality and having to live with the risk of being infected of the HIV virus, and she worried about being seen as a bad woman (Win, 2007). As Win argues, it is important to include the voices of women like Maria in research in the South. Poverty is not only about resources but also "violence, denial of personhood, silencing, marginalization, denial of choice and other freedoms." (2007:84).

In the chapter I have discussed how Maria saw education as somewhat incompatible with wifehood and struggled to combine her positions as a career woman, wife and mother. I have argued that education was a site of struggle in her marriage, but it was clear that this was only one of the aspects influencing their relationship. Maria equally referred to her career being seen in a negative light by her husband and to having personality traits that she associated with masculinity rather than femininity, such as being a fighter. I have shown how Maria's narrative gives insight into discourses about appropriate masculinities and femininities. Maria positioned herself as a '*modern woman*' one who studied and was not '*left behind*' or found '*sitting*' in the house.

At the same time she described how this clashed with her husband's ideas of a '*good wife*', someone who took care of the house and children and was positioned below himself. Maria positioned her husband as verbally abusive, controlling, alcoholic and womanising. These are all characteristics that Silberschmidt (2001) has associated with men in Kenya and Tanzania, whom she describes as 'disempowered' because of not being able to fulfil their position as the 'provider'. Paulo's behaviours could also be understood by applying the concept of '*thwarting*' (Moore, 1994). Moore suggests that there is a relationship between identity, power and violence and uses the term '*thwarting*' to describe this. She argues that when men fail to take up subject positions in accordance with their ideal masculinity this leads to a feeling of being thwarted which can result in violence as violence reconfirms the masculinity being denied. She defines thwarting as:

1. The inability to sustain or properly take up a gendered subject position, resulting in a crisis, real or imagined of self-representation and/or social evaluation.
2. The result of contradictions arising from the taking up of multiple subject positions, and the pressure of multiple expectations about self-identity or social presentation.
3. The result of other persons refusing to take up or sustain their subject positions *vis-à-vis* oneself and thereby calling one's self-identity into question". (1994:66-67)

It seemed, from what Maria said that Paulo had experienced thwarting when she became more educated and started to earn more, as he could not sustain his masculine ideal of the 'provider'.

In the chapter I have also discussed the power of dominant discourses on people's lives. Although Maria told me she could not bear to stay in her marriage, she did not want to divorce Paulo. She feared that people would say that she lost respect for him as soon as she got more educated and got a job. This reflects the discourse, discussed in chapter 5, of the '*abusive educated wife*'. Despite describing Paulo as abusive and neglecting she assumed that she would be the one seen in a negative light if they divorced. This shows that despite new, alternative discourses on gender equality, the dominant discourses of the proper role of women within the family had a strong hold on Maria. She seemed to be at the same time appropriating these discourses and struggling against them (Riessman, 2008).

I have also discussed in the chapter how Maria's story had certain parallels with my own. When telling friends in Iceland that I was writing about some women in Mozambique who had husbands who seemed to feel threatened by their education, I often got the response "well this is just like here" or "well this is how it used to be in Iceland as well". Maria seemed to be dealing with a lot of the same issues that Icelandic women dealt with when they started claiming space in educational institutions and on the labour market. Like Mozambique, Iceland underwent a rapid change from a primarily agriculture based economy to an industrial country. Women from my grandmother's generation did not have much opportunity to study, except for specific courses learning skills such as cooking and embroidery, that were seen as preparing women for their roles as wives and mothers (Sigurðardóttir, 2005).

In my mother's generation women had more opportunities for education and work, but they saw themselves primarily as wives and mothers, contributing with some work to 'help' the husband in his role as the provider (Hjálmsdóttir & Bergsdóttir, 2011). Iceland now has one of the highest levels of women's participation in the labour market in Europe and Hjálmsdóttir and Bergsdóttir suggest that the identity of Icelandic women has changed from looking at employment as the "second shift" as an extra activity with housework to being the "first shift" that they do before taking

care of their home (2011). In other words their identity has shifted from being primarily that of a mother and housewife to being primarily a 'career woman'. This is usually seen as an improvement in women's status as seen by Sigurðardóttir's claim that in Iceland: "there is no doubt that women's education was the key to changing women's status in society" (Sigurðardóttir, 2005:22). Thus, I belong to the first generation where women are seen as having the right to education in their own right and not as future mothers or wives. It seems to me that Maria was dealing with similar issues as women of my mother's generation. At the same time, she also talked about the difficulty of combining motherhood and work, which is something many women in Iceland talk about. This indicates to me that similar discourses about gender relations, education and work were dominant in both cultures, perhaps because Mozambican discourses on gender relations were influenced by Northern discourses through colonialism and Christian missions as discussed in chapter 1.

Due to modern technology, my thesis or articles produced from it could end up in Mozambique and be seen by Maria or someone who knows her. I have made changes to her story in order to disguise her identity, leaving out details that would have provided a fuller picture and also moderating some facts. I believe that I have changed enough to honour the promise I made of anonymity and confidentiality, but not too much to affect the main points I wanted to make with her story.

In this chapter the focus has been on an educated, middle-class woman. I have explored how Maria's life was influenced when discourses on femininities that she saw as '*urban*' and '*modern*' clashed with discourses that she saw as '*rural*' and somewhat '*backward*'. In the following chapter I explore the experiences of three women with a different educational and social background from Maria as they were studying at night in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade in the rural setting of Maganja.

## **CHAPTER 7: EDUCATION AS A SITE OF STRUGGLE IN MARRIAGE**

In this chapter I discuss the idea of education as a 'site of struggle' in marriage by examining the stories of Nielete and Olga who had been '*prohibited*' from studying by their husbands and Sonia who felt supported by her husband. As explained in chapter 4, I initially wrote up more detailed accounts of both Nielete and Olga but after deciding to organize the empirical chapters around different levels of education, I decided to put their narratives together in one chapter as they were both studying in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade at night. This was also influenced by my concern that details in Olga's narrative would compromise her anonymity and therefore I have focused mainly on Nielete's narrative. Although I focus on women's education as a site of struggle, this only applies to some women as others have supportive husbands. The narratives are constructed from taped interviews and I have focused specifically on their stories of education as related to their marriages. I have then drawn on other material from the interviews to aid the analysis of those narratives.

### **7.1 Nielete's Narrative of Marriage and Education**

Nielete was 21 years old. Her husband was nine years older and was a facilitator in the literacy programme, but had previously had a vending stall at the market. They had two children, one and three years old. Nielete came twice to a Focus Group activity with women in 6<sup>th</sup> grade at night and was quite articulate about having problems with her husband because he was against her studies. When I asked her to tell me her story she responded with a long narrative of her education that I present in the following section without editing. I have, however, intersected it with analysis. I have underlined the parts of the narrative where Nielete is speaking on behalf of another person in order to distinguish between different voices within the narrative. I do the same in the remainder of the thesis.

*I started studying in 1995. I did first grade and passed it in 1996, in 1997 I passed second grade, in 1998 I passed third grade, I failed fourth grade in 1999 and went back to fourth grade in this school in Narea. When I was a child when I was 13 I was in fourth grade. Then in 1999 in August my*

husband appeared to talk to my father: “I want this girl. When she grows up I want to marry her”<sup>55</sup>. I refused. I said “No I am still too young I want to study first. I don’t want to get married yet, I am not yet of age to marry”. He was married, but he divorced his wife and then he came to speak with my parents. “I want to marry your daughter”. Well I did not want to, my parents also did not want to. Then he obliged me, he said: “I will put you in school while we are in our home you will study just like I am studying”. I said: “If it will be like that then I will accept because there is no woman who doesn’t get married in life. I will accept but only if you help me in school so I can continue studying”. He said: “This is no problem”. I continued studying in fourth grade and passed. Then in January the registration started for fifth grade and I talked to my boyfriend, I said: “My boyfriend I want to study I want to enrol. He said: “You can’t enrol now, I would like to marry you now, I am already tired of being single, I have already been married and got used to having a home, now I am living at my brother’s house, I am tired of it, I would like to get married to you so that we can stay in our house, you will wash my clothes, we will have our home. Later I will put you in school”. This was before it became possible to study at night he wanted to put me in school to study during the day this was before the AEA started. So I accepted this, I almost refused, I refused and refused but then at the end I said: “Ok I will marry you.” I didn’t enrol I accepted him in 1999 and in June I got married. I was at ease it was not that I got pregnant, I got married first at 16 and we immediately moved into our house.

Nielete’s narrative contains inconsistencies as when she said that her husband had come to ask for her hand in August 1999 but later gave the marriage date as June 1999. She then said that she had been married at the age of 16, so possibly the marriage took place in 2000 and not 1999. However, I do not see these inconsistencies as problematic: the significance of Nielete’s account is not as a portrayal of the ‘facts’ of her life as it ‘really happened’, but rather of how she remembered and made sense of her life from a current standpoint.

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<sup>55</sup> In order to distinguish between when people are speaking on behalf of others, I underline what I term performances of other’s voices, that is when people reconstruct the direct speech of others.

Looking back on her life, Nielete positions herself as a young girl who was interested in pursuing her education supported by her parents. She suggests that she did not want to give up her education to get married and hesitated when her husband proposed to her, but agreed as she saw wifehood as inevitable in a woman's life. She had second thoughts when he wanted her to quit school and dedicate herself to the role as his wife but agreed when he assured her that he would put her in school again later. Nielete positions herself as an active agent in making this decision; she was not forced to get married by her parents or because of getting pregnant. She was in a position to negotiate that her husband took over the responsibility of her education from her father. Still, her words that he '*forced*' her to marry him indicate an imbalance in their power relation and that she gave in to pressure. Nielete suggests that the main motive for her husband to get married was to get a wife to take care of him as he was tired of living with his brother and wanted to live an independent life. There also seems to have been some passion involved at least from his side, as indicated by her quoting him: "*I want this girl*" and by his persistence.

*Then 1999 finished and 2000 arrived. So I said: "My husband now we already got married and I want to enrol and you said: "I will enrol you once we have moved into our house". He said: "So if you want to study go back to your parents' house if you want to be married stay here with me I don't care". I said "my husband. If you had told me this before I would have refused to get married. I also told you that that I did not want to get married before I had studied, I wanted to study first. Now you are saying this after we are married now what am I supposed to do? Run away from you to my parents' house because of studying? Why don't you put me in school? He said: "Aaa if you want to study go back to your [parents'] house". Then my uncle came from Maputo I said to him: "Uncle, please talk to my husband. He is prohibiting me to study, but I want to study". He said: "My niece! Listen to the order of your husband. If he is prohibiting you to go to school he won't authorize you even if I talk to him. So just let it be like that. Just stay like that". So then I stayed like that and did not enrol. Then in 2001 I had a baby, after having the baby I said: "My husband I want to study". AEA already appeared in 2001, everyone wanted to study, those who wanted to study went and enrolled at ease. I said to my husband*

*“I am going to study and do 5<sup>th</sup> and continue until...” Then he started prohibiting me, but I said: “iiii<sup>56</sup> I am going to enrol” and started in 5<sup>th</sup> grade with teacher Nuno, I studied with teacher Nuno in 2004.*

It is evident here how much power a husband can have over whether his wife studies or not. When Nielete got married there were school fees in primary school.<sup>57</sup> As discussed in chapter 5, Nielete depends on her husband for financial support for her studies, hence her request to him: *“I want to enrol”*. One might wonder why her father cannot continue supporting her. The issue seems linked with perceptions of responsibilities linked to the roles of a father versus a husband. This responsibility for her studies has now passed from her father to her husband. She does not see her husband’s refusal to enrol her as a legitimate reason to leave him, but it is evident that it has become a ‘site of struggle’ in their marriage. Nielete sees it as her husband breaking his promise and suggests that he tricked her into marrying him. When she tries to get her uncle to convince her husband to let her study, he engages in the dominant discourse of the ‘*submissive*’ and ‘*obedient*’ wife (see chapter 5) who should follow the “*order*” of her husband.

Nielete was very specific about her educational timeline. I found this to be typical: interviewees were often very specific about which year they had done each grade and whether or not they had passed. This may have been related to the inefficiency of the school system. Repetition rates in Zambezia Province were 27.7 per cent in 2003 (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005). I suspect that Nielete was proud that she had only had to repeat one grade and through this, was positioning herself as a good student.

As discussed in chapter 3 literacy programmes got back on the agenda of the Mozambican government, when halving adult literacy by 2015 became an international education goal. Above, Nielete refers to the importance for women of the literacy programme ‘*arriving*’ in Maganja. Campaigns were carried out to encourage the participation of women in literacy classes. Nielete’s words “*everyone wanted to study*”, and that they “*enrolled at ease*” reflects that young women like

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<sup>56</sup> An exclamation. I understand it as indicating that now she was putting her foot down and indicating that she felt that he did not have any reason to prevent her from studying.

<sup>57</sup> They were abolished in 2003

Nielete who had not been able to study because of the school fees in formal school could now pursue education. The literacy classes were usually held in the afternoon when women were most likely to be able to take time off from their responsibilities. Another difference from formal school was that they were allowed to take their infants with them to class so literacy classes did not interfere with breastfeeding or require babysitting. Nielete talks about wanting to go to the literacy programme in 2001, but waiting until 2003. She talks about her husband 'prohibiting' her to go and eventually defying him by a confrontation "I am going to study" "I am going to enrol". She is positioning herself as an active agent in their relationship.

ME: Aaa you waited until 2004?

N: *No I started in 2003 in 4<sup>th</sup> grade because many years had passed where I did not study so I preferred to return and do 4<sup>th</sup> grade to understand better in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and after passing 5<sup>th</sup> grade go to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I passed 4<sup>th</sup> grade in 2003 and in 2004 I did 5<sup>th</sup> grade and with a big effort passed to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Then we started fighting when I told him that I was going to enrol and do 6<sup>th</sup> grade at night. He said: "Well if you insist on enrolling go but I am not in condition to take responsibility for your studies. Things such as BI<sup>58</sup> and certificates cost money. I am not going to give you money to help you study. I would like you to stop studying so that we can be together like this, you cultivating." I said: But what am I doing wrong? I cultivate, I do everything, studying is at night in my free time after doing everything. I will do everything and leave food on the table. I will just go and study and return. Now why are you prohibiting me? I went and told my mother. My mother said: "Go and enrol". My father said: "Go and enrol my daughter. If he wants to leave you, come and live with us and start studying with us." I forced myself, on my own account I went and enrolled in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I obliged myself I came here and enrolled in 6<sup>th</sup> grade with a lot of suffering, sometimes when I return home after studying he says disgraceful things, he says things that are out of order and I have been tolerating this until now. I alone buy the materials, books, exercise books I buy myself, I never asked him for a pen or anything after he authorized me I never said to him "my*

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<sup>58</sup> The national identity card used in Mozambique.

*husband please buy me a pen”, nothing. He even sold pens and exercise books. So this is how I am, with two children, without options.*

As discussed in chapter 3, the literacy programme could be used as a bridge between the formal primary school stages. By completing it, Nielete got the equivalent of 5<sup>th</sup> grade and could continue in 6<sup>th</sup> grade offered at night for adults. Although school fees had been abolished in 2004 up to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, studying still incurred some costs. Nielete refers here to school materials, documents and the need to acquire the BI, the official identity card, in order to be able to continue her education.

## **7.2 Conflicting Perceptions of Masculinities and Femininities within Marriage**

In her narrative Nielete suggests that problems arose again in her marriage when she ‘told’ her husband that she was going to continue in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Again she positions herself as an active agent who does not ask her husband for permission, but tells him what she is going to do. She is resisting the dominant discourse of the *submissive* and *obedient* wife. Going to her parents for advice and support indicates that this was a risk and she needed reassurance by her family that her defiance was justified and that she had a ‘fall-back’ position (Agarwal, 1997) and could move back to them in case her marriage broke down. Nielete might also be emphasizing that others saw her husband as unreasonable in order to show me that she was in the right and her husband in the wrong.

Nielete’s narrative suggests to me that their marital problems were linked to different expectations about the roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives. First, Nielete quotes her husband saying that he did not have money to support her studies, thereby not living up to her expectations of the ‘*provider*’ (see chapter 5). By saying that he sold school materials himself, she suggest that the real issue was not that he could not support her but that he did not want to. Her words suggest that he felt that her education interfered with his ideal of a wife. She reconstructs an argument where she claims to be fulfilling her responsibilities despite her night class: “*I do everything*”, “*leave food on the table*”. She then continues:

*N: It is me who irons the clothes, I do everything, fetch water, we do not have a maid, it is only me. I'm a cultivator, I do everything, but he doesn't even..!* [Silence]

I interpret Nielete's tone of voice and abrupt halt to mean that she feels unappreciated and unfairly treated.

ME: He does not appreciate it?

*N: He is not appreciating it at all..* [Silence] *Sometimes he says "iaaa I'm buying things for you..I sometimes pay for household costs!" I start saying: "But my husband don't you realize what I am doing for you? I am ironing, I am washing the clothes, I am sweeping the house, your house is never dirty, I am cultivating food for our children, and I am doing good things for you. Now what do you want from me? Let me be so I can study as well". He is saying: "Iaaa all this that you are doing all the other women do as well". I say "You know all these women who are doing the same, their husbands also do good things for them".*

In this reconstructed argument it seems that Nielete's husband also feels that he is fulfilling his role as a husband and that Nielete is making unreasonable demands. According to Nielete he feels that her night class interferes with her role as a mother and that this is influenced by his male friends:

*Some things he heard from others, friends, sometimes when their wives do not study, they say: "Iaaa but how come you let your wife go to school? The children are suffering". Then he immediately starts talking like this: "My wife this studying of yours will end now the children are suffering because you are doing this", while the children are not suffering he just says it so that I leave school.*

His masculinity might be undermined when his friends question why he allows his wife to study. Then his telling her that now she is going to quit school could be seen as an attempt to assert his status as head of household. The issue of whether or not she may study therefore seems to be a part of a power struggle where she asserts her right to study in light of his promise when they married and her fulfilment of her responsibilities as wife. She positions him as unfairly hindering her by refusing to support her financially. Later in the interview she described how he showed his

contempt in other ways. He had locked the bedroom door and refused to open it when she came home from school; told her that she would never manage with her studies; and that she would never get a job even if she studied. So either he was trying to put her down or did not believe that she would be able to get work and was thereby wasting her time instead of dedicating it to the house and children, or perhaps a bit of both.

### **7.3 Education as a Fall-Back Position in an Abusive Marriage**

It seemed to me that Nielete interpreted her present situation in light of an unhappy marriage. She described her husband as abusive and their marriage as full of conflict.

*My husband used to beat me, he even beat me when I was 3 months pregnant but then he stopped beating me. Now we just keep arguing and I don't feel at ease, but I have nowhere to go, if I had somewhere to go, I would already have left him.*

She compared her situation with former school friends who had continued in school. She regretted her choices and assumed that she would have been better off continuing in school as some of her friends had.

*N: We started fighting at the start, right after we got married. This year we will have been married six years, I have already been with him for five years, have I not tolerated it for a long time? Since we married he's been arguing and arguing. I am regretful because those women who went to school with me in those years, some of them are in 10<sup>th</sup> grade already and some in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and me! I am in 6<sup>th</sup> grade after having to suffer to study. I am feeling very bad.*

ME: Umm that you did not study instead of getting married?

*N: Umm I would like to leave my husband and go and live with my uncle in Maputo and stay there and study if it were possible, now I cannot as I do not have money, so I stay like this crying.*

Nielete said that her husband drank a lot and linked this with behaviours she found hurtful:

*There is too much suffering, now when I left my house my husband was already drinking and saying many things...He was also drinking yesterday*

*he was saying: “If you want to, leave me and go and live in your mother's house”. As my father does not work I just keep crying... Sometimes when we argue he says: “Iaaa if you want, leave and take the younger child I will keep the older one «« this house does not belong to you, this is my home” because he had already built this house before getting a wife, he built it alone just before marrying me, so when we argue he talks like this. When I imagine this I feel uneasy.*

Looking at the words attributed to her husband could both be understood to mean that he is exercising his masculine role as a husband and threatening to throw her out if she does not comply. They could also be read, however, from the point of view of him being defensive. If Nielete was telling me that she wanted to leave him, I find it likely that this was also what she said to him. Thus his words could indicate that he feels disempowered in his role as ‘provider’ and ‘head of household’, that he does not want Nielete to leave and that the threat of withholding one of their children and the house is his strongest weapon. If read in this way it seems to be working, as Nielete seems to feel that women cannot count on the support of their male kin like in the “old days” in the case of a divorce or widowhood (see chapter 1)<sup>59</sup>.

*I would really like to leave [my husband]. If I had a family with means.. This family of mine doesn't have the means... In my family there is no one who works, no one in my whole family is a teacher, therefore we are all poor... we are feeling very bad because of this. How will this all end? When my parents die it should have been my uncles who helped me study...If we divorce from our husbands they should have been the ones looking after us... now they are just drinking and roaming the streets.*

When our interview started Nielete had not waited for me to ask questions but immediately launched into describing how her whole family was poor and could not help her:

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<sup>59</sup> In chapter 1, I discussed that divorce was easy for women in the matrilineal North in the “old days” as the husband would leave and the wife would keep their house and children and be supported by their kin.

*There are four of us... my father is alive it is just that he is a poor man he does not have work. Therefore we are in this situation.*

Thus, although Nielete's parents have encouraged her to defy her husband and ensured her she can come back to them if he decides to divorce him it is clear that she does not see it as a good option. Perhaps she does not want to be a further burden on them and perhaps she prefers to live with her husband despite their problems as it secures a roof over her head and food and clothing for her and the children.

I see Nielete's narrative as a whole as portraying a certain sense of disappointment, not only in her husband, but also the wider family network.

*I will try everything possible... so that I can finish my studies, I would not like to give up school, no [pause]. I would like there to be at least one person in my father's house who studies, but none of us studied, we married and then our husbands do not consider us. Our brother also did not study he quit in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, he got married and lives in Quelimane but does not have a project, now for my part I am very sorry for my parents. I would like there to be someone in my house who worked and could help them.*

In Nielete's eyes an educated person is someone who has completed at least 7<sup>th</sup> grade and she links education with formal employment. It is clear that she does not see education as an individual business but concerning the whole family. Although one of her brothers has completed the first cycle of primary school, she does not see this as education as this has not resulted in support for their parents. So Nielete sees education as a means to get a job and help her parents, although the main reason seems to be providing economic security for herself and her children. Thereby, education seems to be a possible route out of an unhappy and abusive relationship: *If I had somewhere else to go I wouldn't be living with him*". I would call this the possibility of 'education as a fall-back position'. Still it is not really education in itself that could lead to Nielete's independence but rather the possibility of subsequent employment. That Nielete sees education as a fall-back position can be seen in the following account of how she was trying to convince her older sister to go back to school:

*So this sister of mine said she still did not have time [to study] because she had a baby a month ago. But I am obliging her: "At least complete 7th grade my sister because it is possible that you divorce your husband and if there is a job while you completed 7<sup>th</sup> grade with your certificate you will get this job to at least improve your life. You did not study, life nowadays is studying, work nowadays does not come along for people who do not study but [for] those who studied a bit those who at least know how to write and read".*

Nielete described how there had been arguments in her marriage from early on and described her husband as verbally and physically abusive. She said that he had 'prohibited' her to study and linked this with his perception of her as a wife who should 'cultivate' and take care of their home and children. Her narrative describes an economic dependency on her husband and her expectation of him as a 'provider', which includes financial support for her education. I have suggested that Nielete saw studying in evening class as a 'fall back position', as a means towards a job that could enable her to become financially independent and leave her husband in times where wider kin of brothers and uncles could not be counted on anymore. I have suggested that in Nielete's marriage, education could be described as a 'site of struggle'. It seemed to me that Nielete's education was not necessarily the cause of problems in their marriage, but rather one of the 'symptoms' of an otherwise conflicted marriage. This was also my perception in the case of Olga as will be discussed in the following section.

#### **7.4 Olga's Narrative: Prohibition as a Symptom of an Unhappy Marriage**

My interview with Olga was set up by a teacher who told me about her as he felt that her husband had shown an extreme reaction to her studies. The husband had come to see him and asked him to tell Olga to leave school as he had not given her permission to study. The teacher had responded that this was not possible and the husband had not been happy about that.

Olga was 22 years old and had started going out with her husband when she was seventeen. He was 13 years older and already married, but Olga said that he had not told her about the other wife.

*I was studying I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Then I started going out with this man with whom I have separated, I passed 6<sup>th</sup> grade but I was still at my father's house. Then my father called for him. He said: "I am asking you whether you intend to marry her or not"? "He responded: "At the moment we are just going out". Then I conceived, I got pregnant, when I got pregnant they asked him about the question of schooling as there were no evening classes at that time. They said: "She is pregnant what are we going to do"? He said: "At the moment she can stay like this. After she has the baby she will continue studying". They agreed. So I annulled my enrolment and sat down and had my first child.*

Here Olga positions herself as passive and depending on the decisions of her family and former husband. She refers to her father, but then says *they* in plural and it is not clear who the other or others are who are involved in making decisions about her. She suggests that her father was not happy with her going out with this man and that this was linked to the fact that she was still in school. Unlike Nielete's parents who were very poor, her father was relatively well off and perhaps had other plans for his daughter than marrying young. Nielete also suggests that her husband saw their relationship as an affair and did not immediately take her as his wife. She does not say anything about her role in this affair, although her "*I started going out*" suggests that she was an active agent. This is different from Nielete where the husband came to ask her parents for her hand. The first time Olga positions herself as an active agent is when she later asks her husband to enrol her in school:

*Then I asked him to enrol me. He said no. So he has another wife, there were two of us. Then when they introduced the literacy programme he allowed the other woman to study. She did fourth grade, she did fifth grade, but when I talked to him he always prohibited. He always said: "You may not study". So I stayed three years, this is the fourth year, always saying that I wanted to go to school, he prohibited me, but always when the other went to ask him if she could study he authorized her to enrol. So I stayed, I stayed. Then there started to be trouble at home [two words unclear] so he*

*said: “If you want to study get out of my house and leave my children. Then you can go and study but study in your father’s house”. So I decided because lately his behaviour towards me had been very bad, he was being very bad to me he started to distrust me so I decided to leave his house, so I went to my father’s house to continue to study....but he accepted that his other wife went to school, she is there studying. He only prohibited me.*

Olga's story demonstrates the complexity of household relations and human interactions. Judging from the extract above, she was not only dissatisfied that she couldn't study, she found it unfair that her husband would differentiate between her and his other wife in this way. She emphasizes the significance of this by starting and ending her section of the narrative above on this point, which seemed to have been paramount when she decided to defy her husband.

*O: The first year I tolerated it while my friend did fourth grade and I stayed out of school. In the second year she did fifth grade and I stayed outside.*

ME: The other wife?

*O: Yes I was always out of school. Then when she was in 6th grade I could not bear it. He was already losing respect for me, he wanted to abuse me and he wanted to abuse my parents... So I really lost my patience. I lost my patience and preferred to continue studying and return to my parents' house.*

Olga describes how her husband uses his power as 'provider' to threaten to throw her out of "his house" if she does not obey him. The struggle over whether Olga can study or not seems to be a power struggle not only between her and her husband but also between her and her co-wife. As evening classes were given a higher status than literacy classes because they could lead to jobs, getting a formal education might have changed the power relations between Olga and the other wife. Initially Olga might have accepted her husband's prohibition by attributing it to common, 'normal' discourses such as jealousy and the fear that she might lose respect for him (see chapter 5). Olga said he had said things like: "*When women study they do not respect men*" and "*Instead of studying they will start having a relationship with the teacher*". Once he allowed the other wife to study, but not her, it was evident that he was attributing such discourses only to Olga but not to his other wife. Thus he was

making different assumptions about them, depending on their different relationships and Olga felt that this was unfounded and unfair. Yet Olga did not speak of the other wife in a negative way, she referred to her as her 'friend'. In other words she was positioning her husband as the 'bad guy' in the story, not her co-wife and said she did not know his reasons:

*I don't know! I asked him: "Why is it that she goes to school, but I don't go to school"? He doesn't respond just says: "I did not agree upon it with you".*

As with Nielete, the issue of Olga's husband prohibiting her to study seems to be one of the 'symptoms' of a marriage fraught with conflicts and problems. Perhaps the reason Olga positions herself as more passive than Nielete is her husband's physical abuse. Whereas Nielete had told me that her parents and friends had intervened and therefore her husband had stopped beating her, Olga describes escalating physical and verbal abuse. It is the abusive behaviour that she describes as the reason why she decided to leave her husband and continue in school.

*I have these scars because of one time when he beat me. He was always beating me but this time he overdid it. The problem was resolved at the police station and I returned home. This was when I was pregnant with my daughter....One day he beat me because I went to visit our neighbour to see her new child. When he saw me he beat me and said that I had not gone to see the child but to have an affair with the father when this was not true it was a pure lie that he was saying. Sometimes he beat me even if I had not provoked him the whole day, sometimes because of things that I had not done. He heard something in somebody else's house and came home and started telling me off....He was always threatening me so I did not do things out of my free will I did things out of fear.... He said things like: "You are a whore, you are not going to school to study, you are going to school to be with other men. Get out of my house. You are not a woman, I will bring another woman home to show you that I don't like you anymore". He said that my father was a witch doctor who was using black magic on his children; he was abusive and said ugly things about my father and bad things to him...So I preferred to leave his house.*

Here Olga's narrative suggests that her husband was jealous and accused her of having affairs when she went to visit friends. This also concerned him when she went to school. A woman who did not know that I had interviewed her told me that she thought that this was the reason he did not allow Olga to study, that he did not trust her whereas he trusted his other wife.

Olga said that she had been forced to leave her children behind when she left her husband. There were some complicated family issues that meant that she could not take them with her and as her crops had failed, she could not feed them:

*I am not working, I don't do anything and my field dried up. Because there was no rain I don't have any food as my rice dried up.*

Olga was very worried that his other wife might not take proper care of her children. She had tears in her eyes while telling me this and was obviously upset. She said that her husband's version of their story was that she had abandoned him and the children for school. She was hoping that education could enable her to be economically independent and get her children back. Thus as Nielete she seemed to see completing 7<sup>th</sup> grade as a fall-back position:

*I really prefer to continue studying so that maybe later if God helps me I can go and get my children.*

As Nielete, Olga describes a marriage where being prohibited from studying seems to be one of the problems or 'symptoms' of an abusive marriage. Nielete and Olga both got married young to older men who had already been married. Olga positions herself in a more passive way than Nielete. She does not seem to have had much to say about getting married, unlike Nielete. There was also a larger age difference between Olga and her husband; one can imagine that a pregnant seventeen year old does not have much power in relation to a thirty year old man on whom she depends financially. Olga describes her husband as more authoritarian than Nielete. She talks about him not responding when she asked him why he was against her studies, whereas Nielete recreates long dialogues with her husband. Being 'prohibited' to study thus seems to have a different meaning to the two women. Nielete seems to use it in the way of having a husband who was against her studying, but somewhat accepted it after she defied him. Olga described a more violent reaction when she disobeyed her husband, some of which I will not go into in more detail as this might

compromise her anonymity. To her, being 'prohibited' meant that her husband exercised 'power over' (Kabeer, 1994, 1999; Rowlands, 1998) her and did not accept that she disobeyed his orders.

I see these stories as indicating that the issue of Nielete and Olga being 'prohibited' to study was linked to the quality of relationship with their husband. In order to better demonstrate this point I now turn to the narrative of Sonia, who had a very different experience in her marriage in relation to her education.

### **7.5 Sonia's Narrative: Accepting Authority but Knowing the Art of Negotiating**

Sonia participated in FG7. During a discussion about men who prohibited their wives to study she was quite articulate about her opinion that women had to be strategic when they wanted to study and plead to their husband rather than demand to study. I was interested in exploring this aspect further and set up an interview. In comparison to Olga and Nielete, her narrative of schooling was rather short, perhaps because it was not linked to a negative experience.

*When we [women] heard that they had started with this thing the literacy classes we went there, because for a long time they had not allowed people who were married to go to school. When we heard that in the literacy programme women could have children or not, married women could also enrol I went back to school. I enrolled in the literacy programme in 4<sup>th</sup> grade in 2003, I did 5<sup>th</sup> grade in 2004 and now in 2005 I am doing 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Because that time when I left school in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade I didn't even know how to read or write... but now I am writing well and also reading, when I come to a place, for example a bar on the street I start reading [the sign], yes I am reading well, I am really pleased because of this, yes.*

ME: So you left when you were in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and had not learnt to read and write?

S: *Yes but now I can write, I can really write.*

Sonia emphasizes that the literacy programme gave young married women the chance to get back to school and the opportunity it gave her to learn to read and

write which she is happy about. Unlike Olga and Nielete, she did not talk about her education being interrupted by her marriage although when I asked her explicitly, it turned out it had.

ME: Did you leave school when you married or was there another reason?

*S: I left school because of getting married. When I got married I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade because I started in school very late I was almost 12 years old when I started, so when I got to third grade I was already grown up, I met a man and got married and left, then I continued until this 6<sup>th</sup> grade where I am now...*

ME: Whose idea was it that you studied?

*S: It was my idea and he also wanted me to study because it was he who took me out of school, right! Yes it was he who took me out of school.*

ME: Has he ever disliked you going to school?

*S: No not at all he liked it, he likes it a lot that I go to school.*

ME: So is he helping you to study?

*S: Yes when I am not managing with my homework he helps me.*

ME: Expenses?

*S: Yes he buys exercise books and he was the one who bought pencils, pens a ruler for me. He even managed to buy school books so that I did not have a problem with reading the material. The books that are distributed are not sufficient for everyone so he bought books and brought them and gave to me.*

ME: Is he not jealous?

*S: No not at all he never said: "Why are you going to school" and such things, "why are you coming home so late", since we study at night. He even comes and picks me up from school sometimes when he knows that we have finished as he has a motorbike.*

Sonia suggests that her husband felt he should support her studies because he had been the reason she left school. The way she describes her husband's reaction to her education is the opposite of everything Nielete and Olga said about their husbands. She says he encourages her to go to school, buys school materials, picks her up from school and is not jealous. One of the things Nielete had mentioned about her husband

was that he also studied at night, but did not give her a lift back home on his bike, so she had to walk by herself in the dark.

ME: What is the difference between him and those men who prohibit their wives to study?

S: *I don't know what the difference is... I do not understand those who studied and have a head [brain] and see a woman that cannot read and also this with jobs they tell people to come and sign here. Now when she is with her husband and does not know how to sign her husband gets embarrassed: "My wife is really backwards she does not know how to sign", but when she can sign her husband is happy, right! But other men do not think like this, they are not embarrassed.*

Here Sonia links being illiterate with being ignorant and suggests that educated men would normally be embarrassed by such a wife. Her own husband had completed 10<sup>th</sup> grade and was therefore relatively well educated. If he was embarrassed of her when she was illiterate this might have been one of the reasons he was so supportive of her studies. She also seems to link men's education to their behaviour and intelligence, suggesting that it is the uneducated men without a 'head' who don't want their wives to study. Sonia then suggests that it is to some extent women's own fault if their husbands' prohibit them to study:

*These husbands who are prohibiting, their wives are those who don't know how to talk to their husbands. They go there with noise [performs with a loud demanding voice] "I want to go to school, why are you prohibiting me. I am going anyway". So the husband gets angry.*

Sonia is here reflecting the discourse of the ideal 'respectful' wife reflected in FG9<sup>60</sup> in chapter 5 as opposed to a loud, demanding, disrespectful wife. Women should not speak to their husband like that because he is the head of household.

S: *He is the 'head of household' yes [laughs] he is head of household*

ME: But do you always have to ask him for permission or about some things?

S: *About some things, yes about some things*

ME: If you want to go somewhere?

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<sup>60</sup> Focus Group 9

*S: Then you have to ask, if he is there you have to ask him, ask: My husband I am going to place x... so he stays quiet you cannot leave without saying goodbye [taking leave of absence]. Otherwise it will seem that you are secretly going to somewhere, right!*

Sonia does not seem to mean that she needs to ask her husband whether she can go somewhere or not. Rather, that she would need to inform him where she is going, to avoid creating suspicion.

Sonia seems to suggest that for a wife to be allowed to study it is best to acknowledge her husband's authority as 'head of household', since if she challenges him, he will retaliate by enforcing his power and stopping her. However, if he does not want to allow her to go to school this does not mean that she should take the no for an answer. The trick is, knowing how to bargain in the right way:

*You have to really plead to your husband. Not argue with them but plead. "My husband I can see that here in the neighbourhood all the other women went to school they are studying. Others even started in first grade, women with five children. Now I am sitting here don't you feel embarrassed that I am sitting here without studying"? Pleading to your husband like this, if he is a good person he will not prohibit you he will tell you: "So go there".*

Nonetheless she recognizes that this may not work unless the husband is "a good person" or in other words not an abusive one. Later on she emphasizes that even if the husband does not give in immediately, the wife should not give up.

*You have to insist. If a man is prohibiting his wife to go to school she has to really ask her husband: "Now my husband why are you prohibiting me? Haven't you heard that many women went to work in the polio campaign? Now if I had studied couldn't I have gone there as well and earned 300 Meticaïs. This is money, even 100 Meticaïs is money. Then you are prohibiting me to go to school".*

Sonia suggests making use of instrumental discourses on women's education to convince a husband. In her first example she engages with discourses on men who

are embarrassed by their ignorant wives and in the second on education as beneficial as it can lead to some cash in the household.

Although at the start Sonia talked about going to school because she wanted to learn how to read and linked it with the stigma of being illiterate, she now hoped to continue and get a job.

*S: I would like to study until at least 8<sup>th</sup> or even 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I would like to give lessons in the literacy programme, with 8<sup>th</sup> grade they start teaching those in the literacy programme...there are still many schools where there are no teachers for the literacy programme.*

She distances herself from “those in the literacy programme”, she is now positioning herself as one of the educated ones.

## **7.6 Discussion**

Nielete, Olga and Sonia were all in their twenties and belonged to a generation of Mozambican women who had reached marriage age before completing fifth grade if they had access at all to school as girls. Dropout rates have been found to be higher in Mozambique for students who enter school at an advanced age (Wils, 2004) and the women had all left school when they got married. Nielete and Sonia both talked about how when literacy classes were introduced in the area they got the opportunity to go back to school as they could complete the equivalent of 5<sup>th</sup> grade there and continue. In Nielete’s case it had also meant that she could go and study without the economic support of her husband as there were no school fees in literacy class. As Olga had completed 6<sup>th</sup> grade when she got married, she could go to 7<sup>th</sup> grade directly.

I have argued that in the marriages of Nielete and Olga, their education can be seen as a *‘site of struggle’*. They both told detailed narratives about how their husbands had promised to support their education financially after getting married and then gone back on their words. They had both gone to school anyway, thereby defying their husband's authority and both described the issue of their education as linked with conflict in the marriage. The women described being *‘prohibited’* to study and

staying out of school for a couple of years as a result. This suggests that as a *'head of household'* and *'provider'*, their husbands were in a position to hinder their education. Nielete seems to link her husband's resistance to her education to different perceptions of masculinities and femininities. She suggests that he wants to confine her to taking care of their home and children as well as *'cultivating'* and sees himself as the *'provider'*. She seems to feel that he was not fulfilling his role of *'provider'* whereas she was fulfilling hers. Olga seems to link her husband's prohibition to jealousy and being abusive. Both Nielete and Olga, however, described their husband's prohibition as unjust and unfair. Their reasoning was that their husbands had been the reason they had to leave school and that it had been agreed with them that they would help them to go back to school later. This was also the reason Sonia mentioned for her husband's encouragement: *"It was he who took me out of school"*.

The narratives seem to suggest that the women did not see education as their human right as stated in the Mozambican constitution. Nielete and Olga certainly did not speak about their husbands abusing their rights to education. They did not seem to see being prohibited as a reason to leave their husbands although they said their husbands had gone back on their agreement to support their studies. This is reflected in Nielete's words when her husband refused to enrol her: *"Am I going to leave you because of studying"*!

It seemed to me that men who were educated and had formal jobs were more likely to encourage their wives to study than men with little education and/or unemployed. Many of the men I met who worked within the education sector said they had educated wives or wives who were studying. This was the case with Sonia's husband who was a teacher and she suggested that for educated men it was embarrassing to have an illiterate wife. This was not the case with Nielete's husband, however, who was working as a facilitator but was still against her education. Perhaps he was not as secure in his position as Sonia's husband, as Nielete would soon get a similar level of education and possibly a similar job to his.

Even if Olga and Nielete position themselves as victims of verbal and physical abuse, by their husbands, I see them at the same time as positioning themselves as remarkably resilient and determined in continuing their education. They use

examples of other women to explain why they were justified in challenging their husbands. Nielete said that “*everyone wanted to study*” which indicates that this was a discourse she could use to argue her case for going back to school. In Olga’s case it was her co-wife who was allowed to study when she was not. Sonia’s narrative also suggests that even if she talks about the husband as ‘head of household’, she believes that women have considerable space to manoeuvre within their marriage as long as they accept their husband's authority and ask politely for what they want.

The narratives reflect the different discourses discussed in chapter 5 on women's motives for studying. The women were all studying at night and linked this with the possibility of getting a job, although their purposes seemed different. Olga and Nielete, seemed to see education as a ‘fall-back position’ (Agarwal, 1997), as the best strategy to get out of physically and verbally abusive relationships, since they could not count on their parents or wider kin for support. Olga suggested that her husband had been prohibiting her from studying as he did not want her to get the independence to be able to leave him: “*He knows that if I work then I will somehow manage*”. It is possible that having abusive husbands was one of the reasons why Nielete and Olga were so determined to go back to school despite their husbands’ opposition. Sonia also saw facilitating a literacy class as a future prospect, but she did not mention this until I asked her about her plans for education. What she had emphasized in her narrative was the stigma of being illiterate and her pride in having learnt to read. She distances herself from “those in the literacy programme”. In the following chapter, I discuss the narrative of Isabel who was one of those Sonia referred, to as she was participating in the literacy class.

## **CHAPTER 8 – ISABEL: CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES AND MEANING MAKING.**

### **8.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the story of Isabel whom I knew from the village and who was a literacy programme participant. As in the case stories in chapters 6 and 7, I discuss the themes of gender identities, roles and education. As in chapter 6 which focuses on Maria, this chapter is about the meeting between different cultures and contexts. In contrast to chapter 6 where I explored similarities between myself and Maria, this chapter reflects on some of the different perceptions between me and Isabel that are reflected in the research transcripts.

In pre-narrative drafts I had used extracts from the interview with Isabel in different chapters, mainly in relation to points about gender relations. Once I had decided to adopt narrative analysis, I went through the transcripts again and highlighted all her ‘narratives’, using the narrow definition of a bound event or experience in the past (see section 4.5). I noticed that when these were put together and read in sequence, they were all in some way related to marriage and wifhood. I found that analysing the narratives as a whole gave a different picture of how Isabel might perceive her life than what I had understood from reading the interview transcript as a whole. Here I am making the assumption that stories are constructed for a certain purpose, such as justifying our thoughts and actions (Chase, 2005; Frank, 2012). I focus on the aspect of how people enact particular identities, trying to show themselves in a positive light (Frank, 2012). I hold that by putting the main focus of our encounter on these narratives I am given her more power over presenting to the audience what was important to her.

In a previous draft, I wrote Isabel's narratives up as seven shorter pieces but found that this required the reader to remember a lot of information when it came to the analysis. I have therefore joined the narratives under three themes: that of her first marriage, second marriage and history of education. By probing further and reacting to what Isabel was saying I co-produced the narratives (Riessman, 2008). To make my influence more explicit, I have included my questions rather than editing them out as it shows where she naturally stopped her account and why and how she picked

it up again. Isabel controlled, however, which questions she chose to elaborate on by telling me a story, rather than giving me a short answer. The narratives are presented verbatim in their entirety. This gives the reader a chance to make their own interpretation of both the narratives and of my interpretation of Isabel's account (Clandenin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008).

## **8.2 The Interview Context**

The interview was carried out at Isabel's house. Because of the heat in Maganja, visitors were received outside, which inevitably meant that interviews at someone's house would be carried out in an open and somewhat public space. When I arrived, Isabel was sitting outside with Raisa, a neighbour that I had recently also interviewed. Isabel did not have previous experience of being interviewed and although the interview was intended to be one to one, as she did not seem to mind Raisa's presence, I decided not to suggest that she leave. Different information is public and private between cultures and individuals do not share the same sensitivities (Devereux & Hoddinott, 1992). The questions I was planning to ask were linked to issues women commonly discussed outside their homes and I was not expecting to discuss particularly sensitive issues as at that point I did not know that her previous husband had been violent and prohibited her from going to school. I joined the women on a mat outside the house and the encounter felt in many ways like a chat between neighbours, although the tape recorder present signalled that it had a specific purpose.

Isabel was not sure how old she was. She said that she was 23, but that she was born in 1986, which would have made her nineteen. Judging by her narratives and appearances I found it more likely that she was 23. She was married to a man from another province and they had two children. Her husband had returned to his home province to look for work around a year earlier and she had not seen him since. She knew that he had found a job as he had sent her a letter, a 'capulana' and clothes for the children. He had not sent any money. There was no bank or institution in Maganja that could be used for sending and receiving money and he had told her he could not trust anyone to transport it but would bring money when he returned.

Isabel lived in a house that her husband had built before they met. It was made out of clay bricks and had a thatched roof. The land it was built on belonged to her mother-in-law as well as the coconut, banana- and mango trees on it. Isabel was entitled to some of the harvest as she looked after the trees. When I asked her with whom she was living she responded her mother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law and children. I meant with whom she was sharing the house, but she obviously defined her household in broader terms since her mother and parents-in-law lived in separate houses nearby. While her husband was away she shared her house with her children and brother-in-law. She had a 'machamba' and cultivated cassava, rice, sweet potatoes, peanuts and beans. In Maganja, coconuts were also an important source of food ingredients and could be sold in need. Isabel did not have a coconut tree but had the right to some of the produce of a coconut tree that belonged to her grandmother who had passed away. Her mother and parents-in-law also helped her out with necessities when they could. Isabel had been married before and had a child with her first husband who died in infancy. Around 10 minutes into the interview I asked her a question that she answered with a narrative, whereas before she had given shorter answers. The letters in the transcript stand for ME: Marta, I: Isabel and R: Raisa the neighbour.

### **8.3 Isabel's Narratives of Education, Marriage and Schooling**

#### ***Narrative 1: First Marriage***

ME: When you got married the first time was it you who wanted to get married or did your family say that you had to marry?

*It was my family it was also those days as my father was poor it was poverty my stepfather was also poor he didn't work he didn't do anything. So this man when he came to my house and started courting me he said: "Epa<sup>61</sup>! Accept him, as you are a woman, accept getting married, just stay in your home, this guy will support you, buy clothes for you, if you sit here.. I am miserable I have nowhere where I can work.*

ME: So was your first husband a good person?

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<sup>61</sup> Exclamation, here meaning "Well what to do"!

I: Aaaa<sup>62</sup>. *We divorced because he was out of his mind. He was beating me all the time. He was beating my all the time. Sjjiii<sup>63</sup>.*

R: *He's like Baltazar<sup>64</sup>.*

I: *Then my father said. "Epa you are making my daughter suffer, now we will get the money you paid and give back to you and my daughter goes home and sits". Then we summoned the families, they came to our house, we debated until we came to a conclusion, they divided the plates and the things that were inside, everything, then he stayed and I went to live here.*

ME: So he had paid pride price (*lobolo*)?

I: *Yes*

ME: He had given money to your parents and they returned it?

I: *They returned it. He was making me suffer a lot. I was very skinny I wasn't putting on weight because of the suffering. I wouldn't eat anything for two to three weeks just because of the abuse.*

[I and R start talking in the local language].

ME: But did he also abuse you talking? Did he also say bad things?

*He also said bad things to my family he was saying things to my whole family he was abusing while my family was not there when we were fighting, but these things he said, he was being abusive to my family and to me.*

R: *He is crazy, he is like Baltazar he is crazy.*

ME: Can you give me an example of how he talked?

I: *He?*

ME: Yes:

I: [Short chuckle] *He was saying like this: "You are not a woman, you were poor, and if it wasn't for me you would have died of hunger, you would have been walking around naked because of not having any clothes to wear, not having clothes, you look like a slut, a whore", saying this about me and also my mother", Epa I was very upset: "but you did not find me on the street, you found me at home, sitting in my father's house. Yes my father is not employed but he was managing to do everything, my father is a*

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<sup>62</sup> Exclamation signifying "no quite the opposite"

<sup>63</sup> Exclamation signifying that it was extreme behaviour.

<sup>64</sup> Baltazar was her husband and both I and Isabel knew that he was abusive towards her.

*fisherman, his work just comes from the sea he goes there and catches fish and I go and sell it to get money for fuel and so on, I make use of it and now you abuse me like this Epa patience”!*

ME: Had he studied?

*I: He had not studied, he was just an illiterate, just like that, he does not know anything, does not even know his name.*

*R: A canjoka<sup>65</sup>?*

ME: What is a canjoka?

*R: It is those who don't study.*

ME: So you divorced him?

*I: Yes.*

Here Isabel positions herself as passive. The main agents are her husband and stepfather. The husband pursued her and her father encouraged her to get married, although the exclamation 'epa' indicates that this was not an order, but rather advice. She does not say anything about how she thought or felt and is not taking responsibility for getting married. As narratives are always interpreted retrospectively and are coloured by knowledge of subsequent events, this passivity might result from the fact that her husband turned out to be very abusive. It may be that she regrets the fact that she married him and is not taking the responsibility for choosing him, attributing it instead to the poverty of her family, especially as later on she positions herself as not being very poor. The fact that her family was able to repay her bride price suggests that her family was not desperately poor as they would then presumably already have spent the money and had difficulties coming up with it again.

### ***Narrative 2: Second Marriage***

ME: ..<sup>66</sup> and then you met this one

*I met this one when I was living at my grandmother's place. He met me right there: "Girl are you married"? I said like this, I responded: "Yes I was married but I am divorced from my husband". Then he said: "Well I*

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<sup>65</sup> This is a word in the local language that I was not familiar with.

<sup>66</sup> This narrative follows directly from the previous one.

*did not marry yet, I have had a few girlfriends but I was just having an affair with them. Now in my heart I am looking for a girl to marry and live in my house.” “Epa, what you are saying is also what I want, I don’t want to sleep around like these other women you were talking about, not at all. I just want to marry and live in my house”. Then we travelled to my mother’s house where we introduced him. He said that this was what he wanted in his heart, then we started going out, being together and then we got married. He brought me here where we settled and started living together, then after four months I got pregnant.*

Unlike Narrative 1, Isabel here positions herself as an active agent. This time it is she who makes the decision to get married although it is made clear that it was not taken without presenting her suitor to her mother and getting her approval. Her decision to get married is attributed to the fact that this man had respectable intentions towards her: “*Now in my heart I am looking for a girl to marry and live in my house*”. This matched her ideas for her future “*Epa, what you are saying is also what I want...I just want to marry and live in my house*”. The way she performs a conversation between herself and her husband suggests a courting period where she met someone she liked.

ME: And how does he treat you?

I: Pardon?

ME: This man is he good or does he also beat you?

*But no, a person does not behave badly when he is not bad. He! Since we got married he never laid his hands on me, he never beat me and he also never insulted me. He didn’t insult me or anything, no.*

[A break of 2.5 seconds] *It was just that I myself, when my uncle had sent me money, I wanted to run away from him and go to Maputo* [break of 1.5 sec]

ME: You wanted to run away?

I: I wanted to run away?

ME: He gave you money?

I: *The one who gave me money was my uncle who lives in Maputo.*

ME: umm

*I: Now! At the time he was going out with another girl then I said: “Well I don’t want there to be another woman, don’t want it”. So I called my uncle, and he responded and sent me 900 Meticaïs and told me to prepare for travelling, to arrange my documents and come to Maputo. Then when he sent me money, then my husband grabbed me and beat me, but only slapped me twice.*

ME: Your husband?

*I: Aaa<sup>67</sup> my husband. He said: “Who sent you to call your uncle? Did I tell you that I would leave you? I am not going to leave you, I’m just going around with this girl, and I am going to marry her”. I said: “No! You are going to fail! Get married now! When you still have not built me a house since we got married! This house you already had when we met, you built it when you were single. It is a house for a youngster not for me it is not a house for a married person!” Then he said: “Ai hush up, I will build you a house, you must not take offence because of this.” It was just I myself who wanted to run away while this was not what was in his heart. So I sat down, since then and until now a problem has still not come up here.*

ME: So did he leave the other woman [meaning whether he broke up with her]?

*I: Yes he left her like that [In the meaning of leaving behind]. A week from the day he married her he went away... she lives in her mother’s house; they still did not build a house... She is the younger one I am the older one.*

ME: But when he married her what did you think?

*When he married this girl I did not think anything I just said like this: “Epa<sup>68</sup>! As you already married this way I am not going to say anything. I will also stay here sitting. But I will be keeping an eye on you. As you the master<sup>69</sup> saw on your pocket that you could marry two people I will manage. But you must not treat the other person badly, no not at all, you just have to manage with the two of us ««. He said “Yes I did not say that now when I have married I am going to leave you, I already know that I have two wives ««. After he said this I kept quiet. I did not say anything*

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<sup>67</sup> A confirmation, like umm

<sup>68</sup> Exclamation here meaning something in the way of “Well, what can I do”.

<sup>69</sup> *Dono*

*else. I continued keeping an eye on him, where he was going, but always when he was going to the other woman's house he returned to say hello, one week here, one week there, one week here, one week there. He did not do a bad thing, no.*

ME: But now don't you feel jealousy in your heart?

*I: Now? No not at all.*

ME: But at the time when he married her?

*I: Yes I was feeling it, but now, now I already got used to it. I don't feel anything when I sit I don't feel anything, I am just feeling things about life, now I don't have any feelings of jealousy.*

ME: Because in my country we are very jealous. If we know that our husbands are having an affair we start crying.

*I: [Laughs heartedly] You start crying?*

[R also laughs and makes a sound *aaaa*<sup>70</sup>],

ME: We might even divorce him.

They both keep laughing *ayeee*<sup>71</sup>?

ME: We say: "You don't respect me, I will divorce you, I will look for another man who only wants me" [they start laughing again and making a sound *aaaa*].

*I: In your country you want to be the only woman, alone? Iiiii while here a man marries two women, even three to four women?*

*R: Even five!*

ME: Why? What is the difference?

*I: I don't really know.*

I found it confusing when Isabel said that she had wanted to run away from her husband after she had just told me: "*he is not bad... he never laid his hands on me... he never beat me and he also never insulted me*". Then I became even more confused when she told me on second thoughts: "*Then my husband caught me and beat me, but only slapped me twice*". My confusion can be seen by the way in which I ask questions to make sure I have understood her correctly: "*You wanted to run away*"? "*Your husband*"? This reflects the different discourses we are drawing on: Isabel did

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<sup>70</sup> An exclamation signifying something like how strange or what a way to act

<sup>71</sup> A sound meaning really

not perceive slapping as abusive or insulting behaviour, whereas in my perspective a husband who beats or slaps his wife was being violent. Another woman later explained to me how there was a big difference between slapping and beating with fists or objects and did not see slapping as really serious. Perhaps Isabel saw slapping as abusive, since she did bring it up, but as it has only happened once it did not make her husband abusive. She seemed to feel that she had deserved it or at least brought it on by planning to leave her husband. Thus, she seemed to see abuse as relational but not in absolute terms. A bit of slapping when she had been accusing her husband of something that was not “*in his heart*” was reasonable, especially after the experience of her first husband who beat her often, severely and unfairly.

Her account of polygamy also represented abuse to me. I saw her husband as using his relatively powerful position vis-à-vis her to engage in behaviour that she did not agree with. The questions I ask Isabel indicate that I am trying to understand her perceptions as they are different from where I come from. She explains her reaction when her husband started going out with the other woman in rather practical terms. She suggests that she feared that he would leave her and it seems that this fear was mainly linked to having to leave their house. When he assured her that he was not leaving her but adding the other woman, she was mainly concerned that this would mean that he would not be able to afford to build her a house that was entirely her own. Expressions of jealousy and betrayal were not part of her narrative and this I found interesting. When I ask Isabel how she feels about her husband taking another wife I am comparing her experience with stories I have heard about women or men in Iceland having an affair or leaving their spouse for another person. In my culture this is linked with ideas of monogamy and faithfulness. There, affairs are seen as sources of jealousy and feelings of being betrayed and turned down. This in turn is linked to ideas of equality of men and women, where both parties are supposed to show their love and respect towards the other party by being faithful. To me it was a sign of inequality that Isabel’s husband married another woman despite her protest. It signalled that her husband had economic power over her and I assumed that women would not get along with their co-wives. In order to explore these differences I shared information about my culture, generalizing and imitating the local way of speaking by using direct speech: We say “*You don’t respect me, I will divorce you, I will look for another man who only wants me*”.

To Isabel and Raisa the idea that a woman is entitled to the sole affection of their husband is foreign as seen by their verbal expressions of surprise and genuine laughter. Interestingly, Isabel's words "*In your country you want to be the only woman, alone? Iiiii while here a man marries two women, even three to four women?*" indicate that she does not find this strange because she cannot relate to women thinking this way. Rather, she suggests that it would be impossible in Mozambique because men want to have many women. This draws on discourses about sexuality and masculinity in Mozambique where men are positioned as having a very strong sexual drive and therefore needing multiple partners to satisfy their needs (Groes-Green, 2009). Thus, it is the idea of Icelandic men having only one wife that is foreign.

When Isabel told me that a problem had not occurred between her and her husband after their argument about the other woman, I understood her to mean that he had stopped seeing her and that therefore it had not been a problem. Hence, my follow up question: "*So did he leave the other woman?*"? Isabel on the other hand thought I was asking whether he also left her behind when he went away as she was coming from the notion that Mozambican men needed many women. For her the issue was whether her husband treated both his wives equally by for instance spending equal time with them "*he would stay... one week here, one week there. He did not do anything wrong*" and that when he was with the other wife he made sure to show Isabel that she was not forgotten "*always when he was going to the other woman's house he returned to say hello*". Perhaps this acceptance of how things were was the reason why Isabel did not mention jealousy in her narratives. She was not at all jealous 'now' but with further probing about how she had felt when it happened she said "*Yes I was feeling it, but now, now I already got used to it. I don't feel anything*". Or perhaps she did not feel jealous at all because her marriage was not built on love and expectations of being the only woman in his life, but a mutual contract of exchanging goods and services.

### ***Narrative 3: History of Schooling and Prohibition***

ME: So I also wanted to know about the story of your going to school.

*Isabel: The story of going to school?*

ME: umm did you study as a child?

*I: When I was a child I went to first class, passed to enter second grade, I studied second but in third grade I stopped.*

ME: Why?

*I: I left because of not having exercise books, my father died when I was twelve; he was killed during the time of colonialism. Then I was living with my stepfather but then he left for Beira so I went to stay with my stepmother. My stepmother said Epa I will not manage to send you to school, to buy books, exercise books and a pen. You know that I'm single and don't have money. It is better that you leave school and start using the hoe. I stopped studying, left school and sat down at home. I did not have anyone to help me to buy exercise books.*

ME: And when did you start in the literacy programme?

*I started in 2003 in the literacy programme in second class. Then in the middle I left school and went to Gurúe as my mother was sick and I went to help her as she was living there with her husband. I did not finish school.*

ME: Did you go again in 2004?

*I: In 2004 I continued in the same class, I passed to third grade, but this year I refused to go to third grade. I wanted to go back and continue in second grade until completing.*

ME: Do you think your husband will have a problem with your studies?

*I: Not at all, he is not going to have a problem*

ME: Is he not going to prohibit you to study

*I: No*

ME: Was the other one prohibiting you to study?

*Yes the other one was prohibiting me to go. When I went to school he started talking as soon as I came home: "aaaa you are not going to school, you are with a man" and so on "you are not studying you are a slut, you don't want to work on the field, you just want to have an affair with someone else's husband." I said: "Epa I am not having an affair with another man, I am just going out because of the studies, to know something, to know how to write my name, the name of my mother and of my father, now this is because you, since you were born until this age you don't know*

*anything about anything, now this is the reason. Now I don't have this [that you are accusing me of] in my heart, I have to study, to know something.*

ME: So you started in the literacy programme while you were still together with him. So he did not like it?

*I: He did not like it that I studied, he just wanted me to be sitting at home so he could have a fight every day.*

ME: But you did not stop studying because of this?

*I: Yes I quit. I was obeying the order of the house, right! So I stopped left school. Now when I left school a lot of things came up, so then epa! I said "I prefer that we get divorced than that you fracture my head with beating"!*

ME: So did you insist on going to school at first or stop right away?

*I: No when he was saying these things I continued to go to school then he started moaning too much, iaaa then I quit, I left, abandoned school, sat down.*

ME: Was he getting worse?

*I: He was getting worse, saying things a lot.*

ME: So it was creating a lot of conflicts?

*I: Yes*

ME: But he was not doing anything like burning your exercise books?

*I: He didn't burn my exercise books; it was just that when he talked and I did not talk back he took a stick and started beating me.*

ME: But when you left school he did not stop?

*I: No he didn't stop at all; he continued, always, always, then iaaa. My family came and said: "Epa! You can not make our daughter suffer, it is better to leave her, you can find another person to marry and she leaves from here and goes and sits in her grandmother's house". Then the family came here and talked about the problems, the problems were finished, then we divorced, then I came here. It was my father who paid money and who told me go there and rest. When I got here within two weeks I heard that "your husband got married".*

ME: He married another woman?

*Yes he married another woman, he left her pregnant as well, he got married just now to another woman, I hear this from his friends when they*

*come here to fish. They say: “sjii your husband the things he is doing it is like when he was with you, he still has not changed his heart he continues saying things and beating his wife. I asked them: “Why does he do that”? “We don’t know it is his head that is not working properly”.*

Before the interview, I did not know that Isabel had a history of being prohibited from going to school and this was not something she initiated talking about. When telling me that she was married before (see Narrative 1), she did not mention this aspect. This suggests to me that she saw it as any other aspect of her conflicted marriage. Or that she did not feel that this period of her studies was relevant to her current situation where she was married to a different man and studying without problems. Unlike Nielete and Olga in chapter 7, Isabel did not know that I was particularly interested in experiences of women who had been prohibited from going to school, since I was interviewing her as a participant in the adult literacy programme and wanted to learn about her studies and life.

Isabel distinguishes between what her husband said were the reasons he did not want her to study and what she felt was the real reason. He engaged in discourses of jealousy that she might meet another man and accused her of being lazy and taking time from working on the field. She on the other hand attributes his reasons to ignorance, that he was prohibiting her because he himself had not gone to school. In Narrative 1, she referred to him as ignorant and not even knowing his own name due to his lack of schooling. It is not clear whether she means that he was too ignorant to understand the value of studying, that he was a bad person due to his ignorance or that he was threatened by her education because he did not want her to pass his own level of education. These were all perceptions I came across during my fieldwork.

Isabel also suggests that it was more than the issue of her education that caused him to prohibit her: *“he just wanted me to be at home so he could have a fight every day”*. I understand her to mean that it was a manifestation of his need to control and abuse her. As with Maria (chapter 6) and Nielete and Olga (chapter 7) it is clear that the conflicts she had with her husband over education were a part of a wider abusive relationship as he continued his abusive behaviour after she left school. By what she says it almost seems as if he was using her education as an excuse to pick a fight and,

that he would start arguing about it and when she did not respond, beat her. Here there is no mention that education could lead to her leaving him or that it could lead to her becoming disrespectful as discussed in chapter 5. This is perhaps because Isabel was attending literacy classes which would not lead to an increased economic independence, at least not unless she then continued.

#### **8.4 Constructing Identities and Making Meaning**

I see the narratives of Isabel as a whole as portraying the relevance of marriage and wifehood to her at the particular time in her life when our conversation took place. Although various themes such as poverty and abuse run through Isabel's stories, wifehood and marriage is the common denominator, except for the part where she talks about her educational history. This is the only part where my question specifically invited her to tell a story: "*I wanted to know about the history of your schooling*". As the other narratives were more instigated by Isabel, this could indicate that speaking about wifehood and marriage was more important to her than speaking about her schooling. During the interview I asked Isabel other questions that could have invited a narrative and I did not ask her specifically to talk about marriage. So why would she choose to tell stories about marriage and wifehood? One answer could be that stories about marriage are appropriate stories to tell to other women. As Frank points out, stories are told to particular audiences (2012). Then why would such stories be particularly appropriate? I think that Isabel answers that question in Narrative 1, by putting the following words in her stepfather's mouth "*as you are a woman, accept getting married, just stay in your home, this guy will support you, buy clothes for you*". This quote suggests that Isabel had learnt growing up that her expected role in society was to be a wife. If Isabel saw being a wife as her main role in society it makes sense that marriage and wifehood would be prominent when telling stories of her life as it was such an important aspect of her identity. Thus, I would argue that the main purpose of Isabel's narrative is to construct identities, particularly the identities of a wife.

Narrative one suggests that as a woman, Isabel depended on a man to 'support' her financially. She positions her stepfather as poor, signifying that he could not take on this role and thus Isabel needed a husband as soon as possible. Speaking through her

stepfather, Isabel positions her unmarried self as “*sitting*” at home. Thereby, she constructs herself as an idle burden while waiting for a husband to arrive. Thus, her contribution to household tasks and agricultural production does not seem to be highly valued.

***Alternative Femininities: The’ Wife’ versus ‘These Other Women’***

In her marriage narratives Isabel is constructing an identity as a respectable woman. In narrative 1 she positions herself as ‘sitting’ and waiting to be married off formally. In narrative 2 she positions adult women in two groups, those who are married versus ‘*these other women*’ who ‘*sleep around*’ and she underscores that she belongs to the first group. Here she is drawing on discourses that suggest that women who are not married need to engage in sexual favours to survive as will be discussed in the following chapter. Thus, for Isabel marrying was not only a matter of economic security but also of being respected.

A house seems to be the manifestation or symbol of marriage and wifhood for Isabel. She talks about getting married and having a *home* and leaving her first husband’s *house* to go and live in her grandmother’s *house*. In Narrative 2 she seems to be mainly against her husband taking a second wife because it is important for her identity as a married woman to live in a house “*for a married person*” not a house “*for a youngster*”. Here a second wife is threatening as her husband’s income will then have to be divided between the two and Isabel fears that he will not be able to provide her with her own house “*You are going to fail! Get married now when you still have not built me a house since we got married*”.

I remember Isabel as always joyful and laughing when I ran into her. Unlike Nielete and Olga in chapter 7 and Maria in chapter 6, Isabel seemed content with her marriage and with life in general. She said her husband was “*not bad*” and she did not complain about him. I found this interesting as she had told me how he took another woman against her will and went away before building her the house that obviously was so important to her. I had heard so many stories of men who had left their wives and children for work somewhere else, established a new family in the new place, never come back and never sent any money to support their children.

How was she better off being married to this man than staying single in her grandmother's house? Had she wondered as I did what the use was of having a husband or in other words a provider who lived and worked in another province and did not send home money? I think she had. When I asked her about her marital status at the beginning of our interview she said "*I am married it is just that this husband of mine isn't here*". So she seemed to be putting a sort of a disclaimer on the marriage. Also, when I asked her what she did to make a living she said:

*A single woman who does not pick up the hoe [to work on the field] is in a bad situation, I sometimes help people on their field, they give me money, when they have 10 or 20 or 25 Meticaïs I use this money to buy flour and make cakes and earn some money, perhaps 5 Meticaïs to buy food for the household. We are out of food now<sup>72</sup>.*

Although Isabel emphasises her wifhood through her narratives she at the same time acknowledges here that she has to use some of the same methods to survive as single women. Isabel adheres to the principle that being married secures your future, despite the fact that her first marriage failed because of the abuse of her husband and that her current husband was far away and not taking part in her daily life. What her second marriage did give was social status and a wider social network. She could go to her parents-in-law as well as her own parents for assistance. Therefore, it seems that by getting married, Isabel had fulfilled her expectations of life and did not imagine a life much different from the one she had. When I asked her about her aspirations for school she said she wanted to complete the literacy programme and continue in night class. She associated becoming literate with the acquisition of knowledge: "*I have to study to know something, to know how to write my name, the name of my mother and of my father*" (narrative 3). Unlike Nielete, Olga and Sonia, she did not mention independence or getting work as hoped for outcomes. When I asked her how many children she wanted to have, she said that it: "*Depended on God*" and when I asked her whether she wanted to continue living where she lived she answered: "*This depends on my husband*". I asked her what she would do if she could decide, to which she responded:

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<sup>72</sup> Here she is referring to the food produced on her '*machamba*'.

*I would like that we bought our own land and built a house there as borrowing something is not good. If it is your own land it is difficult to make you leave.*

Thus, Isabel imagined a future in her own house on her own land with more children but it was not up to her, but in the hands of god and her husband. Her husband had promised her that house and it seemed that as long as she continued to imagine the house as something which would manifest at some point in the future, she was content.

### ***Alternative Masculinities: The ‘Out of his Mind’ versus ‘Not Bad’***

Making meaning of her husband’s violent behaviour, Isabel positions him as particularly violent: “*he was out of his mind*”. The reference to losing weight due to the abuse suggests that it was severe. Isabel underscores that the violence was not because of her personality or behaviour by mentioning that he had subsequently beaten two more wives. She also reconstructs the words of her parents twice that it was not acceptable how he was making their “*daughter suffer*” (Narratives 1 and 3). She did not have an explanation of his abusive behaviour but suggests that it was because of an inherent violent personality by quoting his friends that he had still not “*changed his heart*” and that “*it is his head that is not working properly*” (Narrative 3). Raisa is also acting to co-construct the identity of Isabel’s husband as abusive in nature. When Isabel describes how her husband verbally abused her family (Narrative 1), Raisa reacts by comparing him with Baltazar concluding that “*he is crazy*”. She also uses a local word meaning ‘illiterate’ to negatively label Isabel’s husband. In chapter 5 I argued that being illiterate had a negative connotation and was sometimes associated with being uncivilized, lacking in character and not knowing how to behave properly.

Interestingly, when I asked Isabel about her second husband she did not define him so much by how he was and what he did, but rather what he was not and did not do: “*a person does not behave badly when he is not bad*”, “*he did not do a bad thing*”, “*he never insulted me*”, “*he never beat me*”. I link this with Isabel's expectations and perception of the choices she has in life. She does not expect to have a “good

man”. I find it likely that this was influenced by her limited choices in life as discussed previously. She commented that her food was finished, suggesting that she was vulnerable to going hungry. I also understand her words to mean that after being in a violent relationship she could take a lot from a man as long as he was not violent, gave her a house to live in, *capulana* and clothes for their children.

### ***‘Verbal Abuse’: A ‘Sensitive Topic’?***

As stated earlier, at the beginning of the interview I did not know that Isabel had previously been married to an abusive man. I did not get the feeling that she was uncomfortable about Raisa being present and as I did not know she would talk about potentially ‘*sensitive*’ issues, I was not concerned about Raisa’s presence. However, in light of how the interview developed I wonder whether it was unethical to keep asking Isabel about her husband’s abusive behaviour rather than making an excuse to go and come back later when she was alone. As Hydén points out, what counts as a sensitive topic in research is relational. It depends on the context, the views of the teller and listener and their relationship.

Talk about a traumatic experience, for example, has the potential to pose a threat and even has the potential to re-traumatize the traumatized, but such talk can just as well have the potential to heal. (2008:123)

My concern is not so much about Isabel’s account of physical abuse as she offered that information without hesitation. It is rather my probing in Narrative 1 about his verbal abuse. As evident in the transcript, I asked Raisa whether her husband also ‘*abused her talking*’. Then I realized that she might not categorize hurtful words as abuse so I rephrased and ask her whether he ‘*said bad things*’, which was a term often used. She answered affirmatively but in very general terms “*he also said bad things to my family*”, “*he was being abusive to my family*”. When I asked her to give me an example she hesitated and then before continuing she shortly chuckled. Such a chuckle could signal embarrassment. I realized when reading the transcripts of Olga and Maria (see chapter 7) that they also referred to verbal abuse and did not describe it in detail until I asked them to give me an example. I therefore came to wonder whether verbal abuse was a more ‘sensitive topic’ than physical abuse and why that might be.

Isabel suggests in Narratives 1 and 3 that her husband beat her because he did not have “*a good heart*”. Attributed to the husband’s brutal personality, it was therefore not provoked by her behaviour. Thus, narratives about his undeserved physical abuse showed her as the victim of a brutal husband, rather than portraying her in a negative light. His physical violence did not threaten her preferred identity of a respectable woman and wife. Perhaps his verbal abuse did.

In Narrative 1, Isabel performs (acts out) the hurtful words of her husband: “*You are not a woman, you were poor, and if it wasn’t for me you would have died of hunger...*” Although she had previously told me that her poverty was the main reason why she got married, here she reconstructs how she had refuted her husband’s words. She argues that he had not found her on the street but respectably sitting in her father’s house and that although her father did not have a job he was still working as a fisherman. Isabel is pointing out that her family may be poor but not destitute. Furthermore, he calls her a ‘*whore*’ and a ‘*slut*’ and in Narrative 7, accuses her of having an affair instead of going to school. Thus, her husband is here attacking her preferred identity. He is positioning her as ‘*these other women*’, the opposite of the respectable wife she wanted to portray. This reminded me of an event during my undergraduate years when a fellow student went to our teacher and accused me of stealing her idea for a research. I saw myself and wanted others to see me as an honest person. Although the accusation was not true and the person accusing me later admitted it and apologized, I found it very upsetting. I realized that once negative words about someone have been spoken they are out there and can never be taken back. Even if they are untrue, they might make someone wonder about their truthfulness. Drawing on my experience, could it be that Isabel feared that repeating her husband’s hurtful words could show her in a bad light. What if I or Raisa believed those words to be true? Even if we did not believe them, would they sow seeds of doubts in our minds? If Isabel told us that her husband called her a whore might we wonder whether she behaved “*like these other women*” and slept around. Repeating these words to others gave them independent lives. For Isabel describing her experiences of verbal abuse may have been linked with shame and vulnerability and thus been a sensitive topic (Hydén, 2008).

Another explanation could be that verbal abuse was perceived as more hurtful than physical as it was seen as a lack of respect. As Maria put it in chapter 6, whereas physical pain went away, hurtful words stayed in the head. One of the reasons might have been that women interpreted abusive words as unjustified and unfair whereas they might like Isabel have excused an occasional slapping and beatings that did not result in physical harm as corrective and justified behaviour.

### **8.5 Discussion**

Households in Mozambique that depend on subsistence agriculture are vulnerable (World Bank, 2008). Maganja is an area susceptible to droughts and floods which are factors that put many people under threat of hunger and malnourishment in the off-season (ibid). A recent study suggests that although poverty is decreasing in Mozambique, the poorest are falling behind and that women are particularly vulnerable (Ehrenpreis, 2008).

Isabel would fall under the category of resource-poor African women. She positioned herself as an agricultural producer, as a mother and as a wife. Isabel's narratives suggest that her self-preferred identity was that of being a wife and that she associated economic security and social respectability with this role. The security was associated with having a house, but not necessarily with receiving a cash contribution from her husband as he was away. She produced food, did occasional labour for other people and received support from her own and her husband's family. The indication that for Isabel being married meant social respectability was her reference to "these other women" who slept around. Thus, she was not only constructing her identity in the way of what she was but also of what she was not. In the same way, she constructed a binary of a bad man represented by her first husband, versus a "not bad" man in her second husband.

Her participation in the literacy programme was motivated by the desire to not be illiterate, which she associated with being ignorant. When I asked her what educational level she was aiming for, she said that she would like to continue in evening school after completing the literacy programme, but she sounded as if she did not really believe that this was possible. Perhaps she did not feel confident that

she would manage in evening school. Or perhaps she felt like some of her neighbours from FG2 in chapter 5, that she was not the kind of person who would be able to get a job even if she studied more. Isabel had started literacy class after her husband left and said he would not have a problem with her studies, like her previous husband. This could mean that she perceived their relationship as different from her first one and that therefore education would not be a problem. This could be linked to the different levels of education of the two men. Her second husband was more educated than the first husband and perhaps less likely to feel threatened by it. On the other hand, as her husband was absent and therefore unable to control whether or not she went to the literacy programme, his opinion about her studying was perhaps irrelevant.

In my analysis I have used some examples of how Isabel's perceptions were different from mine. I offered these comparative examples during the interview as well, in the belief that making comparisons between cultures serves to create a mutual understanding. I also felt that it would be impossible to live among women for months and expect to only "extract" their stories without sharing something of my world and my thoughts about the issues I was asking them about. In addition, from a feminist point of view, our encounter could be seen as a space where women could challenge the discourses that guided their own lives. Making my questions and responses visible also aids the reader in understanding where my assumptions and interpretation came from and how they might have influenced the discussion. Inevitably my own cultural assumptions and differences influenced the shaping of the thesis as a whole and what I chose to discuss in the thesis and what not. It also seemed to me that the response of women when I offered an alternative discourse allowed me to make more nuanced interpretations of the differences in our ways of thinking and an indication of whether they were simply repeating discourses or sharing lived realities that might be different from the normative discourse. An example was when they laughed at the idea of Icelandic women divorcing their husbands over an affair with another woman, but then by their words indicated that their feelings about polygamy might not be so different but rather that the discourse of men needing many women was dominant and therefore their behaviour in that regard had to be accepted.

Isabel could have chosen to tell me her narratives because she was content with being married as this was what she imagined as her best strategy in life. She could also have told these narratives because they were the kinds of stories most appropriate for conversations between women or for yet another reason. The presence of Raisa might also have influenced the way in which she constructed her narratives, as Raisa had experienced physical violence in her marriage and commented on this aspect of Isabel's story. Apart from being narratives about marriage, Isabel's narratives were also about suffering physical and verbal abuse. They could also be seen as narratives about resisting power enforced by husbands. Isabel managed to leave her first husband when he was abusive and she was preparing to also leave her second husband when she felt unfairly treated by him.

## **CHAPTER 9 – NARRATIVES OF WOMEN IN MOZAMBIQUE: SOME LESSONS LEARNT**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This thesis has explored the research question: *How are women's experiences of adult education influenced by perceptions of their gendered identities and roles as wives and mothers?* The focus has been on the experiences of women who were being “prohibited from studying” by their husbands. I have described how I set out to inform policy related to women’s literacy participation and how I came to question my own assumptions about gender. I have discussed whether as a Northern feminist I could make legitimate claims about the lives of women in a village in Mozambique, given the criticism that Northern feminists apply irrelevant theories and concepts to different realities in the South (Idi Amadiume, 2000; Arnfred, 2011, 2004c; Oyewùmí, 1997). I have reflexively discussed my assumptions and how they influenced my interaction with women (and men) in the field and subsequent analysis and writing up of data. Although the main purpose was to examine issues of gender and education, the thesis has been partly written as an exploration of my research practice, for I agree with Lynne Phillips that ultimately the purpose of a feminist ethnography is to point to areas of inequality between men and women in the hope that this can lead to change:

To make self-critique the only purpose for reflexivity in feminist ethnography misses a major point: the underlying goal of feminist social science is to make a difference and not just understand it. (1995:31-32)

Although, as discussed in chapter 4, it is probably unrealistic to expect that a limited period of fieldwork and the product that is a thesis will make a big difference to the lives of those the researcher interacts with, an awareness of some of the ways in which inequality and injustice are linked to women's education can be the first step towards change. As others have argued, describing the world may be the most effective way to change it (Frank, 2012). The study has limitations due to its ethnographic nature, drawing on few case stories and due to the fact that fieldwork was carried out in 2004-2005, but I hold that specific implications for policy and practice can be inferred from the research. Furthermore, as Win (2007) points out, Northern feminists are in a position of power in relation to feminists in the South as

they have more access to pursuing their education and more access to funding for research. In this respect my research can certainly make a contribution: by allowing the voices of some Mozambican women to be heard, thus making use of my privileged position. Indeed, after discussing barriers to women's education in a focus group, one of the women said:

*Now Ms Marta given these problems can you not help us when you get there by telling that in Mozambique we are suffering? That there are things we want to do but we are not able to, [can you not] tell this to the public so that these Mozambicans also hear it and help us? (FG8, 27/08/0)*

Her hope is that as a Northern researcher, my report about the problems women face in Maganja when they want to study might reach the ears of those in Mozambique who are in a position to make changes. Bearing all this in mind, the first part of this chapter draws together some of the themes coming out of the research while the second part is a reflection on their implications for policy and practice. In my analysis I also draw on insights from my post fieldwork position with the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) where I worked within the sectors of adult education and gender.

## **9.2 Revisiting Narrative Themes**

### *Narratives of Suffering*

During my fieldwork I was struck by how often the word “*suffering*” came up when women were speaking to me or among themselves. It seems to me that what women described as making them suffer were issues they would have liked to see change. As my focus was on gendered relations, I inevitably often heard about suffering linked to women's position as a wife and mother. As discussed in chapter 5, many women complained about the burden of being left by men to take sole responsibility for the children: *He abandons you he arranges another wife and you are left alone. You have to suffer until your baby grows up.* Linked to this, many women complained that their husbands took other wives or lovers despite being unemployed and unable to provide for them: *“They want to marry many women...without having any means. This is suffering.* Drinking in excess was also often discussed: *“These men when they*

*drink then they make you suffer*". Drinking was linked with men spending money on alcohol and also linked with violence as in the case of both Nielete (chapter 7) and Maria (chapter 6) who described their husbands drinking for days and being abusive.

The stories of Nielete, Olga, Isabel and Maria in chapters 6-8 are also all in some ways narratives of suffering, of feeling poor, enduring physical and emotional violence and being hindered when trying to pursue education. Nielete talked about how she felt stuck in her marriage as she had nowhere to go and no one to help her; Olga worried that her children were not being treated well by the stepmother who was taking care of them and that she might not be able to get them back and Isabel worried about being able to feed her children as she had to depend on her machamba and extended family in the absence of her husband.

Researching oral history in Mozambique, Errante (2000) felt that changes in society were spoken of with a sense of grieving and suggested that social change was being experienced as a personal loss (2000). Similarly, the tales of suffering above can be seen as an expression of grieving for the "old times" when women were taken care of by their husbands instead of being left alone to provide for their children and grandchildren, times when women could initiate a divorce and count on support from their extended family (Arnfred, 2011). These accounts reflect ongoing changes in roles and responsibilities of men and women. Silberschmidt argues that when women complain, they are taking a position of power and creating new roles for themselves (2004) but it seemed to me that women criticised men for not fulfilling their roles, rather than challenging the gendered roles themselves. However, this is perhaps the first step towards a change in gendered relations as to challenge an oppressive structure you have to first acknowledge that something is not right (Ewick & Silbey, 2003).

### ***Poverty and the Economics of Relationships between Men and Women***

Another theme running through the research is poverty. One of the women I interviewed described how her husband had drunk a lot, beaten her, not brought home money for their four children and how she had eventually left him after he had

thrown a machete at her. I asked her what had been the main reason she eventually divorced him, assuming she would say it was domestic violence. Instead she responded: “*What I suffered most was that he did not provide money for the family, this thing with beating was not every day*”. Poverty is present for the women in FG1 in their descriptions of the daily struggle of providing food and school materials for their children. They describe how at times the only option for women is to have sexual relations with a man in exchange for money or goods. Although this is described in terms of making a “*contract*” and their female sexuality portrayed as a source of power (Arnfred, 2011), at the same time they describe women as feeling abused when men do not respect the norm of compensating them for sexual services.

Poverty and economics are implicit in the accounts about marriage, relationships and education. Isabel (chapter 8) married young because she needed a husband to provide for her. After she divorced, she waited in her grandmother’s house for another man to appear. Olga (chapter 7) left her father’s house when she got pregnant, although the father of her child already had another wife and seemed to have seen his relationship with Olga as a casual affair. Once Olga left her husband she had to move back to her father’s place and leave her children with her husband as she could not take care of them. Nielete (chapter 7) remained in an abusive relationship because her parents and extended family were too poor to help her.

In Maganja young girls were often portrayed as “*lazy*”, preferring to sleep with men to working on the field or as preferring to either “*do their thing*” or “*to prostitute*” rather than study. In the context of widespread unemployment and the perception that jobs could only be secured through social networking or bribes (see chapter 5), some young girls perhaps saw this as a better way to secure an income than waiting for a husband or studying. Helle-Valle found in Botswana that it was common for young and middle aged women to engage in informal sexual relationships in exchange for gifts. He argued that this can be seen as an act of agency, as a way for women to opt out of marriage or postpone it (2004). Similarly, research in Maputo describes how some young women in Maputo engage in relationships with “*sugar daddies*”, to finance their education or “*modern life style*” (Groes-Green, 2009).

Some women in Maganja were cynical about depending on men and said they preferred to be single: [A husband] *does not work nor does he want to go to the machamba*<sup>73</sup>, *he just stays with his friends. This is why many women here are single; it is worth it to be alone in your house.* However, as seen by the stories of Isabel, Maria, Nielete, Olga and Sonia, being a married woman was the expected social position for a woman and an important marker of her identity. It was the ‘*emphasized femininity*’ (Connell, 1987) in society. As seen when Isabel (chapter 8) made a distinction between ‘*the wife*’ and ‘*these other women*’ who ‘*sleep around*’ and when speaking to me, actively positioned herself in the former group. Being unmarried could be described as a ‘*pariah femininity*’ as contaminating and disrupting the dominant social order (Schippers, 2007). Thus, even when women complained about men they seemed to see being unmarried as unfortunate, as illustrated by one woman’s response when asked why she had never married: “*I never had the luck to marry*”.

#### ***Education as a ‘Fall-Back’ Position***

Many women who either did not have a husband or who had a husband they felt did not provide enough saw the pursuit of education as improving their options. In chapters 5-8 I discussed how education was often perceived and portrayed as the way to get paid employment. Women in Focus Groups 7-10, who themselves participated in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade, generally emphasized the necessity of completing 7<sup>th</sup> grade if their education was to have direct financial gains (see chapter 5) and this view was echoed in the narratives of Nielete, Olga and Sonia (chapter 7). Maria (chapter 6) talked about how she had tried to convince her female relatives to study. Because they had not completed the primary level and beyond she described them as stuck in a situation of poverty. Rael, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade student who participated in FG10, described her husband as violent and negligent, but as her family was poor she preferred to stay with him and “*suffer*” than to leave for an uncertain future. Getting a job would change everything: “*When I start working and have money I will settle where I want, I will leave this suffering behind*”. Therefore, I have argued that some women saw education as a ‘fall-back position’ as something to fall back on if they could not count on a husband or a family. Olga, who had left her children with her husband

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<sup>73</sup> The field

when they separated as her crops had failed, hoped that after completing 7<sup>th</sup> grade she would be able to work and get her children back. Nielete talked about how she would be able to leave her abusive husband once she started working.

However, although education might improve people's chances of getting paid work it was by no means a guarantee as unemployment was high in Maganja (SLSA, 2002). I supported some young people in secondary school during and after fieldwork, who still have not managed to get a "formal" job. A woman who was struggling to complete 7<sup>th</sup> grade during my fieldwork had dropped out twice. She was a widow and prioritised using the money she earned by baking and selling cakes to put her children through school. She has now completed 10<sup>th</sup> grade, but still does not have a formal job, although more education has resulted in more possibilities than before, like giving lessons in literacy classes. So despite the links often made in discourses between education and paid employment (chapters 5-8), education clearly does not automatically lead to employment.

### ***Education and Identities***

In chapters 5-7 I discussed how Maria, Nielete, Olga and women in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade positioned themselves as women who did not want to be "*left behind*" in changing times that required people to be educated to get ahead. They positioned themselves as '*modern women*' who took up paid employment to meet the increased costs of living and in the face of insecurity resulting from droughts and faltering support from husbands and kin. Most of them had a machamba and seemed to perceive education and paid employment as an addition to the work typically ascribed to women's roles. Nielete (chapter 7) commented that she fulfilled her role as a wife as she did everything in the household, took care of their children and produced food. She therefore found it unreasonable that her husband wanted her to stop studying and "*just cultivate*".

Women in the adult literacy class I observed had somewhat different ideas of what they would gain by studying. In chapter 5, I discussed discourses linking illiteracy with ignorance and suggested that some women studied because they wanted to feel

and to be seen as “*not ignorant*”. As has been reported by literacy learners in Mozambique (van der Linden & Rungo, 2006) and many other countries, they linked their studies with becoming more self-confident and able to function in various ways such as finding directions, voting, helping children with homework, avoid being fooled by husbands and so on. It was evident that the illiterate women in FG2, who were not participating in the adult literacy programme, also identified with such discourses and saw studying as essentially good. Still they suggested that it was not an activity that would make a difference in their lives in terms of survival. They suggested that for the poorest in society, education was out of reach and that their time would be better spent working on their fields as this resulted in food on their plates. Thus, as discussed in chapter 5, education was not only linked to paid employment but also to identities; this was so both for women who felt more positive about themselves as a result of studying and for other women who did not see themselves as “the type of person” who studied. I am not suggesting that there were clear cut differences between non-participants, participants in the literacy programme and in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade in regard to their perceptions on education and how these were linked to their identities. Some women in adult literacy classes wanted to complete the programme and continue in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and women in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> class were also motivated to study by some of the things literacy participants listed. The main point is that the diverse and different needs and perceptions of women should be taken into consideration when designing education policies.

### ***Education as a ‘Site of Struggle’***

When women said: “*My husband prohibited me from studying*” it did not necessarily mean that the woman in question had refrained from going to school; it should therefore not be understood as necessarily an ultimatum given by a husband to his wife. People seemed to use the phrase in a situation where a husband told his wife he did not want her to study, followed by different outcomes. Some women managed to negotiate access to school; others went despite their husband’s protest and had various difficulties in the marriage because of this. Yet others did not go to class when their husbands prohibited them or quit school because of facing emotional and physical violence. I have framed this issue as ‘education as a site of struggle’.

Why some men prohibited their wives from studying is complex. Maria, Isabel, Nielete and Olga were not able to explain it to me. They said that their husbands explained it in terms of jealousy; or that women would lose respect for their husbands when they studied; or that studying interfered with their reproductive and productive roles. Thus, they engaged in the discourses around women's education and femininity described in chapter 5. Men prohibiting women from studying seemed to be linked to variables such as the level of education pursued by the woman; her husband's level of education, earning ability and social position; whether or not education might lead to paid employment; the quality of the relationship between the husband and wife; and urban or rural residence. Further research would be needed to map out such factors.

It seems to me that these various factors were linked to perceptions of gendered identities, of masculinities and femininities and the different positions of power within the household. As discussed in chapters 5-8, marriage tended to be seen as a relationship or institution where the husband had '*power over*' (Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1998; Townsend, 1999) his wife in light of his status as the '*head of household*'. I have argued that this was linked to the perception of the husband as a '*provider*' and of the wife as '*submissive*' and '*respectful*'. At first this seemed to fit the Northern feminist notion that women in Mozambique were subordinated by men, hence a wife by her husband. Observing other kinds of power relations, however, indicated that reality was more complicated, as being a woman did not necessarily mean being submissive to men. There seemed to be a clear hierarchy of power within certain relationships dictating how those with more power behaved towards those with less power. This did not seem to be necessarily determined by gender: men and women in power behaved in a similar way towards those subordinate to them. For example, the single women I lived with had unquestioned authority over the two teenage boys in the household in light of their seniority and position as mothers. I observed occasions where women who had male staff or servants spoke to them in an authoritarian '*power over*' manner, especially women living in cities. I observed such authoritarian interactions in other relations of power, for example between teachers and their students. Thus, power within a hierarchy was based on social position and not on gender per se (Arnfred, 1995, 2011).

Power has been described as a “sub-zero” game (Rowlands, 1998; Townsend, 1999) in which when one person gains power the other party loses it; in the context of marriage in Maganja this power appears to reside not in the husband's body but rather in his position as ‘*provider*’. I would therefore argue that when women were said to have lost respect for their husbands as a result of studying and getting a job, this is in fact about the perception of the wife as invading the husband’s domain as ‘*provider*’. If women were perceived to be entering their husband’s domain as the ‘*provider*’ they were at the same time seen as undermining his power. This would explain why when Maria took on a new subject positions as an educated, career woman, her increased economic power was perceived by her husband as loss in his role as ‘*provider*’ and the status it afforded him. This is what Moore refers to as feeling ‘*thwarted*’ when men are not able to sustain their gendered subject position of the “breadwinner” (1994). Moore argues that when men feel thwarted they may engage in behaviour that in their culture is seen as demonstrating masculinity such as drinking, taking a lover and being violent towards their wives (also see Wade, 1994). All of this fits with Maria’s descriptions of Paulo’s behaviour.

Silberschmidt has come to a similar conclusion based on research in Kenya and Tanzania. She argues that in the context of unemployment it has become impossible for many men in Eastern Africa to fulfil their subject position as a ‘*provider*’ and that this has led to feelings of disempowerment, resulting in displays of ‘*masculine*’ behaviour:

In their frustrating situation, multi-partnered (“extramarital”) often casual sexual relationships – have become essential for masculinity and self-esteem. (2001:657)

Silberschmidt found that while husbands complained that their wives no longer respected them; wives complained that their husbands drank too much and didn't provide for the family. She quotes people saying that “more and more women have taken command of the home” and that “harmony has gone out of the window” (2004:236-237). She points to a certain mismatch between the persistent ideology of the male as the “head of household” who should “provide a house (and land), pay school fees and clothes for wife and children” (ibid:237) and the reality. Silberschmidt found that when women became economically independent this was

seen as a threat by some husbands who believed that she might then go out to find a man who could better satisfy her material needs. When the husband could not control his wife this was seen as severely affecting his reputation, honour and ego. Even when women became economically independent and kept their income to themselves, their husbands were still expected to provide money for rent, food and school fees. Silberschmidt concluded that there was a difference between the discourses of masculinity of the provider with a reality in which men had “become increasingly marginalised and disempowered” (ibid:240).

### ***Women's Agency and Resistance***

Although men in Mozambique are seen as *'heads of household'* and women told they should be submissive wives, this does not mean that women are passive and obedient victims (Arnfred, 2011). Narratives about suffering can be seen as an act of protest, as an act of challenging the situation and positioning of women. Nielete, Olga, Isabel and Maria had all refused to give in and found ways to continue in school. Other women told me stories of actively standing up to their husbands, like Madalena who had recently moved into the village with her husband and two children from his first wife. Her machamba had not yet started producing food and the family sometimes went to bed hungry. The family relied on her husband to provide income from occasional day labour. So she was not happy when he got together with another woman, as now he would have to provide her with money. Madalena had protested and told him he was not going to manage to feed this woman and her five children, as he did not have work. When I asked her whether she was angry with her husband, she did not respond but laughed quietly, indicating that she felt powerless when it came to her husband taking another wife. Still she told me two stories of how she had exercised power and set limits on her husband. In the first incident he had brought the other woman home with him and intended her to stay overnight. Madalena had responded: *You [plural] are not going to sleep in this house. It might be a rented house, but it is my house.* He had then threatened to beat her but when she threatened to then tell the neighbours about it, he had taken the other wife to stay at another house. The second narrative was about an occasion when the other woman had come to Madalena's house and Madalena had not invited her to eat with the rest of the family, which was a sign of disrespect. I see Madalena's stories as narratives of

resistance to power (Ewick & Silbey, 2003). Madalena's control over food was a source of power (Arnfred, 2011) and taking care of her husband's children from another marriage probably strengthened her bargaining position. Madalena suggested that her protest had resulted in some positive changes in her husband's behaviour.

I agree with the many feminists who emphasize the importance of looking at the ways in which women exercise agency and resist power and restrictive forms of femininity. Paechter argues that:

Distancing oneself from stereotypical femininity... is a claiming of power... to oppose stereotypical or normalized feminine positioning is to reject the disempowerment that comes with it". (2006:257)

It is outside of the scope of this thesis to examine the ways in which women negotiated their studies with their husbands, although this was touched upon in Sonia's narrative (chapter 7). At the same time, I agree with Phillips (1995) that feminists should not romanticise resistance and give to it meaning that the women themselves might not ascribe to it. Madalena did not tell me her stories as an example of resisting her husband's power, but as an example of how offended she felt when the other woman showed up at her house and how badly she felt treated when her husband brought her with him to stay overnight. Even if Madalena told her tale of refusing to accept such behaviour, I still sensed a feeling of vulnerability and helplessness.

### **9.3 Implications for Policy and Practice**

#### ***Promoting the Discourse of Women's Education as a Human Right***

In narrative analysis it is important to look at not only what people say but also what they do not say. In this respect what was absent in the narratives of Maria, Olga, Nielete and Isabel and also in discussions in focus groups (see chapter 5) was the notion of women's rights. They did not talk about their right to get educated and when their husbands "prohibited" them to study they did not talk about their husbands violating their rights. They all described how they had "*stayed behind*" or "*sat down*" when they were prohibited and only taken the decision to defy their

husbands after they had been physically or verbally abused. That they were not engaging with discourses of human rights indicates that they had not had much exposure to such discourses as people draw on the discourses available to them to construct their identities and narrate their lives (Warriner, 2004).

When describing how they tried to convince their husbands to allow them to study, Nielete and Maria engaged in instrumental discourses on how useful their education would be for the family in terms of being able to contribute to household costs and take better care of their children. I also observed such instrumental discourses on women's education in focus groups and public events (see chapter 5) and they were reflected in official documents such as the strategy for the sub-sector of Literacy and Adult Education for 2001-2005 (MINED, 2000b:10):

There is a strong correlation between the education of women and the education of children. This is a concrete example of the benefits of literacy for girls and women and should be used to increase their access to AL/NFE programmes and their retention.

Communities need to be sensitized to the importance of educating women, for the development of families and communities.

Participation of girls and women is very important for the development of the country.

Here women's education is seen as important because of what it does for their families and community rather than for themselves. The government discourses in turn echoed global policy discourses about women's schooling and literacy learning at the time (e.g. King & Hill, 1993; Lauglo, 2001; Schultz, 2002). Thus, there was a congruency between global and governmental discourses and the discourses women themselves engaged in which indicates that global policies had percolated down to the local level. During my time at ICEIDA, I heard staff at the Ministry of Education voice concern over the emphasis on primary education in comparison to other levels of education. Receiving around half of its state budget from donors means that the Mozambican government has to some extent had to adapt to donor policies. It

therefore seems that a more rights based approach to education would have to originate from global policies. Such a shift seems to have been occurring in the last decade, influenced by the capability approach and view of development as freedom rather than solely economic growth (Sen, 1999).

Freedom in this sense is characterized by the “capabilities of people to lead the kind of lives they value” (Sen, 1999:18). Martha Nussbaum, another influential proponent of the capability approach, defines capability as:

What people are actually able to do and to be – in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being.  
(Nussbaum, 2000:5)

Development should be about removing the ‘unfreedoms’ which hinder people from expanding and making use of their capabilities (Sen, 1999). Poverty, lack of public facilities and social care, gender inequalities, and imposed restrictions on the freedom to participate in social, political and economic life are all examples of such unfreedoms (Sen, 1999). Education is seen as a key capability of both instrumental and intrinsic value (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1999). In this sense, being prevented from studying and working outside of the household would be an “unfreedom” and being physically and emotionally abused would also be an unfreedom. What Maria, Isabel, Nielete and Olga were describing was essentially not being able to live the lives they valued because of “unfreedom” linked to the institution of marriage. In this sense then, promoting women's right to study and work would be one aspect of promoting development.

Many feminists have also argued for a rights based approach to education in the South. For example, Subrahmanian argues that rights should be framed in terms of states’ “obligations towards their citizens, obligations for which they can be held accountable” (2005:396-397).

The influence of capability and human rights approaches is also apparent in recent UN documents where the discourse seems to be shifting towards emphasizing the rights of women to education and where education is seen as empowering for women themselves as well as serving the goal of eliminating poverty:

*The UN Calls upon*<sup>74</sup> Member States to ensure the right of women and girls to education of good quality and on an equal basis with men and boys, to ensure that they complete a full course of primary education, and to renew their efforts to improve and expand girls' and women's education at all levels, including at the secondary and higher levels, as well as vocational education and technical training, in order to, inter alia, achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and poverty eradication. (UNCSW, 2012:18)

In light of what has been said in this chapter so far, I suggest that discourses about women's education in Mozambique need to shift. Education is enshrined as a human right in the Mozambican constitution (MINED, 2011, 2012), but just as parents have been sensitised about the importance of sending girls to school, my case studies suggest that a campaign is needed to raise awareness of the right of adult women to study and to sensitise men to this fact.

However, it also needs to be taken into account that promoting education as empowering might have the effect of creating more opposition by some husbands to their wife's education. When explaining why they supported their wife's education, men tended to frame it in instrumental terms, like this literacy facilitator: *I know why I let her go to school. Tomorrow if I lose my life she will look after my children.* Perhaps some women in Maganja have been able to negotiate their studies precisely because their education has been framed in terms of what they could do for their families and society, rather than in terms of empowerment, as seen, for example, in Sonia's discussion of how a woman should negotiate with a husband who did not want her to study (chapter 7). Similarly, Maria reconstructed a conversation with her family about how her studies would benefit her children (chapter 6). They might have been consciously downplaying their own interests in education as a fall-back position (see chapter 7). Thus, instrumental discourses may be drawn on by women to bargain and argue their case. At the same time there is a need to go beyond such instrumental discourses and promote women's rights to education. This would have to go hand in hand with challenging existing ideas about gendered roles, and

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<sup>74</sup> Original emphasis

advocating for men and women's equal rights to decision making, paid employment and movement within and outside of the household.

***The Importance of Taking Perceptions of Masculinities and Femininities into Account***

It seemed to me that what Silberschmidt has to say about changing masculinities and femininities in Tanzania (see above) could just as well have been based on fieldwork in Maganja. It echoes the discourses described in chapter 5 and the stories of Maria, Nielete and Olga. Therefore, I see their stories as relevant beyond their particular contexts and lives. Similar to some other Sub-Saharan countries, economic and social changes in Maganja have resulted in new realities and responsibilities for women, whereas gendered norms and power have not been renegotiated to the same extent. In order to promote gender equality, decrease gendered violence and improve women's use of opportunities to education, it is important to work towards changing ideas of masculinities and femininities that position husbands as above their wives. In order to do that, it is important to bring men and masculinities into the picture (Cornwall, 1997; Groes-Green, 2009; Silberschmidt, 2001).

Groes-Green and Silberschmidt argue that lack of understanding about how men react to the increasing difficulties in fulfilling their role as provider may lead to failing policies and programmes in the area of HIV/AIDS. One contribution of this research is that it has established links between perceptions of masculinities and femininities and adult women's education. Men's resistance to their wife's education is not an issue that has gone away despite improved access to education in the nine years since my research was carried out and a decrease in the gender gap in primary education (MINED, 2012). This issue is discussed in an online article about the UIL FELITAMO literacy initiative in North Mozambique (UIL, 2012). One of the aims of FELITAMO is to empower women and sensitise communities to the important role women play for social development and they comment that this aim:

Remains the biggest challenge the programme has had to face since its inception because many women have been prevented from attending classes on a regular basis in order to fulfil their very restricted female roles, such as

doing domestic chores. This phenomenon has led to high drop-out rates among female learners. (UIL, 2012)

Thus, if women and men are to enjoy equal opportunities in education as stated by the Ministry of Education (MINED, 2011, 2012), action needs to be taken to change perceptions and attitudes about gendered roles, femininities and masculinities.

The school system itself could be an important vehicle of promoting such change, as recognized in the Strategy for Gender Equality in the Education Sector (EGSE). The EGSE argues that promoting gender equality should be mainstreamed into the system of education by sensitising communities about: “aspects related to women’s human rights” (MINED, 2011:27). It also suggests promoting the transformation of gendered roles and power relations “between girls and boys” in the curriculum, at all levels of school and in teacher training (ibid:24). The EGSE, however, “has a particular focus on the schooling of girls and boys from 6 to 12 years of age”<sup>75</sup> (MINED, 2011:1) and not on adult women and men or on the institution of marriage. Also, as recognized by the EGSE, funding needs to be allocated to such activities (MINED, 2011), which is unlikely to happen unless they are seen as a priority by the Mozambican government and by donors.

### ***Promoting Women's Education beyond the Literacy Level.***

In research on adult women’s education in the South, the focus is often on literacy learning and basic education rather than on life-long learning as in the North (Torres, 2002). I feel that too little attention has been paid to the educational needs of women like Nielete and Olga who studied as children, but left school without completing the primary level. Nielete said that her husband did not want her to study in 6<sup>th</sup> grade as he wanted her to maintain her role as a food producer, while he studied and worked. Arnfred argues that with neo-liberal economic policies, the focus in Mozambique has shifted from food (the women’s domain) towards money (the men’s domain) and that this has led to women losing power (Arnfred, 2001a). Pursuing education could therefore be seen as women’s struggle to regain some of their previous power by making use of opportunities in paid employment. Arnfred argues that young men

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<sup>75</sup> Was underlined in the original version.

imagine a future for themselves with paid jobs, but want their wives to remain in agriculture (2001a). Research by the World Bank concluded that while there was a tendency for Mozambican men to move out of the agriculture sector towards better paid activities, women were forced to remain as they were likely to lack the qualifications for formal jobs. It also suggested that female headed households were particularly vulnerable (World Bank, 2008). As I discussed above, women's complaints about men who did not support their families indicated societal changes that left women feeling increasingly vulnerable to poverty. Women like Nielete and Olga saw education beyond the literacy level as a "fall-back position" enabling them to leave physically and emotionally abusive relationships.

Nielete, Olga, Isabel and Sonia could be described as belonging to a "lost generation" of women, in terms of education policies. The introduction of school fees resulting from the Structural Adjustment Programme meant that as girls they were less likely to be sent to school than their brothers (Unterhalter, 2006; Waterhouse, 1996). Now the need for education of their daughters and sons was being prioritised. My case stories suggest that it is important to pay more attention to this "lost generation" of women. Further research is needed into the differing needs of women in the age group of 15-60 in order to better identify the group of women wanting to pursue formal qualifications and ways in which these needs could be met. Here the Mozambican education system is in a better position than some other countries in the South, as the adult literacy programme is already linked to the formal school system, which is not the case in many other countries. Addressing the educational needs of these women would be an important step in the government's effort to promote equality in Mozambique. The UNCSW encourages countries to renew their efforts to support women's education at all levels, including vocational and technical training (2012). This indicates that the need to provide opportunities beyond the literacy level is starting to be recognized. This is also apparent in the current Strategy for Literacy and Adult Education in Mozambique where the aim is to promote: "equitable basic education and life long learning for youngsters and adults." In the Education Strategic Plan there is, however, a clear focus on girls and teenagers, and on primary school, although the need for further education is discussed.

By arguing for more attention being paid to education after the adult literacy programme, I am not downplaying the importance of the government providing formal and non-formal literacy classes of good quality. Although Nielete, Olga and Sonia were in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade when I interviewed them, they had all left school previously and used the AEA as a route to get back into the formal system. Nielete talked about the importance of the literacy classes being introduced in Maganja and how the campaigns for women's education had influenced her and other women like her. Sonia also talked about being able to go back to school as a married woman when the literacy classes were introduced and Isabel was enjoying participating in the literacy programme. I have discussed how women had various other motives for pursuing education than getting a job. I could have focused on issues related to the adult education and literacy programme, but as research had already been done on adult literacy in Mozambique (e.g. Lind et al., 2009; MINED, 2000c; van der Linden, Manhiça, & Rungo, 2004), I felt it was more pertinent to call attention to issues of women who were studying at other levels of education. To my knowledge, these have not been addressed specifically in Mozambique.

Recognizing the insufficient financial and human capital of the Education Sector, The PEE states that it had to strike a balance between: “that which is desirable and that which is possible” (MINED, 2012). In 2010, different sectors of education received the following percentage of the education budget: primary education 53.4 per cent; secondary education 14.4 per cent; technical and professional education 6 per cent; and higher education 6.4 per cent (República de Mozambique, 2011a:2). Literacy and adult education are not mentioned in the PEE in this context. Although literacy programmes are described as: “Playing a preponderant role in the Government’s fight against poverty” (República de Mozambique, 2011a:8), it is obvious that the education needs of the close to 10 million<sup>76</sup> illiterate youngsters and adults in Mozambique cannot be met while only 1-4 per cent of the budget of the education sector is allocated to this sub-sector (Mário & Nandja, 2006b). In practice it therefore seems that adult basic education is seen as “desirable” rather than a

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<sup>76</sup> 9860500 according to statistics from INE from 2007, based on a population of 20 500 000 in the last census and 48.1 per cent of the population being illiterate (Republic of Mozambique,

“priority”. There are still hundreds of thousands of children out of school<sup>77</sup> and a large ratio of students leave without completing the primary level. Unless more effort is put into providing good quality life-long learning there will therefore be large numbers of women (and men) without basic education for decades to come.

Maria’s story showed (chapter 6) that there can also be gender barriers at work for women in higher education and with well paid jobs and this issue also warrants further attention and research. According to Maria, her marriage deteriorated the more educated she got and as she progressed in her job. As Pearson has pointed out, there tends to be an assumption in development work that increased economic power of women translates into power within the household (2007:207). Maria's story seems to suggest that it did, but that it also contributed to the breakup of her marriage. As Moore points out, not all subject positions are equal; some subject positions are ‘negatively sanctioned’:

Those individuals who do challenge dominant discourses on gender and gender identity frequently find that this is at the expense of such things as social power, social approval and even material benefits”. (1994:65)

Even if Maria's education and success at work had provided personal satisfaction, it seemed to be seen by her husband and his family as incompatible with the ideal of the ‘*good wife*’. Thus as Moore describes above, her positioning as an educated career woman had been met with social disapproval and her position seemed to be ‘negatively sanctioned’ in a wider context, as she hesitated to leave the marriage for fear of public opinion. Despite the gain in educational and economic status, there were still aspects of power relations within the marriage where she felt disadvantaged. She talked about how she felt vulnerable as she feared becoming infected with HIV/AIDS. She said that this was one area where her husband still “*dominated her*”. Again, this resonates with the words of Everjoice Win:

As a middle-class woman, I am intimately affected by HIV/AIDS. I find it as hard to negotiate safe sex as any other woman. I have the same fears about the consequences of my actions as any other woman. I am afraid of what society thinks of me, I am afraid of what my family will say I do not

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<sup>77</sup> It is estimated by MINED that 196 841 child is out of school, while international agencies have estimated that more than 600 000 children are out of school. The majority are girls (MINED, 2011).

want to be constantly seen as a bad woman. Sexual violence stalks me wherever I go. (Win, 2007:81)

When promoting women's education as a human right and when working towards changing perceptions on masculinities and femininities and gender relations within the marriage, as discussed above, it is therefore important to include “middle-class” women in this discussion and recognise that education can be a “site of struggle”.

### ***Sexual Harassment in Literacy Classes and Adult Education***

As discussed in chapter 5, one of the rationales for some men not wanting their wives to study, was fear that they would have an affair with their facilitator or teacher. According to both Olga and Nielete, their husbands said they did not want them to study because they would start being with their teacher (chapter 7). Sexual abuse of girls by teachers is recognized as a problem in Mozambique (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005; Oledzka-Nielsen, 2012; República de Mozambique, 2011b; Walker, et al., 1996) and in Maganja this has been identified as one of the barriers to girl's education (Justiniano & Nielsen, 2005). The majority of literacy facilitators in Mozambique are men and the majority of literacy learners are women (República de Mozambique, 2011a; UN Mozambique, 2008). Yet there was nothing in the literature that indicated that sexual harassment might be a problem for adult women.

It seemed to me that there was little concern that sexual harassment might be a problem in regard to adult learners. This could partly be due to a perception that women had agency to refuse the teacher, as implied by a woman in FG8 when I asked the women whether their facilitators had ever hit on them: “*Yes that is sure to happen, but the person just refuses*”. As discussed in chapter 5, women in the focus groups tended to dismiss men's claims that women who studied slept with their teachers. A woman in FG8 responded that if she wanted to have an affair she did not need to go to school for that, she could just as easily meet a man at the well. Another woman said that she thought women in literacy classes were too old, teachers preferred seducing young girls. Another woman then told a story of how her facilitator in the literacy programme had refused to allow her to take the final exam

because she refused to sleep with him. She had gone and complained to the school director and been allowed to take the exam. She concluded: *“It happens, this is how men are”*.

When the issue was brought up in FG6 (see chapter 5) a male participant told a story of how he had divorced his former wife because she started a relationship with her teacher and how as a result, he was now prohibiting his current wife from attending literacy classes. This resulted in another man sharing a story about a teacher who had threatened to fail his sister-in-law if she did not sleep with him. Interestingly the stories seemed to surprise a male facilitator who was participating: *“I am discovering one thing that our friends... prohibit their wives to study because they are afraid of the teachers”*. He acknowledged that there might be cases where facilitators pressured their students into having sexual relations and that this might result in some husbands not allowing their wives to study. He said that he had thought that these things did not happen, although he may have been simply reluctant to acknowledge that they did.

Actions have been taken in Mozambique to tackle sexual abuse of girls in school, such as the ‘Zero tolerance’ campaign against sexual harassment and abuse in schools. There have been some positive results such as an increased capacity at district level to deal with such problems and more cases being reported (MINED, 2011). The strategy does not mention, however, that this may be a problem in adult education as well. In the light of the stories above and given that jealousy of husbands was frequently referred to as a reason for not wanting wives to study, the Ministry of Education could broaden their remit to include all levels of education in campaigns to reduce sexual harassment in schools.

It has been a strategy in Mozambique to increase the ratio of female teachers and School Heads as they are seen as good role models (MINED, 2011; SACMEQ, 2012). A higher ratio of female facilitators and teachers in classes teaching adult women might decrease the number of husbands who are against their wives’ studies. Further research is also warranted as to whether women who are not allowed to study at night might have better access if 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade were offered during the day. This

might not be seen to interfere with women's responsibilities as wives and mothers in the same way as attending classes at night.

#### **9.4 Conclusion**

In my post fieldwork position at ICEIDA I worked with four of the eleven Provincial Directorates of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. The staff there often brought up the problem of women not knowing the rights awarded to them by the Mozambican constitution and law. Beyond apparent differences between Northern and Southern feminists, both are clearly concerned about women's human rights. This is the reason why my research focus was more on women who had problems with their husband's over their education than on women who were supported by their husbands. When women are hindered from studying, in line with feminists such as Subrahmanian, I see it as a human rights issue and discriminatory:

Even if opportunities are made available to women, and women make the best use of them, women may be prevented from exercising their full rights to these opportunities because of discrimination operating outside the sphere of education. (Subrahmanian, 2005:398)

Education is important in Mozambique as it improves women's possibilities of earning an independent income in a fast growing neo-liberal economy. It also contributes to forming new identities and increasing self-confidence. Discourses have a large influence on gendered identities, on what is seen as education and what is seen as development. If adult education is to lead to development as freedom I hold that it would need to address inequalities between men and women. Based on my research I suggest a particular focus on the institution of marriage and perceptions of masculinities and femininities. It is not enough to provide education provision and mobilize women to participate. It needs to be taken into account that women may have restricted access to such programmes. It is also not enough to gear adult education towards the provision of basic literacy skills; if education is to lead to freedom it needs to tackle the inequalities in society and the mechanisms used to sustain such inequalities. Domestic violence is one of those mechanisms.

What I have gained by using an ethnographic approach and narrative analysis is an understanding of the complexity of the issues related to gendered identities and women's adult education in Maganja da Costa. I hope I have put across these complexities in this chapter in a way which can usefully inform policy and practice, rather than suggesting quick fixes. In the following chapter I will conclude this thesis by reflecting on feminist ethnography as a methodological approach and narrative as a method of analysis.

## **CHAPTER 10 – EPILOGUE: AT THE END OF A RESEARCH JOURNEY**

During the process of doing this research, I have found myself, as a feminist, in somewhat of a crisis. I identified with the perspective that feminist ethnography is not only about describing unequal gender relations, but also trying to change them (Phillips, 1995). This seemed to be at odds with the postmodern approach of avoiding generalizations and emphasising deconstruction (Maynard, 1994). How could my research benefit “women” if I agreed that they were not a homogenous group, and that feminist concepts and models from the North were not necessarily appropriate and adaptable in the South (e.g. Idi Amadiume, 2000; Arnfred, 2004c; Mohanty, 1986; Oyewùmí, 1997)?

My solution has been to honour both perspectives by adopting a narrative approach to analysis. This has allowed me to “think out of the box” and recognize that, for example, a middle-class, educated woman like Maria also had an important story to tell, and not only what Win refers to as the “poor, powerless and pregnant” (2007). By looking at the lives of individual women from different spheres of society and different levels of education, I have acknowledged that women in Mozambique are not a homogenous group. The case stories of Maria, Sonia, Isabel, Olga and Nielete (chapters 6-8) show how differential social position and access to education have impacted these women, their perceptions and position in society. At the same time they demonstrate the dominance of constructions of femininities and masculinities. By adopting narrative analysis I have also been able to reflect both on similarities and differences, not only between women in different contexts in Mozambique, but also cross-culturally. I have discussed similarities between Maria and myself and between her story and what happened in Iceland during industrialization. Thereby, I have tried to dissolve: “The artificial boundaries that divide one culture from each other” (Fox, 2006:48).

It is often when you enter a situation where people play by different rules or have different ideas that you reflect on or question your own assumptions and identities. In order to adhere to feminist, ethnographic and narrative principles I have reflexively commented on how my identities and assumptions influenced my research. As

discussed in chapter 4 and seen in the quotes in chapters 5-8, I sometimes shared stories or experiences from my life to encourage participants to reflect on their own lives. Their responses often taught me about how they saw their own society, like when Isabel (see chapter 8) laughed in response to my telling her that women in my country might divorce a man who had an affair. Therefore, I could be criticized for influencing the responses of my participants. Although this is likely to have happened at times, the opposite also often occurred, in that people pointed out their different opinion or circumstance. I also believe that this approach helped build rapport as I could use humour when comparing different contexts. At the same time, it also gave the people I was talking to a glimpse into a different context and different discourses. This sharing was influenced by a feminist ideology but to some extent I started interacting in this way because it was a 'natural' way of communicating in this community. By showing sympathy, disclosing aspects from my life and giving some feedback on what they had told me, the interviews and conversations began resembling a conversation between friends or peers rather than between a researcher and a participant. I felt that this was important in a context where people were not familiar with interview practices and helped break down barriers. I also learnt from such dialogue how I was being constructed by people in Maganja, since "othering" goes both ways (Phillips, 1995). By reflecting on the ways in which I was constructed as a 'mother', 'aunt', 'girl', 'sister' and 'provider' I learnt about the fluidity of identities in Maganja as discussed in chapter 4.

Sharing my own experiences was also how my friendship with Maria first started (see chapter 6), by my comparing something she told me about her husband with an experience from my own former relationship. Thus, although Southern researchers with an inside perspective might be better equipped in some aspects to do research in their own societies, there is also some merit in research done by researchers coming from a different culture. It seemed to me that Maria shared her experiences with me precisely because I was a foreigner and she saw me as offering a different discourse and experience than most other women she socialized with. Sharing experiences and opinions in this way can be empowering for participants. As an example, one woman told me she was not sure she could attend evening classes as she was afraid of meeting ghosts on the way. I encouraged her to go to school and gave her advice on

overcoming this fear. I later heard her tell another woman that she was studying thanks to our conversation.

As discussed in chapter 4, I also occasionally challenged people, for example, by saying that I could not get a Mozambican husband, because Mozambican men liked having many women and that this was not what I was used to. Providing this was done with humour and not in an offending manner, it often led to interesting debates and insights into how gender and gender relations were constructed. I also challenged participants when they positioned themselves in discourses that I saw as 'oppressive', as can be seen in chapter 5 where I question women in FG9 whether they are really as submissive as they describe. This often brought out nuances that I would otherwise not have become aware of.

Applying Frank's idea of listening to the various voices within a speaker's voice (2012), I started to also "hear" the voices of men when women performed their narratives, as if their husband were speaking. I would argue that for further research, looking at the way in which women construct men and the way in which men construct women is worthy in itself and could be compared to how men and women construct themselves. In focus groups where participants were of both sexes it was interesting to see how men and women positioned themselves and each other differently (see chapter 5). Based on my research, I hold that if the ultimate aim of feminism is promoting changes in gender relations this cannot be done by a sole focus on women and femininities. If I went back to do research now, I would set out to interview both men and women. This could also be done in focus groups by comparing women only, men only and mixed groups.

Commenting on the use of narratives as the topic of study, I would argue that narratives reflect not only the way in which my participants interpreted their past and present, which is often the focus in narrative research (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008), but also how they imagined an alternative present and future for themselves. Looking at the way in which both Nielete and Olga told me detailed stories about how they had been studying at their father's house when their husband came to ask for their hand and how this had interrupted their studies, I came to think of the film *Sliding Doors* (Howitt, 1998). By following two parallel stories the film explores

how a woman's life turns out differently depending on whether she catches or misses a train. Thereby, it explores the question of 'what if' something else had happened. When Nielete compared her life with that of her friends who had studied and concluded that women who had left school like she had, regretted it, this indicated to me that she was exploring the question 'what if' she had stayed at her father's place and continued to study. Therefore she was imagining an alternative present. At the same time, the narratives suggest that Nielete and Olga were imagining a different future. They both talked about completing 7<sup>th</sup> grade and becoming financially independent so that they could take care of their children. Thus, through their narratives, they were reflecting not only on who they had been and how they currently saw themselves, but also on whom they might become (Frank, 2012). This also serves to point out that narratives of the past are "retrospective meaning making - the shaping or ordering of past experiences" (Chase, 2005:656). As we learn, as life goes on, our identities change, we take on new positions or different positions and interpret our stories and past from the viewpoint of who we are in the present (Andrews, 2008).

I also found it useful to look at hypothetical narratives, such as the one told by Carlos in the Preface and at the start of chapter 5, and not only narratives in the stricter sense of being about a personal, past event (Riessman, 2008). Carlos's narratives reflect dominant discourses on gender relations and identities. Telling hypothetical narratives may also be a way of sharing sensitive information without disclosing whether participants are speaking about a personal experience. For example the women in FG1 (see chapter 5) acted out a scenario in which a hypothetical woman was exchanging sex for money or goods and the man responding in a particular way. From the way in which they were speaking and other things they said in the interview, I suspected that they were speaking from experience and could have been followed up later with individual interviews if establishing whether or not they were speaking from personal experience had been relevant to my research.

By looking at my transcripts from a dialogic perspective (Frank, 2012; Riessman, 2008), I realized how my understanding was influenced by my previous assumptions and experiences. I asked myself whether this meant that what I had found about gendered identities in Maganja was all "in the eye of the beholder" (Oyewùmí,

1997:xv). Was I reading gender inequality into the stories of Nielete, Olga, Maria and Isabel and excluding acts of their agency? I came to the conclusion that when women described themselves as *'suffering'* because their husbands were verbally and physically abusive, they were talking about gender inequality, no matter what gender framework is applied.

Putting the last dots to this thesis, I cannot help but ask myself whether this journey was worth almost ten years of my life? For although I had long periods of intercalation, the thesis was always there looming over my head, much like a virus programme that runs in the background, but still slows the whole system down. I have already discussed what I feel I have contributed to “the field” to what the official “outcome” of the research is supposed to be. To me the journey has become much more. I have made close personal relationships that might last a lifetime. I see Maganja as a “home”, a place I look forward to visiting again, where I know I will be received with a genuine welcome and goodwill.

Being in touch with my “family” and “friends” in Maganja allows me to comment a little on the rapid ongoing changes there. The two teenage boys in the family I lived with were both in 8<sup>th</sup> grade when I arrived and are now grown men. One is working as a teacher and has established his own family. The other is pursuing a professional course. The seven and twelve year old girls who both started in first grade while I was there are still in school. I think I had something to do with that, together with the programme aiming to increase the participation of girls in the district that started the year I left. A woman who told me that she wanted to study, but could not because of ill health and poverty, is now in secondary school in 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Two major technical improvements occurred shortly after I left. Electricity became available for the people in Maganja vila and it was connected to the rest of the world by a mobile phone network. A widow, who told me she had frequent headaches because of the worries of feeding and educating her seven children and that she had failed 7<sup>th</sup> grade twice because of these worries, has since completed secondary school. She has also remarried, bought a house, had a child and lost her husband. Although she still struggles, she has made use of new opportunities that came with electricity: she bought a freezer and now sells cold beer and sodas from her home.

The impact and importance of having access to a cell phone is important, as demonstrated by the following message received as I was writing the conclusion:

*Good afternoon mother. How is it going over there? Here everything is fine. Auntie I have good news, I made an entrance exam [for a professional course] and passed it. The course will be held in another province and will take two years and...I would like auntie's help, can I count on you? The course starts next month and I need money for the transport there. Please reply.*

Having been able to help this individual to achieve his dreams about his education makes my stay in Maganja worthwhile to me, regardless of the effect it may have on my future career. By saying that, I am not trying to romanticise my stay in Maganja; I also did things I am not proud of such as losing my temper and telling people off because I felt they were being ungrateful and greedy. I think that living with a family in such a different economic and cultural context is always going to be trying and hard and that each individual will respond differently based on their personality, beliefs and experience. The experience has convinced me that who you are and what you do cannot be separated in research; that our multiple identities are a part of the research process and of its outcome. It has taught me that in such research circumstances, the researcher needs to be flexible and deal with the realities at hand. Furthermore, that it is important to then convey all these complexities in the end product of the research, whether a thesis, an article or a book. At the risk of being criticized for being narcissistic (Chase, 2005), I have chosen to be reflexive but I have also tried to strike a balance between my story and the story of the women I encountered. The purpose of my narrative has been first and foremost to give the reader an insight into the many challenges Mozambican women face and the different ways they find to deal with them.

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