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Carnivores, Colonization, and Conflict: A Qualitative Case Study on the Intersectional Persecution of Predators and People in Namibia

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ABSTRACT Nonhuman carnivores have historically been demonized, lethally controlled, and extirpated throughout many parts of the world—indeed, they bear the brunt of this in some places still today. To understand why this is still occurring, it is important to appreciate the historical events that have shaped and led to this situation. We use a qualitative case study in Namibia that draws on an archival review and eight months of ethnography to describe the widespread control of nonhuman carnivores in the country, from the 1800s to the present day. Calling upon Val Plumwood’s eco-feminist typology of domination of the “Other,” and integrating it with current advances in intersectional theory, we explain the apparent parallels in this process of domination of Namibian nonhuman predators alongside its Indigenous peoples by European settlers. We discuss the process of colonization of predators and people, highlighting how perceived power differentials provided an ideal situation to dominate these presumed “Others.” We conclude with a number of recommendations that could begin to reconcile conflicts between people and predators, and between different groups of people.

Keywords: domination, eco-feminism, human–wildlife conflict, racism, speciesism



Negative interactions with wildlife, such as attacks on people or livestock by carnivores, poses one of the biggest threats to carnivores globally as humans can retaliate and kill presumed “problem” animals (Inskip and Zimmermann 2009). Understanding the historical context in which a negative human–wildlife interaction lies is crucial because it can explain some of the intangible driving forces

influencing a current situation, and thus aid conservation efforts of wild animals as well as reduce conflict with people (Madden and McQuinn 2014). Natural history studies have yielded essential information on rates and causes of declines of various wildlife species, but as useful as they are, they only paint a partial picture of the reasons for some conflicts with wildlife. This is because they often fail to address the human dimensions that might affect this situation (Madden and McQuinn 2014). It is therefore essential to understand how our own human history has shaped negative interactions with wildlife (Madden 2004; Hazzah and Dolrenry 2007).

As in other areas of the world, Namibian carnivores are killed by farmers due to the perceived threat they pose to livestock (Marker, Mills and Macdonald 2003; Stein et al 2010). Despite a concerted effort to “control” “wild” animal predation of livestock through various lethal and non-lethal means, predation is increasing nationwide (NACSO 2013). This suggests that current attempts are at best missing something key, and at worst are misplaced. One possibility is that in employing a largely ahistorical framework to consider the issue means the root cause of the problem has not yet been properly addressed: indeed, recent research has suggested that the political history of the country, particularly related to the apartheid era, shapes farmers’ attitudes and behaviors toward carnivores (Rust 2015). Thus the aim of our study was to understand how the history of Namibia has influenced present-day persecution of nonhuman predators, paying particular attention to the era from European colonization onwards. A secondary aim was to try to consider such history outside of an anthropocentric framework, and instead to adopt an intersectional analytical approach (which we explain shortly).

Whilst conflicts between humans and nonhuman predators occurred prior to European settlement, the extent of lethal control of predators was likely to be minimal in comparison to that experienced upon colonization, due to the lack of easily-accessible poisons and guns. As such, we focus our attention on the widespread control of predators (and people) from the start of European colonization of Namibia until the present day. We acknowledge that the issue of carnivore killing in Namibia is a complex one and do not suggest that our analysis explains all causes, roots, and manifestations. We do claim, however, that existing analyses tend to be anthropocentric and thus have overlooked significant components of the explanation. We aim to rectify that here.

To contextualize this study, we begin with a brief historical account of the country, starting with the migration of San peoples. Following this, we develop our theoretical argument of how history has shaped behavior toward predators. To support our argument, we complement Plumwood’s ecofeminist idea of the “master model” (Plumwood 1993; Alloun 2015) with intersectional theory (Crenshaw 1989) to consider how discourses of human mastery perpetuate, condone, and/or excuse violence against animals and humans. Specifically we identify apparent similarities between the process of domination and control of nonhuman carnivores and of African Indigenous peoples by European settlers during colonization. Our argument borrows from, and rests upon, ecofeminist theory, which can be understood as “the position that there are important connections—historical, symbolic, theoretical—between the domination of women and the domination of nonhuman nature” (Warren 1990, p. 342). By locating this within the works of Val Plumwood (1993, 2003, 2004), we demonstrate how the historical oppression of certain humans and nonhumans is based on anthropocentric and binary paradigms that lead to the normalization of oppression through a process of “Othering.”¹

Previous research within this realm has demonstrated the parallels between the processes (and outcomes) of racism, sexism, slavery, and animal exploitation (Reid 1988; Adams 2000; Nibert 2002; Patterson 2002; Gaard 2003; Plous 2003; Finn 2012). However, although comparisons have been drawn between the processes of the colonization of both nature and Indigenous peoples (MacKenzie 1997; Adams and Mulligan 2002), there is a dearth of research that considers the mechanisms that underpin the exploitation of humans and of non-domesticated animals.

The theoretical framework we propose is supported empirically by ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in Namibia and archival reviews of historical documents. When developing our argument, we use relevant examples from this fieldwork to contend that the processes of subjugation of both groups (carnivores and humans) were similar. We conclude with a number of steps that could be used to improve the situation, including reinstating power to the subjugated. This paper contributes toward filling this knowledge gap by focusing on the steps that enable the joint oppression of “Others”; namely wild carnivores and of African Indigenous peoples.

Methods

Participant Observation

Ethical approval was gained from the University of Kent’s Ethics Committee to undertake this research. The first author (NR) spent one year between 2010 and 2011 working at a Namibian carnivore conservation organization, where her role focused on understanding the human dimensions of conflicts with carnivores. This was followed by eight months, in 2013, living on a commercial livestock farm in central Namibia, owned by white German and Afrikaans farmers. This data collection was part of a larger study looking into the underlying drivers of conflicts between livestock farmers and carnivores, the results of which have been published elsewhere (Rust 2016; Rust et al. 2016).

To learn more about livestock farming, the farmer and his Indigenous Namibian workers were assisted as they went about their duties, and data were collected using a grounded-theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Seventeen other white-owned farms were also visited (spending an average of two days per farm) to gain a wider perspective of livestock farming in Namibia. At each site, farmers gave a tour of the farm, and the farmer and Indigenous Namibian workers explained their farm and management systems. During this time, the first author assisted with various livestock tasks. In addition, other rural events were attended, such as livestock auctions, conservation meetings, countryside fairs, and social gatherings in the farming community. This was to learn more about the rural lifestyle and to place knowledge about predators in the wider context of farming at large.

Following traditional ethnographic prescriptions, notes were written and photographs were taken on every aspect of the farm enterprise to gain a deep understanding of commercial livestock farming in Namibia. After initial qualitative analysis and recognition of a clear theme regarding perceived human–carnivore conflict, and the racism and domination experienced on the farms by workers from farmers (Rust et al. 2016), data collection was focused on the potential interaction between racism, subjugation, and perceptions of predators and Indigenous Namibians. Notes were transcribed onto a computer within 24 hours to ensure the information was still fresh.

Interviews

Seventy-five in-depth, qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 31 farmers of European descent (26 male, 5 female) and other residents on the farm, such as family

members ($n = 16$; 6 male, 10 female) and 28 workers of Indigenous descent ($n = 28$; 26 male, 2 female). Interviews were mostly unstructured or semi-structured, some taking place in an unplanned and informal ad hoc manner, and others more formally with a list of topics to be discussed. Informed consent was obtained from participants before each interview took place. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and 2 hours, averaging 90 minutes. Snowball and purposeful sampling were used to find farms to visit and farmers to interview. Both participant observation and interviews were conducted until theoretical saturation was reached (Wutich and Gravlee 2010).

Archival Review

An archival review of historical newspapers, books, journal articles and other documents related to Namibia's history was undertaken firstly to aid in gaining a holistic understanding of the situation, and secondly to triangulate data gathered from participant observation and interviews.

Analysis

All interview and participant data were transcribed onto nVivo 10 (QSR International UK Ltd, Warrington, UK) for further qualitative analysis. Participant observation data were typed into electronic diaries that described activities undertaken during the day. Electronic memos were used to describe thoughts and understandings of events, people, and places. Each entry was read and data were then coded into themes using a grounded-theory approach. At the end of data collection, all data were recoded to ensure consistency throughout, which allowed for a wider perspective on the entire dataset. For more details on the main themes that emerged from this study, please see Rust et al. (2016).

Interviews were coded in a similar way to participant observation data. The same set of codes were used for interviews, diary entries, and memos, to increase consistency. Quotes used in the results section were selected for their typical representation of a particular theme that emerged from the data (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003). We use these data combined with information from an archival review of Namibian literature to inform our argument that similar mechanisms underpin and justify the normalization of oppression of certain humans and nonhumans.

Brief History of Namibia

Pre-colonization

The first human inhabitants of Namibia were the San bushmen who arrived in the country approximately 27,000–30,000 years ago. It was not until the second millennium that the next human migration took place, the Bantu. Around the same time, the Nama/Damara peoples arrived in Namibia from the south. The Hereros were the next ethnic group to arrive in the country, who also came from Bantu origins in east Africa. They entered the north of Namibia around 1550 and then moved more centrally. A branch of the Hereros, the Himbas, settled in north-west Namibia. By 1880, the last African migration took place: the Oorlams and Basters of South Africa, the former being of the Khoi lineage and the latter being descendants of Cape Dutch and Indigenous Africans. This marked the final African migration into Namibia prior to European colonization.

Colonization

By the mid-1800s, it was South Africa (then called the “Cape Colony”) that first contemplated colonizing Namibia, but this did not come to fruition. It was not until the 1880s that the first

successful colonizers, the Germans, officially occupied the country; by 1884, Namibia had been proclaimed under German rule and was renamed “German South-West Africa.”

As with elsewhere in Africa, colonization was resisted by many Indigenous groups. The Owambos to the north had sufficient populations and power to shield their territory from the colonizers. The Nama and Hereros were not so fortunate; the European settlers took their land and cattle. In retaliation, these Africans rebelled, which culminated in the German-Herero war of 1904, where approximately 60,000 Hereros and 10,000 Namas were killed (roughly 80% of their populations) (Schaller 2011). After the war, the Hereros fled to the east—a vast, barren semi-desert with insufficient water. Not content with the few thousand Hereros remaining, the German army was ordered to kill all remaining Hereros by restricting water access points, poisoning water holes, or by shooting them on sight (Kössler and Melber 2004). All Indigenous survivors were banned from owning land or cattle, which effectively inhibited development of these societies—particularly the Herero, whose livelihoods depended on cattle.

By 1907, the Germans forced the Hereros into slave labor concentration camps to develop their settler colony (Madley 2005)—some argue that German South-West Africa was used as a template for the later Nazi concentration camps (Olusoga and Erichsen 2010). These camps led to further deaths amongst the Hereros; the skulls of which were used in eugenics research, with the aim of providing further evidence that Indigenous Namibians were inferior races to Europeans (Olusoga and Erichsen 2010).

During the first part of the twentieth century, there was a growing philosophical outlook by prominent German officials that Germany should dominate the world. Individuals who were bold enough to oppose this idea were deemed “powerless vermin” (Johnson 1991, p. 813). This feeling of superiority over other peoples was epitomized in a letter written by General Lothar von Trotha, commander-in-chief of German South-West Africa:

African tribes ... will only succumb to violent force. It has been and remains my policy to exercise this violence with gross terrorism and even with cruelty. I annihilate the African tribes by floods of money and floods of blood. It is only by such sowings that something new will arise (quoted in Kössler and Melber 2004, p. 20).

It is evident that “something new” meant control of the country once competitors were removed—and by any means necessary. In an interesting convergence of predator terminology, a soldier once described von Trotha as a “human shark” and a “bloodthirsty animal” (Olusoga and Erichsen 2010, p. 138).

After the First World War broke out, the Union of South Africa invaded Namibia in 1915 and took control of the country; the forced marriage became “South-West Africa,” and subjugation of the Indigenous peoples continued unabated. Marginalization of these peoples occurred to an even greater extent than under German rule, which ultimately led to the apartheid system (Hunter 2004), instituted in 1948. Homes of Indigenous peoples were demolished and residents were forcibly relocated. The Odendaal Commission of 1963 extended the apartheid system by allocating defined regions of the country, known as “reserves” or “homelands,” to each ethnic group. Financial budgets for these reserves were restricted to reduce development which, coupled with the lack of grazing land in many reserves, pressured most communities to seek employment on European-owned farms (Werner 1998). Such forced poverty created a large labor pool for the commercial livestock farmers to exploit, who were able to benefit from the almost endless supply of low-paid workers (Atkinson 2007). More than 50% of the land,

much of it in areas of high mineral wealth and superior grazing quality, was allocated to the white minority, while only 25% was given to the more populous Indigenous communities (Adams, Werner and Vale 1990).

During implementation of the Odendaal Commission, a Namibian political group formed called the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). This Indigenous opposition used military strength via the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) to resist the colonizers (Suzman 2002). Concurrently, much of the rest of the world began to show increasing disdain toward European colonization of African countries. Finally, after a long battle for freedom by SWAPO, coupled with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and increasing international pressure, independence was finally won from South African control; this marked the end of a century of colonization. The country was declared the "Republic of Namibia" in March 1990, and Indigenous Africans began to be reinstated into power to govern their land.

Predator Control during Colonization

Occurring parallel to the apartheid of Indigenous Africans during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the segregation and control of Namibia's wildlife populations, most notably amongst predator species. The European attitude toward African wildlife was to tame and dominate it (Carruthers 1995), reflecting both an acceptance of post-enlightenment thought regarding the necessity of mastering and controlling nature (e.g., Plumwood 1993) and a need to impose distance from wild animals as part of developing a more domesticated, "civilized" nature (Elias 2000). Linked to this was the anthropocentric view that wildlife was a resource to control and mine (MacKenzie 1997), similar to the diamonds being extracted from the country. Colonization therefore contributed to a changed attitude toward Namibia's wildlife, effectively moving wild animals from "other-than-human persons" to "animals of enterprise" (White 1994, pp. 237–238).

Financial incentives were implemented across southern Africa to eradicate predators; hunters were rewarded in monetary bounties for every carnivore killed (Beinart 1989). Widespread annihilation campaigns, using firearms, trapping, poisoning, and dogs (Hey 1974; Beinart 2012; Bergman, Bodenchuk and Marlow 2013) were initiated around the time of World War I, to aid in what might be termed a genocide against another species.

The intersectional nature of oppression and speciesism continued throughout much of the twentieth century, and in 1961 a law was passed that conveyed property rights for white (but not black) farmers over wildlife, permitting lethal control over predators and other wild animals. However, as the decades progressed and Namibia drew closer to becoming an independent nation—where focus was starting to move toward improving human rights in the country—public opinion also began to slowly change in favor of tolerating predators (De Waal 2009). Government subsidization of agriculture (and therefore predator control) was halted by the time of independence in 1990.

Following this brief contextualization regarding the historical backdrop to the country, we now describe the results of our ethnographic data collection on attitudes and behaviors toward nonhuman predators and Indigenous peoples in present-day Namibia against the theoretical framework of the process of subjugation, described below.

Subjugation of the "Other"

Previous research into the exploitation of women, different cultures, and other animals has been shown to follow a set pathway for achieving domination of out-groups (Ponsonby 1928;

Morelli 2001; Joy 2011). Plumwood (2003), for example, describes seven steps toward domination, and these steps can be usefully applied to explore the subjugation of Namibian peoples and predators. This pathway builds on the psychological theory of moral exclusion, whereby one group (the “in-group,” also known as the “One”) believes it is dominant to others (the “out-group” or the “Others”). Various means are used to enact and secure this superiority, such as marginalization, exclusion, and torture (Opotow 1990). However, most of these technologies of violence rely on the use of language—a powerful tool in the depersonalization and objectification necessary to designate one group as the subordinate Other, be they human or animal (Dunayer 2001). This can be seen, for example, during colonization, where Indigenous Africans were referred to in differential terms, such as “bush pig” (Rangarajan 2003, p. 80), “baboon” (Madley 2004, p. 169), “two-legged jackals” (Amutenya 2008, p. 3) or, more poetically, “dead vermin of the wilderness” (Koller 2008, p. 123). Carnivores, too, were frequently denoted as “the enemy,” animals that were “out of place” (Peace 2009, p. 53) that must be eradicated (van Sittert 1998, p. 333). We therefore pay attention to the language used by our interviewees and within the archival review when considering the seven steps to this pathway of domination, which we outline below.

Step 1: Differentiate

The first step begins with the in-group differentiating themselves from those to be dominated. These dominating tactics are caused by the in-group thinking of themselves as more intelligent, worthy, or moral than the out-group (Crompton and Kasser 2009). Indigenous Africans, for example, have historically been considered by some as under-evolved, unintelligent, wild savages, and predators as cruel, heartless beasts (Beinart 2012; Pinto 2011). This was reflected in the data collected for this fieldwork: Indigenous peoples were referred to by some farmers in our study as “animals” (FR9) who were thought to want more simplistic living: “black people don’t want or need the creature comforts that white people want” (FR4). Similarly, predators were also differentiated from the European in-group: “you must show to wild predators that you are a superior ... that is one of the reasons why you hunt them” (FR1). Alongside perceived superiority was the idea that humans could dominate nature: “livestock farmers think they still want to dominate and own their land, above and beyond other animals” (FR13).

The whole process of colonization of humans and wildlife rested on the notion of segregation, both physically and psychologically. Many European settlers, informed by (misunderstandings of) Darwinist evolutionary theory, believed that there was a hierarchy of evolutionary development—and therefore worth—amongst species (Cudworth and Hobden 2014); there was also a growing movement toward hierarchy within humans and the discipline of eugenics, the latter of which ironically was a topic of great interest of the cousin of Darwin (Turda 2010). Nonhuman animals were categorized in terms of their utility toward humans (MacKenzie 1997); at the bottom of this hierarchy, according to the settlers, were carnivores (Beinart 2012). These species were designated as “vermin” to be exterminated due to their propensity to kill livestock, game, and humans (Beinart 2008). Classification into hierarchies did not stop at wild animals: “several eye-witness accounts also depicted the Herero as faceless ‘others,’ on the lowest rung of the social-Darwinian ladder” (Dederig 1999, p. 215). Eugenics too provided a basis for legitimizing the extermination of out-groups that were thought to be too close to nature (Cudworth and Hobden 2014), and is likely to have been one of the foundations for which colonial ideologies in Namibia materialized.

Step 2: Exaggerate Differences, Deny Commonality

The next step toward domination is to exaggerate these differences whilst denying any form of commonality, effectively removing any sense of empathy—a crucial step to the effective perpetuation of violence and oppression (Plumwood 2003; Shadle 2012). Indigenous Africans, particularly the San (Suzman 2001), were often regarded as subhuman, whereas carnivores were considered superfluous. Myths that the Hereros participated in acts of bestiality (Krüger 1999) further refused any commonality between the settlers and the Indigenous peoples. The presumed differences were highlighted by a number of farmers interviewed: “the white man will never understand the black man’s mind” (FR14); “these vultures [workers] come from their nests [the communal areas] to work for us ... They’re *bobbejaans* [Afrikaans for ‘baboons’]” (farmer, FR12). The way in which predators were described by respondents also reflected a sense of exaggerated differences; a number of farmers spoke of carnivores as thoughtless, mindless beasts driven only by a thirst for blood.

Step 3: Stereotype and Scapegoat

Stereotyping and scapegoating are tools to further differentiate One from the Other. One theme that emerged from the interviews was the use of these tactics to blame out-group members as being the cause for various problems. For instance, one farmer assumed that criminals “are always thought to be people from the communal areas [i.e. where Indigenous peoples reside] then you develop this intense distrust of them” (FR10). Another said that “Africa is starving because most of the land has been given back to the blacks” (FR5). Predators too were blamed as one of the sole reasons for the decreasing profitability of livestock farming, when in reality many other factors affected this situation such as drought and economic markets.

Step 4: Homogenize

Once stereotyped, the oppressed are homogenized (Plumwood 1993): Indigenous peoples were regarded as one singular entity (the “natives” or “blacks”) and all predators were considered “vermin.” Swanepoel (2016, p. 4) contends that “in the mind of the settler, the differences between native human and animal predators thus straddled a thin line.” During the interviews, one farm worker described where an aardwolf (a small hyena insectivore that poses no threat to livestock) had been caught in a leg-holding trap: “I said to my boss ‘What do we do with an aardwolf?’ and he just said ‘Kill it’... they’ll kill anything” (FW4). Another farm worker mentioned that “farmers really just see [predators] as harmful, all of them, even young farmers who you come across, they just want to wipe them out” (FW2). During the interviews, Indigenous peoples too were homogenized into being regarded as a single entity: “the enemy” (FR8), or “niggers” (FR11).

Step 5: Exclude

Next comes exclusion, conducted through various means such as physically, linguistically, or resource-based. When the South Africans took control of the country from the Germans, predefined reserves were created for Indigenous Africans. Access out of the reserves was strictly controlled and individuals were forced to carry identity cards. Concurrently, predators were removed from settler farms, their only sanctuary being in national parks. The settlers built formidable fences around their own properties to keep Indigenous Africans and predators out, as both were regarded as a threat (Swanepoel 2016). During the interviews, when asking a farmer whether predators and livestock could coexist, she replied that “you will have to fence

[the farm] off. The cheetahs will just take your calves, your sheep and I don't think they can be combined. You can combine antelope but not when it comes to cats" (FR15). Another farmer, when talking about the communal area near to his farm, described it as "a reservation. Where the niggers stay" (FR11).

Step 6: Oppressed Become Inferior

Following this exclusion, the oppressed begin to assimilate an inferior being because of the domination tactics employed by the One. This reinforces beliefs and stereotypes of the Other, spurring further subjugation, as the dominating in-group believe they are morally justified in acting in demeaning ways toward the perceived inferior (Jeong 2008). For instance, one farmer said that "it is frustrating working with the black people. White people have been in Africa since 1600s and still have to lead the blacks even now" (FR10), whereas another said "there is a fine line between how much you allow [Indigenous peoples] to think for themselves" (FR5). The real or perceived limited capacity for Indigenous peoples to govern their country was never considered by the white farmers to be the result of a century of oppression; instead, it was believed to be because the Indigenous peoples were not intelligent enough: "the country still needs white people to oversee things because black people are not yet trained enough to do things by themselves" (FR6).

Step 7: Complete Polarization

The end result of this process is a total polarization of the two groups, where the exploiters lack any empathy toward the exploited (Haddad 2000). By this point, subjugation of the Other is deemed normal, natural, and necessary: just as patriarchy, slavery, and carnism have historically been morally justified, so too was (and is) speciesism (Joy 2011). This final step creates an ethical acceptance of actions that would otherwise be deemed unacceptable, such as the genocide of the Hereros or the mass extermination of jackals ("back then, farmers did an all-out massacre of all animals, especially jackals," FR6). Lethal control of predators is still considered normal, natural, and necessary in many parts of Namibia: "if a predator comes onto your land, you kill it; if another one comes, you kill that too" (FR9); "[the farmers] think they've got too many cheetahs so they just shoot them and put them in a hole" (FW25).

Gladly, extermination of Indigenous peoples is (for the majority) unacceptable, but there is still the perception that they must be ruled: "you need to control these people" (FR8); "we need to recolonize this country" (FR1). However, during colonization, extermination was seen as par for the course:

They have been killed off like predatory game. The idea has been considered to preserve the Bushmen in reservations as the last remnants of the primordial past of the human race, just as elsewhere attempts are made to save endangered animal species (Schultze 1914, p. 290).

European colonial hunters would revel at the number of "nigger" trophies "bagged" alongside their nonhuman animal trophies (MacKenzie 1997, p. 134). Poison was used as an effective extermination tool for both subjugated beings: animal carcasses were laced with strychnine, with the aim of poisoning scavenging carnivores, just as waterholes were filled with poison to kill indigenous peoples (Purkitt and Burgess 2002; Tropp 2003; Kössler and Melber 2004). Bounties were put on the heads of the Hereros, similar to those paid out for the dead bodies of predators (Dedering 1999; Beinart 2012). During this poisoning

campaign, the German General Staff noted that “like a half-dead animal he [the Hereros] was hunted from water-hole to water-hole” (Grosser Generalstab 1906, p. 211).

Improving the Situation

“Nowhere is patriarchy’s iron fist as naked as in the oppression of animals, which serves as the model and training ground for all other forms of oppression.”
(Cantor 1983, p. 27)

A common cause of conflicts amongst humans is due to perceived power differentials (Nibert 2002; Jeong 2008). As we have shown, the conflicts between humans and nonhuman predators, and between Europeans and Africans, were no exception. As our argument has demonstrated, it was not sufficient for settlers to dominate Indigenous Namibians, but also to attempt to annihilate them as they were perceived as a threat to their power. Concurrently, it was not deemed adequate to only fence off stock-killing predators, but to eradicate entire guilds of species. Power and domination would not be rescinded until it was clear that this was in direct opposition to worldwide social norms.

Progress is, however, slow in achieving coexistence between Indigenous peoples and European descendants and between farmers and predators. One way in which tolerance between different groups can increase is by breaking down negative stereotypes, particularly by empathy building. For example, in-group bias declines by taking the perspective of out-groups (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000), whereas racial bias is reduced when in-groups are exposed to positive images of respected out-group members and negative images of disliked in-group members (Dasgupta and Greenwald 2001).

Value confrontation, where individuals are provided with feedback on their egalitarian values in comparison to either the values of their peers or their own behavior (Rokeach 1973), could prove useful too, especially amongst those who are already showing signs of empathy toward other people (Son Hing, Li and Zanna 2002). Empathy also appears to play a key role in attitudes and behavior toward other animals (Ascione 1992; Taylor and Signal 2005). Where human cultures believe that there is no definite boundary between nonhuman primates and humans, people tend to hold more positive feelings toward these other species (Hill and Webber 2010). Furthermore, individuals who are less supportive of hierarchies tend to see more similarities between humans and nonhuman animals (Costello and Hodson 2010). By emphasizing these similarities, individuals who previously held dominating views toward an out-group become more empathetic and less prejudiced toward out-groups (Costello and Hodson 2010). However, as individuals in positions of power tend to be more likely to stereotype, reducing this tendency may prove challenging (Dépret and Fiske 1993).

How individuals treat out-group humans has been linked with how they treat nonhuman animals: one study has shown that individuals expressing concern over worker welfare also show concern about farmed animal welfare (Deemer 2009). Individuals who are less accepting of social dominance also tend to eat less meat, more strongly disagree with exploiting animals, are less likely to be threatened by vegetarianism, and believe more strongly that humans are not superior over nonhuman animals (Dhont and Hodson 2014). Building on these techniques could prove useful in the Namibian context; however, the underlying psychological and social mechanisms driving this dominance mind-set are deeply ingrained and will undoubtedly prove difficult to change.

Despite there being some potential areas for future projects to reduce domination of out-groups, some scholars believe that coexistence will never be truly achieved as long as there is violence toward, and subjugation of, certain groups (Sylvain 2001; Nibert 2002). Because much of the violence toward Namibian predators is conducted on livestock- and trophy hunting-farms (Marker, Mills and Macdonald 2003), where killing is an every-day occurrence, coexistence may never be achieved as long as killing is considered normal, natural, and necessary (Joy 2011). Indeed, domestication of animals may have been the first step toward an authoritarian politic (Thomas 1991). Animal slavery has been argued by some to pave the way for human exploitation and slavery (Fisher 1979). Therefore Leo Tolstoy may have been correct in stating that “as long as there are slaughter houses there will always be battlefields.”

Conclusion

This article has offered a detailed analysis of perceptions and behavior toward nonhuman predators in Namibia, to untangle the complex historical nature that affects the way in which people act toward these species today. We accept that there are limitations to this paper in both scope and argument. The data used here is drawn from a much larger project (Rust 2015) and is necessarily partial. Similarly, both authors have particular political and ideological standpoints which are to be found in the argument. While we raise these points, we do not apologize for them, believing firmly that any good ethnographic work is both partial and political, precisely because, as a practice, ethnography is attendant to the ways in which so-called “truths” are a function of power/knowledge and are themselves exclusionary (Clifford 1986; Hamilton and Taylor 2012). We have highlighted similarities between how the particular out-group under consideration has been dominated and controlled by European settlers and how Indigenous peoples were subjugated. We have found that one reason for the continued intolerance toward carnivores is the historical and political backdrop that framed the situation. Our argument is that without embracing the intricacy of many conservation challenges, our interventions are likely to fail (Madden and McQuinn 2014). Only by breaking down incorrect stereotypes and scapegoats, along with the physical and mental barriers, will both predators and people be regarded in a more positive and balanced light.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors state there are no conflicts of interest.

Note

1. Whilst this paper focuses on marginalization and othering in a colonialist setting, it does not preclude these in pre/post-colonial Namibia with the denigration of Bushmen by Bantu-speakers and marginalization—deliberate or otherwise—by the post-colonial government.

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