Polyamory Used as a Form of Concurrency to Enhance HIV Programmes in South Africa

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Declaration

I declare that this Doctoral thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of PhD Psychology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Stanley Molefi

To my daughter Mathabo 'Kopano' Mashaphu, I love you.

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Abstract

In South Africa and the broader region of sub-Saharan Africa, non-monogamy, in the form of concurrent partnerships, is linked to the risk of HIV/AIDS. For this reason, the prevention policy framework and scholarly mindset which advocates for the reduction of all forms of concurrent sexual partnerships as a potential behavioral prevention strategy regarding HIV/AIDS, is well established in the region. This happens even in the presence of empirical challenges. Indeed, the idea of some forms of concurrency (and also other forms of multiple partnering) driving HIV infection is disputed, and the question remains whether all forms of concurrent relationships pose the same risk to HIV infection. Some research points to a lack of substantial evidence, inconsistent definition, and difficulty in measuring concurrent partnerships, as factors which show that not all forms of concurrency are related to risk of HIV infection. Indeed, the latter consideration points to the need to distinguish between concurrency that carries the risk of HIV and others which do not pose the same risk.

In the foregoing debates, although not vigorously investigated, but an insight that otherwise emerges, is that in sexual relationships – including those of monogamous ordering – aspects, such as high levels of communication, trust and honesty, are some of the protective factors against HIV. For example, when one partner (in a commitment relationship) engages in extra-dyadic sex beyond the scope of his/her primary partnering without the knowledge and consent of his/her partner, the outcomes are often deleterious. In the context of HIV, lack of safer sex practices is one of the most immediate dangers associated with the preceding behavior, along with the violation of trust of one's partner, among many other things. In this vein, this study argues that the practice of polyamory (a relationship where someone has sexual and/or romantic partnerships with multiple people simultaneously) which embraces the validity of multiple love, is a potential form of concurrency which might have low risk of HIV. The domain of this partnering is rich in philosophies that are particularly helpful in eradicating many of the risk factors linked to this devastating virus. These include, but are not limited to, pro-gender equality norms, re-working patriarchial systems, promotion of sexual rules and agreements, and providing psychosocial support to those who are involved in polyamorous relationships.

A conceptual framework derived from the three inter-related theories of social cognitive theory, constructivism and the meaning-making model, was used to investigate the group of relations between polyamorous relationships, safer sex practices and HIV. A non-random sampling method was used to select individuals who were in polyamorist relationships in three provinces in South Africa: Gauteng, Cape Town and Northern Cape. In-depth individual interviews were conducted in order to collect data from seven participants. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was employed as the data analysis method. The findings of this study revealed that many of the

participants who were involved in polyamorous relationships were concerned about their health and well-being. Therefore, in most of these relationships, the participants required of their secondary partners to disclose their HIV status and test for STDs. Furthermore, in all of the participants' polyamorous relationships there were sexual rules and agreements that were set up in order to limit exposure to HIV. Furthermore, high level of communication strategies were employed to improve honesty and trust among all of the partners involved. The coping strategies that were adopted by all of these participants in order to deal with familial and societal rejection of their involvement in concurrency included forming psychosocial support networks. These finding show that there is a need to re-concepualize the partner reduction policy in order to accommodate the perspectives and needs of people who are involved in concurrent partnerships.

Table of contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Appendices

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASRH&R	National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
CAQDAS	computer assisted qualitative data analysis software
CHTC	Couples HIV Testing and Counselling
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HU	Hermeneutic Unit
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LDS	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
MCP	multiple concurrent partnering
PISD	post-infidelity stress disorder
PLHIV	people living with HIV
PSI	Population Services International
PTSD	posttraumatic stress disorder
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SIV	Simian Immunodeficiency Virus
STIs	sexually transmitted infections
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
US	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

The epidemic of the Human Immunodefiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) continues to devastate lives in Southern Africa (Shisana, Rehle, & Simbayi et al., 2009). In the year 2007, it was reported that 67 per cent of all people living with HIV were situated in sub-Saharan Africa (Shisana et al., 2009). New HIV infections worldwide were estimated to reach around 2.1 million (1.8 million–2.4 million) in 2015, bringing the projected total to 36.7 million (34.0 million–39.8 million) people living with HIV (The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [UNAIDS], 2014). When this statistical data is broken down into categories of gender, it becomes evident that women bear a disproportionate burden of being infected with this virus. For example, of the 15 per cent of women aged 15 to 24 who are reported as having contracted HIV, 80 per cent lives in sub-Saharan Africa (Kharsany & Karim, 2016). In addition, this group of young women have higher rates of HIV infection than their male counterparts. As Kharsany and Karim (2016) stated, this sub-population is infected with HIV five to seven years earlier than their male peers.

When figures per country are examined and with an estimated 6.4 million people infected in 2013, South Africa is reported amongst those with the highest prevalences of HIV in the world (UNAIDS, 2014). In the same year, 330 000 new infections were reported, as well as 200 000 deaths from AIDS-related illnesses (UNAIDS, 2014). Nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa–namely; Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe have an estimated HIV infection rate among the adult population of 10 per cent (UNAIDS, 2014). Furthermore, these reports indicated that Swaziland had a prevalence rate of 26.5 per cent, which is said to be the highest of any country in the world. This is followed by Botswana with 23 per cent, while Lesotho's estimated rate is as high as 23.3 per cent (UNAIDS, 2014).

The quest to investigate and ultimately understand the primary drivers of HIV and AIDS remains an important undertaking to policy makers, health-care practitioners and social scientists. The commonly identified risk-factors, such as poverty, stigma and discrimination, inequality, transactional sex, sexual violence and lack of access to quality medical care, provide valuable insights regarding the transmission of this virus (Shisana et al., 2013; South African National AIDS Council, 2011). These factors have also played a critical role in terms of health-care practices and psychosocial resources that should and have been provided to people who live with the disease. Sexuality, however, remains at the heart of our attempts to understand the dynamics of this epidemic.

In a world where sexual practices are constantly shifting and the meaning associated with sexual lifestyles is varied, the need to place a particular emphasis on sexual relationship formations has

never been so great (Tsapelas, Fisher, & Aron, 2010). This is especially salient in South Africa where different patterns of sexual relationships have been observed. For example, reduced trade barriers and regional efforts to improve business relations in sub-Saharan Africa provide opportunities for people to engage in varied sexualities between and within these countries. In South Africa, new ways of doing sexual relationships is arguably attributed to the declining rates of marriages (e.g. serial monogamy, casual sex and multiple partners) (Makiwane, Gumede, & Molefi, 2016). Furthermore, the recognition of same-sex unions in some parts of sub-Saharan Africa underscores the ever present reality of alternative sexualities (De Vos & Barnard, 2007). In addition, the existence of monarchies and traditional royal kingdoms in sub-Saharan Africa complicates the normative practice of monogamy where historical and customary belief in non-monogamy is foregrounded (Tsapelas et al. 2010). Indeed, in a socio-politically and culturally diverse environment, such as sub-Saharan Africa, sexuality is a facet of human experience, which evidently has contextually-bound meaning.

A certain way of investigating and understanding the meaning of sexuality has, however, had considerable impact in relation to the design of HIV and AIDS interventions in South Africa and the rest of the region. This is clearly reflected in the HIV and AIDS responses from some of the governments in sub-Saharan Africa. A specific example is the prevention policy framework and scholarly mind-set that advocates for the reduction of all forms of concurrent sexual partnerships as a potential behavioural HIV and AIDS prevention strategy. Critical scholarship in this respect has highlighted empirical challenges related to the preceding view (Allais & Venter, 2012; Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). To this end, a large body of research illustrates how such production and reproduction of 'reduction of all concurrency' as an HIV and AIDS prevention policies privilege monogamy as societal context from which establishment of sexual relationships should emerge. This narrative of monogamy as a site and space within which sexual practices should be defined is problematised because: (a) it paints a singular view whereby all forms of non-monogamous relationships are considered to pose the same threat to HIV and AIDS; (b) it makes it difficult to understand sexual relationships that are constructed on the basis of consensual and mutual understanding of extra-dyadic relationships, where safer sex practices are communicated, as well as promoted, and the risk of transition to HIV and AIDS is low; and (c) there is little attempt in understanding how sexual practices, such as non-monogamous relationships, can be used to enhance formulation of HIV and AIDS programmes in South Africa.

Therefore, this study investigates practices around non-monogamy with a specific focus on polyamorous relationships. In addition, this study engages an already existing scholarship where critical discourse regarding the role that concurrency plays on the prevalence of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa forms a big part of relationships research in connection with this epidemic (Allais & Venter, 2012; Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). In so doing, a deeper understanding is explored regarding

how polyamory appears to be a transformative partnering where critical issues such as consensual and ethical extra-dyadic sexual activities are negotiated and promoted. An inquiry of this nature is unique in the field of HIV research, especially within the context of sub-Saharan Africa.

1.2 Problem Statement

In South Africa, the practice of non-monogamy within the context of polygamy is legally protected under customary law. The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998[3], ensures that the rights of the individuals in polygamous unions, such as inheritance and rights to child custody, are legally protected. Indeed, in this country polygyny is practiced by various ethnic groups (e.g. [Black] Africans, in spite of religious affiliation; and Islamic South Africans who are classified as Cape Malays, Cape Coloureds and Indian South Africans, particularly Muslims). In other parts of the Southern African region, polygamy– particularly polygyny– remains a common practice (Bove & Valeggia, 2008). For example, Bove and Valeggia (2008) provided statistics related to polygyny in countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Guinea, and these were reported as 4.9 per cent, 14.1 per cent and 36.7 per cent respectively. In Swaziland, which is the last monarchy on the African continent, polygyny is allowed (Bove & Valeggia, 2008).

Indeed, the scholarly disciplines, especially those in the humanities field, such as anthropology, psychology and sociology, have long observed the co-existence of non-monogamy and monogamy. This is the case not only in Southern Africa, but worldwide. For example, anthropologists estimate that 83.5 per cent of all human cultures permit polygyny (one husband with multiple wives), only 16 per cent are tolerant towards monogamy, while polyandry (one wife with multiple husbands) is allowed in 0.5 per cent (Pasternack, Ember, & Ember, 1997; Tsapelas, Fisher, & Aron, 2010). In his study, Davenport (1976) reported on his tour de force survey of human sexuality with a specific focus on non-monogamy across the Polynesian cultures. The same study shows that young people in pre-Christianised Tahiti were allowed to engage in the sexual practices of self-masturbation and premarital intercourse. In this context, it was the cultural norm to not only talk openly about "marital and extramarital intercourse" but also to engage in the practices permitted by extra-dyadic relationships (Davenport, 1976). In addition, Loue (2006) reported that during the 1970s in Kuwait, between 8 per cent and 13 per cent of marriages were estimated to be polygamous.

Furthermore, sexual research on heterosexual couples in the United States of America (U.S) has illustrated that 20 per cent to 40 per cent of married men and 20 per cent to 25 per cent of married women are highly likely to engage in an extramarital affair during their lifetime (Greeley, Laumann et

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[3]South Africa's Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998, Regulations in Terms of the GN R1101 in GG 21700 of 1 November 2000.

al; Tafoya & Spitzberg as cited in Tsapelas et al., 2010). In a study by Allen and Baucom, American dating couples reported a 70 per cent rate of incidences related to extra-dyadic relationships (2006). Indeed, widespread non-monogamy on a global scale was best exemplified by the Ashley Madison scandal. Ashley Madison is a website which arose from the recognition of a need for spouses to practice non-monogamy. It created a space that enabled such sexual lifestyles to flourish, using the slogan, "*Life is Short. Have an Affair*" (Horton, 2015). When the website was hacked, the worldwide prevalence of the inclination to non-monogamy was exposed.

Nonetheless, evidence across diverse geographical and cultural contexts shows that, in many parts of the world, the existence of non-monogamy is largely recognised as a public health problem and as a negative sexual behaviour. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa – a region from which the scientific and societal impact of HIV and AIDS is underscored – non-monogamy, especially concurrency, is primarily investigated on the basis of this epidemic. In this context, concurrency is noted as a pathological sexual practice (Parker, 2007). Such an understanding of concurrency not only shapes and organises how non-monogamy is practiced, but also how it is discussed, performed and negotiated. In South Africa, the language that is used to refer to the practice of extra-dyadic relationships includes: *Khwapheni* – armpit (Xhosa), Roll-On*,* Side-kick – concubine (English), *Nyatsi* – concubine (Sotho), *Ishende* – secret lover (Zulu) (Dladla, Hiner, Qwana, & Lurie, 2012*)*. Indeed, this is indicative of the HIV and AIDS campaigns and policy frameworks, such as Soul City's OneLove campaign in South Africa, where one of the objectives is to "encourage a paradigm shift that supports the idea that single, monogamous relationships can be happy and fulfilling" (Letsela & Weiner, 2009, p. 5). The O Icheke Campaign in Botswana, the OneLove Kwasila Campaign in Zambia, the Makhwapheni - Secret Lovers Kill campaign in Swaziland and the One Love/Get off the Sexual Network in Uganda, are campaigns which were constructed to fulfil only one purpose: to reduce multiple and concurrent partnerships (Letsela & Weiner, 2009). As a social scientist and one who values the importance of the subjective meaning-making process, interrogating the ways in which the aforementioned discourses appear to prescribe specific forms of sexual conduct as healthy or unhealthy remains a critical endeavour. With this in mind, it becomes fitting to expand the analysis of how HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa is mobilised as an instrument in order to institutionalise the meaning of appropriate and inappropriate ways of establishing sexual partnering.

From the above description, it becomes clear that, what is less recognised and poorly understood is the manner in which the preceding policy considerations and associated rhetoric affect how individuals who practice non-monogamy are positioned. Furthermore, the preceding discourse infers a context from which non-monogamous relationships are defined as problematic (Frost, McClelland, Clark, & Boyland, 2014; Haritawon, Lin, & Kleese, 2006). Included in these issues is the partner reduction policy and associated non-monogamous 'othering' discourses, and how these influence

"people's mental processes regarding what it means to be a healthy subject" (Holt & Stephenson, 2006, p. 212). More importantly, to what extent do such policy imperatives serve as socio-political and cultural axis of inclusion or exclusion, where sexual subjects who express inclination towards non-monogamy are demonised and stigmatised? Addressing such questions, one is reminded of the critical work of Michel Foucalt, who illuminated the illusion of 'fair and measured' decision making related to government policies (Frost et al., 2014). This is because "sexuality-related social policies are at times designed to exert social control over sexual bodies and behaviors and are often intended to extend the sexual morals of some individuals and groups with legislative authority to all individuals" (Frost et al., 2014, p. 122).

The health sexual research and contemporary HIV and AIDS policy frameworks in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa addresses little in exploring the lived realities of the individuals who practice non-monogamy. Indeed, there is less critical thinking regarding how, in the pursuit of preventing the prevalence of HIV and AIDS, such approaches simultaneously marginalise and alienate non-monogamous relationships (Allais & Venter, 2012; Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). This may be the case in situations where some forms of concurrent partnerships pose minimal risk to HIV and AIDS (Allais & Venter, 2012; Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). Subscription to such approaches poses serious challenges, both conceptually and methodologically. This is because viewing non-monogamous relationships in this manner obscures opportunities to capture the meanings that are attached to such relationship partnering (Allais & Venter, 2012; Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). Fostering novel avenues of understanding nuanced meaning and perceptions related to non-monogamy may facilitate alternative paradigms and spaces from which HIV and AIDS programmes can be enhanced.

1.3. Aim and Objectives of the study

The main aim of this study is to understand how people conceptualise the role and meaning of concurrent partnerships within the context of polyamory. The other objectives are described as follows:

(a) To explore the personal, cultural, and social meanings attached to polyamorous relationships;

(b) To explore how the elevated risk of HIV is negotiated and discussed in polyamorous relationships;

(c) To identify knowledge that can be used to enhance HIV prevention programmes in South Africa;

(d) To contribute to the existing body of theory on concurrent partnerships in South Africa.

1.4 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

(a)   How is polyamory conceptualised and understood by the individuals who are involved in polyamorous relationships?

(b)   What meaning is attached to this particular form of non-monogamy?

(c)   How is the elevated risk of HIV negotiated and discussed in polyamorous relationships?

(d)   What recommendations can be made to enhance HIV and AIDS programmes in South Africa?

1.5 The rationale of the present study

The aim of the study is to explore polyamory as a form of non-monogamy that can be used to enhance HIV and AIDS programmes in South Africa. As illustrated in the preceding section, non-monogamy is not a fleeting sexual lifestyle, but a relationship patterning that exists in diverse contexts. Although much effort has gone into framing its practice as pathology and the sexual subjects who engage in it as promiscuous, in certain socio-political and cultural contexts it remains an alternative form of constituting sexual relationships (Frost et al., 2014). Indeed, variations of sexualities and also the reality of the HIV epidemic, especially in sub Saharan Africa, highlights the continued need for understanding how "shifting sexual norms and social contexts influence when, how, and with whom one can have sex, [and how intimacy is or can be performed]" (Frost et al., 2014, p. 129). Thus, theorising on social constructs, such as race, social class, age, and gender, from which trajectories of sexual relationships are shaped and how these are related to safer sex practices becomes an even greater responsibility for social scientists to investigate. More importantly, the scourge of HIV and AIDS prompts us to reflect on questions around how non-monogamy is conceptualised in contexts where privileges of monogamy are institutionalised, and what particular meanings are ascribed to such relationship patterning (Haritawon et al., 2006). For example, why do some spouses or partners, who have committed their lives to the institution of pair-bonding marriage, conceal their inclination towards extra-dyadic relationships? Why is monogamy the dominant ideal from which formation of sexual relationships is governed? Why is non-monogamy, despite the overwhelming evidence of its existence across different cultures, described as abhorrent, and why do some people put their lives and those of their loved ones at risk of contracting HIV by doing non-monogamy unethically and irresponsibly?

These types of questions along with many others create pathways that lead to certain understandings of the risk factors associated with HIV. For example, studies have shown how

notions of hetero-normative masculinity perpetuate the stereotype that men have sexual intercourse with different women without using a condom as a protective method against HIV and AIDS (Letsela & Weiner, 2009; Shisana et al., 2009). This is reported in a study that was conducted in South Africa (Taylor, Dlamini, Kagoro, Jinabhai, & de Vries, 2003) in which it was estimated that, in rural areas, only one-half of adolescent respondents who were sexually active reported using condoms in the past 30 days prior to the commencement of this research. In a national survey that was conducted by Shisana et al. (2009) in South Africa it was reported that 65 per cent of males, and 60 per cent of males aged 15 and older, indicated using a condom during their last intercourse. Furthermore, with some of the ethnic groups, particularly Blacks (Africans) in Southern Africa, the body of scholarly work points to social class playing an important role with respect to practices of unsafe sex (Shefer, Clowes, & Vergnani, 2012). This is particularly evident given the transactional sex framework that has been observed in the region (Shefer et al., 2012). In addition, a range of studies have arguably found a strong correlation between concurrency and HIV and AIDS (Mavhu, Buzdugan, Langhaug, Hatzold, Benedikt et al., 2011; Nshindano & Maharaj, 2008; Kenyon & Zondo, 2011). The study by Johnson, Dorrington, Bradshaw, Pillay-Van Wyk, and Rehle (2009), estimates that concurrency, including multiple partnerships, accounted for 74 per cent of HIV infections in South Africa between 1990 and 2000.

The last consideration sets the agenda for this study. In sexual research, non-monogamy, especially concurrency (as illustrated in this study), is strongly correlated with the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. This study argues that non-monogamy, including concurrent partnering, should be recognised as a human sexual experience. This argument is made by drawing on the expansive and critical scholarship of Lurie and Rosenthal (2010), and Allais and Venter (2012), where it is acknowledged that some forms of non-monogamy, including concurrency, do spread the epidemic of HIV and AIDS. However, these authors also recognize that other forms of concurrent partnerships do not pose the same risk (Allais & Venter, 2012; Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). To illustrate this point, in the study by Reniers and Watkins (2010), it was found that the association between polygyny and HIV prevalence is not positively correlated. Furthermore, in the same study, it was indicated that the HIV prevalence is lower in countries where polygyny is common (Reniers & Watkins, 2010). These insights are important not only for contributing to social scientific knowledge of human sexuality but for highlighting those contexts where non-monogamy is performed with precautionary measures against HIV and AIDS (Reniers & Watkins, 2010). This narrative exemplifies how representation of non-monogamy as a human sexual experience can produce outcomes that may assist in designing HIV prevention efforts which take sexual minorities into account.

To this end, this study contextualises non-monogamy by drawing upon the practice of polyamory. This distinction is made because polyamory is a form of concurrency which espouses the desire for

intimate relationships involving more than two people, with the knowledge and consent of everyone involved. It has been described as a consensual, ethical and responsible way of doing concurrent partnerships (Haritawon et al., 2006). It is important to note that there is no data available regarding the prevalence of HIV and AIDS among people who practice polyamory. Therefore, it is not known whether the prevalence of HIV and AIDS is high or low within the community of polyamorous individuals. As explained above, much of the literature related to concurrency and HIV and AIDS shows that the former is largely conducted in secrecy. It is the concealment of concurrency that has been identified as a key factor in the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. Hence, the formulation of policy frameworks, such as Swaziland's – *Secret Lovers Kill*, South Africa's '*OneLove*' campapaign, or rhetoric such as "*Nyatsi* is dangerous". Indeed, when a spouse hides his or her involvement in extra-dyadic relationships, the other partner has no way of knowing how vulnerable he or she is to contracting HIV. In this context the setting of disclosure, where both partners can discuss safer sex practices is intentionally obscured.

Polyamory addresses such issues; it is a practice that espouses openness towards the validity of loving more than one partner at the same time (Haritawon et al., 2006). It is a relationship site that foregrounds discussions related to safer sex practices because of the openness towards plural love (Haritawon et al., 2006). Indeed, this ethic of responsible and ethical non-monogamy characterizes polyamory as a concurrent partnering which discourages secrets and lies regarding extra-dyadic sexual relationships (Haritawon et al., 2006). These philosophies are widely considered as orientations which encourage psychological attributes such as trust, honesty and transparency in these relationships (Haritawon et al., 2006). To a large extent these qualities may be protective factors against the HIV virus. In a country like South Africa, with already cited issues such as gender inequality, high levels of domestic violence and so forth, the preceding psychological attributes may be difficult to obtain. However, it is important to also insert progressive milestones that the country has achieved in relation to preceding narratives. These pertain to South Africa's transformative legislations that make it mandatory for women to be employed, including promoting the number of women who are enrolled in both basic and higher education sector (Appelton, 2009). The legal approval of same-sex marriages in the country provide further evidence that South Africa is one of the few places in the African continent where polyamorous philosophies can be incorporated into HIV programmes.

Even more so, polyamory with the focus on high levels of communication strategies which entail prior knowledge of extra-dyadic relationships in these relationships are particularly crucial in an environment such as South Africa with high rates of HIV. When a partner is fully aware of his/her partner's intention or involvement in other sexual relationships such a partner is able to make an informed decision regarding safer sex practices. In many ways, this approach promotes full

disclosure of the partners' sexual activities – a strategy that is akin to Uganda and Zambia's provider-initiated HIV testing and adoption of test-and-treat approach (Research to Prevention, 2012). In both these countries, the stated approach has been proposed as a way of making mandatory for patients to be tested for HIV, while acknowledging the ethical implications of consent from patients (Research to Prevention, 2012). Indeed, informed consent is generally one of the important topics that is continually discussed and debated in polyamory (Matlainen, 2012). This is to make sure that all the partners who are involved in these relationships understand the full extent of polyamory. More so, informed consent also addresses issues such as coercion that some of the partners may experience in such complex relationships (Matlainen, 2012). This facilitates parity between partners making this concurrency an exception in comparison to other non-monogamous practices like the 'gendered-polygyny' (Matlainen, 2012).

However, consentiality is a very loaded concept, especially when read in geographies like the South African setting, with its inequality issues, prompting one to draw upon the useful category of "imperfect consent" that was coined by Richards' (2010). Richards (2010, p. 200) described this as "moments where the ability of a person to consent to an act is questionable either because the act is arguably harmful to the person, or because social or cultural pressures potentially compromise the person's autonomy". Of course, this term is considered against the backdrop of concurrent-transactional relationships that are already discussed earlier on in this dissertation. The scholarship on this topic interrogates questions about autonomy and diminished capacity for full consent to be realised on the part of women when choosing to enter into these relationships. In polyamorous relationships consensuality is often re-established in order to reflect new contexts.

In addition, people who are involved in polyamorous relationships often establish psycho-social support to like-minded individuals (Sheff, 2010). Usually the purpose of these support networks is to meet and discuss issues that are important around involvement in this form of concurrent partnering Sheff, 2010). Furthermore, polyamorous individuals have access to literature, including books on polyamory published in many countries, which provides guidelines for the safe and ethical engagement with this type of concurrency (Sheff, 2010). Indeed, access to such resources and support networks can have emotional, psychological and physical benefits, and might help individuals who practice non-monogamy by giving them a sense of belonging (Sheff, 2010). Furthermore, such an environment can serve as a coping strategy that is used by these individuals to contest the meaning of the partner reduction policy against the personal meaning of their own partnering (Sheff, 2010).

Other points that show the importance of considering polyamory as a form of concurrency that can be used to enhance HIV programmes in South Africa include how in this context much emphasis is

placed on love rather than sex. As Matlainen (2012) has observed characteristics such as love, responsibility and relationship are future oriented actions, which means polyamory is a type of concurrency that has an enduring value. Therefore, unlike, concubines, ngatsi, side-kick and many other words that have negative connotations regarding non-monogamous relationships, in polyamory the focus is on lifelong partnerships (Matlainen, 2012). Such insights provide compelling evidence why policy makers in the country when conceptualising HIV programmes through the prism of concurrent relationships, the philosophies of polyamory are best suited to be used as baselines in order to understand sexual diversity. Furthermore, similar to queer movement, feminism and other progressive movements, polyamory is also another alternative voice that has been formed to create collective awareness of non-normative choices in relationships and sexuality politics. Together with this is how polyamorists are open about being involved in these relationships in hostile environments.

Nevertheless, acknowledging the importance of polyamory in the area of HIV and AIDS requires careful consideration related to utilising methods that adequately capture the diversity and complexity of such a sexual lifestyle. This is particularly important in the field of psychology where findings from psychological research regarding sexuality are often used in clinical practices related to diagnosis and treatment. For example, consider how present research trends in psychology explain non-monogamy from the perspective of infidelity and promiscuity (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002). To this end, theories, such as the attachment model, have been used to explain the link between personality traits, sexual risky behaviour and HIV and AIDS (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002). For example, in their study, John and Srivastava (1999) reportedly posited that among the Big Five dimensions of personality, four traits appear to be linked to risky forms of sexual behaviour. These include extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Furthermore, in a study by Bowlby (1969) it is stated that secure attachment was positively linked to the likelihood of more stable relationships and less practices of infidelity (Miller & Fishkin, 1997). In the same study, insecure attachment was reported as positively related to the likelihood of more extra-dyadic relationships (Bogaert & Sadava, 2002). Note how, in this context, the person's 'freedom and choice' regarding desire, interpretation and meaning of their sexuality is explicitly and implicitly obscured (Frost et al., 2014; Shildrick, 2007).

Therefore, it is important to use of concepts and methodologies that:
(a) take into account the voices of polyamorists individuals; in other words, the conceptual framework that position the agency of those involved in the relationships;
(b) focus on the interactional context of meaning-making; and
(c) help social scientists as well as policy makers to understand the way in which the people who practice polyamory cope with the discrepancy of the meaning of their concurrency against those embedded in the partner reduction policy.

The magnitude of this academic inquiry is such that there is no singular theory, methodology or conceptual framework that can critically and adequately address it. Therefore, the mass field of psychological theories were a helpful resource. This is because after familiarising myself with many of these theories, I was able to obtain sufficient knowledge to combine three related theories, and turn these into one coherent conceptual framework. These theories are social cognitive theory, constructivism and the meaning-making model. By employing this unified conceptual framework, I was able to investigate the perception and meaning of the individuals who practice polyamory in South Africa in greater depth.

As the reader will observe when engaging with the analysis and findings chapter, this innovative way of approaching the study generates a nuanced production of knowledge that would not necessarily be obtained through the use of traditional methods. Indeed, this vein of thinking also draws on health-care practices in the area of HIV and AIDS programmes, which need to be regularly evaluated and improved by using new techniques. On the whole, this shows the importance of insights which may be generated from eploxing under-researched sexual relationships such as polyamory in relation to the stated programmes.

1.6 The qualitative research approach to sexual relationship studies

As identified in many peer-reviewed accredited journals, the scope of research on sexual relationships demonstrates an area of work that is increasingly driven by the applied sciences approach. This means that, in this field, there is a shift from theory-oriented discipline towards producing research tools for qualitative researchers. This applied sciences approach has been seminal in demonstrating the utility of these tools and methods in the study of relationships (e.g. family studies and interpersonal relationships). However, less effort appears to be persistent in using those modified methodologies in sexual relationships, specifically in the area of HIV in the setting such as the global south.

Nevertheless, the corpus of relationship research gaining widespread currency across social science disciplines focuses on interaction and meaning. This cluster of research excavates much of Albert Bandura's theorisation of interaction as the foundation upon which our perception of the world becomes cognitively realised (Bandura, 2001). Theories, such as interpretative, symbolic or constructive theory, have extended such thinking and stress the importance of meaning-making as a process rooted in the interaction (Bandura, 2001). This is markedly significant for the present study, because the social environment is understood here as a site where the agentic self is not only situated, but also embodied. In the social environment, the self is able to negotiate, as he or she constantly interprets his or her sexual relationships and the meaning of aspects such as safer sex

practices. On the whole, this study enters into a broader conversation around which qualitative relationship researchers discuss, debate and theorize how people create the meaning of sexual relationships. This differs in conceptualisation from positivism studies where the epistemology of meanings is based on human internal attributes that might be found in a person, object, or idea (Terre-Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2014). On the other hand, qualitative relationship researchers understand meaning-making as a process that is reflexive in nature and constituted in social relations (Baxter, 2004). Thus it is continuously negotiated through complex relationships.

1.6.1 Qualitative relationship studies allow for exploration of meaning-making in interaction

There is often ambiguity regarding the meanings people attach to relationships which helps create paradoxes and contradiction (Baxter, 2004; Manning & Kunkel, 2014). This is particularly the case when it comes to subjective meaning of sexual relationships which is different from the dominant view of these in the society. In this sense, a qualitative relationship approach gives researchers an opportunity to explore these discrepancies of understandings of sexual relationships. In doing so, the researcher is also able to investigate how the different ideas contextualise change, whether it is negotiated or coerced, and the reasons therein.

1.6.2 Qualitative relationship studies permit representation of sexual minorities

According to Gemignani et al. (as cited in Manning & Kunkel, 2014, p. 1112), ''[q]ualitative inquiries often result in complex and nuanced accounts of realities and experiences that, differently from dominant or hegemonic discourses or statistical significance, acknowledge both the center and the margins''. This underlies the appropriateness of qualitative relationship research for scholarship that seeks to investigate relationships, which are under-explored, as well as the people who are engaged in them. At the heart of this type of research is the participant-driven approach which prioritises the subjective realities of participants.

1.6.3 The focus of qualitative relationship studies on psychological attributes

The study of relationships is invariably research on emotions. It is a field which reveals varying degrees of conceptualisation, for example, some authors understand emotions as perceptions, either of the world or of bodily changes (Vasterling, 2007). On the other hand, others claim that emotions are judgments; some maintain that emotions are dispositions; or emotions may be considered as involving evaluations or appraisals (Vasterling, 2007). Indeed, as opposed to using a particular method to bracket the meaning of emotions, what qualitative relationship research does is recognise that participants need to speak about the personal meaning of emotions in their lives. This participant-driven approach to feelings, emotions, and subjectivity can also help bring ideas or concepts into focus that might otherwise have eluded researchers. Indeed, the analysis of

relationship data allows the researcher to feel the emotions that are expressed by the participants, visualise their life-worlds and make sense of their physical, psychological as well as emotion situations (Manning & Kunkel, 2014).

1.6.4 Understanding the interaction of relationships through qualitative relationship studies

Qualitative relationship researchers place the primary focus squarely on how relationships arise in the society. Implicit in this orientation is that relationships are social constructs. Human constructs that are socially defined occur as people share their understandings of them with others and through the course of organising their human experiences. Therefore, approaches related to relationship studies pay particular attention not only to the way that various factors, such as society, culture, and the political-economic environment of the country shape the human experience but also people's perception of reality (Baxter, 2004; Manning & Kunkel, 2014). When understood through the prism of qualitative methods, these intersecting factors often illuminate connections that might not otherwise be intelligible without the data collection tools of, for example, in-depth interviews, focus groups and ethnography (Baxter, 2004; Manning & Kunkel, 2014).

1.7 The structure of the study

Chapter 1: Background and Orientation

As a background to this dissertation, the chapter discusses key research aspects, such as objectives, the problem statement and rationale of the study.

Chapter 2: Towards Understanding Public Health Policy

The partner reduction policy forms the basis upon which this study is constructed; therefore, the related concept of 'public health policy' is also thoroughly interrogated in this chapter. In addition, the notion of sexuality as a construct that has different meaning across space and time is provided with a specific operational meaning in the same chapter.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Some of the major points of discussion in this chapter relate to showing the reader the historical and contemporary debates on issues regarding sexual relationships, and how the meaning attached to these partnerings shift over time. Furthermore, the chapter discusses approaches to African sexuality, especially with regard to the HIV epidemic.

Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework

This chapter describes and justifies the methodologies that were adopted in order to explore the subject of inquiry.

Chapter 5: Research Methodology and Design

This chapter provides the adoption of the inter-related research paradigms and procedures that were followed with respect to data collection and other aspects of the research activities.

Chapter 6: Interpretative Phenomenological Data Analysis

Data analysis is one of the important aspects of the research process. Therefore, this chapter provides the rationale for using the method of interpretative phenomenological analysis in this study.

Chapter 7: Data Coding

This chapter provides an overview of the steps that were followed in order to analyse the data.

Chapter 8: Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

The description and interpretations of the participants' experiences are provided in thorough detail.

Chapter 9: The Implications of the Data Analysis and Findings of This Study

This part of the dissertation illustrates the contribution of this study to the area of HIV research, not only in South Africa, but the region of sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This chapter explains the limitations of the study, provides recommendation and summarises the study findings, provides conclusions, and offers recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY

2. Introduction

As a precursor to understanding the agenda for this study, it is important to explain how critical policy research is, especially considering the impact of public health policy on the broader literacies between sexuality and HIV. Research in this area, particularly as it is related to the present study, helps us to understand the considerable discrepancy between concurrent partnership practices and the HIV partner reduction policy. Such intellectual scholarship also assists in teasing out a clear statement of this difference and justification for it. Indeed, policy research which is focussed on HIV and AIDS, and access to prevention, care and treatment, prompts deeper questions regarding critical ethical and methodological theories that are used in this line of work (Herrell, 1991; Sandoval & Caceres, 2013).

Significantly, these reflections raise more questions around the people involved in the formulation of such policies and who they are. In other words, the emphasis is on the politics of insider versus outsider and how these dynamics are connected to implementation of HIV policies that often do not account for the subjective meaning of sexuality and are insensitive to alternative sexualities (Herrell, 1991). This is discussed in detail in the literature review chapter. Together with these preoccupations is the thinking around how re-conceptualisation of public health policy can mobilise subjective-life histories as insights that can inform a more comprehensive model of health intervention. The analysis and findings of this study address these concerns. In policy research it is also important to note how the construction of policies often draws on literacies of sexuality, memory, and history, particularly given the historical research on Pan-African sexual cultures (Herrell, 1991; Stillwaggon, 2003). These reflections are discussed in this chapter.

2.1 Defining Public Health Policy

In its basic form public health policy mirrors the constitution of politics. According to Arendtian as cited in Barnett (2014, p. 679), politics refers to "an activity concerned with addressing problems of living together in a shared world". In this instance public policy is a relational phenomenon which is established to fulfil a goal or an objective for the purposes of co-existence, out of which human association should not be harmful to all members of the society (Barnett, 2014; Kallio & Hakli, 2013). Therefore, this study uses the operational term of the World Health Organization (WHO) for *public policy* and *public health policy*, which refer to government documents that identify: (1) the basic goals of government agencies or programmes; (2) strategic approaches to be used to achieve these goals; and (3) detailed technical methods or procedures to be used by agencies or programmes (WHO, 1999). Typically, the public health policy sets the tone for what will, or will not be done in order to attain this goal (WHO, 1999). The globalised practice of governments to construct policy is widely

considered an effective way to determine in what contexts human conduct, such as sexuality, is appropriate or inappropriate. This is significant for a number of reasons. For example, such frameworks provide profound insights into how governments create particular environments for the legislation of human behaviour (WHO, 1999). More so, it sets the parameters that govern deviant cultures and confers upon certain individuals the legal authority to deal with such non-conformity, and also what forms of punishment are to be instituted.

2.2 The implementation of public health policy

WHO (1999) issues a cautionary note that public policies should be understood as instruments or tools and not as ends in themselves. As with other tools, public policies can be effective in certain contexts, but inadequate and inappropriate in others (WHO, 1999). Cognisance of this was important to this study the Sout Africa's HIV partner reduction policy was the subject of enquiry (WHO, 1999). Thus, the primary thrust of this study was to explore the ways such a policy might have impacted on the meaning of concurrent partnerships in the country. The broader goal of this undertaking was to understand whether (and how) a new or revised instrument of the preventative HIV policy in sub-Saharan Africa might accommodate personal meaning of sexuality (WHO, 1999). All of these concerns were addressed by the participants of this study through the in-depth interviews that I held with them during the data collection phase. Furthermore, in my conversations with these participants I also sought to try and understand the following:

(a) How developing a policy or legislation by selectively filtering scientific knowledge can have harmful effects at certain strata of the population;

(b) How policy, such as HIV partner reduction, promote hierarchies of relationships by privileging monogamy over non-monogamy, and how this affect perceptions, experiences, and sexual desires;

(c) How changing policies using a system of open-ended processes might provide active engagement and productive negotiations with marginalised non-monogamous communities, and move towards a plurality of realities; and

(d) How revising the HIV partner reduction policy might change perceptions of concurrent partnering, and how these relationships are talked about and imagined in society.

All of these critical issues emerged in the data analysis and findings chapter. This provided for knowledge production that is novel to South Africa. Many of the participants' experiences stimulated a number of new questions and reflections - among these was how some countries formulated public health policies that were inclusive, whereas in South Africa and sub-Saharan the opposite was true.

2.3 Aligning the approaches of the study with progressive policies

The approach of this study was intentional and specific, drawing from rich sources of literature that focus on HIV and AIDS, as well as sexual health programmes around the world. All of these stress the profound significance of socially engaged policy frameworks as preconditions for reducing prejudice, stigma and vulnerability (Park, 2013). These discourses also endorse policies that recognise and respect sexual differences while pursuing the common goal of promoting safer sex practices. Furthermore, they draw links to some of South Africa's progressive legislations. For example, the National Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRH&R) Framework Strategy, which shares the vision of the 1998 Population Policy for South Africa, aims to "to contribute towards the establishment of a society that provides a high and equitable quality of life for all South Africans…" (Republic of South Africa, 2015, p. 2). This objective, according to the WHO (1999) can be achieved primarily through understanding that people and communities are entitled to have a free and meaningful way of making decisions regarding the health policies or programs that affect them. Participation is a critical component of upholding the right to health (WHO, 1999).

The interactional context between policy makers and citizens is central to a process characterised by a bi-directional paradigm, and is fundamental to meaningful improvement in health systems. The discussion here is of a model of health-care systems which embrace an inclusive and sustainable social and health policy. This orientation towards public health policy also focuses on an institutional and political context in which the interaction of all relevant actors promotes parity in representation on such topics as the meanings of sexuality.

2.4 The partner reduction policy as an HIV response in sub-Saharan Africa

Although this study is located in South Africa, sub-Saharan Africa is drawn into the conversation throughout the dissertation. The reason for this is quite simple: HIV partner reduction policy is a dominant ideology in the region. Nevertheless, up to this point the aforementioned policy has often been referred to, but has not been fleshed out. This part of the study provides the broader background of this policy not only as it is implemented in South Africa, but in most of the countries in region of sub-Saharan Africa. The 2006 meeting of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries and UNAIDS was a major event that provided impetus to the promulgation of the HIV partner reduction policies (Spina, 2009). The conclusion reached at this meeting was that "high levels of multiple and concurrent sexual partnerships by men and women, with inconsistent, incorrect condom use, combined with low levels of male circumcision, are the key drivers of the epidemic in the sub-region" (SADC, 2006, p. 5). Morris and Kretzchmar's (1997) mathematical modelling of concurrency was arguably of influence in the promulgation of these policies (see Chapter 3 for in-depth discussion). The lead author of this concurrency hypothesis, Professor Martha Morris, was

involved in providing the research to most of the SADC countries that implemented these policies. Indeed, what followed Morris and Kretzchmar's (1997) pronouncements were a series of implementation of partner reduction policies across sub-Saharan Africa. Details of these policies are provided below.

2.5 The overview of the partner reduction policies in sub-Saharan Africa

This section of the dissertation provides an overview of some of the partner reduction policies that are implemented in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Although, it would have been useful to provide an overview of all of these policies; however, due to the constraints of space the discussion below should allow for good understanding of partner reduction policies in the region.

2.5.1 Botswana's 'O Icheke' Campaign

Botswana has one of the highest rates of multiple concurrent partnering (MCP) in Southern Africa. These statistics are provided by Population Services International (PSI), a Washington based research organisation, headed by a University of Washington Professor, Martina Morris (Lillie, 2010; Population Services International, 2010). Professor Morris and Professor Kretzchmar were the architects of concurrency hypothesis modelling. The Botswana's *National Operational Plan for Scaling Up HIV Prevention in Botswana (2008–2010)* identified a need for the development of an initiative that was aimed at reducing rates of MCP in that country. The '*O Icheke*' Campaign, which was rolled out in March 2009 emerged from this thinking. The Botswana's National Prevention Technical Advisory Committee, the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships, the Ministry of Health and the National AIDS Coordinating Agency led the project (Lillie, 2010). The PSI was tasked with conducting the research and also led the conceptualisation of The '*O Icheke*' Campaign (Lillie, 2010). Overall, this initiative was a multi-year behavioural change communication campaign, with the sole purpose of reducing concurrent partnering in the country. In order to achieve this goal, mass media outlets, such as television, radio, and billboards, were used to disseminate the messages of the campaign. In addition, social institutions such as churches, schools and community theatres, became useful resources for spreading the campaign's message (Lillie, 2010).

2.5.2 Swaziland's Secret Lovers Kill

The *Makhwapheni* Campaign was launched in July 2006 and became Swaziland's first national media effort to focus primarily on partner reduction as an HIV policy imperative (Spina, 2009). Similar to Botswana, the formulation of this policy was singularly informed by the research of PSI, which claimed that the country was among those with the highest prevalence of MCP in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, the goal of this campaign was to challenge the public perception about

concurrency and thus change cultural norms that accept these practices (Spina, 2009). Below is the list of some of the objectives of the *Makhwapheni* Campaign

• to encourage positive and responsible sexual behavior

• to discourage MCP

• to influence public debate on the issue of MCP

• to encourage reduction of the number of sexual partners by sexually active persons

• to encourage faithfulness among partners.

The message associated with this initiative also emphasised the secretive and dangerous nature of concurrency. Appearing on the campaign advertisements were taglines that warned "Secret lovers kill", "Why kill your family" or "You have put yourself in trouble" (Spina, 2009).

2.5.3 South Africa's Soul City's OneLove campaign

The Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication (Soul City) is a non-governmental organisation launched in 1992 with the sole purpose of promoting health and development in South Africa. The strategy used by this organisation to reach its audience was that of integrating education and entertainment with popular television and radio edutainment drama programmes, as well as in print media (Letsela & Weiner, 2009). Soul City worked hard at gaining the support of strong political leaders and policy makers for their media programmes. In order to address the issue of concurrent partnerships, which were regarded as one of the primary drivers of HIV on the website of this organisation, the OneLove campaign was established. The goal of this initiative was to advance the objective of the National Strategic Plan for HIV in South Africa by contributing to the reduction of new HIV infections (Letsela & Weiner, 2009). To this end, some of the specific objectives of the OneLove campaign included:

• encouraging a paradigm shift that supported the idea that single, monogamous relationships can be happy and fulfilling; and

• informing and empowering target groups to make positive lifestyle choices concerning their sexuality.

In order to ensure that the OneLove initiative had a widespread reach and that its message was fully disseminated, Soul City conducted a series of qualitative interviews with people across South Africa (Letsela & Weiner, 2009). Some of the findings that emerged from these interviews are described below and these are.

• having concurrent partners hugely increases the risk of getting HIV and puts loved ones at risk.

- sex is an important part of life and can be rewarding and fulfilling. It can also be harmful to an individual and their loved ones.
- open and honest communication between steady partners about their sexual needs can result in fulfilling and enjoyable sexual lives.
- both men and women can control their sexuality.

2.5.4 Lesotho's HIV/AIDS prevention, control and management document

In Lesotho, there were contradictory messages related to how concurrent partnering is viewed within the context of HIV. For example, objective (2.2.6) of the government's *HIV/AIDS prevention, control and management* document states that HIV preventative efforts are centred on providing the correct information on HIV and STIs (sexually transmitted infections) (Government of Lesotho, 2000). In the same document it is also stipulated that the major concern was to point out the dangers of unprotected sex, especially with multiple partners (Government of Lesotho, 2000). One can argue that although this approach regards concurrent partnering as one of the risk factors for the transmission of HIV, the emphasis is placed on promoting safer sex rather than on demonising certain sexual practices. These sentiments were echoed in another policy document entitled The National HIV & AIDS Strategic Plan 2006 – 2011. In section 1.10.2.2 of this strategy it is stated:

- To increase correct and consistent use of condoms in multiple and concurrent sexual relationships to 80% by 2009.

2.5.5 Angola's 2009-2013 HIV and AIDS prevention strategy

This HIV behavioural framework was the partnership between the government of the Republic of Angola and the Government of the United States of America to Combat HIV/AIDS 2009-2013. In this policy document, the *'five-year strategic overview'* includes addressing sexual behaviour by using mass media, including social network and other forms of media communication as a strategy to highlight multiple concurrent partners as one of the key risk factors in the transmission of HIV (Government of Angola, 2009-2013).

2.5.7 Namibia's Combination Prevention Strategy and Operational Plan for HIV, 2015 - 2017

The key aim of the Combination Prevention Strategy and Operational Plan for HIV in Namibia 2015-2017 was to promote strategies that prioritised the reduction of multiple and concurrent partnerships (Republic of Namibia, 2015). Furthermore, the National Strategic Framework for HIV and AIDS 2010 - 2016 and Medium Term Plan III of 2004-2009 reiterated the call to work towards encouraging partner reduction among the people of Namibia (Republic of Nambia, 2010). One of the critical aspects that went with the preceding policies is 'Break the Chain' campaign which was implemented across the country (Republic of Nambia, 2010).

2.5.8 Zimbabwe's National Behavioural Change Strategy for Prevention of Sexual Transmission of HIV 2006-2010

Two documents were drafted in Zimbabwe relating to curbing the spread of HIV in the country. These are the Zimbabwe's Comprehensive Review of Behavioural Change for Prevention of Sexual Transmission of HIV in Zimbabwe and The National Behavioural Change Strategy for Prevention of Sexual Transmission of HIV 2006-2010. In both of the documents cited above, the 'small house' phenomenon, a form of concurrency, which is widely considered as a practice unique to Zimbabwe, is blamed for fuelling the spread of multiple partnering (The Government of Zimbabwe, 2006-2010). The 'small house' phenomenon is associated with the high incidents of HIV rates in the country. Therefore, all forms of concurrent partnerships are discouraged in the country.

2.5.9 Mozambique's Andar Fora E Maningue Arriscado (stepping outside – cheating – is risky business)

As explained earlier on in this dissertation the prevailing HIV partner reduction policy in sub-Saharan Africa considers non-monogamy a form of promiscuity. Mozambique, with its *Andar Fora E maningue Arriscado* campaign is no different. This campaign was launched in December 2009 as a multi-year mass media strategy in order to show that all forms of concurrency (which are viewed as cheating) pose the same risk to HIV infection (Said & Figueroa, 2008).

2.6.0. Zambia's National Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) strategy

Although, the country's (VMMC) strategy was implemented with the aim of reducing the spread of concurrent relationships in Zambia it was different from other partner reduction policies in the region. The campaign used the approach of profiling men who were responsible for the spread of concurrent partnerships in the country (Ministry of Health, 2012). These men were characterised as: uncircumcised, unmarried; HIV negative status, and between the ages of 26 and 39 (Ministry of Health, 2012). The reason why this target group was believed to be responsible for fuelling the practice of concurrency was, as stated in the VMMC, the type of individuals who were able to make independent decisions about their sexual lives (Ministry of Health, 2012). It is difficult to understand how their female counterparts were unable to equally make independent decisions about their sexuality.

2.6.1 Malawi's HIV and AIDS Extended National Action Framework, 2010-2012

The first objective of Malawi's National Action Framework stipulates action areas with respect to reducing the spread of HIV infection in the country. Other auxiliary objectives included but not limited to:

(a) launching a communication strategy directed at men and women who are in pair-bonding sexual relationships to conform to monogamous practices

(b) calling on non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders to assist in providing one-on-one sex education to couples relative to refraining from engaging in non-monogamous romance

(c) establishing a mass media strategy that focuses on mutual faithfulness – understood as an activity that is only possible within the context of monogamy

(Source: Malawi Government, 2010)

2.7 Concurrent partnerships in sub-Saharan Africa

In order to provide coherence and the logical flow of this study it is only fitting to address, in this very chapter, the types of concurrent partnerships that are critiqued in the foregoing policies and cited in much of Africa-AIDS research. Saunders (2008) describes concurrent partnerships as sexual relationships, which constitute sexual involvement with more than one partner at the same time over the same period. These types of non-monogamous romances arguably lock people into long chains of sexual networks, and these linkages are reportedly one of the key drivers of HIV infection (Saunders, 2008).

2.7.1 Types of concurrent partnerships

According to Nkambule, Jana, and Tumbo (2008) there are four types of concurrent partnerships. These are: (a) a steady partner and additional partners who are often referred to as *nyatsi*; (b) intergenerational sexual relationships; (c) transactional sexual relationships; and (d) polygamy, with the central focus being on the dominant polygyny. In essence, these relationships occur when a person has overlapping sexual relationships with two or more partners. The differences between these relationships are described below.

2.7.2 Steady and other side partners

This is a form of a concurrent partnering where one partner in a committed and agreed pair-bonding relationship enters into one or more additional relationship or relationships without the explicit consent of the other partner (Goldberg, 2012). In simple terms, this is a situation where a partner commits adultery. Nkambule, Jana, and Tumbol (2008) stated that there is usually a motivation for these unwanted extra-dyadic affairs. These include: dissatisfaction, insufficient and unsatisfactory communication, violence, and family discord.

2.7.3 Transactional relationships

According to Nkambule et al. (2008) transactional relationships are sexual partnerings that are only motivated by the exchange of sex for social and financial gains, and involve different partners. Goldberg (2012) states that these types of relationships often occur within the context of poverty and the people which bear the brunt of this type of partnering are mostly women. Other intersectional factors, for instance patriarchal norms and socialisation of power (which is manifested through such societal customs as masculinities) do, however, play a key part in the formation of these relationships.

2.7.4 Intergenerational sexual relationship

In many ways, this form of relationship reflects transactional relationships as these partnering are understood to be formed on the basis of monetary gain (Frtitz, 2011). Typically, younger women from poor backgrounds enter into these relationships with older men who are often married and financially well-endowed. In these settings, the younger women are at a disadvantage, and unable to negotiate safer sex practices because of the income, as well as power disparities in the relationship.

2.7.5 Polygyny

A typical example of this form of non-monogamy is that of former South Africa's President, Mr Jacob Zuma, and current Swaziland's King Moswati. The customary law of these countries permit such marriages where a man (polygyny) or woman (polyandry) can have more than one spouse at the same time (Goldberg, 2012). Gourvenec, Taruberekera, Mochaka, and Kasper (2007) states that the exposure to HIV in these types of concurrency are a result of extra-dyadic sexual activities outside of this sexual network.

2.8 What is mean by sexuality in this study?

It is against the preceding backdrop that the discussion of the definition of sexual relationships is necessary. Definitions in the literature vary, mainly because of different understandings of this construct and the way in which it is studied in different contexts. For instance, the World Association for Sexology describes sexuality as "an integral part of the personality of every human being [whose] full development depends upon the satisfaction of basic human needs such as desire for contact, intimacy, emotional expression, pleasure, tenderness and love" (as cited in Appelton, 2009). On the other hand, the WHO's current working definition of sexuality is:

> ….a central aspect of being human throughout life [that] encompasses sex, gender
> identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction.

Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. [It] is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritual factors (WHO, 2004, p. 3)

By using such words as 'development', 'thoughts', 'identities' and 'experiences', the statements are left open to illustrate the fluid nature of sexuality. This is precisely how this construct is understood in this study, that is, it is not something that is a 'given', nor is it 'fixed' across time and space. This is important to emphasise, particularly when the research of concurrent partnerships is often intersected by the partner reduction policies (Potgieter, 2006). For the longest time theories such as constructivism and social psychology have explained how no living human being could be told what sexuality is and how to define it. The definitions of sexuality are, crucially, embodied on the personal and shaped by socio-cultural and political frameworks through which human social interaction is foregrounded (Potgieter, 2006). It is between and within such interactions that the consequential interpretations of sexuality vary among different people (Potgieter, 2006). Generally speaking, there are usually dominant forms of sexual practices in society, as well as the co-existence of alternative sexualities (Potgieter, 2006). The way in which these different practices are labelled varies from place to place and from time to time (Potgieter, 2006). Some may be regarded as the norm, while others may be observed as different. The issues arise when the latter are problematised and viewed as abnormal.

2.8.1 The focus on personal meaning of sexuality

Given the above it is important to focus on recognition of meaning-making within the interactional context of the agentic self and the environment. This helps to explore issues around the conflict between partner reduction policy and the struggle for recognition of personal meaning of concurrent partnerships. The statements above are indeed located within a wider context of how personal meanings are constructed by people as social agents in environments which are much too often both simultaneously oppressive and enabling (Honneth, 1995). From these texts the meaning of sexuality can be understood as a process that is grounded in social relations, from which some part of it is shaped by the recognition of others (Potgieter, 2006). Therefore, Taylor's (1994) argument carries a specific importance here, because she stresses the absence of societal recognition, or of misrecognition, of the subjective meaning as a factor that can result in a person suffering real damage and distortion regarding their sexuality.

This is particularly the case when society reflects a picture which demonises our sexual practices (Taylor, 1994). Thus, the recognition of personal meaning, as stated by Kallio and Halki (2013, p.

10) "is not just a matter of due respect or courtesy but a vital human need which, unfulfilled, leads to serious [psychological issues]". The lack of societal recognition for personal meaning is not only a negative experience. It can, however, provide opportunities for a positive appraisal of one's personal meaning and inspire individual growth, as well as encourage innovation. With this in mind, it becomes critical to insert in these narratives theories that help us understand the bio-directional process of meaning-making. Where there is a discrepancy of meaning between those of individuals and those of society, theories then can show how people are able to draw on coping strategies to close this gap. Indeed, it would be interesting, when reading through the lens of a particular methodology, to see how the agentic self begins to raise questions, to search for and forge change, regarding the meaning of human experience such as sexual practices.

Thus, the theories and methodologies that address personal meaning-making speak to the larger issues of ethical life. This philosophical thinking should be read in conjunction with Axel Honneth's (1995) for whom the notion of ethical life is reflective of a society that recognises the inter-subjective meaning of the individuals (Honneth, 1995). Earlier on in this section it was shown that articulation of such notion as these supports the formulation of policies by the WHO, South Africa's ASRH&R, as well as the country's constitution, all of which affirm Honneth's body of work (1995). His thoughts on this subject are that people "come to realize themselves in the positive terms of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem that result from 'undistorted and unrestricted recognition [of subjective meaning]" by an approving and encouraging society'" (Honneth, 1995, p. 173).

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the scholarship of concurrent partnerships and HIV. The aim here is threefold. Firstly, sexual relationships, as explored from non-monogamous point of view, are practices that are not only historically situated, but a pattern of sexual lifestyle that still exists in many parts of world. Secondly, the reader will be provided with evidence-based literature which illustrates that, in matters concerning sexuality, a strong sense of agency is often prominent. This is mainly because sexuality is an intensely private human aspect; and as a result people invariably attach personal meaning to sexual relationships. Thirdly, mining the vast literature on sexuality provided a great opportunity to show how some of the HIV policies in South Africa, and by extension sub-Saharan Africa, are constructed. With this in mind, the literature also explains what scientific knowledge was instrumental in the promulgation of these policies, and which actors were imporant. Texts on polyamorous relationships are also discussed here.

3. Towards defining polyamory

The word 'polyamory' is a mixture of Greek and Latin (Anapol, 1997). In Greek, *poly* refers to 'many' and *amory* in Latin means 'love'. The Oxford English Dictionary first included the word in their publication in 1992. It was used when Usenet newsgroup published the *Proposal for alt.poly-amory* by J. L. Wesp (Simpson, 2006). Anapol (1997) contests this by identifying an article entitled *Open Relationships as a Conscious and Loving Lifestyle*, authored by Morning Glory Zell, which appeared in 1990 in *Green Egg Magazine*, as texts that coined the word 'polyamory'*.* The debate regarding the origin of polyamory was a topical issue which appeared on the Wikipedia platform for critical discussion (Keener, 2004). However, Kenner (2004) stated that the word polyamory was said to have been in use as far back as the 1960s. Although this assertion may be difficult to prove, the discourse finds credence in the revolutionary sexual ideas of the 1960s from which polyamory was said to have emerged (Anapol, 1997). Perhaps it was during this period that the word polyamory found peripheral currency (Anapol, 1997). Its contemporary widespread use was crystallised in the Oxford English Dictionary where the nouns 'polyamory' and 'polyamorist', and the adjective 'polyamorous', were acknowledged on September 14, 2006 (Simpson, 2006). The Oxford English Dictionary defines polyamory "as a lifestyle of multiple sexual relationships maintained in an honest and responsible manner and emphasizing intimacy". Indeed, in the definitions the distinction is often drawn between polyamory and other types of concurrent partnering, such as 'polygamy'; (one person with more than one sexual partner), 'polyandry' (one woman with multiple male partners/husbands), and 'polygyny' (one male with multiple female partners/wives) (Sheff, 2005).

3.1 The value of categorising polygamous relationship

Concurrent partnerships are generally regarded as sexual practices with particular challenges (real or perceived) as result of romantic love involving more than one person at the same time (Sheff, 2005). Therefore, it is essential to discern what rules are put in place and why, in order to understand how these relationships are conceptualised (Sheff, 2005). This is important because the functions of the rules in these relationships have serious implications for all of the people involved, particularly the additional partner or partners (Sheff, 2005). For example, a person who knows their status as an 'additional' partner is provided with a framework in which to situate themself in the relationship (Sheff, 2005). This definitely allows the person to determine a wide range of possibilities, such as the level of expectation they can envisage in the relationship relative to the rewards (Sheff, 2005). Indeed, the knowledge that they are 'additional' to someone else's sexual life, allows pursuance of other relationships from which they might derive different rewards (Taormino, 2008). Thus, an understanding of the dynamic of these relationships helps to provide a clear picture of how the structure of concurrency determines not only decision-making, but also boundaries and sexual agreements. These rules and agreements are often differentiated on the basis of the type of concurrency one engages in (e.g. physical, sexual, or emotional/psychological) (Taormino, 2008). This insight has been especially important to clinical practitioners where the category of concurrency has helped counsellors to understand the rules thereof (Anapol, 1997; Easton & Liszt, 1997; Ravenscroft, 2004; Taormino, 2008). Overall, relationship rules and agreements reflect critical issues in concurrency (e.g. who, what, where, when and why issues of relationships) (Taormino, 2008).

3.1.1 Primary or/ secondary model

There are many different forms of polyamorous relationships. The most common form is the one where a couple in a primary relationship courts an additional partner. The additional partner may be a lover of either one partner or both of them (Weitzman, Davidson, & Phillips, 2009). There are two scenarios in this situation. First, a three-way relationship where a person has two partners who are not lovers is often referred to as a Veesignifies. Secondly, the additional partner may be sexually involved with the couple, and this relationship is called a triad (Weitzman et al., 2009). The primary/secondary relational model is referred to as 'hierarchical poly' or 'one primary plus' (Labriola, 1999; Taormino, 2008). In some instances, this structure may be compromised of certain activities that arise during the course of the relationship (e.g. living together in the same house, sharing parental duties and making plan long-term commitment plans).

3.1.2 Poly/mono model

Another form of polyamorous relationship is the polyamorous/monogamous partnering. In this kind of polyamory, one partner in the primary relationship may court multiple partners, while the other has

only the primary partner (Taormino, 2008). This concurrency is common where one partner has a high sexual libido, and where the partner with the lower sex drive chooses not to engage multiple partners. In this situation, the partner with the high sex drive is encouraged to engage multiple partners so that his/her need to explore his/her sexualiy is fulfilled (Benson, 2008).

3.1.3 Swinging

There is a sharp distinction between swinging and polyamory. In the former, sex is widely perceived as a recreational activity, while in the context of polyamory the focus on love and commitment is much pronounced (Rust, 1996). The narrow framework used to describe swinging fails, however, to adequately capture the different forms of this sexual practice. As will be shown elsewhere in this thesis, swinging also contain elements of love, where sex is not the only primary goal, and the pursuit of forming a meaningful relationship is also embraced (Rust, 1996). In addition, the contrast between these two non-monogamous practices is drawn on the basis of polyamory promoting egalitarianism in its philosophical leaning and permitting a wide range of genders and sexual orientations (Rust, 1996). On other hand, swinging is a sexual lifestyle that is perceived as locked into the logic of a patriarchal system, where such gender-based terms as 'wife swapping' are used to identify its practice (Rust, 1996). For instance, in the study that was conducted by Sheff (2006), it was determined that, swingers – particularly men – still hold traditional beliefs about heteronormativity and gender roles.

3.1.4 Multiple primary partners model

This model describes the type of concurrency where three or more people are sexually, romantically and, more important, equally involved in the relationship (Labriola, 1999). In this partnering, all those involved are considered primary partners (Labriola, 1999). In this setting sexual intercourse may only happen within the group. In a situation where sex is allowed to happen outside of the group, however, strict rules are set in place defining the parameters of those activities (Labriola, 1999). This particular concurrency is perceived as difficult to engage because of the complexity of the rules and the amount of effort, as well emotional investment that it demands (Labriola, 1999).

3.1.5 Polyfidelity or group marriage

Labriola (1999) described polyfidelity as a 'group marriage' model, meaning a type of relationship which symbolises plural love between more than one person within the institution of marriage. In this concurrency, the traditional rules related to monogamous relationships, such as faithfulness are followed. This means that sex only takes place within the marriage and any sexual activity outside of the group is strictly prohibited (Labriola, 1999). The dynamics of group marriage were identified in the scholarly work by Satorius (2004) where the practice was noted for its commitment to long-term

relationships. The meaning associated with this relationship structuring is that of the possibility of responding to the desire of satisfying the need for sexual intercourse with more than one person within the context of concurrency that values commitment and faithfulness. The word 'polyfidelity' can be traced back to the Kerista Commune which was located in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco (Barker, 2005). The polyfidelity paradigm within which the Keristan community was constructed, emphasised the importance of a family structure where all members were recognized as equals. This concurrency was reminiscent of Oneida community, in that parenting and labour responsibilities were shared equally among all members. In addition, everyone who was involved made a long-term commitment to be in this partnering (Labriola, 1999).

3.1.6 Summary

The scholarship on polyamory reveals that this concurrency is described using normative terms such as 'couples' or 'partners'. Employing such categorisation as this to define polyamory, however, exposes a poor understanding of the dynamics embedded in poly relationships. Therefore, critical thinking around this area could contribute to a more nuanced exploration of these types of relationships. For example, it may address current approaches which categorise partners into hierarchies of primary and secondary, a narrative which has been greatly problematised within the poly community (Sheff, 2006). Indeed, understanding partners in poly relationships in this manner obscures opportunities of discerning how decision-making are handled, especially how the issue of safer sex practices is discussed (Barker, 2005; Halpern, 1999; McPheeters, 1999; Stelboum, 1999).

3.2 The historical background on non-monogamous global practices

The purpose of this sub-section is to show that non-monogamy is not only a sexual practice observed on a global scale, but is also not a chronic illness that exists in South Africa and the rest sub-Saharan Africa. As indicated elsewhere in this dissertation, the scholarship of concurrency in this region is replete with highly racialised overtones. A pronounced example of this is evident in Caldwell, Caldwell, and Quiggin's (1989, p. 187) historical work in which the context of concurrent partnerships within the 'Black' sub-population in sub-Saharan Africa constitutes "a distinct and internally coherent African system [of] embracing sexuality". One of the ways in which to debunk narratives such as this is to show that non-monogamy is not a sub-Saharan African problem or pathology. In fact, in wider contexts, the meaning associated with non-monogamy including concurrency characterizes a legitimate form of organizing sexual relationships.

3.2.1. The global phenomenon of non-monogamy

In order to understand the meaning attached to the practice of non-monogamy, it is important to investigate its point of origin. Determining the origins of non-monogamy may, perhaps, prove a task too imaginative. What is possible, within limits of course is archiving the history of this practice. An understanding of the history of non-monogamy could change the way health researchers and social scientists approach this topic. This is important in light of certain scientific approaches where concurrency is studied in a way that constructs sexual dissimilarities, especially between the global north and global south (discussed elsewhere in this dissertation). Of all the disciplines that may provide a rich source of scholarship related to this field, none is more suitable than Anthropology. For example, an anthropologist, Cairncross (1974), asserted that non-monogamy, in the form of polygyny, was prevalent in most societies (both existent and extinct). In the study by Pasternack, Ember, and Ember (1997), it was reported that anthropologists had determined that non-monogamy was common in most societies; in fact, 83.5 per cent of all human societies permitted polygyny (one husband with multiple wives), 16 per cent allowed only monogamy, and 5 per cent approved of polyandry (one wife with multiple husbands). Furthermore, the wider prevalence of non-monogamy was quantified in the Human Relations Area Files, which showed that of 1154 societies described, 93 per cent allowed some form of polygamy (Pasternack et al., 1997).

The 1986 *Ethnographic Atlas*, by G. P. Murdock, is a seminal scholarly production which explored the field of non-monogamy in great depth. In this book, Murdock explored the patterns of non-monogamy by observing different societies, with the exception of cultures from industrialised countries. He found that, of the 1157 societies studied, 70 per cent preferred polygyny as the choice of sexual relationships (Clark, 1998). The patterns of monogamous sexual relationships were also observed and its practices were quantified at 15.4 per cent, a marginal existence in comparison to

non-monogamy (Clark, 1998). Davenport (1976) is another scholar who gave non-monogamous sexual lifestyles a thorough empirical treatment. In his tour de force survey of human sexuality, he explored several Polynesian cultures in which concurrency was part of the cosmic order and thus celebrated (Davenport, 1976). For example, in the society of pre-Christian Tahiti, self-masturbation, as well as premarital intercourse, was fully embraced and young people were initiated into these practices by their elders (Davenport, 1976). In addition, marital and extramarital intercourse were topics that were not taboo in that society. There were also not considered an illness, but were a facet of human sexuality which formed part of a societal discourse (Davenport, 1976). These topics were routinely discussed by young and old alike, and a prominent topic for discussion was safer sex practices (Davenport, 1976). This may also explain why the rates of HIV and AIDS were very low in this country (Davenport, 1976). In a different study that was conducted by Burton, Moore, Whiting, and Romney (1996) which included 348 societies, 20 per cent of those were reportedly as monogamous, 20 per cent practised limited polygamy, while 60 per cent allowed widespread polygynous relationships. In addition, MacDonald (1995) investigated non-monogamy in specific countries, such as China, India, and Muslim and New World civilisations, identifying the inclination towards having mistresses and concubines as a common predisposition among men.

3.2.2 Non-monogamy in the African continent

In the broader continent of Africa, particularly in pre-colonial times, polygyny was the primary value system for the establishment of sexual relationships (Hayase & Liaw, 1997). According to Hayase and Liaw (1997), as a way of organising sexual relationships the non-monogamous pattern was especially pervasive in sub-Saharan Africa. In 1850, Livingstone, for example, administered a survey on 278 married Tswana couples. His findings revealed that 43 per cent of the respondents were involved in polygamy (Delius & Glaser, 2004). Similar observations were reported in Delius and Glaser's (2004) thesis where the wider representation of polygyny was estimated at between 30 per cent and 50 per cent in all sub-Saharan countries. Only in Lesotho, however, a much lower rate of polygyny, with a figure of 9 per cent, was noted. The ubiquitous shifts towards monogamy became significantly clear in 1946 when the official census showed that non-monogamous marriages in Southern Africa had decreased dramatically to a reported figure of 11 per cent (Delius & Glaser, 2004). It is important to note that non-monogamy was not only widespread in sub-Saharan Africa, as indicated by Hayase and Liaw, but also prevalent in West Africa. According to Dalton and Leung (2014) the rates of women who were involved in polygynous marriages in the Western African countries of Guinea, Togo and Benin were 44 per cent, 21 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. In this region, polygyny is particularly common among the sub-population of the Animist and Muslim communities (Dalton & Leung, 2014).

Senegal is another Western African country where rates of polygyny are reportedly very high (Dalton & Leung, 2014). In this country, it is estimated that almost 47 per cent of marriages include men with more than one woman (Dalton & Leung, 2014). In Kenya, polygyny is still the preferred sexual patterning within which marriages are organised (Dalton & Leung, 2014). Presently, Akuku Danger, a prominent individual in the Kenyan society, has placed the issue of non-monogamous marriages into sharper focus by wedding over one hundred wives (Dalton & Leung, 2014). In Sudan, polygyny is largely normative and the current president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, exemplifies this societal acceptance with his polygynous marriage to multiple wives (Dalton & Leung, 2014).

Progressive movements, such as feminism, queer theory, human rights and gender equality, render the contemporary practice of polygyny, particularly in Southern Africa, controversial. For example, the Constitution of South Africa protects polygyny under customary law. In some sectors of society, belief in this partnering is strengthened by the fact that Mr Jacob Zuma, as former head of state, partakes in this practice (Stacey & Meadow, 2009). However, political directives, such as the *SADC Protocol on Gender and Development* (Article 4), of which South Africa is a signatory, identifies polygyny as one of the institutions which promote violence against women, and also as a key risk factor in the transmission of HIV (SADC, 2008). Furthermore, this protocol supports measures that seek to promote gender equality in the SADC countries and polygyny is invariably perceived as a practice which hinders these efforts (SADC, 2008). For instance, Article 21 of the document addresses the issue of placing particular emphasis on approaches that discourage harmful traditional norms, and polygyny is increasingly viewed as one of these norms (SADC, 2008). In 2012, members of parliament in Namibia made a determination on the Recognition of Customary Marriages Bill, which was the legislation that aimed to ban civil or customary polygynous marriages (GenderLinks (2013). In 2011, the United Nations Human Rights Council recommended that polygyny be outlawed in Tanzania (GenderLinks, 2013). The government rejected this determination partly for religious reasons (GenderLinks, 2013). This was because Tanzania's Muslim community constituted an estimated 50 per cent of the population and the practice of polygyny was common among this sub-population (GenderLinks, 2013).

3.2.3 Monogamy vs. Non-Monogamy in Religious Texts
The reading of religious texts provides important insights regarding the changing nature of the meaning of sexual relationships. Non-monogamy is prominent in dominant religious texts, including the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon. In the Old Testament of the Bible, scriptures attest to polygyny as a value system among Christians (http://biblehub.com). For example, "a man can marry an infinite amount of women without any limits to how many he can marry" – text from the bible on Exodus 21:10 (*http://biblehub.com*). King David is reported as having six wives and a range of

concubines – text from the bible on 2 Samuel 5:13 as well as 1 Chronicles 3:1-9, 14:3 (*http://biblehub.com*), while King Solomon is said to have had 700 wives and 300 concubines – text from the bible in 1 Kings 11:3 (*http://biblehub.com*). Furthermore, there is also proof in the Old Testament that God permitted the practice of non-monogamy. When God spoke through the prophet Nathan, he said that if David's wives and concubines were insufficient, he would bless him with more wives – text from the bible, 2 Samuel 12:8 (*http://biblehub.com*). In the Quran it is said that Prophet Muhammad had 11 wives (Saleem, 2012). Historically, Hinduism allowed Kings allowed to have concubines and one of the religion's prominent leaders, Krishnadevaraya, was involved in concurrency that included many wives (Hamdan, 2015).

In Christianity, it is not clear what led to the changed meaning of sexuality, but between the Old Testament and New Testament the shift in emphasis towards pair bonding is unmistakable. For example, two of the edicts from the Bible's Ten Commandments are: "[y]ou shall not commit adultery" – text from the bible, Exodus 20:14 (*New Oxford Annotated Bible, Augmented Third Edition*) and "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (*Exodus 20:17, New Oxford Annotated Bible, Augmented Third Edition*). During the 4th century AD, the Roman Catholic Church barred different forms of non-monogamous practices, including polygyny, extra-marital affairs and concubinage (Legros, 2014). Judaism also halted the practice of polygamy, particularly in Europe, during the early Middle Ages (Legros, 2014). Although the broader shift towards monogamy cannot solely be attributed to religion, one could argue that these seismic changes in religious faith had widespread effects in the secular world. For instance, from the 1880s onwards, many societies began the institutionalisation of monogamy by outlawing non-monogamous relationships (Legros, 2014). This was evident in Japan in the early 1880s when legislation was passed forbidding concurrent partnering. In 1935, through legislation, Thailand also put a stop to polygamy (Scheidel, 2008). Similar rules and legislation, particularly against the practice of polygyny, were reported in China in 1953 (Scheidel, 2008). In India, polygyny was banned among the Hindu sub-population in 1955, and the same ruling was reported in Nepal in 1963 (Scheidel, 2008). In sub-Saharan Africa, colonialism significantly halted polygyny through the influence of Christian missionaries who considered the practice primitive, backwards and barbaric (Marks, 2002).

The history of non-monogamy, as outlined above, is of particular significance to this study. What is evident from these historical texts is the gendered nature of non-monogamous relationships. By constrast, the philosophical stance of polyamorous relationships today is that of non-conformity with gender inequality and thus attempts to restore parity between the sexes in such partnering (Sheff, 2015).

3.3 The history of non-monogamy in some North American countries

3.3.1 The Oneida Community: A Bold 19th-Century Group Marriage

The 18th century Christian religious leader, John Humphrey Noyes, founded what became widely considered a cult, the Oneida Community (Robertson, 1970). This type of community, which was described as a kind of utopia (along with many others) was popular in the U.S at the time (Robertson, 1970). The creation of these communities was probably as the result of the U.S Revolution (1775 – 83) and the former was regarded by many Americans as a catalyst for human civilization in that country (Robertson, 1970). Indeed, the American Revolution was actually referred to as 'The Awakening', an historical epoch that symbolized seismic socio-cultural and political shifts (Robertson, 1970). These changes also propelled developments in the field of medicine, and heralded a new breed of free thinkers who waxed lyrical about a better world (Robertson, 1970). Such events may have contributed to Noyes' discourse of Oneida community, which was built on the principle of Perfectionism being accepted by some of the people who lived in a small community of Putney, Vermon (Robertson, 1970).

The Oneida Community was first established in 1848 with a modest of 100 members, a number which grew over the following 30 years to 500 (Robertson, 1970). One of the distinguishing features of the Oneida Community was its unique sexual practices, which reflected plural love (Robertson, 1970). The predisposition towards concurrency was predicated on the principle of consent to those who wished to partake in the practice (Wonderley, 2010). Another key aspect of the Oneida Community was gender equality. During a time when women were relegated to the kitchen and childbearing roles as their primary functions in society, Noyes believed differently (Wonderlery, 2010). In a system where the idea of 'free' love was embraced, women and men were at liberty to have sexual intercourse with whom they chose (Wonderlery, 2010). Although, in some respects, the sexual lifestyle of the Onieda Community could be considered as a cult, such perceptions, however, have to be understood in the context of hegemonic discourses of monogamy, as well as the normative concept of the nuclear family.

Considering the latter, a central focus of this community was on new ways of reconfiguring the idea of a 'family' (Wonderlery, 2010). For example, a system of social parenting was at the heart of Oneida community (Robertson, 1970). This way of parenting was foreign to wealthy countries, but was a prominent African feature. One of the ways the social parenting was apparent in the Oneida Community was the mentorship of adolescent boys by women over the age of 40. This community was also a socialist group, dedicated to living as one family and to sharing all property and responsibilities (Robertson, 1970). The Onieda community should not be romanticised as if conflict

did not exist within and between the group members. Indeed, disagreements in non-monogamous relationships are common, and this community was no exception (Sheff, 2015). In one reported case of conflict, two individuals wanted to confine their romance exclusively between the two of them, but this was contrary to Onieda's mantra of plural love (Bremer, 2015). Another extreme case of conflict resulted in Noyes, along with some of his few followers, abandoning the Oneida community to take up residency elsewhere in the country (Bremer, 2015).

Although these texts may appear unrelated to the topic of the present research, there are important lessons to be learnt from these texts. Much of the scholarship of concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa, within the context of HIV suggests a causal link between these relationships and gender inequality (Shefer, 2003). For example, concurrent-transcational relationships in the region are said to be one of the main contributors of male-masculine identities, and situate women as passive and vulnerable (Shefer, 2003). The consequence of this, as stated in many studies, is the disproportionate number of HIV infections in women (Shefer, 2003). Thus, this history of the Onieda Community, coupled with the philosophies of polyamory, suggest that some forms of concurrent relationships may be sites of empowerment for women. This is significant in sub-Saharan Africa given how concurrent partnering are often observed to promote gender inequality (Shefer, 2003).

As can be seen through the Oneida Community and polyamory practices, ideological systems are learnt and can be re-taught and also re-worked. For instance, matriarchial societies in sub-Saharan Africa are not foreign concepts, but represent historical value systems that accorded women equal power relative to their male counterparts (Ratele & Shefer, 2003). Therefore, HIV programmes in South Africa and the region can learn an important lesson from the Oneida Community - that the structure of the relationship is not necessarily a problem. Accordingly, the primary analysis should be on the community of narratives that appropriate particular contexts to sexuality and also the societal norms which define gender-roles.

3.3.2 The establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints

Joseph Smith formed The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) commonly known as Mormons on April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York (Brookover, 1952). He established the LDS on the basis of holy revelations that he claimed to have received directly from God (Brookover, 1952). These revelations were so powerful that they were included in the Doctrine and Covenants, both part of the LDS canon (Brookover, 1952). One of the central tenets of LDS is an emphasis on non-monogamous practices, which Smith is said to have based on the Bible scriptures of the Old Testament (Brookover, 1952). Smith became involved in polygyny when he married his first plural wife Fanny Alger in 1835 (Brookover, 1952). It is important to note, however, that polygyny was not openly practiced by the

Mormons until 1852 (Embry, 1994). The disclosure of non-monogamous practices in this church was propelled by the prominent efforts by Orson Pratt, an apostle, who highlighted polygyny as one of the tenets of the church. Between 1852 and 1890, the broader leadership in the Church gave testament to non-monogamy, particularly polygyny, and encouraged members to partake in the civil union of plural marriages (Embry, 1994). This verbal promotion of polygyny was not necessarily well received by the majority of the Latter-day Saints congregation (Embry, 1994). In order to highlight the preceding point, consider the numbers recorded by those who chronicled the practice: in 1870, only 30 per cent of the congregation of the St. Georges branch were involved in polygyny (Embry, 1994). By 1880, this figure had increased by 40 per cent, but in the same year the South Weber branch reported only 5 per cent of its congregation was engaged in polygyny (Embry, 1994).

The Mormon Church was not, however, at liberty to practice non-monogamy. On the contrary, the US government and community members sought to put an end to their lifestyle (Embry, 1994). The efforts of the community at large could partly be explained by the way non-monogamy was generally perceived in the global north, and also because of the New Testament's dominant position in the lives of many American citizens (Embry, 1994). Therefore, the meaning of establishing sexual relationships in the U.S was particularly focused on pair bonding. Indeed, polygyny was criticised and chastised. In 1854 the U.S Republican Party labelled the practice the "twin relics of barbarism" (Embry, 1994). This was only the tip of the iceberg, for by 1862 the LDS community was experiencing significant challenges (Embry, 1994). During this period, the United States Congress sought to outlaw non-monogamous practices from American society by passing the Morrill Act (Embry, 1994). This legislation criminalised non-monogamous relationships including imposing major restrictions on the Mormons regarding regarding the ownership of property (Embry, 1994).

Although it is not fully understood what impact, psychological or otherwise, these attacks had on the LDS community, it would not be far-fetched to assume that the effects were deleterious. Social cognitive theory shows that people are not passive receptors to the environment, but that a bi-directional process underscores their behavioural response (Bandura, 2001). This thinking cannot be understated, especially when one considers that the interaction between the individual and environment is fraught with personal meaning (Clark, 2004). Therefore, it is on the basis of this meaning that people are able to draw on certain resources in order to contest the societal stigmatisation under discussion. To this end, in order to contest the Morrill Act, the Mormon community invoked the freedom of religion clause in the U.S Bill of Rights, which protects non-monogamous practices (Embry, 1994). Further attacks were, however, launched by the U.S government and, in 1882, Congress passed the Edmunds Act, which was essentially a series of amendments to the Morrill Act (Embry, 1994). This modified version of the legislation reiterated that polygamy was a crime which incurred penalties of up to five years in prison and a fine of $500

(Embry, 1994). Convicted polygamists, by virtue of being criminals were denied certain privileges, such as being eligible for political office and jury duty (Embry, 1994). Despite these punishments and the demonising legislation, the Mormon community still holds a belief in polygyny (Embry, 1994).

It is also important to highlight other reasons that make the community like the Mormons complicated. For example, Foster (2010) says that much of the group like these tend to be associated with the charismatic leaders' sexual lifestyle. These charismatic leaders usually have more power and opportunity to exert their authority to their followers as something that is divinely ordained (Foster, 2010). Conflict within the group often arises because of the charismatic leader expecting from his/her followers a godly-like status and shunning down any whiff of dissent (Foster, 2010). Similarly, Prophet Joseph Smith Jr., expected from his key male followers to marry more than one wife as a test of their total loyalty to him (Foster, 2010). Joseph Smith Jr himself had at least thirty polygynous wives (Foster, 2010). Foster (2010) states that this was by far the single important factor that landed Joseph Smith Jr in jail and later his killing by a lynch mob in 1844.

Other incidents that demonstrate Mormons as a worst form concurrent partnering are cases like that of Warren Jeffs who was at some point the head of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Austin, 2010). He was convicted of child abuse in the marriages that he sanctioned (Austin, 2010). However, teen brides and incest are some of the issues that are routinely observed among the Mormon community (Austin, 2010). Besides such cases, in the U.S there is a phenomenon that is called the "lost boys" referring to the young men who either ran or were chased away from their Mormon homes (Davis, 2010). Many of these young men are often illiterate and have no form of employable skills (Davis, 2010).

Nevertherless, history of the Mormon community and other groups such as this one demonstrate that this dissertation is not a stand-alone scholarship. However, the present research is indeed part of the "continuous [research on the] battles over the definitions, evaluations, arrangements, privileges, and costs of sexual behaviour" (Rubin, 1984, p. 169). This body of work shows that sexuality is largely grounded in social relations where these are given meaning and interpreted endlessly by people as social agents. Similar to concurrency, as studied in the present research, the Mormon's sexual history illustrates that meaning and the interactional context (between people and environment) are ethical issues, which are important to the fabric of society. To this end, the stated history is a spectacular display of the contestations that arise when there is a discrepancy between personal sexual meaning and that, which is dominant in society.

Furthermore, of interest in these readings is how societal power shifts across space and time. While religion, at one point, had dominion over sexuality, political sovreignity is now the determining force in the lives of citizens in democratic societies. Of course, it is important to recognise that, in modern

democracies, the currency of morality and civilisation assumed greater significance, not only in the U.S, but also in other developed and developing societies alike. Therefore, a history of oppositions and contestation regarding sexuality, although in a different context, has seemingly worked its way through policies such as partner reduction. For this reason, the promulgation of these iniatitaives cannot be read ahistorically, but should be located, as illustrated here, within larger transnational sexual debates. Indeed, these insightful readings of history are seminal in showing that:

> in a democracy, a democratic morality should judge sexual acts by the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion, and quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide. Whether sex acts are gay or straight, coupled or in groups, naked or in underwear, commercial or free, with or without video, should not be ethical concerns. (Rubin, 1984, p.161)

Thus, whether it is in the past or present, the critical lesson here is that, generally, it is difficult to coerce monolithic conceptions of sexuality (Rubin, 1984). Not only is the meaning of sexuality personal, but it is inherently pluralistic in nature. Therefore, in the development of public health policies it is incumbent upon the policy makers to understand that sexual variation courses through the veins of a population that is inherently heterogenous.

3.3.3 Ritual Group Sex

The term 'non-monogamy' is broad and includes different forms of sexual partnering. Hence, among the social science disciplines, history provides a rich corpus of varied non-monogamous practices over different periods of time. For example, the historian, Burgo Partridge, studied the practice of non-monogamy by investigating the history of sexual orgies (Partridge, 1960). In his scholarly work, Partidge describes the sexual phenomenon of orgies as "the organized blowing off steam" (1960, p. 49). It is a group practice of sexual intercourse as a form of recreational activity (Partridge, 1960). These sexual activities were observed in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, the Puritan Age and the Victorian period, as well as Euro-American activity during the 20th century (Partridge, 1960).

3.3.4 Textual Archiving on Swinging in the U. S

The sexual revolution of the 1960s in the U.S and Europe exposed many sexual activities that people were inclined towards, but were afraid to live out. In particular, swinging became a prominent sexual lifestyle during this period. Married couples, who had strictly adhered to heteronormative sexual behaviours, started to participate in this sexual lifestyle (Escoffier, 2004). Swinging was an activity where sex was understood as recreational, and this informed many of the swinging parties that became popular in the U.S. In contrast to polygamy, there was a certain level of tolerance for this

form of non-monogamy in the U.S, although it was not entirely accepted (Escoffier, 2004). This was reflected in the explosion of books written about this sexual lifestyle by journalists, social scientists and swingers themselves.

Some of the publications on this topic were thoroughly researched and an impressive amount of effort went into their production. For example, the book entitled *Options: A Personal Expedition Through a Sexual Frontier*, which was written by Marcia Seligson in 1977, described an in-depth four-year journey into alternative sexual lifestyles outside the scope of the normative nuclear family. In 1972 the author conducted interviews in Sandstone with people who were considered to be promoting this kind of partnering and collated the data. Data was also collected from conversations with people who were involved in open marriages and other forms of sexual partnering, such as triads and quads (Seligson, 1977). Several years later, another longitudinal study was conducted by Talese in the form of a tour de force, an eight-year research project (1980). He published his research findings in a book called *Thy Neighbors Wife*. In this publication, Talese explored varied sexual activities, particularly non-monogamy as practiced by some members of American society regardless of race, class and gender.

Another in-depth and seminal work is that of Herbert Margolis and Paul Rubenstein entitled *The Groupsex Tapes* (1971). In this book, a total number of 628 respondents, who were all swingers, were involved in the research. Some of the respondents were prominent members of the community, including medical doctors, psychologists, sociologists, and fashion designers (Margolis & Rubenstein, 1971). Most of the respondents were middle-class whites (Margolis & Rubenstein, 1971). This was one of the few scholarly works that studied non-monogamy not only as a sexual human experience, but also from a personal meaning point of view. This was illustrated in the interview guide that was formulated to explore the topic of non-monogamy. Some of the questions asked included, but not limited to, "early family issues, sexual learning and relationship histories, initiations into swinging, reports on the social and sexual dynamics experienced at swing parties, and the impact of swinging on personality and wellbeing" (Margolis & Rubenstein, 1971, p. 23).

Indeed, the study impressively demonstrates an active and determined approach towards greater understanding and careful planning, as well as a methodical thoroughness in approaching the subject of swinging. William and Jerrye Breedlove's provided their results of a thorough academic investigation of the practice of swinging in their 1964 book called *Swap Clubs: A Study in Contemporary Sexual Mores*. These authors used the different approach of tracking communities of swingers clubs across the U.S, studying the dynamics between and within these clubs (William & Breedlove, 1964). For example, in the course of their research, the authors found a swingers' club which required the sterilisation of all members to prevent unplanned pregnancies (William &

Breedlove, 1964). Some of these U.S clubs were run by famous people, including Hollywood stars (William & Breedlove, 1964). The authors also discovered swinging clubs in Washington D.C. where couples would meet and view pornographic films in each other's homes (William & Breedlove, 1964). From their research, William and Jerrye Breedlove claimed that there were between 8 and 16 million swingers in the U.S, but these figures were disputed by Bartell (1971), as well as Constantine and Constantine (1973), who put the estimated number of swingers (at the time) between 1 to 2 million.

There is no doubt that the 1970s was an era where swinging was a topic of interest among social scientists. Texts on swinging produced during this period include: *Marriage and Alternatives: Exploring Intimate Relationships* by Libby & Whitehurst, 1977, *Beyond Monogamy: Recent Studies of Sexual Alternatives in Marriage* bySmith and Smith, 1974, *Traditional Marriage and Emerging Alternatives* by Butler, 1979, and *Open Marriage* by Nena and George O'Neill, 1971. Swinging as a sexual topic provided the impetus for scholars in the field of humanities to study this form of concurrency more deeply (Denfield, 1974). This was done by establishing academic journals and creating such institutes as the Self-Actualization Laboratory in Berkeley, the Center for Family Change in Boston, the Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment and the Topanga Center for Human Development in Southern California (Denfield, 1974). It is important to recognise the significance this mass representation of swinging played in the appraisal of this sexuality. Although it is difficult to fully understand why polyamory did not receive the same response, swinging inspired a decade of sexual freedom mostly in the U.S (Noel, 2004).

Academic research on swinging contributed to a broader scholarship which recognised the complexity rooted in this particular sexuality. Therefore, some researchers identified the need to underscore the variations embedded in swinging. Varni (1974), one such scholar, sought to categorise differences in practices related to swinging. In doing so, he highlighted the crucial aspect of swinging, that is, it means different things to different people. For example, he formulated categories of practices, which he arranged as a spectrum, from 'Beginner Swinging' to 'Escalated Swinging', 'Intimate Friendship', 'Evolutionary Commune' and, finally, 'Group Marriage' (Varni, 1974, pp. 257-258). If we examine 'Intimate Friendship', we begin to understand that beyond the realm of mere sexual activity, some people associate a deeper meaning with swinging. This distinction is drawn between such categories and that of 'Hard-core Swingers', where couples want no emotional attachment with other partners, and have sexual intercourse with as many partners as possible (Varni, 1974). Other categories include 'Egotistical Swingers' (people who prefer little emotional attachment), and 'Recreational Swingers' (couples who love the social aspects of swinging and form close relationships with other swingers beyond the sexual activity) (Varni, 1974). In additional Varni (1974) included 'Interpersonal Swingers' (couples who seek close emotional connection with their

partners) and, finally, 'Communal Swingers' (those who practice this sexual lifestyle with the aim of establishing a long term group marriage).

3.3.4 The onset of HIV and shift of Swinging in the U.S

In the U.S, the 1980s HIV epidemic changed the way sexuality was practiced, not only within the context of non-monogamy, but also from a perspective of monogamous relationships. The impact of this disease, however, placed a particular focus on swinging. In 1986 the Minnesota physician, Keith Henry, performed AIDS tests in a number of swingers clubs in Twin Cities, finding two members who had contracted the disease (Chapple & Talbot, 1989). This information drastically changed the sexual activities of this practice. For example, events that had become synonymous with the practice of swinging, such as the national conventions and party cruises faded into obscurity (Chapple & Talbot, 1989). The worst-case scenarios included the closure of swingers clubs, for instance the one located in the state of Minnesota (Chapple & Talbot, 1989). Concern over safer sex practices and transmission of HIV, coupled with the closure of some clubs, had a marked effect on swining in the U.S. By 1987, attendance at swingers' clubs in the U.S was reported as having dropped by over 50 per cent (Chapple & Talbot, 1989).

In the foregoing narrative, note that swinging was neither stigmatised with the label "twin relics of barbarism", nor was it demonised as in the sub-Saharan African literature on concurrency. While the onset of HIV may have changed the meaning of swinging, the major focus centred on safer sex practices. So much that it has become customary, in the contemporary practice of swinging for club owners to make condoms available in their establishments (D'Orlando, 2015). Furthermore, a major event in the swinging community, The Lifestyles Convention in the U.S included safe sex practices as an important topic on the agenda. In addition, the organisers made sure there were condoms at the venue. Indeed, the impact of the HIV epidemic did not dissipate the sexual lifestyle of swinging, but civilised its practice (Escoffier, 2004). For example, the uptake of technological advances, including the Internet, has enabled the practice of swinging in ways that could not have been imagined in the 1980s. Today, those who are involved in swinging use swingers' websites, chat rooms, e-lists and cyber magazines to meet other couples (Escoffier, 2004).

The resources of this virtual world make it easy to transcend geographical boundaries and this creates opportunities for swingers to form transnational communities. Some scholars have observed that the civilisation of swinging is reflected in the way that its contemporary practice has been corporatised (Chapple & Talbot, 1989). The corporate practice related to swinging refers to the pattern of creation of closed membership groups where swinging couples have to pay a certain fee

in order to belong to that particular group (Chapple & Talbot, 1989). In addition, the social events that were popular in the 1980s have become more glamorous. For example, the Lifestyles Organization sponsors three conventions each year. The price of attendance is a hefty $1000 per swinging couple for a weekend (Chapple & Talbot, 1989). In addition, swinging couples are spoilt for choice in that they can attend swinging vacations hosted by various swinging organisations. These are held at resorts, on houseboats and other venues (Chapple & Talbot, 1989).

Similar to polyamory, the community of swingers purportedly establish a pool of family-like networks where, as indicated above, the well-being of members, especially safer sex is of great concern (Serina, Hall, Ciambrone, & Phua, 2012). What is also clear is that in both sexual lifesystyles, powerful factors, such as the social class and educational backgrounds of the people involved, enable the formatioon of networks. Poverty, inequality and lack of educational opportunities, on the other hand, may be barriers to the emergence of support networks among the population of individuals who are involved in concurreny in sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, there are important lessons to be learnt from the way the swingers' community adapted to the threat of and HIV epidemic. Such insights have marked significance to concurrent partnering as practiced in the region. Of course, this is working on the assumption that the HIV partner reduction policy may be re-conceptualised in order to accommodate a more pluralistic literacy of sexual diversity. In this sense, the policy makers in sub-Saharan Africa can advocate for the promotion of such networks in concurrent partnerships. Using such an approach might be useful in ensuring that information on safer sex practices, as well as discourse on egalitarianism in these relationships is available through different media outlets (e.g. the Internet).

3.4 The critique of Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model

The formulation of HIV partner reduction policy in many of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa was singularly informed by the mathematical modelling of concurrency adopted by Morris and Kretzschmar (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010; Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010). For example, the desktop research which indicated that multiple partnerships are some of the highest in Botswana was conducted by Population Society International (PSI). This information had a major influence in the implementation of O' Icheke initiative in that country. The executive director of PSI is none other than Professor Martha Morris, one of the individuals who came up with the concurrency mathematical model which is critiqued in this section of the dissertation. Swaziland's research on multiple partnerships and concurrency in that country was also provided by the same PSI. This particular section may not have direct relevance to the study of polyamory. However, since the exploratory context of polyamory in this study is around the field of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa the critique of Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model speaks to the broader literature of this epidemic in the region. Indeed, it is simply not enough to only critique the HIV partner reduction policy in the region. One should, as a matter of principle show how such policies came to be constructed. To this end, Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model in the HIV partner reduction policies was seminal. In fact, it is our responsibility as social scientists to understand the over-reliance of this mathematical model on the stated HIV partner reduction policies. For this reason, this section provides critical discussion around the aforementioned mathematical modelling, as well as its widespread impact on African sexuality research in general.

3.5 Background

During the late 1980s, the large body of scientific scholarship focused its attention on poverty, hetero-normative masculinities, gender inequality and inconsistent use of condoms as some of the risk factors that drove the epidemic of HIV (Shefer, 2003). By the mid-1990s, however, there was an increased shift towards non-monogamy, specifically concurrent partnerships, as an important risk factor in the prevalence of HIV, especially in Southern Africa (Mah & Maughan-Brown, 2013). This thinking initially emerged in the health sciences, where the epidemiological model formulated by Watts and May in 1992 and later revised by Hudson in 1993 was considered a seminal work in the area of HIV. This model was regarded as a breakthrough, providing what many considered a clear link between concurrency and the rapid spread of HIV in the region. It was, however, the modified version of Morris and Kretzschmar (1997) that obtained widespread currency not only in health sexual research, but also in the discipline of social sciences. Indeed, it is argued that the production of scholarship on concurrency hinges on the strength of Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010; Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010). Sawers and Stillwaggon (2010) stated that evidence of the influence of concurrency hypothesis lay in the number of times these

articles were cited in the literature – more than 800 times according to Google Scholar. The impact of this mathematical model was so significant that it informed the prevention policy frameworks which called for the reduction of all forms of concurrent sexual partnerships as a potential behavioural strategy regarding HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the study on concurrency related to safer sex practices cannot be complete without a thorough exploration of this mathematical model as well as the concurrency hypothesis.

3.5.1 The basis of Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical modelling

Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model is based on microsimulation, from which these authors determined that, as opposed to a sexual network where most relationships are locked into serial monogamy, in a context where sexual relationships are characterized by high degree of concurrency—the spread of HIV is more likely to be rapid (Morris & Kretzschmar, 1997). The fundamental variables that characterise this model are as follows:

(a) the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships;

(b) the concurrency rates of men compared with women;

(c) the per-act transmission rate of HIV; and

(d) the level of concurrency.

Accordingly, the preceding thesis and broader concurrency hypothesis suggest that concurrency leads to more rapid spread of HIV than other forms of heterosexual partnering. In addition, this literature states that concurrency is more prevalent in Eastern and Southern Africa than in the rest of the world.

3.5.2 The importance of the critical appraisal of Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model and concurrency hypothesis

Gautheir (2001) states that public policy impacts on the conditions that influence the overall health of the citizens of a country. For example, public health policies play a major role in shaping how people express their sexualities (Gautheir, 2001). In the case of HIV partner reduction policy, this could mean limited access and availability of health care to those individuals who practice concurrency (Gautheir, 2001). Consider how this policy imperative provides incentives for monogamy to the detriment of concurrency where the latter is stigmatised (Gautheir, 2001). The critical appraisal of Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical modelling and concurrency hypothesis, as the scholarly production that singularly informed the stated policy orientation is thus warranted. It is important to remember that the construction of this policy formulation and scientific thinking exist even though there is empirical research opposing it (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). The latter suggest the lack of substantial evidence, inconsistent definition, and difficulty in measuring concurrent partnerships (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). Therefore, if empirical evidence showing that not all forms

of concurrency pose the same risk to HIV was to be considered, this may result in the modification of partner reduction policy. Gautheir (2001) noted that, generally, changes in laws could improve how sexual relationships are conceptualised by reducing or eliminating unhealthy conditions such as stigma and demonisation of concurrent partnering. Incorporating new knowledge in policies and legislations can help to focus efforts on cognitive, behavioural and environmental factors that impede safer sex practices rather than attacking the structure of the relationship partnering (Gautheir, 2001).

Furthermore, from an academic point of view the critique of Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model and concurrency hypothesis prompts questions related to the use of concepts as well as the validity and reliability of methodologies. For example, how did these authors derive the stated mathematical modelling and what research tools were used to collect data? More importantly, how does the increasingly significant issue of researcher positioning come to play a critical role in the way methodologies are formulated in research scholarship? In view of these questions, the critique falls into three broad sections and these are outlined below.

(a) *Methodologies*: These are scientific tools that are invariably used in academic research not only as measures of reliability, but also as markers from which research results and findings are validated; therefore, exploring Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model is appropriate in understanding the epistemology of concurrency and how this has been ontologically approached so that certain research outcomes are generated.

(b) *Monogamy vs. Non-monogamy*: It has been indicated previously in this dissertation that the narrative associated with non-monogamy, particularly concurrency, in the area of HIV and AIDS fixes this sexual practice in the domain of disease and malaise (Spronk, 2012). Therefore, to what extent does Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model act as cognitive symbols, which shape the meaning of concurrency as a societal pathology?

(c) *The frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships:* this assumption is one of the central tenets of Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model. In discussing this particular aspect of the model, I draw on the work of Flint and Hewitt (2015), exploring their critique of sexuality research in Africa. In addition, through this influential scholarship, I show how colonial and outsider perceptions still inform the view of the African continent as diseased and dysfunctional. In this regard, the seminal thinking of Chirimuuta and Chirimuuta (1987), especially their publication *AIDS, Africa and Racism* is a crucial source of information that helps to put the construction of sexuality in Africa into perspective.

3.5.3 The complexity of the definition of concurrency and its implication on the data

The definition of any scientific construct is regarded as one of the most important aspect from which the pathways of research projects are determined. In the literature, definitions of concurrency or even some consensus of its meaning is reportedly ambiguous (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010). This makes the data-sets from research projects difficult to apply in different contexts, because a wide variety of definitions of concurrency produces different outcomes (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010; Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010). Clear evidence of this is given by research on concurrency that investigates overlapping partnerships in multiple ways (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010; Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010). In some respects, this is crystallised in the use of broad definitions of concurrency, which contain the element of one-time sexual encounters as a central focus from which concurrency is given context (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010; Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010). In other research settings, concurrency is understood on the basis of a narrow definition which uses only long-term partnerships as a yardstick (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2010).

Lurie and Rosenthal (2013) addressed this problem by examining the work on concurrency which involved key figures such as Mah and Halperin. The former critiqued an article written by the latter in the publication entitled *Concurrent Sexual Partnerships and the HIV Epidemics in Africa: Evidence to Move Forward*. In this body of work, concurrency was defined as "the overlap of one or more sexual partnerships for a period of one month or longer" (Mah & Halperin, 2010, p. 12). In another study by Halperin and Epstein (2004, p. 27), the concept of concurrency is understood as "partnerships [in Africa] that can overlap for months or years". In other contexts, Epstein (2007) suggests that 'long-term' or 'longer term' should be used to refer to concurrent partnerships. The UNAIDS recommends using the consensus definition of concurrency or "multiple sustained overlapping partnerships, rather than "single long-term partnership[s] with occasional once-off sexual encounters" (as cited in Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010, p. 8). On the other hand, the pioneers of the concurrency thesis, Morris and Kretzschmar (1997), describe concurrency as partnerships that, on average, last for months or years. To show the implications of using different definitions of concurrency, Le Pont, Pech, Boelle, Giraud, Gilloire, Halfen et al (2003) conducted their research on concurrency in three Caribbean countries. Their findings proved that the levels of concurrent partnerships depend entirely on the definitions used to measure concurrency. Manhart et al. reached similar results in their 2002 research in the U.S, which included urban adults between the ages of 18 and 39 (as cited in Vinod & Assche, 2009).

Based on what I have described above, there seems to be a fixation on the timing of concurrency, and the question is why this is so important. Lurie and Rosenthal (2010) explained this in simple

terms when they stated that the timing of concurrency was important purely because of the elevated transmission risk during the window period. For example, a posited narrative by Mah and Halperin (2008, P. 21) described, "[t]he one-month time as the period from which acute HIV infection is most likely to happen, which is an important element for transmission during concurrent partnerships." What this means is that the transmission of HIV is fuelled by the fact that viral load, and therefore, infection, is significantly acute during the window period – which is the initial weeks or months after infection. Epstein (2007, p. 33) explains that concurrent partnering exacerbates the spread of HIV transmission "because it guarantees another partner will be available during the short peak infection window". In other words, those people who are involved in concurrency and have contracted the virus must, in those first few weeks of being infected with HIV, engage in sexual intercourse so often that all others partners in this partnering become infected too (Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010). Essentially, this means that occasional, one-time sexual encounters will not lead to a sufficient number of sex acts during the acute infection period to produce the rapid spread of HIV (Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010).

3.5.4 The instrument that is used to study concurrent relationships

The instruments that are used in scientific research are key components to the production of scientific knowledge. In the same way as the definition of a scientific construct is important, so too is the formulation of research instruments. Both quantitative and qualitative instruments are powerful tools in research studies because of their unique ability to directly determine the results and findings of the scholarly studies. Therefore, I am particularly interested in how instruments, which are used in the concurrency HIV hypothesis, are formulated. What sorts of responses did the researchers who were investigating this phenomenon hope to find? What informed the formulation of these instruments? How did contextual factors related to politics, culture and economics influence the ordering of these instruments? For example, was the traditional approach of piloting the instruments used in the course of developing certain research questions? Given the highly popular topic of HIV and AIDS, societal constructs such as gender play a key role pertaining to the way in which certain questions are formulated. All of these questions provide clues on the thinking that went into the formulated of the research questions. To this end, I will try to answer some of these questions by drawing on the commonly used instruments in most of the concurrency articles. With this method, participants are often asked to recall the number of times over a given period (e.g., in the past three months) they had sexual intercourse with different sexual partners. This particular approach of constructing the interview guide forms the basis from which concurrency is determined (Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010).

As a specific method of collecting data, memory has, however, been consistently shown to be an unreliable source of information (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). In addition, the question "recall the start and end dates of all sexual partnerships" raises important issues that relate to the validity and reliability of the data collected in this manner (Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010). This approach has serious limitations because it fails to address confounding factors that carry the risk of impacting negatively on the data (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2009). For example, if a participant reported more than one sexual partner in the past 3 months, the relationship is considered a concurrent partnership (Colvin, Abdool, Connolly, Hoosen, & Ntuli 1998; Kalichman, Ntseana, Nthomang, Segwabe, Phorano et al., 2007). There is, however, no way of really knowing the context of that sexual contact. Using the scenario described above, it may be possible that such a respondent might have had short spells of serial dates, one after the other (a phenomenon which is now common in South Africa), or they may have had ongoing sexual relationships with both partners throughout that period (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2009).

Addressing the questions that I asked earlier, the recall or memory as a form of collecting data appears to be formulated without taking into account real life issues that shapes not only people's lives but also influences expression of sexual lifestyle. For example, when asking men about the history of their sexual activity, the researcher has to bear in mind certain variables that may impact the data-set. The concurrency topic is largely located in Africa, a continent where strong beliefs in patriarchy are prevalent. Patriarchal practices are power relations from which sexual behaviour is determined on the basis of gender. Thus, when it comes to men as the unit of analysis, "recall the start and end dates of all sexual partnerships" proves to be a problematic method of collating the data (Lurie & Rosenthal, 2009). As the research on sexual relationships has shown, one reason for this is that men – young and old – often inflate the frequency of their sexual contact with different partners. The validity and reliability of the data is also complicated by the fact that, in some instances, some of these men omit to report on some sexual contact, either because of loss of memory or for other unknown reasons.

The approach of recall or memory was empirically tested by Nelson et al. (2007) by conducting a comparative analysis using two different measures of concurrency among young adults between the ages of 18 and 26. These respondents were recruited from clinics that treated sexually transmitted diseases in the U.S. The first method involved asking respondents direct questions about any other sexual contact they had during their most recent sexual relationship. The other method investigated overlapping start and end dates of the respondents' two most recent relationships. The results of the study showed that these two approaches measured two different concurrencies.

3.5.5 The frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships

The epidemiological model of Morris and Kretzschmar (1997) and the associated concurrency hypothesis placed a strong emphasis on the frequency of sexual contact behavioural pattern, which, reportedly, characterised concurrent partnering. This departure point suggests that the existence of concurrent relationships is, in and of itself, not enough to imply high rates of HIV. The provenance of high transmission of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa is attributed to the 'every day' sexual intercourse of those people, 'Blacks' in particular, who are involved in concurrent partnerships. The frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships supposition as inscribed in the mathematical model of Morris and Kretzschmar and amplified in the wider texts of concurrency hypothesis is a striking consideration, and thus prompts further enquiry. The reading of such epidemiological approaches implores us to give merit to Spronk (2012) for whom the formulation of research questions in scientific research, and how those questions are laden with presuppositions is an important agenda. In this inquiry, consider how the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships assumption played a significant role in generating knowledge about high rates of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. In simple terms, 'the daily sex' consideration addresses the importance of sexual activity that needs to occur within a short window of about three weeks (the high infectivity period following infection) (Sawers & Stillwaggon, 2010). In their study, Sawers and Stillwaggon, (2010) observed that if the sexual activity was modelled on weekly (in Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model), instead of daily sex, this would produce entirely different outcomes. Sawers and Stillwaggon (2010) argue that in the former scenario it would take 35 years to produce the high rates of HIV as stipulated in the latter scenario.

In addition, note how in the broader scheme of things the assumption of the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships inserts a particular image associated with these relationships in sub-Saharan Africa. Firstly, this assertion characterises people who engage in concurrency as a homogeneous population, despite this region characterising an array of diverse socio-cultural, political and religious contexts (Spronk, 2012). I call this a 'native homogenisation', where as Spronk (2012) has stated, statistical approaches produce generalisations and construct categories that may not reflect lived realities. Indeed, in the field of health sciences, epidemiological data-sets are often recognised as the end result where the consideration of socio-cultural contexts within which sex and sexuality occurs is obscured (Spronk, 2012).

As an example, consider a scenario of two people, both of whom are involved in concurrent partnering. In this scenario, confounding variables such as educational background, marital status and social class are acknowledged. One person is a politician who lives in Angola and has a job that requires him to travel extensively as a result of his portfolio in international affairs. The other person

is a young woman who lives in an informal settlement in South Africa and shares a shack with ten family relatives. The described mathematical simulation computes the frequency of sexual contact that is the same in both scenarios. As illustrated elsewhere in this dissertation as humans our being is encompassed by multitudes of human activities. This means that even as sexual subjects who are drawn to engage in different types of sexual partnering, the other facets of our lives are simultaneously at work. To this end, how is the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships assumption probable when taking into account that sex is not the only thing that occupies a human mind? Other social activities, such as parenting or having a job are also important.

Spronk (2012) states that the 'quantification of sex into behavioural frequencies and attitudinal scores' is hardly contemporary. On the contrary, it is reflected in scientific material that constituted a large body of research on sexuality in African societies since the 1980s. Overall, in this paradigm, the horizon of sexuality research on the continent is still very much approached a-historically and to a significant degree laden with ethnocentric analysis (Spronk, 2012). For instance, the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships assumption is reminiscent of the research that was conducted by authors such as Caldwell, Caldwell, & Quiggin in the 1980s. These authors viewed sexual relationships involving multiple partners as embodying a value system that was historic in nature and which was a "distinct and internally coherent African system of sexuality" (1989, p. 187). Indeed, this outlook is also reproduced in Leclerc-Madlala's, who, while discussing the relationship between concurrency and HIV asserts, "[t]here is a great reluctance by Africans to come to terms with the real sexual cultures of their societies" (2009 p. 4). Such post-colonial discourses also resonate more profoundly with the 'African personality' narrative, which dominated European thinking in the 1980s (Swartz, 1986). In this hypothesis, the 'African personality' was postulated as distinct and the 'civilised' vs. 'primitive' continuum of natural/unnatural, rational/irrational and inherent/acquired set the tone for the catgorisation of 'native' behaviour. Therefore, think of how the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships assumption restores in such discourses images of 'Blacks' as creatures who are predisposed to hyper sexual acts (Spronk, 2012).

There is a need to place into wider context how the "white racist imaginary" of the global north in HIV scientific research comes to represent thought, which ultimately reinforces and underpins meaning of African sexuality (Spronk, 2012). Indeed, the discipline of psychology and social cognitive theory in particular has illustrated how powerful language can be in representing certain realities in social relations. For instance, the assumption of people in concurrent relationships having sexual intercourse every day legitimises notions of hyper sexuality in Africa. Such perceptions are often mobilised to stigmatise sexuality in this part of the world (Moon, 2008). In her book, *Ambiguous pleasures: sexuality and middle class self-perceptions in Nairobi*, Spronk (2012) narrated the story of an epidemiologist who accepted an invitation to discuss the topic, 'AIDS in Africa', at the Free

University in Amsterdam in 2003. This scientist stated, "African men like to sow their seeds" and thus have multi-partnered sex as "part of their culture" (Spronk, 2012). In a similar vein, Kevin Myers, in an article which appeared in the www.*independent.ie/* in 2008, argues "while western countries are investing heavily in aid programmes, Africans are doing little apart from reproducing exponentially" (cited in Mulwo, Tomaselli, & Francis, 2012, p. 568). He also goes to say, "Africa offers the rest of the world nothing other than AIDS" (cited in Mulwo, Tomaselli, & Francis, 2012, p. 568). In addition, he asserts, "in the almost complete absence of personal self-discipline, that disease is one of the most efficacious forms of population-control now operating" (Mulwo et al., 2012, p. 568).

These harmful and racists statements are not born out of thin air but perpetuated, in part, by the 'alleged' scientific 'truths' as formulated by the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships assumption. Scholars such as Robins (2002), argued that it was these 'othering' and demonising narratives of African sexuality that underpinned much of the AIDS denial discourse of former President Thabo Mbeki. Indeed, in his response to the AIDS discourse, Mr Mbeki is understood to have signified resistance to colonial discourses and scientific production of knowledge, such as the the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships mathematical model (Robins, 2002). It is reported that he considered such thinking as racial overtures which posit excessive African sexuality and the racialised origin of disease, wherein Africans are positioned as "natural-born promiscuous germ carriers" with an "unconquerable devotion to the sin of lust" (Mbeki as cited in Becker, 2003, p. 3).

As has been shown in other parts of this research the partner reduction policy framework was predicated upon the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships assumption, which rendered those involved in concurrency as a high-risk group. The pathologising view of concurrent partnering is indicative of Sontag's thesis where the construction of an 'other' included gay, 'Haitians' and 'Africans', elevated these categories to that of high-risk group status in the 1980s and served as an explanation for HIV. This chronicle of the epidemic perpetuates existing ideologies from which monogamy is considered as a legitimate form of sexual partnering (Joffe, 1999). Consequently, through discourses that sustain and maintain othering processes contemporary constructions of HIV make those who practice concurrent partnering powerless. Furthermore, stigmatising language such as "secret lovers kill", serve only to entrench the narrative of unregulated sexual desire from which HIV is perceived as something that happens only to non-monogampus couples (Kopelman, 2002). Indeed, this 'deviant' sexual practice, naming and blaming language, as reflected in the secret lovers kill campaign in Swaziland also served to fulfil the pre-existing moral agenda explanation of HIV (Kopelman, 2002).

The statistical data that challenges the domain of the frequency of sexual contact in concurrent partnerships assumption is presented below. These empirical studies were conducted with a special emphasis on Southern Africa where the mathematical model of Morris and Kretzschmar has been extensively applied.

(a) Lurie and Rosenthal (2010) reported on the study that was conducted in South Africa where 90 per cent of sexually active men and women between the ages of 15 and 24 years indicated having had sex intercourse fewer than five times on a monthly basis.

(b) In a study by Cleland, Boerma, Caraël, and Weirr (2004) it was reported that in countries such as Lesotho, Tanzania, Togo, Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire, between 32 per cent and 59 per cent of adults with regular partners reported no sexual activity with their partners in the previous month.

(c) In Jewkes, Nduna, Levin, Jama, Khuzwayo, et al (2006) study, which was conducted in the rural parts of South Africa, of sexually active men between the ages of 15 and 26 years in Eastern Cape Province, 89 per cent had a regular girlfriend. It was reported in this study that half of the men (participants) had not had sex in the previous three weeks (prior to the start of the study) (Jewkes, Nduna, Levin, Jama, Khuzwayo, et al (2006). Furthermore, it was indicated that one-quarter of these men had not had sex in the previous 60 days (prior to the start of the study) (Jewkes, Nduna, Levin, Jama, Khuzwayo, et al (2006).

3.5.6 The image of Africa and disease

The preceding section exemplifies the research trend, which shows that the Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model and the broader concurrency hypothesis are not isolated textual materials. Indeed, this pattern of research is the production of scholarly thinking which existed alongside a history of Eurocentric orientation that characterised a specific image of Africa (Spronk, 2012). In view of this, the 2001 statement by the head of the U.S Agency for International Development, Andrew Natsios, that the nevirapine treatment for HIV would simply not suffice in the continent because the "natives in Africa have not seen a clock or a watch their entire lives", and thus would be unable to take their pills on time (Nordling, 2016, p. 215). Contrary to this opinion, early research on the topic indicated that adherence and treatment reflected better outcomes in African cohorts in comparison to similar research conducted in wealthier countries, especially the U.S (Mills, Nachega, Buchan, Orbinski, Attaran, et al., 2006). Tsampiras (2015) observed how this representation and image of Africa cannot be attributed to a particular period, nor is it the exclusive purview of a specific community. Furthermore, in the institutions of academia, such rhetoric is identified as common across many disciplines (Tsampiras, 2015). In this respect, the archaeological treatment of historical documents shows that in the nineteenth century the dominant thinking among race theorists, including mainstream scientists, was that Africans were a genetically distinct species

from Europeans (Tsampiras, 2015). In order to prove this assertion a range of measurements, which focussed on aspects such as the cranial capacity, jaw length, and other physical characteristics, were conducted by scientists (Tsampiras, 2015). In other instances, theorisation of racial difference was the consideration of 'recapitulation', an orientation which postulated "that the different races represent stages of human evolution" (Tsampiras, 2015). According to this theory, Europeans claimed the highest stage of the development process, whereas their African counterparts were primitive in their development (Tsampiras, 2015).

The foregoing perspective provided a particular backdrop for an observation that had been made in the 1980s: that science is, in every conceivable sense, a socially embedded activity. This reconsideration appropriated certain narratives, primarily the idea that science is a significant cognitive tool to the extent that it is regarded as a powerful instrument in legitimatising information (Spronk, 2012). In addition, science is acknowledged for its prominent role in shaping both scholarly and public opinion – an important socialisation tool (Spronk, 2012). The way in which we see, what we see and how we see it is attributed to the influence of scientific knowledge (Gould, 1981, pp. 21-22). Indeed, the AIDS-in-Africa scientific literature is arguably a mode of representation, which, in the minds of Europeans, was stored and fixed in memory, and therefore turned into mental images of African sexuality (Spronk, 2012). In psychology, the study of images in relation to the construction of knowledge production has received considerable attention. Indeed, images are now commonly identified as playing a functional role in cognition (Roger-Smith, 1982). The current pedagogical view holds imagery as organising tools "of mental representation that functions specifically in representing concrete, perceptual information" (Libby & Eibach, 2011: p 2).

This perspective was echoed strongly in the writings of Wilhelm Wundt, who regarded images as the basis for all thought (Roger-Smith, 1982). Think of how the stated image of an African sexuality concretised the alleged scientific truth about the epidemic of HIV originating in Africa (Mulwo et al., 2012). Chirimuuta addressed such rhetoric in the book and Chirimuuta titled, *AIDS, Africa and Racism* (1987), where it was argued that, the initial diagnosis of this disease was attributed to White American homosexuals. However, later writings on this topic susggest HIV originated from Africa (Chirimuuta, 1987). Nevertheless, in order to maintain and sustain this supposition, a series of events occurred, some of which included tests that showed some similarities between HIV and a virus called Simian Immunodeficiency Virus (SIV) found in African green monkeys (Alcamo, 2003). One of the most telling accounts of the global north image of Africa as a sick continent became evident after the death of a particular Black man in 1959. The disease that killed this man was never determined, yet HIV was cited as having caused his demise (Wain-Hobson, 1998). Mulwo et al. (2012) recount other incidents that perpetuated institutionalised images of African sexuality in higher learning organisations.

Here I am specifically referring to the 1999 claims by the University of Alabama that the chimpanzees of West-Central Africa were the initial carriers of the virus (Mulwo et al., 2012). To this end, exposure of blood from these animals to human was cited as one of the potential ways in which HIV could have been passed on to the latter (Mulwo et al., 2012). These assertions were criticised by Chirimuutas, considering such statements as signifying oppressive and racist images of the African continent. A similar retort is found in the writings of Baffuor Ankomah, who highlighted possible unreliable measures of HIV tests seeking to prove the origins of the virus to Africa (Mulwo et al., 2012).

3.5.7 Gender symmetry

Another central issue that formed part of the early versions of Morris and Kretzschmar's model is the idea of similar levels of involvement in concurrency by both men and women. This assumption had huge ramifications for the support of the thesis of exponential growth in HIV because of concurrent relationships. Halperin and Epstein (2004, p. 20) acknowledged the importance of gender symmetry when they stated that large-scale heterosexual networks can only emerge when a "significant proportion of women are engaging in multiple longer-term partnerships". Gender in Africa is, however, an important social construct because it is interwoven with power relations and these influence how and with whom a person gets to establish sexual relationships (Potgieter, 2006). Furthermore, Africa is a continent where strong beliefs in traditional practices of masculinities are normative and for women who have sex with multiple partners, societal stigmatisation and chastisement are a lived reality (Potgieter, 2006). In fact, in broader contexts, women find it difficult to express their sexuality in many parts of Africa for fear of being harmed or even killed (Mkize, 2011). In South Africa, femicide, the murder of women by their intimate partners is widespread (Mkize, 2011). Data on this topic estimates that of the women who are murdered in the country, half are killed by intimate partners (Mkize, 2011). Mkize also reported that South Africa's Medical Research Council conducted a study of female homicide in 2004, finding that a woman is murdered by her intimate partner every six hours (2011).

In addition, crimes of passion have been identified as one of the main reasons for the murder of South African women, particularly where those women were either accused of, or were caught cheating. To illustrate this point, in 2014 the *Daily Sun* reported that Ntsae Mokomame was kidnapped, raped and killed by her boyfriend (*Daily Sun*, 2014). Acording to the article, Ntsae was cheating on her boyfriend. When her friend, Refilwe Koena, heard her screaming, she knocked on the door (*Daily Sun*, 2014). The boyfriend was already beating Ntsae and threatened to kill Refilwe as well (*Daily Sun*, 2014). In addition to such incidents, when women are accused of sleeping around,

they are labelled with derogative terms such as *isifebe* (meaning *whore*). This stigmatisation is one of the primary reasons why most women desist from this behaviour (Mah & Maughan-Brown, 2013). On the other hand, when men sleep around they are glorified and positively affirmed (Shefer, 2003). Furthermore, in some parts of Africa where child marriages are the norm or where forced marriages exist the assumption of gender symmetry in concurrency is highly improbable (Shefer, 2003).

It is important to note here that I am not suggesting that women do not engage in concurrency. In fact, there are many studies that have shown women's engagement in non-monogamy in sub - Saharan Africa (Mah & Maughan-Brown, 2013). Even in situations where women are involved in concurrency, there is rich scholarship, which points to the limitation of self-reported data about these sexual behaviors (Plummer, Ross, Wight et al., 2004). Cautious use of such data is recommended because of the measurement bias that is likely to occur, especially when women are the unit of analysis (Plummer et al., 2004). Women are known to under-report their premarital and extramarital sexual acts (Zaba, Pisani, Slaymaker, & Boerma, 2004). For example, consider the evaluation of self-reported data from a large multi-centre study on factors determining the differential spread of HIV in four African cities (Buvé et al., cited in Vinod & Assche, 2009). This study revealed that many women who were found to be HIV-positive had indicated they were virgins, or had only one sexual partner and few episodes of sexual intercourse (Buvé et al., cited in Vinod & Assche, 2009).

3.6 The relevance of polyamory in sub-Saharan Africa

This section discusses how and why polyamory might be applicable in sub-Saharan Africa in the context of promoting safer sex practices. Here I show that one of the serious problems associated with concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa is the idea that some of the partners in these relationships are not aware of the sexual activities of their spouses with other partners. The secretive nature of concurrency has been attributed to the spread of HIV since a partner might make informed decisions related to safer sex practices if they knew about the sexual activities of their spouse. As will be shown in this section, the emphasis needs to be on writing about polyaomory and on broadcasting information about this sexual lifestyle through the media. The idea is that by embracing concurrency in the form of polyamory through mass representation, it becomes possible for people to accept this partnering. When this happens broader national dialogue on alternative sexualities and safer sex practices might become the norm.

3.7 The secretive agenda underpinning concurrent relationships

The important feature of concurrency, at least, the type associated with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, is the secretive nature, which underscores its practice (Negash & Morgan, 2016). Although the terms 'infidelity', 'adultery' and 'cheating' are not explicitly stated in some of the concurrency hypothesis literature, the secretive aspect of concurrent partnerships is, in and of itself, indicative of these concepts. A perpetual problem in scientific research is the conceptualisation of 'infidelity', 'adultery' and 'cheating'. These concepts are linked to a host of varied aspects, the scope of which will not be addressed in this study. Therefore, in this sub-section, infidelity, adultery and cheating are used interchangeably.

Apart from the consequential impact of cheating and how this problem impacts on the transmission of HIV, a range of other deleterious outcomes have been associated with this practice (Leone, 2013; Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015). This is because infidelity, to a significant degree, suggests that one's partner (within the context of monogamy) plays an important role towards meeting one's emotional and psychological well-being (Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015). Indeed, based on the nature of the relationship dyad, there is a commitment, on the part of both partners to fulfil each other's needs (e.g., one's sense of belonging, attainment of sexual satisfaction and personal happiness) (Leone, 2013). It is on this basis that fidelity is an important aspect of those functions, where sexual exclusivity is a socially accepted norm (Leone, 2013). Some of the negative outcomes linked to cheating include, but not limited to, interpersonal conflict, family disruption, domestic violence, and emotional and psychological strain (Ortman, 2005). In addition, the discovery of the infidelity of one's partner is considered one of the chief reasons, among threats of divorces and domestic violence, for developing depressive symptoms (Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015).

73

Furthermore, scholars such as Ortman (2005) describe infidelity as tantamount to a traumatic experience because it violates the element of trust that is implied in the context of a dyadic relationship. This view is based on the observation of those who are at the receiving end of infidelity and how those people exhibit the same symptoms as those who suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Ortman, 2005). According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*, characteristic symptoms of PTSD include these psychological signs: intense fear, helplessness, horror, re-experiencing the event, irritability and rage, emotional numbing, heightened anxiety, and avoidance of reminders of the event (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The term 'post-infidelity stress disorder' (PISD) was conceptualised by Ortman (2005) as a specific category in order to highlight the severity of this experience (Ortman, 2005). To this end, the author explained that, among other things, the most prominent symptoms of PISD included rage, impatience and substantially more irritability than usual (Ortman, 2005). The effects of infidelity have wider implications and often other family members are also negatively affected by this problem (Negash & Morgan, 2016). For example, as the result of parental infidelity, children were reported as showing feelings of guilt, anxiety, fear, worry, depression, shock and aggression, and these psychological problems are associated with negative emotional development (Ablow, Measelle, Cowan, & Cowan, 2009; Lusterman, 2005; Negash & Morgan, 2016).

On the other hand, some of the possible psychological effects of infidelity on the adulterer include feelings of guilt and shame (Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015). The mere fact that cheating is a violation of agreed rules makes it unlikely that this deviant behaviour will be disclosed to friends and family members since the likelihood of negative appraisal from these individuals is highly probable (Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015). As a result, the adulterer may feel alone, isolated and, at times, disoriented (Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015). The probable outcome is the unlikelihood of the adulterer seeking help (Rokach & Philibert-Lignieres, 2015). Indeed, obscured from the adulterer's view are potential resources through which he or she may obtain enabling information on safer sex practices.

In other parts of this dissertation, it has been shown how the exploration of non-monogamy, particularly concurrency is confined to the domain of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. By contrast, Barker and Langdridge (2010) stated that, over the years, there has been a noticeable interest in non-monogamous relationships in the global north. Notable research related to this topic includes the study by Page (2004), who explored non-monogamous relationship among bisexual participants. Conley, Moors, Matsick, and Zeigler (2011) took interest in non-monogamous partnering and their online study revealed a fairly sizeable number of participants who practiced non-monogamy. The focus of this scholarship includes consideration of the psychological well-being of those individuals who are open and consent to non-monogamy (Conley et al., 2011). Therefore, in a study by

Bergstrand & Williams (2000), those who practiced non-monogamy openly viewed themselves and the quality of their relationships positively. Furthermore, in a research paper by Rubel and Bogaert (2015) it was reported that couples who embrace non-monogamy are more likely to experience improved relationship satisfaction and happiness (Rubel & Bogaert, 2015).

In view of this, polyamory, with its emphasis on the validity of mutual consent of plural love is different from other forms of concurrency. The widely observed disclosure of involvement in polyamory is a crucial element to this sexual lifestyle. The possible net effect of this is a re-orientation towards acknowledging alternative sexual partnering in the society (Sheff, 2006). Although there is historic evidence of the societal demonisation of different sexual partnerings as exemplified by the marginalisation of same-sex relationships - polyamorists do not abstain from revealing their concurrency (Sheff, 2006). These past incidents of intolerance towards alternative sexualities have encouraged polyamorists to put measures in place (e.g. polyamory support networks) in order to circumvent such negative backlash from the society (Sheff, 2006).

For example, the South Africa's polyamorous group is formed with the sole purpose of providing support for its members. Among the resources made available by this community is the mailing group, a virtual space where polyamorous members can discuss issues that are important in their relationships. These may range from topics such as safer sex practices, jealousy, communication and so forth. More discussions and possibly, debates are centred on sexual rules and agreements, as well as socialisation of sexual fidelity. The provision of additional support includes the monthly meetings that are held in different provinces so that members can get to know each other. A potential benefit of such meetings is their contribution to members' sense of belonging. All of these activities are indicative of polyamory as a form of concurrency that is, arguably, a cut above the rest (Sheff, 2015). These narratives refer to the manner in which polyamorous individuals publicises the philosophies of their sexuality and avail themselves to criticism.

3.7.1 How the use of language can marginalise partner concurrency

Language has been described as a system of communication, the basis of which facilitates how people produce knowledge and meaning through their social interactions with others (Burr, 2015; Collins, 2003; Lesch & Adams, 2016). Collins (2003) stated that the very fabric of our ontological perception, from which our lived experienced is rooted is ordered through the medium of language. Indeed, the societal meaning that underpins "categories, concepts and systems of explanation that we use to interpret sensory information" is ascribed to language (Collins, 2003, p. 28). Furthermore, one crucial aspect of language is transmission of the norms, attitudes, beliefs, myths, customs, rituals and knowledges within which we are situated (Goffman, 1974; Collins, 2003). For example,

the manner in which the society structures our experiences as sexual beings is influenced, in part, by the categories of monogamy versus non-monogamy that we use to make our sexuality meaningful (Lesch & Adams, 2016).

One school of thought that addresses the marginalisation of concurrency does so by highlighting monogamy as dominant in the society and alternative sexual partnering frowned upon (Garfinkel, 1967). Thus, policing of sexual relationships by using certain syntax and words ensures that people conform to monogamous ideologies (Garfinkel, 1967). Indeed, compliance relates to the performance of certain competences and ultimately being accountable to the normative conceptions of monogamy (Garfinkel, 1967). Absconding from these prescribed monogamous ideals means that certain measures may be instituted with the view of re-orienting the behaviour so that it follows the desired hetero-normative standards (Garfinkel, 1967). This is testament to the regime of governability where surveillance through social rules and discipline bracket the normalisation of monogamy (West & Zimmerman, 1987). It is on this basis that Brickell (2006) posited that this exercise of constraint and control meant that the structure of monogamy was imposed as the only way of imagining formation of sexual partnering. Indeed, when this happens monogamy is then declared natural as evidenced in the HIV partner reduction policy frameworks (Fenstermaker & West, 2002, p. 207). An important consideration in this respect is that the maintenance and sustenance of monogamy involves exercising power where alternative sexual partnering such as non-monogamy can be punished (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

3.7.2 Reclaiming Negative Language

The corpus of the preceding texts formulated narratives which focussed on how concurrency exist alongside institutionalised ideologies where monogamy is perceived as the premise upon which all sexual relationships should be structured. The discrepancy in meaning between these two types of sexual relationships does, however, position concurrency as a societal malaise as will be illustrated further on in this research. Therefore, of particular interest here is the apparent lack of retort (in the literature) on the part of those who partake in concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa against the prevailing HIV partner reduction policies. This noticeable gap emanates from a region, if not a continent, where non-monogamy was historically a legitimate form of establishing sexual relationships. As shown earlier, countries such as Botswana have seen the extensive mobilisation of the government services in advancing campaigns such as HIV *O Icheke* in order to discourage non-monogamous romances.

On the other hand, polyamorists recognise the power of language and how this medium of communication is often used to order the meaning of sexual relationships. This is perhaps what

differentiates polyamory from other forms of concurrent partnerships. Ritchie and Barker (2006), two prominent writers on the topic of polyamory suggested several coping strategies for polyamorists when dealing with the issue of language. These include reconfiguring words with negative connotations as one way of addressing the iniquities between monogamy and non-monogamy (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Ritchie and Barker's (2006) recommendations are important because: (a) they understand that the interaction between the self and environment occurs through language; and (b) as Wood and Bandura (1989) stated, the self is not a passive organism and environment does not exert a totalising force over individuals. In fact, the meaning of human phenomena such as sexuality as it transmitted through language is a bi-directional process. Thus, by taking ownership of language, as Ritchie and Barker (2006) suggest, the agentic self can shape the direction of such meaning. This is evident in polyamorists coining the term 'ethical slut'. Dossie Easton and Catherine's 1997 publication *The Ethical Slut: A Guide to Infinite Sexual Possibilities*, explains this term. Although, the word 'slut' has negative connotations, by using the word 'ethical' in order to index it illustrate a creative way of showing that non-monogamous practices need not solicit deviant behaviour. This coping strategy has the potential to challenge the meaning of other words such as *Ungqo* (the one), *umaqondana* (the perfect match), *ibhodwe* (literally meaning 'the pot'), roll-on, *ikhwapha* (armpit), *ishende* (secret lover), *Urnngane* (friend), *ikobho! ami* (literally meaning 'my head'), *isifebe* (bitch) and *odali* (darling) (Dladla, Hiner, Qwana, & Lurie, 2001).

3.7.3 A New Lexicon

As pointed out above, derogatory labelling of certain sexual relationships created negative societal connotations for non-monogamy. Polyamorists have been pro-active in re-inventing a completely new regime of words. This was done primarily as a principle to provide this form of concurrency with positive representation (Sheff, 2006). Another case in point is the coining of the word polyamory, which was in itself symbolic of the power of language. In addition, the currency of the word polyamory shows a great degree of agency that polyamorous individuals exhibit. Its usage was first identified in the 1990s and along with it came an era when polyamorists disclosed their sexual orientation to the world (Sheff, 2006). To this end, the words that polyamorists use to describe this sexual lifestyle such as how it is configured in different contexts shows how profound these relationships are to these people (Sheff, 2006). For example, certain words, which are not found in a monogamous lexicon, are used to signify particular emotions such as 'compersion' and 'frubbly'. These words describe a context where a person acknowledges the happiness that their partner feels when the latter has formed a romantic relationship with someone else (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Ritchie and Barker (2006) discovered words such as 'wibble', 'wibbly' or 'wibbling', which describe the emotion experienced when one person is upset or nervous about their partner's relationship with someone else.

Other words specific to polyamory describe different types of polyamorous relationships, for example, 'metamour', which refers to the other partner or partners of one's partner (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). The strategic coining of metamour replaces the use of derogatory terms such as *nyatsi* and *makhwapheni,* and accord to the partner or partners of one's partner the respect they deserve (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Indeed, the invention of these words is vital because the people who are stigmatised and ridiculed with the labels *nyatsi* or *makwapheni* might otherwise be valued and respected members of the community. The journalists Hamilton and Pisa (2016) wrote a story in *The Sun*, the British newspaper outlet regarding a celebrity couple whose male partner was involved in a threesome with *nyatsi*. The couple spent millions of pounds through the courts trying to prevent the story from being published in that newspaper (Hamilton & Pisa, 2016). During the court proceedings, the couple indicated that they were in an open marriage and thus the judges, Lord Justice Rupert Jackson and Lady Justice Eleanor King ruled in their favour (Hamilton & Pisa, 2016). Howevr, in the story they were labelled as adulterers and journalists described the ruling, which found the couple to be in a committed marriage as shocking (Hamilton & Pisa, 2016). This is a powerful illustration of how language creates reality and how perspectives become lenses through which a particular meaning of sexuality is understood. In this story, the institution of marriage was understood to mean pair-bonding and thus alternative arrangements of legally constituted marriages were perceived as abnormalities. In an ideal world, where terms such as metamour might have attained wider currency and broader awareness of non-monogamous relationships normative, this celebrity couple could have been represented differently.

Indeed, having a vocabulary to describe feelings and sexuality provides meaning to the structure of one's partnering. In their article *There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have to Make Them Up: Constructing Polyamorous Languages in a Culture of Compulsory Monogamy*, authors Ritchie and Barker (2006) speak about the complexity of sexuality and the crucial aspect of correctly naming what one feels. This was in response to those who struggled to identify how they felt until they obtained information that described their exact experience. This point was illustrated in the story that appeared on an online magazine about a married couple who had decided to open up their marriage. For some time, the couple struggled to express and describe their needs. It was through conducting research on the Internet about non-monogamous relationships that the couple discovered that other people also engaged in open marriages. By reading *PanGaia* and other magazines, such as *Loving More*, the couple found out that there was a name for their sexual practice (Sheff, 2015).

3.7.4 Representation of Concurrency in AIDS studies and Polyamorous Literature

It has been shown in this study that much of the literature on concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa is limited to the area of HIV. Furthermore, there has been little evidence, at least in the literature, of those involved in these relationships addressing the stigma associated with concurrency. In addition, there is a serious lack of written material, which highlights not only its legitimacy, but also the potential benefits of concurrency. As I have previously stated, texts on polyamory reveal a thorough and rigorous retort to its (mis)representation. Some of the scholars and activists who write about this lifestyle are people who are personally involved in concurrent relationships. Similarly, in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, many of the people who identify with the stated group are not only respected in the community but also occupy positions of status. For example, South Africa's Constitutional Court Judge, Edwin Cameroon, and actor and entertainer, Sumizi Sakamolo. In their study, Ritchie and Barker (2006) explored a range of online poly communities and resources that were created by poly-identified practitioners and activists. Their findings showed that these practitioners and activists were heavily invested in the production of polyamorous literature (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). For example, Professor Elisabeth Sheff is a prominent academic and poly practitioner who writes extensively about this concurrency. Meg Barker, a psychology lecturer at London South Bank University, and Ani Ritchie, a lecturer in Media with Cultural Studies at Southhampton Solent University are among the polyamorists who devote much of their time on academic work towards producing polyamorous texts.

3.7.5 Representation of Polyamory on the Internet

The mass media is a portal through which the social construction of knowledge is organised (Bandura, 1986). Although in these medium hegemonic ideologies, especially those that pertain to sexual relationships are perpetuated this is also a site of contestation and re-invention (Barker, 2005). This is no better exemplified than in the World Wide Web. The polyamorous community used the Internet as a space where new articulations of non-monogamous relationships can be formulated, and as a result, much information about this sexuality is available on the Web. Furthermore, the Internet transcends the obstacle of vast geographical spaces, thus facilitating a much larger network of polyamorists (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Along with this discovery is the revelation of a community of polyamorists who have a passion for writing about their sexuality (Ritchie & Barker, 2006).

For example, a simple internet search of this sexual lifestyle produces a glossary of words. This was illustrated by Noel (2006), when, in November 2007, used Yahoo to search for information on polyamory and found 1 200 000 hits on this topic. In September 2009, the same search on this website revealed a dramatic increase of hits to around 2 860 000 (Noel, 2006). Another website that has information on polyamory is The Loving More (*http://lovemore.com/)*, which contains links for

polyamorous activities such as conference dates. The websites Poly Matchmaker (*http://www.polymatchmaker.com/*) is essentially a dating site for poly-oriented people. This is a useful resource, particularly when considering that it might not be easy to find poly-inclined individuals in communities where monogamy is a strong ideology. The website [Website name] (*www. https://www.morethantwo.com/resources.html*) contains links to, for example, Polyamory Weekly Headquarters, a weekly talk show on polyamorous lifestyles, and My Poly Place, a Facebook page for poly individuals. There is also a Weblog, the journal of a polyamorous couple, called *www.theordinaryextraordinary.com*. Therapy With Clients Who Are Bisexual and Polyamorous is an article written by Weitzman in 2010 in order to help therapists to understand bisexual and poly relationships.

3.7.6 Publication of Polyamorous Non-Fiction Books

The publication of polyamorous books is akin to a similar trend observed over thirty years ago regarding the popularisation of swinging in the U.S (Noel, 2006). For example, since the 1990s book titles such as *The Ethical Slut: A Guide to Infinite Sexual Possibilities*, by Dossie Easton and Catherine Liszt have heralded an era of publication of texts on polyamory. *The Ethical Slut* was so well received by the polyamorous community that it was described as the holy "bible of polyamorists" (Noel, 2006, p. 607). This was because it was a major publication which criticised the prioritisation of pair-bonding as the only form of sexual relationship. In this book, the idea of open relationships was discussed extensively. Of particular importance in the preceding publication were areas such as dealing with jealousy, creating boundaries, and childrearing within the context of polyamory (Noel, 2006). Noel stated that since non-monogamy is mostly ostracised, *The Ethical Slut* put forward the idea that alternative sexuality, especially concurrency could be expressed positively, responsibly, openly and ethically (Noel, 2006).

Other publications that contributed to the widespread representation of polyamory are briefly discussed here. *Polyamory, the New Love Without Limits: Secrets of Sustainable Intimate Relationships* (1997), written by Deborah M. Anapol, addresses pertinent issues such as ethics, dealing with jealousy, coming out poly and how polyamorous practices benefits all of society. *Eight Things I Wish I'd Known About Polyamory: Before I Tried It and Frakked It Up* (2014), by Cunning Minx, seeks to demystify the basics of healthy, consensual non-monogamy by sharing the lessons learned by the author as a practicing polyamorist. *More Than Two: A Practical Guide to Ethical Polyamory*, by Franklin Veaux and Eve Rickert, based on the anecdotal accounts of the authors as polyamorists was adapted as a practical guide book, which provides useful information ranging from ethics to sexual health in polyaomous relationships. *The Polyamorists Next Door*, by Elisabeth Sheff, is a longitudinal research study, which followed polyamorous families. This publication explored how

poly families function, including the way in which children are reared in this context. *Open All the Way: Confessions from My Open Marriage*, by Sadie Smythe documents the ups and downs, lessons, pitfalls, and joy of the author's journey from monogamy to non-monogamy. Anthony Ravenscroft's (2004) *Polyamory: Roadmaps for the Clueless & Hopeful*, alerts polyamorists to the common mistakes people make in these relationships, and how such problems can be avoided. On a positive note, the author also discusses the joyous moments of being involvement in non-monogamous relationships. In his thesis, Noel (2006) also mentioned *Opening Up: A Guide to Creating and Sustaining Open Relationships* (2008), by Tristan Taormino. It could be argued that this particular publication was, in part, written in response to s. 27 of Canada's *Criminal Code*. To this end, the book speaks about the legal considerations of being involved in concurrency and the implications for child rearing.

3.6.7 Representation of Polyamory on Television

Wolfe (2003) says that the representation of polyamory on mainstream television began appearing on shows like *Ally McBeal[4]*. It is important to note that in this series polyamory, as a relationship partnering, was not portrayed negatively; rather, critical issues such as the legal consideration of people who want to marry more than one person at the same time was addressed (Wolfe, 2003). Note how, in sub-Saharan Africa such representation is often negative and concurrency is televised as associated with the topic of HIV. Here I am referring to television programmes such as South Africa's *Intersexions* and Botswana's *Makhwapheni*. Another show worth mentioning is *What About Brian?* which appeared on U.S television and highlighted the topic of polyamorous relationships. This show depicted the challenges and potential benefits of a couple opening up their marriage to additional sexual partners (Wolfe, 2003). In addition, the polyamorous lifestyle has been discussed on prominent talk shows, such as *The Tyra Banks Show* (Wolfe, 2003).

3.8 The critique of polyamory

One of the key pillars of scientific research is prioritising the applicability of tools and methodologies that we use in our studies in different contexts. This has to do with the reliability and validity of methodologies, particularly in empirical research, to make sure that what works in one situation, does not necessarily imply the same results would yield in other settings. Sexuality is a problematic phenomenon, especially in contexts as varied as those of sub-Saharan Africa. The high prevalence of HIV and how this interacts with concurrent partnering is an additional factor that complicates

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[4] Ally McBeal is a U.S legal comedy-drama television series, originally broadcasted on Fox network from the period 1997 to 2002. David E. Kelley was the producer of this show. The main actors included US actors such as Calista Flockhart, Greg Germann and Jane Krakowski. The series is about a young lawyer who works in the fictional Boston law firm whose life is overly dramatic and eccentric.

research on sexuality in this region. Therefore, in this part of the dissertation the discussion centres on the applicability of polyamory in sub-Saharan African contexts. This agenda is fundamental, considering the critical scholarship of Noel (2006), as well as Haritawon Lin, and Klesse (2006), who highlighted the exclusionary nature of polyamory. These authors also mentioned how such positioning of polyamory curtails the potential of this partnering and its applicability in other geographical locations. Therefore, I discuss the limitation of polyamory in relation to its applicability in sub-Saharan Africa.

3.8.1 Contextualising race and social class in non-monogamous practices

The literature highlights some academically savvy polyamorists whom representation of their sexual practice is a paramount objective (Sheff, 2006). Indeed, the previous section identified a specific demographic within the polyamory community who curved professional careers from writing about this partnering. However, the focus on 'demographics' as a variable at which certain people are able to express or mute sexual relationships is of much interest in scientific scholarship. Of particular importance here is the race and social class, which are studiedly, social constructs that position the context within which we as sexual selves are able to create and negotiate sexual encounters (Weber, 1998). Haritawon et al. (2006) observed how these variables also influence where we look and the context within which we are able to find sexual partners. Furthermore, race and social class determine the conditions on which we are able to draw on certain resources (e.g., financial, physical or cultural capital). Indeed, the conceptual inquiry into these two variables raises pertinent issues. Firstly, how such factors provide bodies of knowledges that shape both our social and psychological realities (Haritawon et al., 2006). Second, how do such realities facilitate the experience of concurrency which is mediated and sustained through narratives that 'other' this partnering?

The dialogue about these issues is particularly important to elucidate because the present study is interested in what way polyamory could enhance HIV programmes in South Africa. It is essential to remind ourselves as we move along with this discussion that the study of sexual relationships in sub-Saharan Africa puts greater emphasis on social constructs such as gender, race and class. The reliance on these variables and how they generate sexual knowledge are key to a broader understanding of partners' decision-making power in relationships, especially as this relates to safer sex practices (Sheff, 2006). For instance, knowledge about the race and social class of the individual enables us to explore what meaning the practice of concurrency has for a 'Black' woman who lives in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, in this region being 'Black' and female are largely indicators of exclusion or limited access to socio-economic and cultural resources. Therefore, how would polyamory account for this complex intersection? This consideration is not only the purview of the present study but also received a critical reflection in Noel's (2006) study. Noel (2006) was especially

interested in how these variables signified privilege in polyamory. For example, the posited narrative in her thesis indicates that polyamorous individuals are largely Caucasian by descent, middle class and educated (Noel, 2006). This poses serious problems because in the case of South Africa and the broader region of sub-Saharan Africa, race, for the most part, reflects the remnants of the legacy of apartheid (Hook, 2003). To this end, access to opportunities specifically income and educational prospects between 'Whites' and 'Blacks' were possible along these racial lines (Hook, 2003).

It is important to underscore these historical factors because it is between and within these variables that concurrency is organised (Shefer, 2003). For example, it might be easier for 'White' women who live in South Africa to practice polyamory despite the reality of the stigma associated with this concurrent partnership. This is because 'White' women in this country are, for the most part, educated and may have access to better income opportunities than their 'Black' counterparts. It is also because of these advantages that the former may have the advantage to navigate spaces where they define the type of concurrency within which they want to be situated. On the other hand, 'Black' women who are largely dependent on men for financial support might find it particularly difficult to engage in such sexual practices (Boonzaier, 2003). There is a rich scholarship in South Africa, which speaks to the practices of transactional sex, where older men who have access to income opportunities become involved with women who have far less access to such prospects (Shefer, 2003). Indeed, 'Black' women who are disadvantaged by income opportunities experience great obstacles in terms of gaining equal power regarding decision-making in sexual relationships (WHO, 2008). Indeed, polyamory has been accused of being unable to address these critical issues (Haritawon et al., 2006).

Haritawon et al. (2006) identified another problem with polyamory and that is how this partner concurrency is framed as a universal model, which may be applicable in different situations in spite of race and social class. As identified above, as social beings the issue of positioning is important because it underscores the inherited varied socio-political and cultural contexts within which our sexual selves are shaped. Indeed, we are by no means a homogeneous group. Therefore, the lack of placing a particular focus on race and social class, especially given an environment as complex and diverse as sub-Saharan Africa limits the potential of polyamory as a form of concurrency that may revolutionise oppressive structures (Haritawon et al., 2006). Such ignorance reduces polyamory to an elitist sexual lifestyle where significant markers such as race and social class act as axes of inclusion and exclusion (Haritawon et al., 2006). This means that, for the most part, one would have to be 'White' and at least middle class in order to practice polyamory (Haritawon et al., 2006).

3.8.2 The assumption of equal communication between partners

A pronounced emphasis on communication practices lies at the heart of polyamory (Sheff, 2006). This orientation underpins the complexity of a sexual relationship that involves more than two people (Sheff, 2006). Indeed, societal stigma, high level of risk of STIs and a greater emotional investment on loving more than one person simultaneously are some of the features that require acquisition of efficient communication skills (Sheff, 2005). In texts on polyamory, this partnering has been positively appraised as a form of concurrency where the attainment of the foregoing skills enables discussion of the preceding critical issues. Furthermore, some of the polyamorous literatures state that because of the prominent focus on communication many of the needs of polyamorists are often met (Sheff, 2005). Anapol (1997) and Easton and Lizt (1997) problematised this assumption by pointing out that this view underlies a narrow understanding of sexual relationships. Although it is important to concentrate on communication in concurrency, these narratives should, however, be grounded in localities such as South Africa. In this country contextual factors such as heteronormative masculinities are potential constraining dynamics to improving positive outcomes in sexual partnering (Potgieter, 2006). Indeed, gender inequality has been shown to be one of the focal points at which domestic violence is perpetuated (Potgieter, 2006). Furthermore, there is a vast amount of literature which shows that many women in sub-Saharan Africa often face great challenges when attempting to discuss safer sex practices with their partners, even in situations where the woman suspects that her partner is unfaithful (Boonzaier, 2003; Muula, 2008; WHO, 1995). Failure to address the impact of these contextual factors in the application of polyamory in diverse situations might obscure opportunities of understanding why people choose to hide concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa. On the basis of this perspective, polyamory is revealed as a form of concurrency which is largely uncritical of the problems that are experienced in other concurrency, especially those that are criticised in African-AIDS-research (Haritawon et al., 2006).

3.8.3 Heterenormative practices within Polyamorous Relationships

Although polyamory is one of the sexual partnerings that is poorly understood and under-researched, scholars such as Klesse (2005) have undertaken empirical work in this area. Her scholarly research, which was conducted in the U.S, showed that even though polyamory espouses ideals such as egalitarianism, broadly speaking, polyamorous relationships are far from reworking issues of gender inequality (Klesse, 2005). Sheff (2010) is another scholar who has critically investigated the gender inequality practices in polygamous relationships. In her article, *Poly-Hegemonic Masculinities*, Sheff noted how dominant ideals of masculinities mostly play out in polyamorous relationships. Indeed, gender inequality is one of the risk factors to HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, if the practice of polyamory in a context with lower rates of HIV such as the U.S fails to impede the impact of this variable its successful application in sub-Saharan Africa is only unlikely.

3.8.4 Individualistic / Agency Approach

In the previous section I have indicated that the formation of polyamory was influenced by a series of events which occured during different historical epochs. To this end, the prominent events that merit mention include, but are not limited to, the sexual revolution of the 1990s, feminism, queer theory, women's rights and the concept of the self (which was influenced by the discipline of psychology). The theories of feminism and queer studies are politically driven approaches, which, in most cases, challenge hegemonic institutions such as marriage and the socialisation of behaviour (Potgieter, 2006). This influence is reflected in books written by polyamorists where the focus is on challenging societal norms pertaining to how sexual relationships are structured (Potgieter, 2006). Furthermore, the influence of the psychology-driven conception of the self as an agentic being is reproduced in the genre of polyamorous publications (Haritawon et al., 2006). Although many popular books on polyamory focus their critique on dominant ideas of gender and sexual cultures, the problem here is that this critique is centred on psychologising and individualising social processes (Haritawon et al., 2006). This emphasis is primarily based on free personal choice and agency. Easton and Liszt (1997, p. 72) reflect this argument in the quote below:

> We are paving new roads across new territory. We have no culturally approved scripts for open sexual lifestyles; we pretty much need to write our own. To write your script requires a lot of effort, and a lot of honesty, and is the kind of hard work that brings many rewards.

Also, consider this quote fromNearing (1992, p. 7):

> …. if you are a person with an open mind who wants to explore life options rather than living out the standard patterns handed to you by mainstream culture, lifestyle design is for you. You can consciously choose your lifestyle: the grand synergistic combination of factors including intimacy, resources, children, philosophy, location, recreation, housing, career and more.

The agency and individual choice sentiments are framed in a way that seems to suggest that at any given time people can dislodge the legacies of socialisation and free themself of cognitive schemas that have shaped their psychological thinking (Haritawon et al., 2006). Indeed, this ignores how notions of agency and individual choice are largely governed by social relations where specific historical sites and power relations are lived realities (Ahmed, 2004). What can polyamorous notions of agency and individual choice tell us about the experiences of repressive socialisation that partly arise out of scientific material such as that on the concurrency hypothesis? Even though the system

of demonisation of non-monogamy is also instituted in wealthier countries, how are these experiences significantly pronounced in poorer countries? For example, what does the attachment of the label 'slut' mean to a woman who lives in Zimbabwe and is involved in concurrency as opposed to a polyamorous 'White' woman who is geographically located in the global north (Easton & Liszt, 1997)? How do the contextualised notions of agency and individual choice, which are socially constructed and the basis of which differ in conceptualisation from one culture to another enable or prohibit involvement in concurrency (Petrella, 2007)?

These ideas of agency and individual choice, which are given the one size fits all treatment go back to the issue of who is telling the story, as well as who is writing the books on polyamory. What knowledge, class, race and gender do the authors of these books bring with them? Furthermore, how does this positioning affect how these people cognitively realise context, out of which the meaning of sexual practices is recognised. In asking these questions, it becomes quite clear that the people who are framing the narratives are mostly privileged and have access to resources. They are not from a 'Black' woman who lives in Soshanguwe in South Africa, who is petrified of engaging in concurrency because being called a 'slut' could be life-threatening implications. Indeed, how does our Whiteness, Blackness or Asianness interacting with varying environmental forces actualise or constrain our agency and individual choice in relation to participation in concurrency (Haritawon et al., 2006). Indeed, if polyamory is going to generate nuanced meaning that could help in enhancing HIV programmes in South Africa it needs to pay attention to the sensitive particularities of people, particularly 'Blacks' who do not have privileges and are in a constant state of flux with systems that marginalise concurrency.

3.8.5 Would disclosure of involvement in polyamorous relationship be beneficial or burdensome?

Although the proliferation of polyamory can be attributed, in part, to the contribution of polyamorists by representing this partnering through the mass media (positively in some instances), the same cannot be said about concurrent partnering in sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, as a result of racialised HIV scientific research (e.g., Morris & Kretzschmar's mathematical model), that has contributed to stigmatisation and demonisation of concurrency there might be a perceived strategic value in hiding this sexual lifestyle. Indeed, disclosure of concurrency in this region might actually be a burdensome experience and source of chastisement from the society. Conversely, concealment may prevent the psychological distress of dealing with the negative sentiments of loved ones. Nevertheless, should the individual reach the point of revealing their participation in concurrency, what kind of emotional and physical support would be available to them? As opposed to the polyamorous community where provision of support is prioritised (Haritawon et al., 2006; Sheff, 2010). In the Africa-AIDS-literature

there are no support structures that people who practice concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa are known to access.

Therefore, disclosing engagement in concurrency could be the worst thing that a person who lives in sub-Saharan Africa may do. This is particularly true if such a person might not be ready to go through the distressful experience of being stigmatised. Within the polyamorous paradigm, even if direct and physical access to support services is not attainable the publications that I referred to earlier in this study might be helpful. On the other hand, material written specifically for people who practice concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa is not available. In addition, consider how the South African polyamorous group in this country convene meetings in different provinces in order to facilitate the needed support for polyamorists. This means that the quality of this support is appraised, negotiated and modified to suit the varying needs of those who are involved in the group. For those people who practice concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa the support network as decribed above has not been reported in the literature. However, even if such as support network exists there is really no telling whether the quality thereof would be adequate for the stated people. Indeed, disclosure of engagement in concurrency for people who reside in this region might result in decreased relationship satisfaction and possible termination of this partnering.

Another advantage pertaining to the secretive aspect of concurrency may be the appropriation of time between the primary and secondary partner. For example, the partner who has secondary partners may not necessarily have enough time and space to invest in those relationships. They may only be able to see those other partners at certain times since their focus may be on the primary partner. Full disclosure of plural love could, however, have unexpected consequences. For instance, polyamorous texts talk about the difficulty of dealing with various issues such as jealously, possessiveness and anxiety associated with being romantically involved with more than one person at the same time (Easton & Liszt, 1997). In this context, there is great emphasis on polyamorists being aware of the socialisation of emotional responses to accepting these monogamous norms (Easton & Liszt, 1997). Thus, the majority of polyamorists aspire to overcome this socialisation of emotional responses. Therefore, a silent secondary partner may avoid the occurrence of this kind of a situation. Jealously, possesiveness and anxiety are powerful psychological emotions, which, if not handled well could cause serious damage to a relationship (Sheff, 2010). This is particularly salient in contexts where the support of family members and friends is reduced and the cost of obtaining professional support is simply prohibitive. Furthermore, disclosure in concurrency may cause jealousy and this could result in an unpleasant relationship experience. Therefore, polyamory may become relevant in localities such as sub-Saharan Africa by simply broadening the scope of the support network to the wider community of people who practice concurrency in this region.

3.8.6 The political nature of polyamory

The prevailing partner reduction policy framework, which was, on the whole, driven by the racist concurrency hypothesis contains powerful cognitive tools which have influenced the meaning of concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa. What an individual's choice should be regarding with whom, how, when and in what context they have sex has become a political issue. The restraint of individual choice and centralisation of politics on sexual relationships is testament to the discourse of surveillance and control. Haritawon et al. (2006) noted that if polyamory has little concern over or time to think about how the stated racialised narratives play out into wider contexts it would simply remain an elitist sexual lifestyle. Its applicability and relevance in this region can be improved on the basis of building activist coalitions with those people who practice concurrency. Indeed, by displacing the hegemonic and oppressive Eurocentric image of concurrency as being distinct to sub-Saharan Africa, polyamory has the ability to forge positive representation in the mass media to challenge this stereotyping. On the basis of this perspective, polyamory might demonstrate that it is not the context of partnering per se that is the problem but specific factors that prevent opportunities for discussing and enacting safer sex practices (Sheff, 2006). This pattern of building alliances may not necessary be confined to concurrency but extends to other minorities, for example, homosexuals, who were and still are classified as a high-risk group in relation to the spread of HIV (Noel, 2006). It is because of this that the legitimacy of polyamory might be established and opportunities for addressing and transforming the preceding hostile political and scientific spaces created. In the broader scheme of things, this may actually enhance the meaning of sexual freedom in societies (Haritawon et al., 2006).

3.8.7 The configuration of parenting in polyamorous relationships

One of the pillars of polyamory is its focus on forming expanded family relationships (Sheff, 2010). This means that in some forms of polyamorous relationships secondary partners become involved in raising the children. Although the concept of social parenting is not foreign in sub-Saharan Africa, in South Africa it forms a big part of parenting among 'Blacks' (Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes, 2012). Social parenting from the perspective of inclusion of secondary (sexual) partners is, however, entirely a different context, which is not observed in this region. This idea of involving additional partners in the lives of the couple's children may have catastrophic consequences. For example, how would a couple disclose that the people their children thought were uncles or aunts are actually their parents' other lovers? What would the psychological impact of this be on the children? In addition, what sorts of tensions would this situation create for the families of such a couple? How would the friends of this couple react to the news? In some instances, this could be viewed as incompetence and grounds for the children to be removed from the couple by the courts and placed in state custody or in the care of other family members. These are not hypothetical situations. In *Considering Issues of*

Diversity, Melita J. Noël (2006) writes extensively about these issues, specifically in the context of family relationships. Furthermore, Noel (2006) argues for a careful disclosure of such information, particularly given the sensitivity and vulnerability of children to situations that may potentially disrupt their lives. In her Weblog, Sheff (2015) often responds to questions regarding how polyamorous relationships can be harmful to children.

In the broader contexts, there has, however, been increasing interest in the changing nature of families and the impact of this on children. For example, in the study by Clowes, Ratele, and Shefer (2013) the privileging of the nuclear family as the normative standard out of which conceptualisations of healthy children emerge has been problematised. These authors lament the way in which literature pathologises alternative forms of family structures in the rearing of children. This is why Shefer (2003) said that there was nothing inherently wrong with concurrent partnering and involvement of children in these relationships. She stated that the most important thing was how the couples involved in these relationships conducted themselves. Nevertheless, incorporating this sexual lifestyle into 'Black' families might be a mammoth task.

3.8.8 What is Natural and what is not natural in sexual partnering

As Willey (2010) noted, many feminist poly activists justify polyamory on the grounds that monogamy is unnatural. Indeed, monogamy has been accused of creating unrealistic expectations which one partner may not be able to fulfil (Willey, 2010). These sentiments are deeply ignorant and judge non-monogamy versus monogamy dichotomy a-historically (Willey, 2010). Indeed, such thinking fails to take into account decades of African-sexuality research, for example, the one referred to previously in this desktop analysis. Such historical scientific research such as the cited Caldwell et al.'s scholarship, as well as contemporary concurrency hypothesis continues to perpetuate the narrative of promiscuous 'Blacks' in relation to non-monogamous practices. Furthermore, these polyamorous texts reveal poor awareness regarding oppressive socialisation of monogamy in the broader society. Mores so, how monogamous ideals have played a major role in influencing how people perceive of sexual relationships in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, in these literacies there is a paucity of understanding of the way in which HIV is used as a pre-text in order to marginalise concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa. The findings of Noël's (2006, p. 604) study indicated that polyamorous thinking related to the preceding discussion "offer a short-sighted, isolationist alternative that serves to further solidify privileges for a few".

CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In scientific research, the use of methodologies as a principle of framing the subject of enquiry is considered normative. In our respective disciplines, as students and researchers, we are taught to immortalise this practice in our approach to investigating and exploring phenomena of interests. This systematic way of approaching the topic of the study is followed here. Over the years, schools of thought such as constructive psychology and related sciences have noted how the subjects of enquiries are often intersected by a variety of complex factors. Therefore, there is an increasing shift towards using multidisciplinary methodologies when undertaking scientific research in social sciences. This recognition was particularly helpful in this study. This is because sexuality as intersected by health behavioural policies such as partner reduction policy requires methodologies that reflect pluralities of "realities, and perspectives that are anti-foundational, pragmatic, contingent, local and provisional" (Wickramasinghe, 2009, p. 181). Thus, the conceptual framework used to explore the topic of this study is threefold, namely: social cognitive theory, constructive theory, and the meaning-making model. The rationale for using these three systems of theoretical knowledge as a unifying framework in order to approach concurrency as it relates to HIV partner reduction policy will be clarified throughout this chapter.

One of the central focus of this dissertation is the obvious discrepancy of meaning between concurrent partnerships and HIV partner reduction policy. In addition, the ancilliary objective here is to explore how the former is sustained in practice through the intolerant ambiance that is forged by the latter. Therefore, social cognitive theory and constructivism, although both critical to this study are considered as mostly abstract methodologies but lacking when it comes to the applied sciences. To put this in simple terms, social cognitive theory explains much about how the self interacts with the environment and constructivism picks up this theorisation by showing how such interaction is imbued with meaning. What this explanation lacks are how people cope when there is a discrepancy in meaning between the self and environment. It is crucial to understand this because as the literature has shown polaymorists have a history of developing coping mechanisms against policies which often criminalises their partnering. Although in South Africa this is not necessarily the case, however, at issue in this study is the clash of meaning between this form of concurrency and aforementioned policy and how this relates to safer sex practices.

In view of this, it is important to put into use an additional layer of methodology that can aid in exploring this phenomenon. Therefore, the meaning-making model is vital in helping me to analyse how people in this case the participants who are involved in polyamory cope with the stated discrepancy. First, this section provides an overview of the social cognitive theory, the purpose of which is to illustrate the ontological and epistemological stance related to how the self is positioned

in this study. Secondly, I explain how and where the social cognitive theory falls short and thus needs to be complemented by constructivism theory. Thirdly, by using the meaning-making model I elaborate on how in practice people come up with ways to cope with the processes that are at odds with the meaning of their sexual patterning.

4. Section A: Social cognitive theory: A theoretical framework

4.1 The Background and Overview of Social Cognitive Theory

In 1941, Miller and Dollard drafted into theory the social learning model. This theory was modified by Bandura and Walters in 1959 and this updated version appeared in the 1963 publication entitled *Social Learning and Personality Development* (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963). In this book some of the key concepts that formed the backdrop of Bandura and Walter's adaptation included observational learning and vicarious reinforcement. Over the preceding years, Bandura further revised this theory on his own. For example, in the 1980s, he wrote a book called *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. This particular thesis concentrated on cognition, vicarious learning, self-regulation and self-reflection as attributes that facilitate adaptation and change in human beings (Bandura, 1986). Building on what is described above Bandura postulated the essence of his theory in *Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*, published in 1977. In this volume of work, he spoke about the concept of triadic reciprocality. This model has three factors that are critical and these are: the environment, huma being and behaviour. All of these variables are engaged in the recursive relationship (Bandura, 1977). Thus, the basis of Bandura's (1986) conception of *reciprocal determinism* is understood as follows: (a) personal factors that characterise cognition, affect, and biological events; (b) behaviour; and (c) environmental stimuli, which foreground interaction that produces and sustains a *triadic reciprocality* (Bandura, 1986). Although much of Bandura's work was borrowed from social learning theory, a pronounced emphasis on cognition distinguished his thesis from the former (Glanz, Rimer, & Lewis, 2002). Therefore, in order to highlight this point, he called his concept social cognitive theory (Glanz et al., 2002).

4.1.1 Agentic Conceptual Framework

Social cognitive theory is premised upon the agentic perspective according to which individuals are agents who are proactively involved in their own development and not just merely reactive organisms to environmental forces (Bandura, 1986). Of particular importance is the idea that the agentic individuals possess "self-beliefs that enable him/her to exercise a measure of control over his/her thoughts, feelings, as well as his/her actions" (Bandura, 1986, p. 25). In addition, what the person thinks, believes, and feels affect how he/she behaves (Bandura, 1986). It is on this basis that individuals are understood as both products and producers of their own environments (Bandura,

1986). Indeed, discarded in this theorisation is the dualism of personal agency and social structure, instead, the recursive nature of both these concepts is recognized (Bandura, 2001). Furthermore, the idea that man is co-dependent on the environment made Bandura think more broadly about the scope of human agency, which, he asserted was grounded in socio-structural relations (Glanz et al., 2002). An expansive collective agency was then conceptualised with respect to the preceding orientation.

4.1.2 Triadic Reciprocal Determinism

Before analysing the development of different human capabilities, the model of causation on which social cognitive theory is founded is briefly reviewed here. In historical terms, behavioural theorists postulated the nature of human behaviour from a perspective of one-sided determinism (Glanz et al., 2002). This thinking essentially romanticised the view of unidirectional causation, out of which behaviour is shaped either by environmental influences or by internal dispositions (Glanz et al., 2002). On the other hand, the basis of Bandura's social cognitive theory appraises a system of causation, which acknowledges triadic reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 2001, p. 2). The reciprocal causation model stipulates that "behaviour, cognition and other personal factors, as well as environmental influences all operate as interacting determinants that impact each other bi-directionally" (Bandura, 2001, p. 2) (see, Figure 1 below). Thus, reciprocal causation is by no means an end product but an evolving process.

Figure 1: Triadic reciprocality
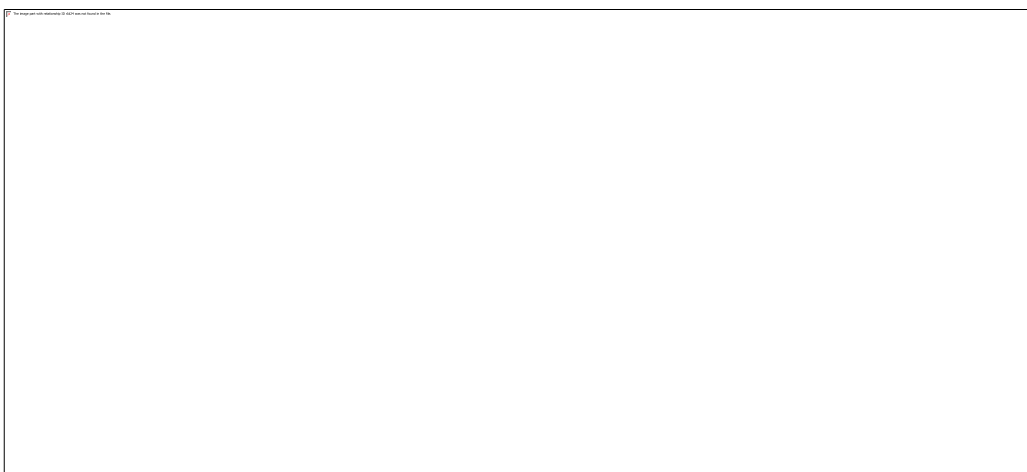
The figure above illustrates the modes of triadic reciprocal determinism. Therefore, I will discuss these theoretical leaning starting with the P ø B subsystems of influence. The P ø B of reciprocal causation shows the interaction between thought, affect and action. Essentially the behaviour of a person is organised around their expectations, beliefs, self-perceptions, goals and intentions, from which it derives shape and direction (Bandura, 1986). Indeed, the manner in which people conceive

of things, hold certain beliefs, and how they feel impact on their behavioural dispositions (Bower, 1975; Neisser, 1976; Bandura, 1986). The other determining factor that has a bearing on people's behaviour is the environmental response based on their their actions.

Secondly, the E ø P aspect of the reciprocal causation highlights the group of relations between personal characteristics and environmental factors. In this context, human expectations, beliefs, emotional bents and cognitive competencies are formulated, sustained and maintained within social relations (Bandura, 2001). This happens because of modelling, instruction and social persuasion, which conveys information that activates these variables (Bandura, 1986). It is important to understand that the system of modelling, instruction and social persuasion is constant only to change. Indeed, such systems are fluid, subject to adaptation and modification of human behvaiour (Bandura, 1986). On the other hand, people also elicit particular responses from their social environment because of their physical attributes, which include, but are not limited to, age, size, race, sex and physical attractiveness (Lerner, 1982). This means a person can be a symbol/figure that others observe and learn from because of his/her conferred roles and status in the society (Lerner, 1982).

Thirdly, the B ø E subsystem of reciprocal causation focuses on the recursive relationship between behaviour and the environment. In the course of everyday life, the recursive relationships means a person's behaviour alters environmental conditions, which in turn shape their behavioural patterns (Bandura, 2001). The preceding preoccupation simply illustrates that environmental factors are not only constraining but also enabling. Thus, behaviour determines which of the many potential environmental influences will come into play and what forms they will take (Bandura, 1986). Environmental influences, in turn, partly determine which forms of behaviour are developed and activated (Bandura, 1986).

4.1.3 Symbolizing Capacity

Bandura (1976) states that one of the ways in which people are able to comprehend their environment is through the use of symbols. These symbols, which may be verbal, visual or in the form of objects, are typically turned into cognitive models of reality (Bandura, 1976). Furthermore, symbols facilitate a process where people are able to use experiences as perspectives to choose "which environmental events will be observed, what meaning will be conferred on them (Bandura, 1989, p. 9). Indeed, symbols are essentially cognitive schemas which serve as a way information that is received through experience will be used for future judgement and action (1976). In addition, such symbols also provide the cognitive processes that shape people's experiences, as well as the meaning, form, and continuity of those lived experiences.

For example, symbols in the form of images that are reflected in the mass media are important because, as is the case in this study represent a particular social reality out of which certain ideologies are produced. The way in which concurrent partnerships are potrayed in HIV partner reduction policies convey a message of relationships that constitute sexually transmitted diseaese (Adoni & Mane, 1984). Bandura (2001) explained that prolonged exposure to the media has serious implications as this symbolic world tends to have the power to normalise images, especially those which relate to sexual practices. This is because external influences, such as the mass media, affects human behaviour as a result of people relying on this medium for information (Bandura, 2001). To this end, Bandura argue, the content that emanate from the media often "shapes [people's] beliefs and conceptions of reality" (Bandura, 2001).

4.1.4 Key Concepts of Social Cognitive Theory

Embedded in Bandura's social cognitive perspective is the understanding that individuals are imbued with certain capabilities that constitute their humanity. These can be categorised in the following way: the ability to symbolize and devise novel strategies (forethought), learning through vicarious experience, self-regulate, and self-reflect (Bandura, 1986)

4.1.5 Forethought Capacity

One of the most important aspects of social cognitive theory is that people have the capability for forethought. This means that behaviour is neither reactive to external influences nor shaped by past experiences (Bandura, 1986). In general, behaviour is governed by forethought. This simply means that people can anticipate the likely cause and effect of their prospective actions and on the basis of this formulate alternative strategies (Bandura, 1986). Furthermore, through the exercise of forethought people set goals for themselves and consciously guide their course of actions so that the desired outcomes may arise (Bandura, 2001).

4.1.6 Vicarious learning

As the result of the likely negative impact of mistakes the approach of trial and error, as a basis for learning and acquiring new knowledge, is often discarded in favour of observational modelling. Indeed, mistakes can sometimes, be costly, or have serious consequences. Therefore, much of social learning happens vicariously through symbols or by means of hearsay (Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978; Bandura, 1986). The benefit of observational modelling is that a single model can inspire a whole new regime of thinking and behaving to a wide spectrum of people in different geographic localities. In addition, Bandura (1986) stated that one's immediate environment is another form of modelling where a few people that one interacts with on a daily basis tend to have a profound influence on an individual's conception of social reality.

4.1.7 Self-regulation

Self-regulation refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions that are planned and relied on so that desired personal goals can be obtained (Boekaerts, 2005, p. 14). According to Bandura, self-regulation functions based on psychological sub-functions, which include appraisal of oneself (self-concept, self-esteem, values), judgemental sub-function, and self-motivators (Bandura, 2001).

4.1.8 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy plays a central role in the self-regulation process. It concerns an individual's belief in their capabilities to successfully control actions or events in their lives (Wood & Bandura, 1989). These beliefs are based on the individual feeling that he/she possess the requisite cognitive abilities, motivation, and resources to complete the task that is required to be undertaken (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Bandura (1977) identified four main sources of information that influences one's sense of self-efficacy and these are: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious (observational) experiences, social persuasions, and physiological and psychological states.

4.1.9 Self-reflection

Bandura (1986) states that what sets human beings apart are their ability for self-consciousness. Of particular importance here is the capacity of human beings to reflect on their experiences, engage with their self-beliefs, and appraise their conception of reality and those sources of information upon which this reality is organised. In addition, Bandura (1977) explains that human beings obtain greater understanding through the process of reflection. In verifying thought through self-reflective means, people monitor their ideas, act on them, or predict occurrences from such actions (Bandura, 1977). In addition, people make judgements based on the reactions they receive from other people and thus apply adjustment where necessary (Bandura, 1986).

4. Section B: The meaning-making individual

The social cognitive theory is useful in situating the self as an organism that is reflexive, capable of self-regulation and having capacity for forethought. The crucial element of the interaction between the self and environment and how this relates to meaning-making is not clearly explained (Theron & Theron, 2014). Theorists such as Gallagher (2011) argue that such theorisation has to go further and provide an explanation for the meaning that invariably characterises the interaction between the self and environment. In other words, there should also be a broader focus on how individuals seek to make meaning of their lives and how they understand themselves as different from others (Singer, 2004).

It is for this reason that constructive theory is such a vital method to the conceptual framework that is proposed in this study. Constructivism contends that interaction is a space where social activities are shared (Vasterling, 2007). The nature of such interaction cannot only be grounded in social relations without being constituted in meaning (Vasterling, 2007). Thus Frank (as quoted in Roussi & Avdi, 2008, p. 149) contended that:

> ... meaning-making is not solely an individual affair, but it is also a social process, both in the sense of a person's sharing their experience in the various social contexts of his/her life and in the sense that deeply held personal meanings are constructed in a sociocultural context with powerful presuppositions regarding life, self and morality.

Put another way, Gallagher (2011) contended that our everyday encounters with other people are embodied in our inter-subjective state where the meaning and intentionality of one's action are rooted in the interaction. In light of this, social interaction is understood as organised from an enactive perspectiv, where people are described as agentic selves who are not merely passive receptors of information from the environment (Gallagher, 2011). In this framework, people are considered as active and participating actors in the generation of meaning (Varela, 1991).

Since the bi-directional process is a perspective from which the social interaction and consequently where meaning is constructed, according to constructivism personal meaning is not only accepted but promoted (Hein, 1999). For instance, when using the constructivist perspective in the development of public health policy related to HIV, the personal meaning of people who are involved in concurrency would be included in this political tool. With this in mind, HIV partner reduction policy is observed as representing certain interpretations and meaning of sexual relationships (Moreno & Mayer, 2007). Indeed, other interpretations of sexual partnering may also contribute to rich and nuanced outlooks on the topic of safer sex practices within the context of HIV prevention policy (Moreno & Mayer, 2007). In this sense, the meaning of concurrency is seen as an insight which can provide opportunities for more expansive understanding of sexual diversity in the generation of public health policy. Therefore, in a complex political landscape such as sub-Saharan Africa, a constructivism perspective would argue for a comprehensive approach. This would include a creation of an environment where both policy makers and those who are involved in concurrency can engage in dialogue regarding different meanings of sexuality. More so, the factors that make people vulnerable to risky sexual behaviour (Moreno & Mayer, 2007).

Overall, understanding the personal meaning of sexual relationships is an area of work suitable for investigation into the way discriminatory and prejudicial policies such as partner reduction may undermine one's broad assumptions about the meaning of sexuality. Such cognisance is particularly

salient in social sciences where the ontology of knowledge is located within the subjective experiences of the agentic self. Furthermore, this corpus of enquiry lends itself squarely on psychological processes that consume the self when a person tries to cope with such discrepancies. This is the gap that the meaning-making model addresses. Accordingly, this model assists in investigating various coping strategies that people undertaken when their meaning of sexual relationships differ in conceptualisation to those dominant in the society (Park, 2013).

4. Section C: The meaning-making model

In the meaning-making model the understanding is that there are two levels of meaning, namely: global and situational (Park, 2013). The former describes the individual's general orienting systems and understanding of many situations (Park, 2013). On the other hand, situational meaning refers to a construction of meaning specific to a particular situation (Park, 2013). Situational meaning includes processes such as "initial appraisals of the situation, revision of global and appraised meanings and the outcomes of these processes" (Park, 2013, p. 40). The meaning-making model focuses on the discrepancy between the global and situational meaning. In other words, particular attention is paid to a person's cognitive perception of discrepancies between their appraised meaning of a particular situation and their global meaning (i.e., what they believe and desire) (Park, 2013).

Another area of interest in this regard is the potential psychological, emotional and physical distress that may result from the discrepancy of meaning between that held by the individual and those that are dominant in the society (Park, 2013). There are a number of ways through which this discrepancy of meaning can be reduced, including the use of problem-solving strategies. Other coping mechanisms may be psychologically and emotionally driven coping styles (Aldwin, 2007). Another way of reducing discrepancies in meaning, as Park (2013) suggests, is that the individual can either internalise the hegemonic meaning (e.g., of sexuality) as propagated by the society or reject it. Furthermore, the individual can also accept some parts of the dominant meaning while rejecting other parts of it; all in the process of creating a novel meaning that suite his/her needs (Park, 2013). All of this speaks to a bi-directional process of meaning-making, which is constituted by re-evaluating global beliefs and revising goals, or questioning, rethinking, and reaffirming one's sense of meaning in life (Park, 2013).

4.2.0 Global meaning of sexuality and how this is linked to one's general health

Global meaning is related to the individual's health and well-being (Park, 2013). Furthermore, global meaning plays an important role in how individuals deal with circumstances relating to life's adversities (Park, 2013). Such challenges include discrimination and prejudice (Park, 2013). From the perspective of sexuality, these sentiments are strongly associated with the WHO's definition of

sexual health as reported earlier in this dissertation. This articulation impresses upon us the need for one's global meaning of sexuality to be in tandem with that pronounced on by society. When this integration is achieved this experience may lead to the individual's somatic, emotional, intellectual and social aspects of sexual being positively enriched (WHO, 1975).

This conceptualisation of sexual health is largely understood as emerging from the socio-political, as well as cultural interactional context within which it is co-constructed by the agentic self and environmental factors. Therefore, the WHO (1975) literacies focus on how the government should create an environment that enable individuals to access their right to health, which includes the right to self-determination, as well as freedom from sexual prejudice. Furthermore, these texts emphasis the need for people to establish sexual relationships in a manner they deem appropriate (WHO, 1975). The important message emanating from these texts is how the dominant meaning of sexual health in society should not result in the individual being pressured, forced or coerced into assimilating those ideologies (WHO, 1975). The underlying message here is that when negative pressure is exerted, the individual's general health may be impacted negatively (WHO, 1975). In this literature, there is clearly a strong sense of how a person's global meaning of sexuality is linked to their general well-being. Therefore, governments are urged to create an environment and also formulate policies that take this into account, and work towards building constructive relationships with the key population like sexual minorities (WHO, 1975).

4.2.1 Global sexual prejudice and personal meaning-making

The history of sexuality reveals great conflict between governments' understanding of this construct and the people's personal meaning of the same concept. In Southern Africa this clash in meaning dates back to the 19th century when Christian missionaries used religion to discourage the local inhabitants from practicing polygamy (Daniel, 2002). For example, the British colonisers attempted to force the reduction of polygamy through increasing the amount of tax for each wife and reducing the allocation of land for polygamous family households (Brunson, 2014). These actions displayed lack of fairness as well as sexual prejudice, the result being increasing the individual's vulnerability and loss of personal control over such matters (Park, 2013). Although in a different context, Rafizadeh (2016, May 11), captured this accurately when in *Front Page Mag*, he quoted an Iranian woman who lived in the city of Kerman saying:

> Socially speaking the average age for virginity has gone up in Muslim countries. I am thirty-five years old now, and I am still a virgin. They have planted deep-rooted guilt and shame in us if we think about these issues before getting married....

This narrative reminds me of a certain individual from Swaziland who took a strong exception to the country's *Makhwapheniʔ* Campaign. *The Washington Post* quoted him as saying, "... [d]on't tell me how many people to have sex with … you can't dictate that to me. I go to bed with someone. That's my choice. Rather, tell me how to be safer" (Timberg, 2006). Several issues become evident from these two scenarios, and these are: (a) in both these situations there is a sense of agency on the part of the individuals, out of which the conflict between the governments' meaning of sexuality and their personal one is observed; (b) there is a psychological strain that result from the conflict; and (c) at one point or another in the lives of both of these individuals, they may have revised their goals either to assimilate or reject the government's meaning of sexuality. This last point relates to the already existing or anticipated impact of these governments' meaning of sexuality in the lives of these individuals. Indeed, these individuals' general sense of control over expressing their personalised meaning of sexual relationships in both scenarios appears to be constrained.

4.2.2 The impact of the discrepancy of meaning

Sexual prejudice refers to negative attitudes aimed at an individual or a group of people as a result of their sexual orientation (Herek, 2000). This definition implies that there is a difference in sexual meaning for people who institutionalise sexual prejudice and those at the receiving end of it. When this understanding is applied to concurrent partnerships it becomes clear that the partner reduction policy is in violation of section 9 of South Africa's Constitution[5]. This section states that the state may not unfairly discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of sexual orientation. The meaning-making model places the emphasis on how this violation is likely to affect the individuals' goals and his/her plan for the future. Studies have shown that prejudice, based on an individual's sexual orientation, undermines one's broad assumptions about sexual relationships (Park, 2013). The victims of such discrimination and prejudice are reported as experiencing emotional and psychological pain (Meyer, 2003). Some of the outcomes that arise from these distressful situations include fear, anxiety and depression, psychological emotions that can linger for many years (Meyer, 2003). Meyer (2003) indicated that stigma, prejudice and discrimination can create an environment that creates expectations of rejection, hiding and concealment as well as mental health problems.

The most important question is: how do the victims of these processes respond? The meaning-making model states that the response "often entail[s] an effort to find meaning, in terms of making sense of the discrimination itself and of restoring the sense of meaningfulness that is threatened by it" (Park, 2013, p. 40). The scholarship that eloquently illustrates this point is found in texts on homosexuality. For instance, the American Psychiatric Association only declassified same-sex

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[5] Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

sexuality as a psychological illness in 1973 (Nel, 2009). In 1975, the American Psychological Association passed a resolution which affirmed the preceding conclusion (Nel, 2009). Furthermore, the WHO followed suite in 1990, the same year that the International Classification of Diseases delisted homosexuality as an illness (Nel, 2009). It is important to note that these reforms did not occur simply because the people who were in authority and promulgating these rules and policies changed their minds. They occured as the result of the determined efforts by the LGBTI community and other affected individuals, using all sorts of activism and coping mechanisms to contest the heteronormative ideologies of sexual relationships.

In the broader scheme of things, the preceding examples show that meaning-making is an area that should not be taken lightly; rather, it is a part of our lives which is laden with presuppositions regarding life, the self and morality (Frank, 1995). Indeed, at the heart of these narratives is the realisation that the self is agentic and proactively involved in its own development and not merely an organism reactive to environmental forces (Bandura, 1986). Thus, the process of meaning-making characterises the system of causation out of which triadic reciprocal determinism is greatly highlighted (Bandura, 2001). This reciprocal causation model, as explained by Bandura, stipulates that "behaviour, cognition and other personal factors, as well as environmental influences all operate as interacting determinants that influence [meaning-making processes]" (Bandura, 2001, p. 2).

4.2.3 The rationale for including the meaning-making model in the proposed conceptual framework of this study

Given what I have described above, it becomes clear I have drawn on the meaning-making model so that the proposed conceptual framework can provide for a bigger and holistic picture of this contested terrain. Indeed, the insertion of this model into the overall methodology of this study may enable me to critically explore the discrepancy of meaning between concurrency and partner reduction policy. Furthermore, meaning making model might also enable me to explore how such discrepancy may have an impact on the participants' ability to enjoy a safe and satisfying sexual life (WHO, 2015). In addition, the meaning-making model might be useful in teasing out the types of "language, clichés, motifs, references and other elements of linguistic and symbolic repertories which [dictate a certain meaning of concurrency in the HIV partner-reduction policy]" (Bury, 2001, p. 278).

Once again research on the meaning-making of sexuality and how this is linked to HIV policies in South Africa and the rest of the region is invaluable. In the context of the present study this is even more pertinent. This is because the stories from the participants in the study are likely to shed light on how public health policy influences the way in which people organise their perceptions, thoughts

and cognition into the sorts of categories, concepts and systems of explanations related to the meaning of their sexual practices.

4.2.4 Summary

As demonstrated above, sexuality as a construct is formulated and given meaning through interaction with others. This human aspect is often a source of great confusion, discussion and debate (Sember, 2009). Therefore, as shown here it is important to employ a methodological lens which, in this case is not singular but multidisciplinary in scope. Such an intergrated conceptual framework might provide a thorough reading and analysis pertaining to the topic of this study. Indeed, conceptual frameworks that place in context and emphasise the importance of the way in which dominant ideologies are commonly used to exclude sexual minorities are more than necessary in sub-Saharan Africa. The prioritisation of personal meaning associated with concurrency makes this dissertation the only scholarship in sub-Saharan Africa that highlights how HIV partner-reduction policy may be impacting negatively on people who are involved in these relationships.

Given that polyamorous relationships in South Africa are poorly researched, specifically in the field of HIV policies the contribution of this academic undertaking cannot be underestimated. Indeed, personal meaning of sexualities provides a powerful tool for understanding how the conceptualisation of HIV prevention initiatives can have particularised significance to those people who are engaged in concurrency if the meaning of their relationships is acknowledged. This orientation is appropriate in opening up opportunities for policy makers in this country and the rest of the region to interrogate significant psychological processes. These relate to the individual's sense of mastery, forethought, value judgment, or how individuals appraise situations that may enable or obstruct negotiation of safer sex practices in concurrent relationships. Furthermore, the focus on personal meaning also enables the pursuit of discovery pertaining to how the individual perceives or experiences themself as a causal agent within the context of concurrency. With this in mind, policy makers, health practitioners and social scientists may learn that sexual behaviour is nothing more than a construct that is interpreted and re-interpreted within a transactional process of interaction which is constantly negotiated by the agentic self (McCarthy & Wright 2004).

Importantly, the HIV partner reduction policy shows that, for the most part, HIV is a discursive phenomenon. Thus, when the appropriate message is targeted at the key population, the idea is that it might encourage these group of people to re-orientate their behaviour and consider conduct that is less risky. Therefore, the larger aim should always be on formulating HIV strategies that acknowledges the personal meaning of concurrent relationships.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This chapter discusses the methodology used in the study. Therefore, the following explanation is centred on the research design, population sampling, and fieldwork, as well as data analysis. More information is provided regarding the ethics of conducting scientific research with participants and this also includes a discussion on how such studies attain measures of trustworthiness.

5. Research Paradigm

Paradigms are generally understood as coherent belief structures (Terre-Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2014). In view of this, a paradigm is also a lens through which our perspectives are shaped. Luke explains paradigms as sets of assumptions about the ontology of reality, epistemology of human knowledge and the kinds of methods that can be used to provide answer to research questions (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). The term paradigm comes from the Greek word, *paradeigma*, which means pattern (Kuhn, 1970). Thomas Kuhn is largely regarded as the first person to refer to paradigms as conceptual frameworks that are shared by a community of scientists – the purpose being structuring a model for investigating problems and finding solutions (Kuhn, 1970). Terre-Blanche and Durrheim (1999) state that in research the purpose of a paradigm has three major thrusts and these are: ontology (what is reality?), epistemology (how do you know something?) and methodology (how do you go about finding it out?). In social science, there are at least three competing paradigms: positivism, interpretivism and constructivism.

5.1 Positivism

Positivism is a term that refers to a scientific means of testing hypotheses (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). The cross disciplinary application of this model in social sciences is centred on the philosophical thinking of the French Philosopher, August Comte (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). His way of investigating human behaviour was through the strategies of observation and reason (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Furthermore, he regarded experiments as the best means of obtaining true knowledge (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). In general, the positivism approach views objectivity, measurements and quantities as the ontological way of examining reality (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). In this paradigm, the researcher is considered as independent and uses his or her instruments to minimise sources of bias wherever possible in empricial studies (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Indeed, this way of conducting research means that the researcher is detached from his or her data in the pursuit of the reliability and validity of the data-set (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014).

The positivist stance uses the dualism of right or wrong, and true or false dichotomy to frame what constitutes reality (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). This addresses the kinds of Morris and Kretzschmar's

mathematical modelling of concurrency that has been used in the HIV partner reduction policy. In this epidemiological modelling, the construction of concurrency is framed as sexual partnering that is wrong and incorrect. The view here is that knowledge is hard, real and acquirable; therefore, people can be instructed to confine their love to only one person. Indeed, Morris and Kretzschmar's concurrency hypothesis is the sort of methodology that is used in the HIV partner-reduction policies as a justification for the control and manipulation of the reality of sexual partnering. This positivist thinking regards human sexuality as passive, controlled and determined by external environment (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014).

5.1.2 Interpretivism

The worldview of interpretivism espouses a notion of reality that is grounded in social relations. In this paradigm human beings are regarding as agentic selves and subjectively driven individuals (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Willis (1995) explains that the focus on subjectivity allows for the exploration of plurality of the epistemology and ontology of realities. Thus, the application of this approach in research practices utilises more open-ended research questions. In doing so, the researcher is better able to reach an understanding of a person's contextual wordview (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). This contextual emphasis on the subject reifies particularities, while at the same time obscuring the generalisation and quantification of experiences that is so critical in positivist thinking. In so many ways, the principles of phenomenology are reflected here, specifically in discovering and expressing important characteristics of a certain phenomenon as they appear to the researcher. In other words, this means the study of appearances of things as they appear in our experience or the ways we experience things (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Interpretivism is essentially the study of the structures of consciousness through the first-person account of their experiences. What is important here, especially to novice researchers like me, is the systematic approach that this paradigm provides in relation to investigating topics that are generally considered sensitive. The study of sexual relationships is one such example. Indeed, interpretivism provides the sorts of arsenal one needs in order to explore the consciousness and content of conscious experiences. An example of these include one's judgments, perceptions and emotions (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014).

Therefore, interpretivism can be described as a field of research where an in-depth examination of the phenomenon is paramount. In this sense, the core business of interpretivists, asTerre-Blanche et al. (2014) states is on investigating how knowledge and meaning are constructed in interpretation. This nullifies the positivists' approach of objective knowledge that is independent of thinking and outside of the reasoning humans. Furthermore, according to interpretivism reality is understood as emerging from the social constructions such as language and shared meanings of human activities

(Myers, 2009). In the programmatic areas of research projects, this emphasis translates into data collection methodologies such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions or participant observations.

The significance of interpretive research lies in refraining from predefining dependent and independent variables (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Furthermore, the premise of this approach is on attempting to encompass the full complexity of human behaviour as constructed and interpreted in social relations (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Burrell and Morgan (1979) cautioned against viewing interpretivism in singular terms, rather these authors advocate for a perspective that views this approach as a large family of diverse but connected paradigms. This is primarily evidenced by the philosophical base of interpretive research as rooted in hermeneutics and hermeneutical-phenomenology-interpretive (Boland, 1985). The roots of hermeneutics involved the study and interpretation of ancient texts (Klein & Myers, 1999). However, within the context of interpretive studies this practice includes the interpretation of qualitative data (Klein & Myers, 1999). In the late nineteenth century, the authors credited with harmonising the philosophies of hermeneutics in interpretive studies are arguably Gadamer and Ricoeur (Klein & Myers, 1999). Nevertheless, as Bleicher (1980) stated this interpretative approach of reading data is more a mode of analysis. In other words, when human behaviour is explored within this paradigm, the overall aim is to analyse the meaning that people attach to their behaviour (Klein & Myers, 1999). In order to achieve this goal, and as indicated above, the researcher has to focus on modes of communication such as language, particular styles of communication and symbols. For example, in the present study, the application of hermeneutics pertains to analysing how the HIV partner reduction policy uses language and other modes of communication to institutionalise a certain form of knowledge relative to concurrency.

5.1.3 Constructivism

Constructivism can be traced back to the philosophy of human existence, according to Manheim and Schutz (as cited in Barillaro, Metz, Perran, & Stokes, 2009). This approach was institutionalised in the social sciences as a particular methodology used to explore the epistemology of knowledge production (Barillaro et al., 2009). The proponents of this approach are theorists such as Mead and Parsons (Barillaro et al., 2009). Constructivists view knowledge as a phenomenon that is built over time and constructed through experiences rather than discovered (Barillaro et al., 2009). This orientation is similar to interpretivism in that it was developed as a counter methodological practice relative to positivist approaches. According to constructivists the notion of singular truth is rejected (Barillaro et al., 2009). Here knowledge is regarded as a process that is constructed through an active interpretation by individuals in their capacity as social agents (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). In

so many ways constructivism amplifies the argument of this study, which is, there is no one truth related to affective experiences such as sexual relationships. In their 1973 publication, *Sexual Conduct*, Gagnon and Simon used social constructivism to reach the preceding conclusions. These authors stated that sexuality is not a universal phenomenon which is the same for everybody (Gagnon, & Simon, 1973). Similarly, Laws and Schwartz (1977) applied the constructionist paradigm in order to discuss female sexuality within the geopolitical context of the U.S. This was in regard to phenomena such as birth and sexual anatomy. The assertion here was not necessarily the biological contexts of these events but certain social ideologies that govern their occurrence and give them meaning (De Lamater & Hyde, 1998). The concurrent relationships reify the preceding discourse in that the partner reduction policy acts as an instructional system, which dictates the confines of sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa.

5.1.4 Theories adopted in this research study

In chapter 4, I explained how, currently, the best practices in empirical research are those that use the multidisciplinary methodologies in order to investigate the research question. This practice is increasingly accepted as the golden standard, even when approaching the research paradigm of the study. Therefore, this approach is also followed in the present study. The philosophical assumptions used here combine three inter-related school of thoughts and these are phenomenology, interpretivism, as well as constructivism. Although there are philosophical differences between these paradigms, there are also strong parallels and overlaps which provided the rationale for integrating them.

For example, although in its purest sense phenomenology describes the essence of the participants' lived experiences; it is a branch of hermeneutical interpretations which overlaps with interpretative methods (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Therefore, using these two research paradigms gives the researcher greater scope for addressing questions as why and how non-monogamous practices are established. In the area of sexuality studies, the interpretive approach can help the researcher understand the context and processes through which sexual relationships influence, and are influenced by the socio-cultural context within which people live (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Indeed, the aspect of context forms a large part of phenomenology as Heidegger stated, this paradigm is "the art of interpretation in context" (as cited in Terre-Blanche et al., 2014).

In addition, constructivism, as Schwandt (1994) observed, is synonymous with interpretivism because not only does the former focus on the shared meaning, but also on how knowledge is acquired and interpreted. In this sense, the participants of this study illustrated the manner in which knowledge of sexuality was used in the establishment of polyamorous partnering within the social-

cultural context of South Africa. The epistemology of this knowledge was multifaceted in scope, with some of it based in childhood and upbringing, but also influenced by the cultural norm of monogamy. Their knowledge and understanding of what the expression of love meant to them, was essential in helping them to structure these relationships.

In general, these three inter-related paradigms suggest the stance of the inter-subjective or interactional researcher in research work. In other words, according to these research paradigms the researcher is part of the research process and this is the epistemological stance that I have adopted in this study. Therefore, from an interpretivist perspective, this means that I am part of the research process and not an outside observer (Henning, van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004). Indeed, the recent work of Annansingh and Howell's (2016) have sought to dispel the duality of constructionism versus interpretivism-phenomenological approaches. These authors argue for a combination of these approaches by labelling them interpretative-phenomenological-constructivism. This uniformity arises out of an understanding that in qualitative research the phenomena under exploration cannot be empirically described without the principle of interpretation being inherent. This means in a scholarly research project the description of participants' experiences of their polyamorous relationships provides only a partial reading of knowledge production. The researcher's interpretation of these experiences is an implicit part of the process. Indeed, the researcher's interpretative insights are an analytic dimension that ties participants' experiences, relevant literature, as well as the conceptual framework (used in the study) together as one coherent set of knowledge construction.

5.1.5 Definition of methodology

According to Polit, Hungler, and Beck (200: p. 233) methodology is simply a particular way of collating, organising and analysing information which is then presented as a data-set for the purposes of generating knowledge in scientific research. Mouton (1996) says that the concept of methodology refers to a particular way of undertaking an academic scholarship. Burns and Grove (2003) describe methodology as a paradigm, which includes the elements of the research design, setting, sample, methodological limitations, fieldwork and analysis of techniques in research. Meanwhile, Holloway (2005) considers methodology as a particular framework around which methods and procedures are organised. In this dissertation, methodology refers to how the research was conceptualised and the way in which the study was structured. A qualitative research methodology was used as an organising principle with two critical activities of dialectics and interpretation in the present study. Dialectics refers to the interaction that takes place between the researcher and participants. Interpretation pertains to the information gathered from the participants which is turned into a data-set (De Vos, 2002).

5.2 Research Design

Overall, in the present study an exploratory, descriptive, interpretative and contextual qualitative approach in order to investigate the experiences of polyamorous relationships in South Africa was used. Below is the discussion around the attributes of qualitative research design.

5.2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research refers to an approach that is in-depth and detailed in character with the aim of understanding, interpreting, describing and developing a theory on the subject matter under exploration (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Qualitative research is also an approach that is best suited to experience-based studies, which include words, language and stories (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). This differs in principle to quantitative methods where the focus is on figures and statistics. Researchers who use qualitative research understand that this approach is orientated towards the individuals, focusing specifically on the participants' life-worlds (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Accordingly, this approach is geared towards providing a more nuanced, contextual and subjective focus of the population under exploration (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014). Indeed, qualitative research is not concerned with producing generalisations or measuring patterns of behaviour, but with underscoring particularities that are unique to each person and taking into account the social specificity of the participants (Terre-Blanche et al., 2014).

5.2.2 Attributes of qualitative research

Qualitative approach is especially important in psychological research mainly because it is a type of a research paradigm that is able to tease out subjective stories of participants. Furthermore, this approach is strongly associated with promoting ethical conduct on the part of the researcher. This pertains to the researcher striving to emphatically listen to the stories of the participants. In addition, using this approach requires of the researcher to be non-judgemental, build a good rapport with participants, and being honest in his or her conduct during the research process. On the whole, the characteristics of qualitative research include, but are not limited to:

• Deductive and emic interpretation which is derived from constructing themes from the data-set, and then converting these into a coherent set of findings;
• Ideographic interpretation, which aims to explore and gain insight into the meaning that people attach to their everyday life;
• Approaches reality as a concept that is largely relative and subjective;
• Crystallises the meaning once the researcher becomes immersed in the data;

• Presentation of data is provided by means of narratives, experiences, stories such as quotes from transcripts;

• Uses a holistic unit of analysis focusing on the relationships between themes and concepts; and

• The tools of analysis are words as opposed to statistical categories.

(Brink & Wood 1998; Burns & Grove 2003)

5.2.3 Advantages of qualitative research in sexuality studies

According to Power (2002), qualitative methods have made a significant contribution to sexuality studies, particularly to research on sexually transmitted infections and HIV. The topic of sexuality is personal and highly sensitive. Therefore, qualitative research allows the research to tease out such private experiences from participants (Power, 2002). It is because of this that, for example, there is greater understanding of how the epidemic of HIV affects women far more than it does men, mostly because of cultural factors as masculinities (Power, 2002). In other words, qualitative methods move beyond the biological determinants of the disease and reveal the importance of the discursive nature of the virus. Other advantages of qualitative methods are explained below:

• Qualitative research is a means to understand complex human emotions related to sexuality such as intimacy, attachment, rejection, love, jealousy and deceit.

• This approach is important to the study of sexual relationships, because this aspect of our lives cannot be measured or quantified. It is only through constructive dialogue with the participants that people are able to reveal the why, how and when, of their behaviour. This is particularly useful when trying to understand the psychological reasoning behind a person's choice to engage in sexual partnering that is considered outside of the societal norm.

• Qualitative research focuses on understanding the whole, which is a critical approach to understanding complicated phenomena, for instance, the relationship between concurrency, safer sex practice and potential risk of HIV.

5.3 Population and sampling

5.3.1 Research Approach

The research questions as set out in this dissertation determined the focus, design, format and the use of qualitative methods (Evavold, 2003). As I have explained in the preceding section, qualitative methods are important in areas of research that are poorly understood and under-researched such as that of polyamorous relationships (Motlana, Okudela, Moroka, Roos, & Snyman, 2004). Therefore, this study attempts: (1) to understand the experiences of people who are involved in polyamorous relationships in South Africa; (2) to explore their perceptions, beliefs and ideologies

about this partnering; and (3) to find out how the issue of safer sex practice is negotiated in these non-monogamous relationships.

5.3.2 Procedure

I formulated a list of semi-structured questions that was utilised to facilitate the face-to-face individual interviews with participants (see Appendix A). The list consists of questions which were formulated to explore the conceptualisation of the role and meaning of concurrent partnerships among polyamorists. The questions were partly based on policy documents which call for the reduction of all forms of concurrent partnerships as a behavioural strategy, the literature on concurrent partnerships and polyamory scholarship. The face-to-face individual interviews (the data collection method utilised in this study) were expected to last between one hour and two hours each. A digital recorder was used (with the permission of the participants) to record all face-to-face individual interviews. In the event where the participants were not be willing to give permission for the recording of the interview I was prepared to take notes. The individual face-to-face individual interviews were conducted at locations that were suitable for the participants, and which did not pose a security risk to either them or myself.

5.4 Participants

5.4.1 Sampling approach

The word *sample* means a group of people who are selected from the target population and invited to take part in a research study (Burns & Grove, 2003). Thus, the sample is chosen primarily as the result of the common characteristics that those individuals share in relation to the research questions of a particular study (Burns & Grove, 2003). Therefore, this means that all participants who were going to take part in this study would be individuals involved in polyamorous relationships. This is because Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (used here as the data analysis method) suggests that the participants used in the study should be individuals who are "a more closely defined group for whom the research question will be significant" (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 56). A non-random sampling targeted at eight polyamorists (4 females and 4 males) who reside in South Africa was used to have such individuals participating in this study. However, the overall total of the participants that were retained in the study were only seven. The use of a small sample as described above, is in accordance with the recommendations by Turpin et al. (1997) who stated that in an IPA study "six to eight participants is appropriate as this size sample gives an opportunity to examine similarities and differences between individuals.

5.4.2 Participant recruitment

The participants were recruited through a website created for individuals who practice polyamory in South African (at zapoly-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). The South African Polyamory group was established in 2006 and at the time of data, collection had a restricted membership of 260 individuals. Therefore, in order for me to access potential participants, I needed to work through this website. Using this approach to collect data means I had to follow a number of steps. Firstly, I had to join the group by creating an email account on search engine Yahoo and then request to join the group (at zapoly-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). Secondly, I had to wait for feedback from the moderators of the ZA Poly website informing me if my request was approved or declined - I was grant access. Thirdly, I then had to inform the moderators of my intentions for joining the group. Fourthly, I was instructed by the moderators to circulate, on the website, an online recruitment phamphlet (see appendix B) which explained what the study entailed.

5.4.3 Four Inclusion Criteria

This study adopted the four inclusion criteria from the similar study by Keener (2004), which explored the phenomenology of polyamorous persons in the United States of America. In her study, Keener (2004) operationalised these inclusion criteria in the following way:

(a) Choosing participants who self-identified themselves as polyamorists and were in a polyamorous relationship for the period of one year before participating in this study. This particular criterion ensured that the participants were moderately familiar with polyamory.

(b) Participants had to be 25 years of age and above. As Keener (2004) noted, it was not ideal to select participants younger than 25 years because that is an age bracket that is close to adolescence. This preceding phase is regarded as a human development period which is associated with fluidity in identity development. Therefore, choosing the participants who were in their mid-20s ensured that identity formation had been established.

(c) Initially this study was meant to be conducted in the province of Gauteng. There were, however, difficulties in recruiting the required number of participants in the said province. Therefore, I had to include willing participants who lived in other provincesand also belonged to the South African polyamory group. Although, the population of South Africa are culturally diverse, selecting participants from the South African polyamory group meant that this sample were more likely to have shared similar experiences (e.g. stigma). The benefit of this was that the process of eliciting common themes was easier and more practical.

(d) Furthermore, the participants were selected for allowing heterogeneity of factors such as social class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religious or spiritual orientation. The criterion of heterogeneity of participants was important because it was likely to tease out issues such as the privilege or lack thereof related to race and social class, and so forth. For example, in terms of gender, how are 'White' women who practice polyamory able to negotiate safer sex practices in comparison to their 'Black' counterparts? Furthermore, how does the issue of social class mediate protection or vulnerability against the diseases such as HIV?

5.4.4 The selection of participants

As indicated earlier the method of participants' recruitment was through the study pamphlet that I had designed and given permission (by the moderators of the website) to post it on the Poly ZA website. This study pamphlet set out the objectives of the dissertation and also included it were my contact details. Therefore, only the participants who responded to the study pamphlet on the ZA Poly website (15 individuals in total) I vetted to determine if they met the criteria to be involved in my study. Of these participants, I declined eight individuals. This is because three of these individuals were involved in polyamorous relationships for less than 1 year. The other two individuals were in the phase of experimenting with their sexual relationships and thus not sure if they could identify themselves as polyamorous individuals. The remaining three individuals were in the process of emigrating to other countries. Therefore, their involvement in the study might have proved tricky because of the logistics of emigrating.

5.4.5 Participant dropping out the study

One participant dropped out of the study. I made repeated attempts to reach this individual in order to determine the reasons for her dropping out of my research project but could not make contact with ther. Obtaining a replacement through the polyamorous ZA poly website proved difficult and thus I proceeded with only seven participants that agreed to be involved the study.

5.4.6 Locations of interview sessions

The two participants who resided in the Northern Cape Province I conducted the interview sessions with them was via Skype. I had concerns that this mode of conversing with participants might compromise the quality of these interviews. However, this was not the case mainly because both these participants chose the rooms in their homes where it was quite and for the duration of the interviews, no disturbances occurred. In addition, the sound quality of the interviews was audible because I had speakers connected to my laptop and asked both participants to do the same. Furthermore, in terms of the internet connection, in both cases, they were no signal disturbances. I conducted face-to-face interviews with all three participants who live in the Gauteng province. The

two participants who reside in Johannesburg, in both cases I met in the locations that suited their convenience. In both these locations, they were no disturbances during the interview sessions. The participant who live in Pretoria, I met her at the University of Pretoria where the interview session was conducted. The rest of the participants who live in Cape Town, two of these interview sessions were telephonically conducted. Again, this mode of conducting the interviews did not compromise the quality thereof.

5.4.7 The description of the sample

The final group consisted of seven participants (3 males and 4 females) who were between the ages of 25 and 50. The participants were spread across three South African provinces, namely: Gauteng, Cape Town and Northern Cape. All of the participants were employment in different sectors of the labour market. In addition, all of the participants had tertiary education. Table **2** provides biographical information regarding the participants.

Table 1: Biographical information of the participants in this study

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnic background	Home Language	Tertiary Education	Employment Status (during fieldwork)	Sexual Orientation
Jay Naido	51	Male	Indian	English	Yes	Trainer	Cisgender
Kobus van Rooyen	45	Male	White	Afrikaans	Yes	Mechanic	Heterosexual
Martha Louw (person with disability)	40	Female	White	Afrikaans	Yes	Nurse	Pan-sexual
Peter Cash	35	Male	White	English	Yes	Consultant	Heterosexual
Michelle Willian	27	Female	White	Afrikaans	Yes	Lab Assistant	
Marlene van Niekerk	38	Female	White	English	Yes	Administrator	Heterosexual
Benita Soul	28	Female	White	English	Yes	Student	bi-sexual

Although the objective of this study was to obtain, as best as possible, a diverse sample this was difficult to achieve. This was mainly due to the final group of participants sharing certain similarities of race, social class status, access to tertiary education and residency in urban areas. It is important to highlight the backgrounds of the participants given the topic of this study.

5.5 Data collection

Data gathering is the precise, systematic way of obtaining information using data collection tools such as interviews, participant observations, focus group discussions, case histories and so forth (Burns & Grove, 2003). Data collection begins with the researcher deciding from where and which targeted sample the data is going to be gathered (Talbot, 1995).

5.5.1 Qualitative interviews as a form of data collection

5.5.1.1 The history of qualitative interviews

Qualitative research interviews are an established form of gathering scientific knowledge. Anthropology and Sociology are regarded as the two disciplines in academia to have popularised the use of qualitative interviews (Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1925). Although, the use of qualitative interviews as instruments of data collection is not attributed to a single person, Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln are often cited as authors who helped to mainstream this practice in scientific research. In psychology, the use of qualitative interviews as vehicles of knowledge creation were initially confined to clinical practitioners, for instance, Sigmund Freud with his theory of psychoanalysis. Over time, qualitative interviews became the bedrock of most of the psychological theories from which scientific inquiries in scholarly research were conceptualised. In the area of communicable and infectious diseases the discipline of epidemiology and health medicine are important, especially in the initially stages where tracking the spread of these diseases is a paramount factor (Spronk, 2012). This has been the situation with HIV; statistics on the rates of transmission of this epidemic is the type of data that is well documented because of the preceding scientific fields. However, qualitative interviews have contributed to HIV and AIDS research through their ability to produce nuanced and contextual information regarding how this disease in different population. These interviews as forms of data collection have deepened our understanding of how issues related to risk and safer sex practices are perceived (Power, 2002).

Qualitative researchers have proposed different classification systems for different types of interviews. Sayre (2001), for example, distinguished the unstructured field interview from the more formal structured interview that contained a predetermined set of open-ended questions. Patton (2002) provided a more detailed classification of open-ended interviews, differentiating three basic approaches: (a) the informational conversational interview, (b) the interview guide approach, and (c)

the standardised open-ended interview. The most important features of each interview approach are presented in Table 1.2 below:

Table 2: Approaches of open-ended interviews

The Informational conversational interview	The interview guide	The standardised open-ended interview
Unstructured	Semi- structured	Semi-structured
Questions flow from immediate context; no predetermination of questions, topic or wording.	The interview guide provides topics or subject areas in advance, in outline form.	The extract wording of questions and their sequence are predetermined.
Conversational flow as a major tool of extracting information.	Within the framework of the guide, the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions.	Each respondent gets to answer the same questions in the same way and in the same order, including standard probes.
	However: focus on a particular predetermined subject.	
Data gathered will be different for each person interviewed.	Data collection more systematic.	Enhanced comparability of data.

Source: Patton (2002)

Qualitative interviews generally take two forms, that is, structured or semi-structured. Both of these forms follow the same rules, with verbal communication between the researcher and participants foregrounded. It is, indeed, a foregone conclusion that the interviews are based on discussing a topic of interest where the participant is positioned as a discoursing subject. The researcher, on the other hand, captures the narrative of the participant aided by his or her research instrument(s). As opposed to quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews are also suited to uncover meanings that are associated with a particular behaviour, thus revealing the contextual basis of the participant's actions. More so, the flexibility of these interviews allow for probes and follow- up questions in cases where clarity is obscured.

5.5.2 Preparing for the interview

The preparation for the interviews begin when the researcher selects the participants according to the sampling criteria. Obtaining thorough knowledge about the literature review on the topic of the study is also considered part of preparing for the interviews with the participants (De Vos, 2002).

5.5.3 The procedure of the interview sessions

Interviews were conducted individually with each participant and lasted for a period of about 40 to 60 minutes.

As a researcher, I took the following steps in each interview session:

- Made an appointment with each participant at a time which suited them.
- Thanked the participant for the time and willingness to be part of the study.
- Since the setting of some of the interviews were conducted via skype[6], I asked the participant to find a suitable space where we could have a conversation without interruptions.
- Explained the purpose of the interview
- Explained to the participant that there were no right or wrong answers
- Addressed the terms of participant confidentiality
- Indicated the duration of the interview depending on how much the participant is willing to share his/her experience
- Provided the participant with my contact details and those of my supervisor in case further clarity is needed about my study
- Explained that the interview was to be semi-structured and that probing questions would be determined by the information given by the participant.
- Allowed the participant to ask any questions or clarify any doubts about the interview
- Asked the participant for consent to use the digital recorder to record the interview
- In situations where I met with some of the participants refreshments were provided

5.5.4 The Interview guide

The type of the questions that I had drawn up in the interview guide included aspects such as the following:

- Sexual-behavioural questions – what a person has done or is doing.

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[6] Skype is a video call that can be conducted over the Internet irrespective of where the participants are physically located.

- Opinions/values – what a person thinks about the topic.

- Feelings – what a person feels, rather than what a person thinks.

- Knowledge – to get facts about the topic.

- Background/demographics information – standard background questions, such as age, social class, educational level, and so forth.

5.5.5 Building rapport with the participants

Any form of meeting between strangers (whether personal or professional) is often characterised by an ambiance of uneasiness. This is particularly intensified in the research practice where the participants may feel as though they are about to be interrogated, given the power differential between them and the researcher (De Vos, 2002). To this end, creating an atmosphere where the participants felt at ease was critical in order to encourage them to reveal personal information about their lives. I recall a moment where one of the participants indicated before the interview began that she was feeling very nervous. I told her that we were going to have a discussion and that there were no right or wrong answers. Furthermore, I impressed upon her that I was not conducting this research to judge, and that her experiences of engaging in a polyamorous relationship were important to me. This helped me gain rapport and made her feel comfortable and, as a result, she was able to provide a detailed account about her involvement in a polyamorous relationship.

5.5.6 Role of the researcher

My primary role as a researcher is to obtain a rich source of information regarding the phenomenon under study. Thus, I had to pay attention to several factors; some that include building strong rapport with the participants (as indicated above), knowing when to probe for more information and being sensitive to the latter's stories. Overall, as the principal investigator in this study it was important that I had great insight concerning the following:

- Adequate knowledgeable regarding the topic of polyamorous relationships

- Good experience with data collection, particularly relating to extrapolation of information from participants in matters pertaining to sensitive topics. To this end, I have worked (in South Africa) for a number of research institutions as a researcher and some of my key performance areas have been data management and fieldwork. In addition, I have experience in designing research tools such as a qualitative interview guides (with were clear, simple, easy and short questions).

- Along with the above-mentioned skills, as a researcher I needed to conduct the interviews with participants in a gentle manner and be tolerant, sensitive and patient with discussions relating to alternative sexualities such as polyamory.

- I also had to have an ability to be able to steer the course of the interview in order to avoid digressions from the topic under discussion.

- Furthermore, I had be critical in order to test the reliability and validity of what the participants were recounting to me.

5.5.7 Power and positioning in interviews

The contemporary preoccupation of qualitative research is the historically situated nature of data collection, particularly the relationships between the researcher and those that were researched (Wang, 2013). For example, in non-positivist paradigms, there is a move away from the division of researcher versus researched towards underscoring the co-production of knowledge that emerges out of the interrelationship between these two participants (Gergen, 2000). This conceptualisation of fieldwork challenges our traditional understanding of control over representation because here the construct of representation is increasingly shared (Gergen, 2000). Other fields of research paradigms such as feminism have sought practical initiatives that aimed at reducing the oppression of specific populations in the research process by restoring parity in the power distribution between the researcher and researched (Maguire, 1987). This epistemological approach focuses less on the construction of an accurate representation of the objective reality and more on the inter-subjective nature of the inquiry (Maguire, 1987). For instance, in this study I was interested in the following questions: How do I, as a researcher, mutually construct meanings with the participants, and what are the subsequent implications of this relative to the phenomenon under exploration? This thinking was also influenced by Back and Solomos (as cited in Wang, 2013, p. 763), who brought to our attention the "need to give our writing a history, a biography, so that our inevitably imperfect and contingent 'partial truths can be looked at more honestly and free from the confines of rehoric".

This way of researching, which disrupts the traditional hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched had a gestation period in social science research (Reinharz, 1992). Indeed, this discussion is building on the work of Franklin (1997) who posited that the stated relationship was nothing more than an information extraction model. Accordingly, he described this process as some sort of monolithic and linear way of obtaining information, where the researcher took an active role and participants were passive in their story telling (Franklin, 1997). In this paradigm, the researcher strives to assert objectivity aided by his or her research instruments (Franklin, 1997). This prism has been rejected by feminist thinkers by stated that this approach throttles nuanced narratives and obscures opportunities for participants to explore unanticipated, but related topics (Burman, 1994).

Indeed, in the context of interpretative phenomenological research, as well as the constructivist approach, the enterprise of scientific research is, in and of itself, a negotiation through the process of knowledge production. In understanding that the stories of the participants are at the heart of research, the beat of it is in doing research with, instead of, on participants. This conceptualisation is critical, because it is through this understanding that the tacit concept of power between the researcher and participants can be balanced (Reinharz, 1992). This vein of thinking illuminates important aspects such as participants' agency, which should be emphasised in research; as these individuals and the researcher are locked together in an active exercise of knowledge creation (Franklin, 1997).

The authority of the researcher and how this appears may inadvertently exert some form of power over the participants, thereby potentially influencing "what is said and how it is said" (Franklin, 1997, p. 104). In order to mitigate against this, Oakley (1981) suggests that egalitarian structures in the research process be promoted by the researcher through disclosing personal information to the participants in the same way that the latter does during fieldwork. This shift, as Oakley (1981) opines, is likely to reposition the researcher from being an expert, to more of a voyeur or an explorer of knowledge. Ethnographers such as Coffey (1999), have for a long time warned researchers about the use of this method, arguing that building a rapport with the participants is very different to enjoying a close relationship with them. The draw-back of the latter is that the participants may easily forget that the researcher is not necessarily their friend and therefore share information that they would rather have opted to keep confidential (Coffey, 1999). More so, if the researcher completely assumes the role of an insider in the field there is a potential risk of affirming the participants' accounts without allowing for a production of critical and nuanced insights (Wise, 1987).

Wang (2013) addressed these ethical considerations by talking about notions such as falsehood and reality. The context of falsehood does not imply manipulative and deceitful relationships. However, this highlights the elevated nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants, which under normal circumstances might have taken a different trajectory. For instance, in order to obtain a rich source of data from participants, the researcher may seem to be more agreeable and interested in the participants' lives than would ordinarily be the case (Wang, 2013). On the other hand, participants may appear to be keener in their involvement in the research process than they might generally be (Wang, 2013). Indeed, these dynamics illustrate how the field of research is a co-constructive process, which is primarily forged by both parties (Wang, 2013). Wang's (2013) hypothesis of the constructive and artificial nature of field relations is that it is recursive, in that it is both strength and a weakness. The negative aspect of the artificial nature of data collection relates to the participants providing information that may be misleading and which the researcher only

discovers at a later stage when conducting data analysis (Wang, 2013). Furthermore, the researcher's extensive involvement in the field often results in formation of intimate relationships with participants. De Laine (2000) concluded that such relationships are subject to the laws of every relationship in natural settings where emotions became important. Therefore, the emotional bond between the researcher and participants may be characterised by personal likes and dislikes, anomalies, jealousies, resentments and conflicts of interest. Therefore, these complexities might compromise the data collection process.

Writing on this topic, Tindall (1994) described a strategy that may be used by researchers, which is, the latter should strive to make available to the participants information regarding his or her involvement in the research. This could entail revealing why the researcher was interested in the field of study and why this was important to knowledge creation, with the participants being fully aware of their rights in the research (Tindall, 1994). Overall, it is difficult to do away with the power differential between the researcher and participants (Tindall, 1994). This is generally case, especially considering in what context the research process was constituted, by whom and to what end. Indeed, the researcher often initiates the research process and he/she determines how the study is conducted. To this end, the researcher decides on the criterion of the selection of participants, how the interview guide is constructed and how the data is captured (Tindall, 1994).

It is important to remember that despite all of these complexities, the participants generally, want their stories to be heard, hence their involvement in the research. Therefore, the solution that I propose to minimize the researcher's power in these settings is twofold. Firstly, the researcher has to ensure that the participants retain their autonomy. Gillon (1986) define autonomy as the capacity for one to think, decide, and act on the basis of such thought and make decisions freely. Beauchamp and Childress (2001) indicated two additional ways which could ensure the autonomy of the participants during fieldwork, and these were through (a) liberty (independence from controlling influences), and (b) agency (capacity for intentional action).

The second solution is one that I adopted from Karnieli-Miller, Strier, and Pessach (2009), who stated that the researcher should endeavour, as best as possible, to create a welcoming, non-threatening environment in which the participants would be willing to share their stories. This ambiance would encourage a "feeling of empathy for [participants]" thereby allowing for disclosure of personal feelings (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 48). In consideration of these ethical issues related to conducting research with participants, I was mindful of the way in which I collected the data. Therefore, I refrained from offering personal information regarding my sexuality, but did so when participants enquired about it. In instances where some of the participants asked my personal opinion about polyamory, I explained that even though my understanding of it was mostly from what I had read in

the literature, my interest in the topic meant that I considered it to be another form of sexuality. Overall, I found that the setting of the interviews, including the provision of consent forms, use of the interview guide and the digital recorder impressed upon the participants the importance of their stories. I say this because most of these participants explained at the beginning of the interviews how much they needed to tell their stories. Moreover, many of these participants told me that this representation would help to spread awareness about their sexuality to the wider community. Indeed, this systematic way of arranging data elicitation did not impede the ability of the participants to share their experiences but encouraged them to tell their stories with confidence.

5.6 Insider / Oustider binaries

The idea of the co-construction of meaning between the researcher and participants that I outlined above has to be read in conjunction with the issue of insider versus outsider status of the researcher. This topic is increasingly debated in social science research (Liamputtong, 2010). The precarious status (insider versus outsider researcher) is noticeably important, especially in cross-cultural research (Banks, 1998). These terms are reminiscent of research that was historically conducted by Western scholars on native people in Africa. Their saliency in contemporary scholarship is, however, emblematic of local researchers who conduct research with participants in their own country (Liamputtong, 2010). Nevertheless, the framework within which researcher's insider or/ outsider role is discussed in qualitative research is mostly Western orientated. Crucial in this dialogue is how these terms are understood in different contexts, for instance, in South Africa, where I am geographically located as a researcher. Thus, as a 'Black' African scholar, I subscribe to the African writings which articulate society as a basis for human relationships and position the existence of the self in relationships to others. South Africa, the country where I was born and currently live is occupied by a heterogenous population. The official classification of ethnic-groups in this country is as follows: 'Blacks' (Africans), 'Whites', and 'Coloureds'. Although the concept of culture is problematic and largely understood as fluid and in-transit, South Africa's history complicates this construct even further. This is because despite 'White 'South Africans status as Africans, there is still a sense of this sub-population subscribing to the Eurocentric values as opposed to their 'Black' counterparts, who mostly adhere to African perspectives (Shepperson & Tomaselli, 2001). In practice, this may not necessarily be the case; however, it was important for me not to presume to know the life-worlds of the participants (who are mostly 'White'). Furthermore, the idea of neatly placing the insider/outsider researcher as a Western construct or a dualism that has a different meaning in Africa may be a topic that requires a critical discussion (Ratele, 2014). For the purposes of this study, I drew on both Afrocentric and Eurocentric literacies of these constructs.

Adler (2004) identified three different types of researcher roles in qualitative research. These are categorised as follows: (a) observer researchers who refrain from being involved in the core activities of the participants; (b) active member researchers who get involved with the central activities of the participants, but withdraw from committing themselves to the participants' values and goals; and (c) complete member researchers who are already members of the participants, or who assume some sort of an affiliation with the participants during the data collection phase (Adler, 2004).

In this study, I used Banks' (1998) conceptualisation of the insider/outsider researcher because it captures what I felt like when I was conducting the interviews with my participants. In his description of these terms, Banks (1998) explained the insider researcher as someone who has cultural commonalities with the local people as they share similar social backgrounds, cultures, and languages (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010). It is believed that, as a result of these commonalities the cultural insider researchers are more likely to be accepted by local people. This is because they are regarded as ''legitimate member(s) of the community who can speak with authority about [the topic under discussion]'' (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 110). Furthermore, the thread of such commonalities enables the insider researchers to be more sensitive, particularly when discussing issues that may be potentially unpleasant to the participants (Suwankhong, Liamputtong, & Rumbold, 2011). Accordingly, Banks argues that ''only a member of their ethnic or cultural group can really [capture the essence of] the group's [sociocultural contexts] because socialization within it gives them unique insights into it'' (1998, p. 6). The other benefits of assuming the role of the insider researcher include better access to local resources – a key aspect in enabling the researcher to improve his or her working relationship with local people – thereby generating good quality research fieldwork (Bank, 1998).

Suwankhong and Liamputtong (2015), however, identified some challenges related to the insider status and these include, but are not limited to, the ability of the researchers to carry out successful fieldwork and obtain thorough understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. In order to circumvent these limitations, these authors propose that the insider researcher should rethink his or her position in a group. This calls for a greater reflection regarding the assumption that the researcher has about what is being narrated by the participants (Suwankhong & Liamputtong, 2015). This situation, according to Asselin (2003), requires the insider researcher to conduct fieldwork with his or her "eyes open", as if they have no prior knowledge of the topic under investigation. This approach, as Asselin (2003) asserts, addresses the issue of the researcher belonging to the culture under exploration, but not necessarily understanding the subculture. In light of this, the insider researcher is advised to deploy, as part of his methodological arsenal, the philosophies of phenomenology such as bracketing his or her assumptions (Asselin, 2003).

The opposite position of the insider is that of the outsider which refers to a researcher who has chosen a foreign locality to conduct research (Suwankhong & Liamputtong, 2015). This particular researcher may have different values, beliefs, and knowledge to the participants from the area where the research is to be undertaken. In comparison to the insider researcher, the outsider may have far less understanding of the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the participants (Suwankhong and Liamputtong, 2015). The relationships that the outsider forms with the local participants might be at a surface level or there may be none at all (Liamputtong, 2010). It is because of this that the outsider researcher needs to examine certain issues more carefully rather than observing these as common phenomena or not seeing them at all (Liamputtong, 2010). This thorough analysis of the phenomenon may enable the outsider researcher to obtain deeper knowledge (Merriam et al., 2001).

In practice, I found that the dichotomy of insider/outsider researcher did not suffice. In reality, these concepts were recursive and depended on each other for existence. For example, in one of the interviews the participant discussed the issue of respectability politics and drew me into the conversation. He did this by positioning me as an insider researcher by saying, "you [referring to me] researchers theorise respectability politics as something that needs more work". Indeed, it was a foregone conclusion, according to him (the participant) that, probably because of my educational background and the topic of the study, I should at least have some understanding of this theoretical construct. In another case, I assumed the insider researcher position when one of the participants narrated that, in a meeting of the South African polyamory group a 'Black' woman told her and other members how difficult it was for her, as someone who lives in the township to disclose her orientation towards non-monogamy. As a 'Black' South African who was born and raised in the township, I understood what she was talking about, because of my own subjective experience of how non-monogamy is generally viewed in those parts of the country. Thus, I felt a sense of being the insider researcher.

On the other hand, I felt like an outsider researcher when a participant who had a disability spoke about the experience of discrimination, both because of her sexual lifestyle and disability. Furthermore, I felt like an outsider researcher when most of the participants spoke about the issue of racial background and how this factor played an important role in enabling them to pursue the passionate embrace of polyamory. On the whole, the recursive nature of the insider/outsider researcher did not compromise the data collection, if anything it enhanced the quality of information that was relayed by the participants.

CHAPTER 6:INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL DATA ANALYSIS

This part of the chapter outlines the reasons why chose IPA as a method of data analysis. Furthermore, a thorough background into how the IPA was developed and its important use in qualitative studies is provided. The second part of this chapter explains the rationale behind the coding process that I undertook in this study in order to formulate themes that discussed in the findings chapter using the IPA method.

6. Data Analysis

Data analysis is a mechanism for reducing and organising data to produce findings that require interpretation by the researcher (Burns & Grove, 2003). Data analysis is both a challenging and creative process, characterised by an intimate relationship of the researcher with the participants and the data generated (De Vos, 2002).

6.1 The interpretative phenomenological analysis

The IPA was developed in the mid-1990s by Jonathan Smith. Over the years, specifically between the period 1996 and 2008, 294 empirical papers citing IPA were published, indicating the widespread utility of this methodology (Smith, 2010; Willig, 2008). In contemporary psychological research, this methodology is arguably a dominant paradigm that most researchers prefer to use in their scholarship (Smith, 2010; Willig, 2008). My reasons for using this approach in the present study is manifold, the most important of which is that IPA allows for an in-depth exploration of how participants make sense of their subjective experiences and social world (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This focus on subjective lived experience is particularly crucial given the complexity of the topic of this study, which is also ambiguous and highly emotive. For instance, the context of a state-led institutionalisation and symbolic demonisation of concurrency, reified by the prevailing partner reduction policy means that polyamorous practices in South Africa might be difficult to express.

Therefore, IPA with its emphasis on how the participants continually construct meaning and knowledge in social relations – a philosophical thinking that is also embedded in constructivism – helped me in my analysis. It is because of this that I was able to explore how the participants in their capacity as social agents attach certain meaning to their polyamorous relationships. As a theoretical leaning, IPA assumes an epistemological stance through placing in analysis the social cognition of the participants. This is done on the basis of focusing on the connection between the person's perception, linguistic, affective experiences and physical being, their thinking and emotional state. This distinction was appreciated in the present study because sexual relationships are crucial in understanding the participants' cognitive inner worlds. Thus, I paid attention to what the participants were saying about polyamorous relationships, how they were feeling about these relationships and

also how they perceived their involvement in these partnerings affected them psychologically, emotionally and physically.

This type of analysis, according to the IPA's theoretical underpinnings is interpretative and hermeneutic in nature. Such an approach was very important because during this stage I was trying to understand the efforts of the participants in trying to make sense of their polyamorous relationships. This was not necessarily an easy task because in the midst of this interpretation I had pay cognisance to my own understanding and pre-conception of sexual relationships. The preceding hindsight speaks to the issue of the researcher playing an active role in the research. Thus, understanding that my history, ideological leaning and gender plays a role in the analysis of data.

The other reason why I chose to use IPA in order to analyse the data has to do with the fact that this particular method is suitable for studies that include small samples. It enables the micro-level and inductive reading of the participants' experiences. Given the topic of the present research, if the data was too large, I may have required additional resources and and extended period of time in order to complete the analysis of data. This might have potentially compromised the depth of the analysis. Indeed, IPA with its idiographic approach ensured the detailed exploration of the particularised experiences of the participants prior to making generalised claims. According to Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 42) "[t]his requires a high level of skill on the part of the interviewer – a combination of strong empathic engagement and highly attuned antennae ready to probe further into interesting and important aspects". When working with larger samples this could be prohibitively difficult to achieve.

6.2 The steps followed when using interpretative phenomenological data analysis

In phenomenological research, the analysis begins as soon as the first data-set is collected. As explained elsewhere in this dissertation, the methods of data collection were through in-depth interviews. In order to extrapolate data that was translated into text for analysis, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed. Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) posited that phenomenological data analysis has a cyclical process that the researcher should abide by through the iterative stages, which are listed below:

- Stage 1: first encounter with the text
- Stage 2: preliminary themes identified
- Stage 3: grouping themes together into clusters
- Stage 4: tabulating themes in a summary table

Therefore, in the analysis I first attended to the data conceptually by addressing my own preconceptions of polyamorous relationships. This is referred to as bracketing and it means "suspending as humanly possible the researcher's meanings and interpretations and immersing

oneself into the lived experiences of the [participants]" (Tesch, 1992, p. 92). Furthermore, the actual data analysis occurs when the researcher reads and familiarises him/herself with the entire data-set. I followed this process thoroughly. When using the IPA to analyse the data reading process requires more than simply taking note of the content, the transcriptions needs to be read carefully. I had to submerge myself into the data by analysing the transcripts together with the original recordings. This process facilitates the identification of themes that are relevant to the research questions and once this was completed I put those themes into units of meaning (Tesch, 1992).

In the process of analysing the transcripts, I also made notes of any thoughts, observations and reflections that occurred during the data collection phase. Through following the IPA format I had to understand how important it is to identify how statements or central themes emerge and are linked to one another. This clarified the extraction of data in formation of themes can be comprehensive and exhaustive (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003, p. 70). Although I followed the IPA format in terms of formulating themes; however, a clear sense of how this objective was achieved will be clear when reading how I coded of the data. In summary, the phenomenological data analysis process includes providing the picture of all the identified themes that have been put into clusters or concepts.

6.3 Measures of trustworthiness

The dualism of qualitative versus quantitative methods is fraught with age-old debates, some of which concern quality controls mechanisms such as validity and reliability (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Although the qualitative approach is different from quantitative methods, generally, the scientific community has a consensus regarding the quality control measures, which should form part of any form of empirical research. For example, the concepts of reliability and validity in qualitative methods assume a different form (Rolfe, 2006). For that reason, Guba and Lincoln (1994) believed that these concepts should reflect the discipline of qualitative studies. This was primarily because qualitative methods use different methodological tools of investigation and thus should be subjected to unique critique and evaluation (Long & Johnson, 2000). For example, Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, and Dillon (2003) stated that Guba and Lincoln conceptualised a different, but parallel criterion for evaluating validity and reliability by referring to these concepts in qualitative research as measures of trustworthiness. Streubert-Speziale and Carpenter (2003, p. 364) describe trustworthiness as "establishing the validity and reliability of qualitative research" and this can be achieved when the experiences of the participants are accurately articulated in the study. In qualitative research this is referred to as rigour and the importance of this aspect in scientific studies relates to accurately representing the stories of participants (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003).

In qualitative research there are four main criteria within which trustworthiness of the data-set is measured, namely: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. These concepts can be operationalised in the ways listed below.

• truth value – strategy: credibility measure

• applicability – strategy: transferability measure

• consistency – strategy: dependability measure

• neutrality – strategy: confirmability measure

(Polit et al., 2004).

This truth-value, which refers to the credibility measure in quantitative research, is proportionate to the concept of internal validity in qualitative studies (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis, & Dillon, 2003). The objective of generalising the results in quantitative methods, in qualitative research refers to the measure of transferability of findings. In the latter, reliability or the stability of findings is replaced by the notion of dependability, which is attained through an auditing process called an 'audit trail'. This process entails the researcher carefully documenting the methods and approaches and thus appraising the impact of research strategies (as opposed to being concerned with replication of data) (Spencer et al., 2003. p, 40).

Holloway and Wheeler (1996) suggested the steps that can be followed in order to safeguard auditing criteria and these are: (a) systematically capturing the raw data through recording the interviews digitally, as well as taking field notes; (b) code the data, including constructing themes into categories according to the methodology that is used in the study; (c) clear conceptualisation of the research process, designs and procedures used; (d) developing the data collection instruments that are appropriate for the topic under exploration (e) present the data in the manner that is not biased. I followed these recommendations in this study.

The concept of dependability is another measure used to achieve trustworthiness. Generally, dependability describes the method of taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design- induced changes (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Graneheim and Lundman (2004) thought of the use of this particular quality assurance measure in qualitative research as an important principle during the fieldwork phase. This cognisance refers to the extent to which data may change over time and any other potential changes that may arise, especially when the researcher is interpreting the data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). For example, when the period of data collection is extensive, Graneheim and Lundman (2004) state that there is a danger of inconsistency that may emerge during this process. This is because the methods of qualitative data collection such as interviews are dynamic and labour intensive. Therefore, if too many of these are conducted with large number participants, some of the results are likely to have less depth, probably

because of researcher fatigue. Consequently, this may compromise the quality of the data-set (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). In the present study, the data was not extensive and data collection process did not extend over a long period. Therefore, the issue of inconsistency, even though a concern, did not present any problems.

6.3.1 Confirmability

This is another strand of judging qualitative studies, and the aim here is to establish the stability or consistency of the methods that are used by the researcher throughout the research process. What this means is that in order to determine the dependability of a qualitative research, the reviewer must examine if the researcher has been careless or has erred in his or her conceptualisation of the study. This includes checking the process that was followed in conducting fieldwork, the way the data was analysed and interpreted, and presentation of the findings. Additionally, this assessment of the rigour or dependability in qualitative research includes how well the researcher used the criterion to recruit participants, and techniques used to explore the topic of the study. The idea here is to assess for what is commonly referred to as the dependability audit. Furthermore, this aspect of checking for dependability also covers activities such as the researcher's field notes, archives, and any other relevant research material, mainly to determine how well these recommended techniques have been followed.

The absence of these techniques on the part of the researcher does nothing more than impede measures that ensure dependability is safeguarded. For instance, confirmability highlights aspects such as neutrality and accuracy of the data (Tobin & Begley, 2004), and this can be achieved by the way in which data collection is captured. Here I am referring to the description provided by Heritage (1984) when discussing the procedure of recording and transcribing interviews and how this process confirms measures of confirmability. Other measures that the researcher can implement in order to enable confirmability is to take notes during the interview sessions and also digitally record the interviews. This is because some of what the participants are relaying may not necessarily be verbal. Indeed, non-verbal communication during data collection has been described as an important source of information one which the researcher has to take into account. This is because these informational cues provide for a thorough interpretation of the participants' descriptions of their experiences (Spronk, 2012). The researcher cannot wait until the interviews are finished to recall these incidents and then write them down, particularly since memory is commonly regarded as an unreliable measure of data collection (Spronk, 2012).

In the field of scientific research, much emphasis is to replicate the findings of a study in other settings that are similar in context by using the same methodological concepts. In qualitative research this refers to transferability (Leininger, 1994). In the present study, I ensured transferability

by using a sample of individuals who are openly and consensually involved in polyamorous relationships. In the South African setting, where monogamous paradigm is a normative context of establishing relationships, the participants involved in this study were most likely to have had similar experiences pertaining to polyamorous relationships. Therefore, if the construction of the interview guide and the use of IPA in order to analyse polyamorous relationships were to be applied in different settings there is a high likelihood that the conclusion of this research might be similar in those situations (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter, 2003). In general, confirmability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the analysis and findings of the study might be supported or corroborated by other people. This mechanism is crucial in research, because it addresses issues of accusation of potential biases of the researcher's analysis of the data.

6.3.2 Credibility

Credibility is achieved when participants acknowledge research findings as reflecting their own experiences (Streubert-Speziale & Carpenter 2003). It is the truth of how the participants know and experience the phenomenon (Talbot, 1995). The researcher can try to achieve credibility of his or her study's findings by addressing the following activities: prolonged engagement reflexivity; peer and participants debriefing; and member checks. These activities are explained below:

6.3.3 Prolonged engagement

Prolonged engagement refers to the amount of time and effort the researcher dedicates to the data collection process. There is a range of benefits associated with the activity of a prolonged engagement in the field. Some of these benefits pertain to bracketing the researcher's assumptions about what is being studied as explained earlier in this dissertation. Through this process, the researcher can also learn more about the culture of the participants and test for misinformation introduced by distortions by either the researcher or the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Prolonged engagement in fieldwork also allows the researcher to be able to build trust with the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). In some situations, this may entail the researcher conducting a site visit and having an informal discussion with potential participants with the purpose of building a good rapport. The South African polyamory group in Gauteng hold monthly meetings where members of the public who are either curious or interested in polyamory may attend and ask questions about this sexual partnering. I attended one of these meetings with the view to listening and during this event I aslo asked questions about polyamorous relationships. I also mentioned to the group that I intended learning more about polyamory because I was going to pursue my PhD studies on the subject. I was introduced to some of the moderators of the group and told about the procedure I would have to follow in order to obtain approval regarding recruiting the potential participants for this study.

6.3.4 Persistent observation

The consideration of persistent observation is one of the key aspects of conducting empirical studies because it is through this activity that the researcher is able to tease out those features in the situation that appear to be particularly relevant to the academic inquiry. Focusing on these issues is helpful in identifying potential irrelevancies, in other words, those aspects in research which may not be necessarily useful (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

6.3.5 Reflexivity

The discussion (elsewhere in this study) on insider/outsider researcher as well as IPA's method of bracketing one's assumptions about the subject of inquiry speak to the issue of reflexivity in academic research. These research activities underlie how the notion of reflexivity should not be something that is conducted at the end of the research process. The researcher has to bear this in mind throughout the period of the study.

6.3.6 Peer and participants debriefing

Peer debriefing is a process which entails the researcher exposing their research work to another scholar who is familiar with the same topic and a person with whom the researcher does not necessarily have either a personal or professional relationship. The point of this approach is to gain fresh perspective on one's study prior to submitting the work (in my case, this dissertation) to examiners. It is generally a good practice to do this because the scholar to whom the researcher is submitting the work may alert the researcher to some of the inconsistencies between the research question and findings of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985: Polit et al., 2004). In this study, I presented a draft of my dissertation to a researcher who has extensive experience in the area of HIV and sexual relationships. The feedback that I obtained helped me to discard irrelevant information and assisted in refining some of the findings of this study.

6.3.7 Member checks

The member check concerns the increasingly important issue of ethics in scientific studies where participants are viewed as people from whom researchers not only extract information but interested stakeholders who can also ensure measures of credibility of the study. In many of the research universities across the world, there is a burgeoning emphasis on putting pressure on researchers to highlight this issue on the consent form so that the participants can hold scholars accountable by requesting the copy of the completed research work. This is to ensure that the findings of the research are not fabrications, but true representations of the participants' shared experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Polit et al., 2004). I also adhered to these standards by inviting the participants to check if the findings of this study captured the essence of their experiences.

6.4 Ethical considerations

In globalised institutions of higher learning, ethical consideration is an inherent part of the academic research. Therefore, the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria in South Africa ensures that any proposed research project obtains approval prior to the researcher undertaking fieldwork. This committee granted my dissertation ethical approval (see Appendix C). In the broad scheme of scholarly practice ethical guidance for research is provided by a number of associations and some of these are the Psychological Society of South Africa (2012)[7], The Pan-African Psychology Union (2014)[8], the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2008)[9], and the Department of Health (DoH, 2002)[10]. Furthermore, the South African Constitution Act, 1996 (Act No.108 of 1996)[11], specifically section 12(2) of the Bill of Rights, concludes that "[e]veryone has the bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right (b) to security in and control over their body; and (c) not to be subjected to medical or scientific experiments without their informed consent". In addition, the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 1964)[12], amended in 1996, states that the participants must have full knowledge regarding the nature and outcomes of the research so that they can be free to decide whether or not to participate in a particular study (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001).

Indeed, given the nature of the topic and potential emotional distress disclosure of information related to the experiences of being involved in polyamorous relationships might cause to the participants, I had to be sensitive in order to limit such events from occurring. This was particularly evident when some of the participants described situations where their immediate family members demonised their sexual practice, labelled them as crazy, and were visibly upset about this situation. In those instances, I asked the participants if we should take a break or stop discussing the question altogether and in each case the participants chose to continue with the discussion. Furthermore, I informed the participants of their rights, some of which included choosing not to respond to questions that made them uncomfortable or discontinuing their involvement in the research process altogether. I also provided the contact details of counsellors that they could reach should they experience any emotional distress.

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[7] South African Society of South Africa;

[8] Psychological Society of South Africa
[9] Health Professions of South Africa
[10] South Africa's Department of Health
[11] The Republic of South Africa's Constitution
[12] World Medical Association

6.5 Consent

The South African Polyamory group has moderators who evaluate and approve any requests for research about this community. Therefore, I had to submit to these moderators the approval letter that I obtained from the Humanities Research Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria in order to conduct my research. I addition, I had to submit the pamphlet that I had formulated which explains the essence of my dissertation. I was given permission to post the study pamphlet on the South African ZA Poly website and engage with potential participants who may respond to such an advertisement.

6.6 Confidentiality

The assurance of confidentiality is the cornerstone of ethics in research. The consent form that I provided to all of the participants explained the extent of privacy and confidentiality related to their involvement in my research. Certain information, which includes their full names and forwarding addresses, is not disclosed in the final product of this study. To this end, the function of pseudonyms was critical. The participants were also informed that the only people that would have access to their digitally recorded interviews were my supervisor and I. In addition, I also told the participants that their recorded interviews were going to be stored in a safe environment. All the participants signed the consent forms (see Appendix B).

6.7 The right to withdraw from the study

Furthermore, I made it clear that the participation in the study was completely voluntary. I also made them aware that taking part in this study would not benefit them directly and that there would be no monetary incentives. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. This right was explained to them prior to engagement in the study and before the interviews were conducted (Holloway, 2005). This right is fully explained in the consent form (see annexure C).

6.8 Dissemination of results

The major part of any research project is the dissemination of results. Therefore, I explained to the participants that the final product of the dissertation would be made available to them (De Vos, 2002). The scope of the dissertation is only limited to the experiences of some of the South African polyamory group members; therefore, there is no mention of the secrets, weaknesses or any disparaging statements about this group.

CHAPTER 7: DATA CODING

This chapter provides a description of the steps and procedures that were followed in order to code the data. In addition, the software used in this regard is also discussed.

7. Coding data in Atlas.ti: An IPA approach

In this section I discuss how I coded the data, the process of which was grounded in interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) aided by computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called Atlas.ti. The CAQDAS are programmes that have acquired generalised usage within the scientific community mainly because of their utility in aiding the researchers to analyse the data. Some of the functions of these programmes include enhancing the reliability and validity of findings.

7.1 Computer assisted qualitative data analysis

The CAQDAS consists of a range of software packages that facilitate the analysis of data through coding, organising and storing data as well as assistance in content analysis (counting frequencies), display and presentation of findings (Neidbalski & Slezak, 2017). Since Atlas.ti was used in this study for data analysis below I provide a brief discussion on how it was developed. This software package was developed by Thomas Muhr, who was based at the Technical University of Berlin in 1989 (Neidbalski & Slezak, 2017). The launch of its release for commercial purposes was in 1993. In the following years the software was improved upon through several revisions. What is currently available on the market is Atlas.ti version 07. In the technological world from which the academic community are part of, the privilege of using the digital gadgets to analyze the data means that this software package is also available for use on many devices. Atlas.ti was initially designed as a technological tool to help with content analysis, specifically for grounded theory research (Neidbalski & Slezak, 2017). Nevertheless, this software is now broadly used and some of its benefits include the researchers being able to store, organise and code text documents such as PDFs. These functions can also be performed on word documents, as well as audio files, video files and photo or graphics images (Neidbalski & Slezak, 2017). The application of Atlas.ti that enables the researchers to store data does so by storing all research-related documents in one file called a Hermeneutic Unit (HU) (Neidbalski & Slezak, 2017). The function of this HU is not only limited to storing all primary documents, but also different forms of the analysis can be done on these documents.

The most important benefit of using Atlas.ti, especially where the present study is concerned, is that the various stages of data analysis, as stipulated in IPA are in tandem with the functions of this software. For example, the IPA is specific about the researcher immersing him or herself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts. The HU function, where the primary documents are

loaded, allowed me to perform the preceding stage of data analysis, from which I obtained sufficient familiarity with the data.

7.2 The process of coding the data

Coding refers to the process of assigning categories or themes related segments of information (quotes) relevant to the research topic (Neidbalski & Slezak, 2017). Through the coding process in Atlas.ti, the researcher highlights sections within the report and provide labels to the created codes. When using this software, there are several ways to code the data and I have listed two options below:

• Free-code – allows the researcher to provide a new name to each new highlighted section; and
• Assign existing codes – allows the researcher to apply an existing code to a new highlighted section, thereby adding quotes to a category or theme.

Overall, the coding process mostly depends on the analytical methods used in a particular study. As explained in this study, the IPA was used to analyse the data; therefore, the coding techniques used here to frame the findings were epoche, and that is, removing prejudices and suspending one's judgement). In addition, bracketing and phenomenological reduction (coding and theme building-phases), and horizontal imaginative variation (divergent perspectives) are IPA activities that I followed (Saldaña, 2009). On the whole, these techniques resulted in structural description (intergration of themes of each participant) of the findings in this dissertation (Merriam, 1998. Below I have outlined these steps.

7.3 Phenomenological Epoche

The use of IPA as a guide to code the data ensured that the findings were epoche. This means, as a researcher I had to address my own preconceptions of polyamorous relationships. This is referred to as bracketing or reduction. The preceding process means "suspending as humanly possible the researcher's meanings and immersing oneself into the lived experiences of the [participants]" (Tesch, 1992, p. 92). The complexity of this reduction process and the discipline required to put it into practice, particularly during the phase of data analysis dictates a thorough discussion of this issue. This is because according to Finlay (2003) reduction should be understood as a stance or process, as opposed to some form of a mechanical procedure. Furthermore, Finlay (2003) acknowledges reduction as a step that is problematic and a practice that the researcher should not do simply because Husserl suggested it. There has to be a clear awareness on the part of the researcher that science, more so social science, is a social activity in which we engage with prior conceptions of what we think the truth or reality is or should be. Therefore, if we, as social scientists,

do not develop mechanisms to address these factors which could confound our findings, the confirmability and transferability of our research findings becomes, at best, tenuous. Once I started appreciating the principle of bracketing my preconceptions the utility of this mechanism became evident. I began to open myself up to the knowledge that was I obtaining from the participants' data.

It is on this basis that I adopted Finlay's (2003) operationalisation of the epoche where this activity is understood as a phenomenological attitude in psychological research. This phenomenological attitude primarily highlights the critical aspect of data analysis, which is the dialectical relationship between the researcher and participants' texts (Finlay, 2003). This relationship is also a central focus in IPA because, as illustrated before, the researcher's role in research affects the way in which the data is interpreted. The readings of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger are instrumental in this sense and here it is argued strongly for the researcher to continually reflect on how the data is challenging his or her pre-conceptions regarding the phenomenon that is discussed (Finlay, 2003). Therefore, I had to, throughout the data analysis stage, appraise the basis of my interpretations of both my experience of how sexual relationships are constituted and the way in which polyamorous relationships are experienced by the participants. This included, as explained above, setting aside my own prejudices, the root of which was fixed on monogamy being the norm of partnering in romantic relationships (Finlay, 2003). In doing so, I was able to obtained sufficient distance from the data, from which I was able to assess these pre-conceptions.

Thus, the challenge remained, conducting data analysis while "scientifically being removed from," and at the same time being "open to" and "aware of" interacting with the participants' texts in the midst of my own experiencing (Finlay, 2003). This contradiction embedded in a relational context of the data analysis necessitated attentiveness while focusing on how the experiences of involvement in polyamorous relationships were experienced by the participants.

In summary the phenomenological epoche includes a number of steps, which constitute the following:
(a) the epoché which relates to the natural sciences;
(b) the epoché which address the natural attitude;
(c) the transcendental reduction; and
(d) eidetic reduction.

The first "epoché of the natural sciences brackets scientific theory and knowledge, as well as 'reduces' the process of data analysis to the experiences of participants, on the basis of the natural attitude" (Husserl, 1962). This refers to me as a researcher exploring the topic of polyamorous practices inductively.

The second "epoché of the natural attitude" constitutes (referred to by Husserl as the phenomenological epoché) bracketing the reality of the natural, taken-for-granted life-world (Husserl, 1962). The task, as Husserl points out, is to go beyond the natural attitude in order to discover it (Husserl, 1962). This aspect of the epoché leads first to the phenomenological psychological reduction. Here Husserl implores the researcher to investigate the phenomenon as a presence without attributing existence to it, this means reducing the participants' narratives to the psychological (Husserl, 1962). The contextualised nature of the epoché of the natural attitude is its grasp of subjective meanings. This meant that when creating the codes, I had to do so on the basis of teasing out the meaningful ways the life-worlds of the participants presented themselves. In doing so, focus on the subjective processes that constitute these presentations (e.g., through meaning-making, perceptions, emotions, beliefs).

Thirdly, transcendental reduction, refers to the process of describing the phenomenon simply as it gives itself. Put another way, "examining experience in general and dissecting in it what is supplied by the mind from what is supplied by the given intuitions" (Kant as cited in Philipse, 1995, p 280). Here, Husserl proposes an even more radical epoché which involves standing aside from one's subjective experience and ego in order to be able to focus on transcendental consciousness. In claiming that "consciousness which constitutes the world is not part of the world" (Philipse, 1995, p. 280), Husserl takes a purely philosophical direction, rendering this version less directly relevant to the psychological researcher's sphere of interest.

Lastly, the eidectic reduction is a process that entails intuition of essences, where the invariant characteristics and meanings of the phenomenon are described. This aspect of the phenomenological epoche describe the manner in which the researcher can structure the coding process so that he or she distinguishes essential features from those fictional ones that are particular, accidental or incidental (Philipse, 1995).

7.4 The stages of data coding

I coded the data in three ways and these are: open (segmentising), axial (relational) and selective or theoretical coding (Merriam, 2009). This approach to the coding process was, as illustrated in this study, formulated around the qualitative design of IPA which is rooted within a hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology (Saldaña, 2009). It is also important to note that data coding is invariably a formulation of themes. Therefore, this section also explains how themes (discussed in the findings chapter) were created. Below I provided a detailed description of the coding process.

7.4.1 Uploading the data

The first stage entailed using the Atlas.ti interface tool to upload the seven transcripts in date-related sequential order as Primary Documents (PD 1-8).

7.4.2 Open coding

Open coding refers to the process that was described by Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) who, when discussing the stages of data analysis using the IPA approach spoke about how the researcher has to first encounter the data by reading it. These authors went on to say that the researcher had to acquaint him or herself with the data by reading it a number of times. Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) proposed this method because it is often difficult to make sense of the meta-data, particularly when the researcher has not sufficiently immersed him/herself in the data-set. It should always be clear in the researcher's mind that the creation of codes is not simply a procedural stage, but an important research activity that orders the creation of themes. This can only be possible when the researcher has a holistic view of the data-set. Therefore, when I was identifying emerging themes from the interviews, I had to do so in view of illuminating psychological concepts that had explanatory value. Indeed, this was possible because open coding focuses on language such as phrases, specificity of comments, as well as context and consistency. These variables, for want of a better term, are important especially in psychological research because they illustrate the shared meaning of things based on participants' experiences. For example, "sexual rule and agreements" is a particular theme that emerged from all of the transcripts. In the lives of participants establishment of sexual rules and agreements is a shared experience, which had a profound meaning to these individuals (Smith as cited in Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, p. 5). Hence, I created a code for this theme. Additional activities that are crucial during this stage in order for the researcher to develop a coherent picture of the data are observations and identifying abstract ideas that reflect the researcher's initial thoughts and responses to the texts. (Angot & Milano, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

7.4.3 Second Reading and analysis

The Axial coding: refer to reviewing and going through the initial codes that were identified during the first reading of the data (Angot & Milano, 2007). The prescripts of IPA were important here, because it was during this stage that I had to work out the chain of connection between and within the codes that I had formulated in the second stage. Thus, thinking carefully about whether these codes addressed the questins of, when, how, why and where, that are important for the interpretation of the data (Saldaña, 2009). This consideration is important in IPA because showing the connection of codes illustrates the narratives that have to do with the chain of connection between people's

speech and their thinking. Overall, this stage is critical in terms of mapping out linkages, context and coherence.

7.4.4 Structuring the analysis by listing the themes and looking for the relationships between them

The IPA method is very specific about grouping themes together into clusters and checking if others are hierarchically related.

7.4.5 Combining general themes and illustration of quotations

Third Reading and analysis: here the process includes selective coding which is regarded as the final step in the coding stages (Angot & Milano, 2007). This step provided the opportunity for me to make constant and repeated comparisons, contrasts and linkages regarding the research question. The idea here is to focus on precision and conciseness of the codes (Legewie & Schervier-Legewie as cited in Salinger, Plonka & Prechelt, 2007). This is mainly because throughout the analysis, I found similar themes and embarked on the process of creating codes which were sub-categories of an overlying theme. Some of these were collapsed and others grouped together into families, and this was enabled by a function in Atlas.ti called a coding scheme. The coding scheme is very useful, in that it allowed me to link the codes to one another in order to show a relationship between them. In addition, there is a function that enables the researcher to view the preceding relationships by using the network format function.

7.4.6 Interpreting the results by relying upon existing theoretical constructs

Although there may be other forms of coding processes that helps with producing a data-set that is responsive to the research question, for the present study the utility of the coding process as described above addressed what I had set out in the interview guide (Merriam, 2009). In summary, I was able to explore and capture the anticipated critical and nuanced knowledge from the accounts of participants by using the IPA stages of data analysis as illustrated above. These coding processes generated an Atlas.ti Code-List-MSWord.doc. The result of this process was the production of 30 themes. Below is some of the final themes that are discussed in the findings chapter:

- Theme 1: [Theme 1 sexual orientation]
- Theme 2: [Theme 2 sexual rules and agreement + Jealousy]
- Theme 3: [Theme 18 disclosure of involvement in polyamorous relationships + Theme 19 the value of trust in polyamorous relationships]
- Theme 4: [Theme 5 safer sex practices + Theme 6 lack of sexual practices + Theme 21 masculinity practices]

- Theme 5: [Theme 20 sexuality and danger + Theme 15 respectability politics + Theme 22 gender egalitarianism + Theme 23 discrimination + Theme 24 coping strategies + support network]

- Theme 6: [Theme 4 disclosure+ parental rejection 7 + Theme 8 rejection from friends: rejection from colleagues + Theme 10 suicidal ideation + Theme 9 coping strategies: cheating + Theme 10 what it means to be poly: falling in love + Theme 11 loose and pain in polyamorous relationships + Theme 12 the value of honesty in polyamorous relationships + Theme 13 race and sexuality + Theme 14 activism + Theme 7 sexual agency]

The following chapter is the extension of this one and offers a detailed description and interpretation of the participants' experiences.

CHAPTER 8: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the data. Coupled with this is the presentation of the findings. When analysing the data I had to bear in mind the research question as well as the objectives of this study. Some of these pertain to exploring how the polyamory might be a form of concurrency that poses minimul risk to HIV. Furthermore, the bigger context of analysing the participants' meaning of polyamorous relationships as insights that may inform re-conceptualisation of HIV programmes not only in South Africa, but the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

8.1. Earlier thoughts of being involved in non-monogamous relationships

As opposed to the stereotype of non-monogamous relationships being fleeting many of the participants in this study indicated earlier thoughts of involvement in such relationships. This is described below:

> **Res**: *tell me about your earliest memory of wanting to be involved in non-monogamous relationships?*
>
> **Par \ white-male\ peter:** *So uhmmm it's basically something I thought about for a long time. So I started thinking about it, probably I guess when I was in my early twenties just from reading stuff online and then I had a long term relationship beginning at about two-thousand-eight. That was where Mayr and I.…...we'd discussed having an open relationship when we'd first started our relationship.*

The same question was posed to the participant below and his response was:

> **Par \indian-male \ jay:** *Yeah, primarily; I didn't actually discuss this with anybody. It was a thought I had. A thinking pattern… I was thinking that would be so nice that I would not uhmm require that of my partner; that she be, that she report only to me, and not have other relationships while I was with her. Uhmmm so that thinking stayed with me and at that stage I was quite shy, actually very introverted and so I didn't approach women or girls. And didn't even have a girlfriend, I never went out to clubs, very introverted. So my first sex experience was actually at 27, when I had a real girlfriend.*

The response to the same question is also reflected below:

> **Res:** *How did this come about … you know… how did you know that you are a non-monogamous person… so to speak… and when was the first thought of that…*
>
> **Par \white-female \ benita:** *Well…when I started dating …. my boyfriend… I think you classify him as a boyfriend… and I was thirteen …fourteen…*

Indeed, these stories demonstrate the profoundness of concurrent partnership [s in the lives of these participants.

8.2 The relationship between societal socialisation institutions and agentic self

The stories quoted here show how powerful this institution such as the church are in ensuring that a person maintains conformity with the dominant ideology of sexual relationships in the society:

> *Par\ white-female \ martha: Well I just figured that's how it is because like you've grown up in the church since you're very young; you're kind of like this is the truth thing, it's a very indoctrinated experience. So you'll be like yeah I guess that's what the Lord wants for me and I'm going to be happy there. So for a while, unless you actually stop for a moment, you kind of fool yourself that if I just keep doing this, I'm going to be happy, except that I wasn't the case.*

Similar sentiments are expressed in the following extract.

> *Par\ white–female \ marlene: Uhmm well we're brought up with the norm of, you know, marriage and one person for the rest of your life and yeah… that's how you are brought up if you're in a religious house and you know in the* kerk *[church] and you know those types of things…*

In addition, the experience of the following participant seemed to suggest that although religion and society may confer on the individual parameters of '*doing*' sexuality, only the individual can make the ultimate interpretation regarding what sexuality means to them. This participant articulates a life story which, according to her, revealed the limitation of pair-bonding and what this meant to her.

> *Par \ white-female \ martha: And uhmm yeah, I think that whole thing about the soul mate, if you, you can have more than one. You can have, you can't expect one person to fulfil all your needs, every single one that you have. Just as I can't fulfil someone else's needs, every single one, you can't; so you either have to grit your teeth and bear with it and then take that person just like they are and go with it for the rest of your life. Or you can, okay there's another option, I can have this with this person, I can have this with that person and they can have a fulfilling life because all your needs are met and you can meet other people's needs as well because they then see something in you that they haven't found in someone else.*

What also emerged from these sentiments is the image of family formation that arises from religious teachings which, according to this participant, is generally the norm in society. The conversation

below shows the psychological strain that arises from the discrepancy of sexual meaning between that held by this participant and the dominant one in the society.

> *Par \ white-female \ martha: Well definitely it has changed my mindset from, you know, being in, on one path with blinders on and even if you're not happy with that and ending up in a divorce, you have to stay there, nê?. So the options are open if you want to explore it. The other thing that was positive to me, it is positive but I'm still having a bit of a struggle with it, like I said, because I was brought up in a very religious home. It is to go against the belief system that I was brought up with and going against the norm of society, that's the thing, I've never been, I've never been someone that goes the other direction, I've always been the go as it blow [unclear]. I've never been trying to upset the boat.*

Similar sentiments were expressed by another participant as captured below.

> *Par \ white-female \ martha: Well, you can't really change someone's belief system like that nê? so if they're brought up a certain way, you can give them information about it and what you've learned and the experiences that you've had and like I said, what I've learnt about monogamy and about marriage and the negative in it that it can do, like I said, the pressure of the system, and having control over someone because in most marriages that's what it is. And if you give your experiences to them, people have to make their own choices, people have to make their own choices and it's still very difficult for me as well because guilt is like a little thingy sitting here in my ear, the whole time [laugh] and telling me you're such a bad person, what the hell are you doing? You weren't brought up like this, what are you doing?*

This quote uses words and phrases, such as guilt, difficult and bad person, which are deeply loaded with powerful psychological meaning. This individual is clearly having difficulty coping with the discrepancy of sexual meaning that she was taught against what she was practicing. Although it may be metaphorical, since the lack of probing on my part did not suffice, but when a person says "little thingy sitting here in my ear, the whole time [laugh] and telling me you're such a bad person," it makes me wonder if she believed the voice real. In this case, where can this person seek help to address this distressing situation, what relationship literacies for such a person.

8.2.1 The repercussion that result from being confused by one's sexual orientation

It is interesting to note, as revealed from the participants testimonies, that the idea of sexual orientation or identity being fixed and not changing is not necessarily true in many respects. Some of the participants in this study show that sexual orientation or identity is a fragile construct which may change at any given moment. This is indicated here:

> *Par\ white-female \ martha: [laugh] Yeah. And then suddenly this happened with that friend of mine and I didn't know where I was and I'm ashamed to say it now but actually my husband didn't know about it and he found out, and yeah ... and then from there on already because ... found out it he didn't say anything and then he went to research poly actually and that's how he worked up around it with the help of that other guy like I said…*

This is also reflected in the following extract.

> *Par\ white-female \ martha: [laugh] Yeah so at that stage our relationship was under a lot of stress, partly because I mean he's bisexual and he's also pan sexual and he is gender non-conforming. So for us both our core identities didn't really fit comfortably into the culture that we were raised in or the religion that we were part of. So for both of us our identities were grating, we were miserable. We were both deeply, deeply unhappy at that stage and it showed in our relationship. Ultimately our relationship degraded to the point that we both cheated on each other; independently, he cheated on me, I cheated on him. You get to that point in your relationship where you feel… oh this is the end my friend. Particularly when your husband tells you that he cheated on you with a man. You know… for an Afrikaans girl [laugh]…*

The analysis here also confirms what the psychological theories of cognitive social theory and constructivism have been asserting, which is, although the environment is not entirely constraining, it plays a significant role in influencing how people cognitively conceive of sexuality

8.2.2 The need for access to information on sexual literacies

This particular finding is an extension of the one described above because here a participant tells the story of discovering that she and her husband were not monogamous. What following was a struggle pertaining to *doing* non-monogamous romance appropriately:

> *Par\ white-female \ marlene: Okay…..sure… At first when we started experimenting with non-monogamy, we went via swinging. So we actually started*

looking at alternative sexualities in a very sort of hetero-normative way because we went to all these swinging parties where everybody was fit and pretty and basically only interested in swapping couples but the relationship was very shallow. It [was] basically no strings sex. We had our names up on a number of dating sites and I went on a whole bunch of dates and had spectacular sexual relationships, probably shagged half the planet, but apart from getting really good shagging, it felt empty. Both of us felt like you know what, I really like the pillow talk, I like the cuddling, I like checking up to see whether you are okay, I like buying you flowers, I like going for walks together. This just shagging and leaving almost shamefully does not work for me, it feels uncomfortable, I get too attached. So this kind of you know, with what we were reading about online and what we were hearing about from za.poly, it began to make sense to us that we were more than just sexually adventurous, we were properly polyamorous.

The fact that this participant and her husband went to so much trouble to find out how to do non-monogamy, in particular, shows that there is deep psychological and emotional meaning associated with this partnering.

8.2.3 Meeting the needs of people who are involved in non-monogamous relationships

I have touched on the apparent lack of services that address the needs of people who are involved in non-monogamous relationships. This particular finding, however, highlights an incident where the needs of those individuals who practice concurrency can be met at a professional level. Indeed, this extract shows how important supportive clinical interventions, diagnosis, treatment and comprehensive care is, especially to people who have a different understanding of sexual relationships.

> **Par\white-female\martha:** *Then advised me that I should see a marital counselor before I do anything drastic. I think if he knew what that would lead to, he wouldn't have said that. [laugh] He would have encouraged me to divorce this heathenist bastard who was about to lead me into the horrors of you know…uhmm… the evil that he now believes I live in… but at the time his advice to me was to go and see a counselor. My husband and I both went and saw a counselor. At this stage we were very much working in non hetero-normative, but definitely monogamous paradigm. And the counselors walked us through it and we kind of understood that what had been tearing apart our relationship was really personal unhappiness and it didn't really have anything fundamentally to do with our relationship to each other.*

We just learnt to communicate our needs better and ask for what we wanted. And during this process of negotiating for what we needed out of the relationship's structure and content, we discovered that both of us were not gender conforming… we were both bisexual, we both had an interest in alternative sexual lifestyles. We weren't very jealous of each other's cheating, it was more of an offence that we were lied to rather than that there was some sense of possessiveness or whatever. We didn't feel offended by the actual act, we felt offended by the implicit deception involved. So as we began to identify that these were common values for both of us, my husband came to me and he said "I've been googling around, I discovered this thing on the Internet called polyamory and there's a website in South Africa with a mailing list. They do a lot of articles that they post on the website… to take a look"…

Other participants also sought professional help, as the following shows.

Par\white-male\kobus: ….the first relationship between my wife and her ex; what I tell her is that one bad relationship can give you so much mileage in learning like we do say, yeah, we fucked up. It was a time that derailed and crashed and burned and you know, it was a bad thing because we weren't entire [unclear] in certain things to make that relationship work. For instance, the both of them ended up in, what do you call it? Going into a little holiday place, what's the word? They went for counseling, they went for, you know, my wife had a psychiatrist, psychologist and she was on treatment and that relationship just escalated everything and she ended up there again; three weeks, it put a lot of trauma on our relationship but I stood strong. I used that to drive me to analyse what had happened and to grow forth from that experience. I would say now, it was, there's so much I can point out which went wrong at this stage now that I've covered which makes me more comfortable to be able to say, yeah man, I'm polyamorous and I love it. It's hard work but I love it.

8.3 Suffering loss in first polyamorous relationship

As indicated previously, the participants in this study have shown how profound polyamorous relationships are in their lives. This particular finding reinforces such stories and this is explained below:

Par \ white-female \ benita: [laugh] This was a big shock for both of us and both of us took it really, really hard. I mean it took us quite a while after that to really recover. We stayed active in the movement, continued going to the meetings and whatever. I think, I can just remember, at least three years after that, I was still piping mad. It's literally in the last year just before he got back in touch with me

that I only really started to make peace with it and let it go. I used to send him an sms every Christmas to say I hope that you are well, merry Christmas. Cause I was totally in love with him, I was far gone and I was really, really hurt by this experience. I felt genuinely abandoned.

This experience is also captured in the following quote.

Par \ white-female \ benita: Yes, definitely. I mean they were literally best friends, they were mates. I think he felt the loss quite acutely, it was terrible for him because, this guy, they had professional interests in common, the guy is a coder and so they used to do a lot of professional work stuff together. And they were in many of the same social groupings in terms of like the online forums work they do. And suddenly we were just cast out into the dark. So I think he felt very acutely, not just the loss of a lover, but the loss of a best friend. This guy was literally his best friend. So he took it very badly, in fact he fell into quite a deep depression at the time. It took him quite a time to recover from that.

The same participant had this to say:

Par \ white-female \ benita: Not really. At that stage we were… this is why it became as such a shock when this thing blew up in our faces, like I think all of us were so very floored. The way that when you are first in love with someone; your mind is all butterflies and rainbows. So we were all on such a high in this situation that I think we didn't see the signs, we didn't recognise that there was something going on and only afterwards when I had a long time to sit and think about it…

Furthermore, the account below describes the difficulty of losing a partner in a structured triad polaymorous relationship.

Par \ white-female \ benita: It was hard for him but he did also support me because he knew it was very hard for me cause I was very invested in it.

In addition, the following story illustrates that the pain and disappointment of termination of a relationship stays in one's memory for a long time. This shows that there is a great depth of meaning associated with non-monogamy and some of these individuals work very hard to sustain their relationships.

Par \ white-female \ Benita: this was the first time in my life that I had been dumped by a third, you know, in a third person in our marriage, it was the first time anyone had dumped me over tweeter [Twitter]. This was six years ago, I was a trend setter.

These findings highlight the importance of qualitative research studies because this focus allows the researcher to explore critical literacies around alternative sexualities, including non-monogamous relationships.

8.4 Disclosure of non-monogamy to loved ones

8.4.1 Disclosure to Parents

Polyamorous relationships, as studied in this dissertation, reveal a particular fixation with disclosure of this sexual lifestyle to loved ones. All of the participants explained that they told their parents about their involvement in concurrency. As illustrated below, some of the feedback was positive.

> *Par \ white-female \ marlene: Uhmm… Surprising and not surprising. For my dad, not surprising, in fact the only surprising thing was the hemas [heinous] [unclear] of his negative reaction. With my mother though, I was very surprised by how unfazed she was by it all. She was completely, love is the answer, she's a Christian so there could have been quite a bit of conflict there, but she was like Jesus never turned anyone away. True, and the bible clearly speaks and says love is the highest law. So I love my kid, I love… whatever she does is fine… She's not hurting anyone, her life is not harmful to other people, why should I hate on this? Which was amazing and my siblings as well have been amazing; they are completely… they don't understand what I'm on about, I'm a bit like that eccentric family member who wears brightly coloured clothing and does weird stuff that nobody understands but they are completely cool with it. They don't have any kinds of issues with it so from that side it's been really, really supportive, but my dad and I pretty much don't speak.*

In another situation, disclosure elicited a somewhat conflicting response from the parents of the participant.

> *Par \ white-female \ michelle: Yes, I did. That was an interesting conversation. So I sent them a mail; so I was dating my boyfriend and his other girlfriend, now we were all three dating, we were in a triad configuration and so I wrote my parents mail and then they asked to come and have dinner with them and have a conversation on it. And it was sort of awkward and interesting at the same time; there was my dad asking questions like so do you all have sex together? [laughs]*

8.4.2 Rejection by Parents

The issue of disclosure or coming out is an important, if not the most stressful, experience for the individuals who are involved in alternative sexual relationships. The weight of parental rejection regarding the participants' non-monogamous romance has to be understood against the backdrop of societal stigma (discussed elsewhere in this dissertation) that pervades concurrency. Consider the following quote.

> *Par \ white-female \ michelle: So, uhmmm... When I started seeing, like, my third person and well, being intimate with a whole bunch of people, I told my mum about it, she doesn't agree with it at all.*

This was also expressed by the following participant.

> *Par\ white-female \ benita: My dad and I pretty much don't speak.*
> *Res: Is it because of this… that you guys don't speak?*
> *Par\ white-female \ benita: Yeah, this is definitely a big factor, unfortunately my parents divorced when I was in my late teens and the relationship between him and my mother was volatile and quite violent.So there are other issues involved that extend well beyond just my relationship orientation, but I could promise you, my relationship orientation would probably be the nail on the coffin.*

Indeed, some of the participants here illustrated how difficult it was for most of their parents to deal with the information of their involvement in concurrency. This is captured in the following quote.

> *Par \ white-female \ marlene: And my mom's saying things like, Oh I suppose you now going to want to bring them both along to your dad's seventieth birthday camping trip" and then bursting into tears.*

Think about how the following reaction from a participant's mother might have had a negative psychological effect on her.

> *Par \ white-female \ michelle: Uhm hmm Yeah all our friends know, JF's parents know; JF's parents are, like JF's mom's [unclear] but his dad's like you're crazy; why you want to deal with two, he's like it's bad enough to deal with one woman, why you want to deal with two?*

A similar narrative was repeated by another participant.

Par \ indian-male \ jay: I've told my family now for the last maybe couple of years, that's when they knew, I explained the whole poly thing, this is me, I'm poly and this is why I'm poly…

Res: So the first time when you told them, how did they respond?...

Par \ indian-male \ jay: Yoh, crazy.

In hindsight, I realised I should have probed this issue more deeply and enquired about the possible psychological harm this familial rejection may have had on these participants. Indeed, had I probed further, I might have elicited rich information about the psychological, emotional and physical effects being labelled a crazy person had on these participants.

8.4.3 Disclosure to siblings

One of the most important findings in this dissertation has to do with polyamorous individuals who not only disclosed their sexual lifestyle to their parents, but also to their siblings. This is echoed in the following extract.

Par \ white-female \ marlene: My oldest brother knows and we talk about it a lot; the polyamory and stuff; we, my youngest sister is very resistant. I've spoken to her about it once. She's still in the church and she's not, but the idea, she doesn't want to talk about it.

8.4.4 Disclosure to Friends and Colleagues

Some of the participants reported that they revealed their involvement in concurrent partnering to their friends and colleagues. Research on this particular aspect of disclosure suggests that LGBTI individuals often first choose to tell a person less important to them because the impact of rejection from this person would be considered less significant than that of a family member (Schneider et al., 2016). This is indicated below:

Par \ white-male \ peter: Ah yeah, my friends all know, it's not a, it's not a… I mean like it's not something I'll talk about to if [I] run into like someone from school who I haven't seen in thirteen years or whatever. It's not, yeah, but all the friends I see on a regular basis pretty… it's definitely something they know about; and I've talked to my mother about it. She's the only surviving member of my immediate family and my broader family, I haven't talked to them about it…

8.4.5 Disclosure to the Primary Partners' Children

One of the key aspects of polyamory, a feature that differentiates it from other concurrent partnering practiced in sub-Saharan Africa is the focus on formation of an extended family (as cited in Sheff, 2010 elsewhere in this study). This means that sexual partners, other than one's primary partner

may play a role in raising the children. This finding was reflected in this study and the following quote illustrates the point.

> **Res:** *So I mean you have kids right? You have a family right? So have you introduced your other partner, you know, to your kids? Is that something that is on the table? Is that something you are willing to do, maybe?*

This is also explained below:

> **Par \ white-male \kobus:** *The same with my wife's partner now [unclear]; just a friend of the family coming to visit us. She needs to feel safe and comfortable with any other partner that she will have now or maybe in the future and that's the same with my kids also. That's where the hierarchical relationship comes in; they're young, they need to learn life and I'm trying to show, to learn them about life through my wisdom and I'm learning them values, I'm learning them to be consensual, I'm learning them to make choices and at this stage I don't think it's going too bad so introducing a partner into the family, I would say, will not be too difficult, but I would say because of their age, I will leave that up until the age where they can actually make their own decisions.*

The intricate nature of polyamorous couples introducing other sexual partners to the children, is a feature extensively cited in much of polyamorous texts.

8.4.6 The possible reason why people disclose inclination to non-monogamy

As shown elsewhere in this chapter, there may be a number of possible reasons people conceal their involvement in non-monogamous relationships. I reported above how one of the participants were labelled 'crazy' because he was involved in polyamorous relationship. However, many of the participants in this study feel the need to disclose their polyamorous relationships. This is reflected in the quote below:

> **Par \ white-female \ michelle:** *I felt very much like she was a, because I hadn't told my parents, that it didn't feel, it felt to me like she was sort of like a dirty little secret which I didn't like.*

This experiences reveal an important point, the idea that (to these participants) concurrency is considered a human sexual experience.

8.5 The danger of expressing non-monogamous practices

Among the issues that some participants spoke about was the issue of desire, danger and geographical location that is associated with expressing one's sexuality. Here, I am referring to the heightened state of generalised intolerance towards sexual minorities in the South African society. Some of these participants have alluded to this in the following extract:

> ***Par \ white-female \ martha:*** *I am not entirely certain, like, because I am an LGBTGQI person, I am very much aware about how biased and prejudiced and dangerous the townships are for many people from sexual perspective in terms of sexual orientation and behaviour. I mean I hear the horror stories.*

This is also described below:

> ***Par \ white-female \ martha:*** *[laugh] Because he has a very firm opinion about it and he doesn't care if anybody knows and I'm not like that. I have a husband, I have children that I have to look out for. People, especially in Katoo [sp] where I stay, it's not a big community so everyone knows everyone. And especially me for instance I'm a nursing sister so a lot of people know me, a lot of people know me. So suddenly if I come out and say no, this I'm bisexual and I'm polyamorous or whatever; they are gonna think oh this woman, the devil has sent her here.*

This is shown below:

> ***Par \ white-female \ marlene:*** *See that's the other thing, that's the other thing; like we had the last meeting which was the October one, was it October? No, November because I missed the October one; something was going on, the September one that I went to, we had a black lady from Soweto come [unclear] and she spoke a little bit about how she can't do open, she can't do open that she's a lesbian and polyamorous where she lives, because it's not safe. So I think maybe that's one of the reasons that there are people in the black community that are polyamorous and want to live that lifestyle, but because of, given the race of the circumstances surrounding, they don't talk about it. It's very hidden…*

Therefore, hiding involvement in concurrency seems to be one of the coping mechanisms that some of these participants choose to adopt.

8.5.1 The influence of the environment on the expression of sexual relationships

In this dissertation, I have used social cognitive theory to illustrate how, even in situations where the environment is oppressive towards expression of such a human aspect as sexuality, the individuals

still insert their agency in order to influence their environment. In so many ways the findings of this study corroborate the use of this methodology and this is clearly identified by the participant below who displayed a keen awareness of how much the environment influences the way sexuality is expressed.

> *Par \ white-male \ peter: Sure like there's probably a lot going on, there's obviously stuff to do with resources and country capital and all that stuff… I think it's maybe also, here we talk a bit about like you know, respectability politics, kind of you know like, you know if you're a black person, you're already kind of in some ways still thought of as hypersexual or, like not... what's the word I'm looking for? You know, like your sexuality is thought of as [unclear] or excessive or something like that and so I think like there can be a strong, like a strong motivation to kind of like be as kind of like, overtly monogamous as possible in order to get away from that. I mean I definitely think there's kind of, there's definitely a more sort of … like white people just have more license to be weird in some respects, does that make sense? There's just a social norm, like if you're white and you broke a social norm that's just cause you're like an idiot or some sort of weirdo, whereas I think being weird and black is potentially, you know very bad…*

This finding is important because it speaks to the kinds of resources and capital one is able to mobilize in order to protect oneself from viruses such as HIV. Indeed, South Africa is still a country where access is largely conditioned by race and social class.

8.6 Egalitarianism and equality in polyamorous relationships

The pathways of gender inequalities which increase the likelihood of women becoming infected with HIV disease intersect significantly with intimate domestic and partner violence. Recent focus on interventions that promote various forms of egalitarian gender norms aim to decrease the high rates of HIV among women (Amin, 2015). The findings of this dissertation support this view as the following demonstrates.

> *Par \ white-male \ peter: I mean so much of this depends on what sort of normative framework you approach; I mean if you are approaching a framework were you are like in some sense, like a bit some of Africa it's still, like naturally gender unequal society, like I think concurrency like multiple partners within that context is framed in a certain way, I think. You know it's definitely something, like you know framed, like a man gets to do or men get to do, like have multiple partners and the power structure around that is if it's framed around like something that men get to do, it's surrounded around men's sexual pleasure instead of you get to have multiple partners, you get to have unprotected sex with*

them, you know your partner. Women don't get to demand safer sexual practices or negotiate as equal partners when you talk to them about safer sexual practices…

This is also reflected in the quote below:

Par \ white-male \ peter: We've had historically ... we're typically very unfair towards women and women were expected to just suck it up if their men was shagging every woman in town, they were still expected to put out without protection and if they ended up getting an infection, that's just tough for them.

This is also illustrated in the quote below, where one of the male participants speaks about polyamory.

Par \ indian-female \ jay: Well if you look at the history of the whole poly movement, it was initiated by women, not men. It's actually a feminist idea because it's looking for equality. Whereas with the male dominated mindset patriarchy, it's men making the rules, men uhmm telling women what to do and it's their agenda; it's the male agenda that women have to just follow. With the feminists are saying listen, that's nonsense, we also want our right to make our own choices and one of our choices is to have sexual freedom. If we want to have more than one partner, we should be okay, we should be allowed to do that; and that's where poly came from. It's fighting for the equality.

Indeed, many of the female participants had the following to say about polyamorous relationships:

Par \ white-female \ michelle: Whereas in the polyamory that we practice, we are very much working hard to try and (a) dispel the myth that this is an acceptable thing, and (b) install a…. women should be able to stand up for themselves and say no, that men shouldn't be able to demand sex or unprotected sex or anything like that, that this is not okay.

The issue of equality is emphasised in the following extract:

Par \ white-male \ peter: I just think there's different ways you can frame that, right; so if you're negotiating from a position of more equality then there's all sorts of [unclear] things you can agree to once you are actually at equal footing. You can say, oh okay, maybe we can both have multiple partners and that's fine, let's negotiate from a position of equality and we both feel we get something out of that.

The pivotal distinction of these polyamorous relationships, especially as far as women are concerned is that the partners jointly and intentionally construct a particular meaning for their relationships. This differentiation is an aspect that HIV policy makers in sub-Saharan Africa should heed because it relates to the issue of consent which in these relationships appears to be established without undue influence. This is explained below:

> ***Par \ white-female \ martha:*** *Uhmm, that's the thing about poly, like I said, I've been there now, myself, and it is one thing that I never thought I would do, so a red light should have been warning me already when it happened that there's now something here that's not right. The thing with poly is that there is consent of everyone, everyone knows what everyone is doing……*

8.6.1 Performance of masculinity versus ideological practises of polyamorous relationships

One participant said that polyamory was not a miracle even though she acknowledged its importance in South African society. She said this within the context of highlighting some of the problems women in these relationships experience. The ubiquitous male gaze is one such adversity that women in polyamorous relationships often have to contest (Sheff, 2005). One could argue that, in light of these experiences, polyamorous relationships appear to be an added burden rather than a liberating sexual relationship. One female participant described some of the challenges that she has experienced in the following extract:

> ***Par \ white-female \ marlene:*** *Even in our community, this must be said, that there is still predatory behaviour, there is still sexism, there is still racism, there is still classism. So polyamory is not a cure all, it doesn't fix anything, it's just… it's like being gay, it's a relationship orientation, it's who you are, but it's not a cure I think for any of the ills that are society any more than feminism can cure the patriarchy.*

The issue of masculinity and patriarchy is not only reflected here; Shefer (2003) in her study also discovered that patriarchal norms were evident in some of the polyamorous relationships. This issue is discussed below:

> ***Par \ white-female \ martha:*** *Uhmm…. It turns out that his so called deep philosophical nature was just a cover for somebody who likes to shag intelligent women and then turn them into his little puppets. He's very manipulative.*

Indeed, some men feel that polyamory is an opportunity for them to be promiscuous. To this end, some of the female participants reported humiliating experiences because of the 'female conquest'

mantra from some of polyamorous men. What is interesting, though, from these experiences is that these women were keenly aware of the power issues that emanated from patriarchal notions of masculinity. In addition, it is quite significant to note that unpleasant experiences are explained as indicated below:

> *Par \ white-female \ michelle:* *Yes, you know, weekend girlfriend, weekends I get to see him and it's fine. And then when he met the other girl, everything sort of like; he'll always say he's too busy to see me and he'll go see the other girl, would make me sleep on the couch and have the other girl sleep in the bed.*

This is also identified in the extract below:

> *Par \ white-female \ marlene:* *Well, you know, I think he felt like that for some time too frankly, I think it was part of what he was looking for, this idea and I think it was very good at points…*
> *Res:* *But how did that make you feel?...*
> *Par \ white-female \ marlene:* *What? That he's, like the man? Pshhh... I long ago stopped worrying about what people think, so you know.*

As one participant remarked, polyamory is not a cure, particularly since it is a relationship that many of these women were experiencing for the first time in their lives. It is clear that it is a partnering that holds the potential to problematize many of the inequalities that are often critiqued in monogamous partnering.

8.7 The value of trust in polyamory relationships

Sexual relationships that are formed on the basis of polyamory, particularly in localities such as South Africa where the epidemic of HIV has infected and killed so many people reveals high levels of feelings of security and trust among the partners. In other words, some of the participants feel secure enough to place their lives in the hands of their partners. More so, these findings show the intentionality of the participants – the seriousness with which these people view their relationships. More so, the lengths these participants would go in committing themselves to their polyamorous relationships. This is evident below:

> *Par \ white-female \ martha:* *No, there's an exchange of bodily fluids and there's the thing again, there has to be trust. Well he's not involved with anyone now so there's no, but as soon as something like that will happen, there will definitely again be that talk about the fluids because that's the most important thing. Condoms can't take care of everything; there's no one hundred percent, there's no hundred*

percent in anything. So uhmm yeah, there's a risk in everything that you do. But yeah, choose your partners, choose your partners.

Indeed, the role of trust in the decision to allow oneself to be involved in a partnering where your partner's word plays a significant role proves how poorly we understand alternative sexual partnering, and crucially, how little we comprehend the construct of fidelity in these relationships.

Res: Such a big thing…

Par \ white-female \ benita: It is but if you know, if you know your partner and yeah, that's where the love and everything comes in; to know them so well that you know you can trust them a hundred percent. So you know he or she will be safe every time, there will be no exceptions at all because you love them so much, you value them so much that you don't want to hurt them.

At issue here is the information that this particular participant has received about her partner – the knowledge with which she is able to make a value judgement regarding love, trust, communication and closeness. Indeed, the experiences described here are interpreted by these participants as truths about the meaning of love and trust.

Par \ white-female \ benita: Well, I think I've got about two classes of comments about that. First class of comments is you shouldn't be sticking your mouth in a dickk you wouldn't….[inaudiable}… [laugh] really, if you don't trust someone with your life, don't have sex with them.

The same participant also said:

Par \ white-female \ benita: Secondly don't get into an open relationship with them, I mean, trust is essential in a polyamorous relationship. If there's any kind of hint of lack of faith then that thing is going to fly apart like s%@t in a storm. You really don't want to go there… you have to get… this is one of the things that's crucially important about polyamory when you are practicing is your primary relationship, the one that came first, that relationship needs to be rock solid when you start moving out and start finding other people because if it's not, the moment you get involved with other people and you bring them into this relationship, all the crap is going to come out. It's like having a baby, suddenly all the stress that was on the relationship is just amplified a thousand degrees. You will know that you are actually not okay in your relationship the moment you get into a polyamorous relationship.

Lewis and Wiegert (1985) stated that "interpersonal trust has cognitive and affective foundations" and this is primarily built on specific situation in the past where one's partner acted in a certain way in order to validate his or her partner's feelings. The narrative below exemplifies the preceding statement because it shows how Marlene's partner was able to reassure her feelings and place in their relationships:

> *Res: You gonna take his word for it?...*
>
> *Par \ white-female \ marlene: I'm going to take his word for it, yeah…*
>
> *Res: That's a big [unclear], taking his word for it hey?...*
>
> *Par \ white-female \ marlene: I do, it's about the trust and if it turns out that she was lying, she had an affair and she gets us infected with something, I guess we have to really hope that it's something that can be cured with some antibiotics…*
>
> *Res: So how do you know she cheated when she was married to someone?...*
>
> *Par \ white-female \ marlene: Cause she did tell JF that and he told me that because it was concerning and we had a discussion about the sex thing.*

The same participant also stated:

> *Par \ white-female \ marlene: ... Not afraid enough to damage my relationship now, when you get really scared of losing someone, that's when jealousy creeps in and the mistrust and stuff like that. And you know that breaks relationships, relationships can't breathe in cages of these things; so I trust JF to tell me that he's in this relationship. And nothing in his behaviour says to me that he's not, so then you know, she can all she wants, wants me to be gone, but while his and my relationship is working for us both then she can keep wishing.*

It has been identified that at the heart of trusting one's partner, the overriding factor in polyamorous relationships is the wellbeing of everyone involved in the partnering. This is articulated below:

> *Par \ white-male \ peter: So we kind of say, well, pretty much trust each other to decide what would count as risky sex for us. And we pretty much trust each other to maintain that; we do get tested pretty regularly, say about every three months or so.*

8.7.1 The value of honesty in polyamory relationships

As indicated elsewhere in this dissertation that one of the primary functions of qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews is to illuminate knowledge that is intensely private. Therefore, in this study I sought to explore the source of behaviours and attitudes of the participants given how complex their relationships appear to be in society. The experiences of honesty in these relationships

were an important marker that revealed why these participants chose to practice polyamory. Much like trust, honest discussions about sexual desires and fantasies seemed to be an important factor in decisions regarding sexual health of the participants. This is highlighted here:

> *Par \ white-male \ kobus: So I'll be making friends, not intentionally to build a relationship, but I'm more honest, telling my wife, listen here, I'm going out to this and this person, I've told you about them, they've invited me for this and this party. I don't have to, to be, how do you call it? Hide my actions, I don't have to do stuff in secret. I can tell her; listen here I'm going to this and this party, I'm taking condoms for safety, I don't know what['s] gonna happen and that's that. Telling her [unclear] maybe I'll be getting drunk, maybe there'll be something [unclear] against me, maybe… well it's being open. I'm not hunting or anything, but it's just that secureness of being honest about yourself; I know myself, I know how I conduct myself when I'm out with my friends. I won't have hidden agendas or anything because I don't have to. If I feel the need to do anything weird or strange, I will discuss it with my partners and I have their take on it because maybe they would like to join me in the adventure.*

The meaning of honesty, as explained by the participants in these relationships is that it has a much broader scope than sexual intercourse. In fact, polyamorous relationships also including sharing cognitive and intellectual intimacy, the exchange of personal thoughts and sharing feelings with one another. These activities partly explain why these participants practice polyamory and any behavior that is in breach of these values is handled as illustrated below:

> *Par \ white-female \ benita: integrity and honesty are very….very important to me….....the moment you [unclear] or the moment you lie to me you discrediting who I am as a person and you don't deserve respect in my mind… and so... I .like … I personally don't cheat and is something that I am very… very religious if you like and whatever…*

These participants also highlight how important the framework of polyamory has been in their lives, to the extent that because of it, the notion of honesty has been critical in allowing them to express their innermost sexual feelings. This is shown here:

> *Res: How's that?...*
>
> *Par \ indian-male \ jay: Because the poly concept allows you to be totally honest with your partner, it allows for total honesty. If I'm feeling attractions for that person there, and I'm in a relationship with you, I don't see why I shouldn't say to you, listen, that person, I find something attractive with them, about them. Then we can discuss, so what should we do about that? Ok, should I pursue it or what? What*

should [I] do about it? Monogamy doesn't allow you that, in general. Certain people that are very mature, might be able to discuss that, but it's not generally in the monogamy mindset that you can do that.

Indeed, the element of honesty in such partnering is eloquently addressed below:

Par \ white-female \ marlene: It was, but it also taught me a lot of things. It taught me to sit down and have a conversation with someone first and if I can't have an easy conversation with the person then it's not going to go anywhere.

Another participant also stated:

Par \ white-female \ benita: … And I tell people right from the start that I am polyamorous… and I have had great response from people… most people are open to it… like its not like something that I am going to do for the rest of my life… but I can tell you most people in my age group are open to it…

As explained by the participants of this study it is important to engage in non-monogamy ethically and provide other partners with the correct information regarding one's sexual activities.

8.7.2 The value of communication in polyamorous relationships

The value of communication is synonymous with the factors of trust and honesty in the relationship. All of the variables are the ingredients that are important to successful relationships. Indeed, this production of knowledge yields insights which reinforce the profound meaning of polyamorous relationships to the participants as exemplified below.

Par \ white-female \ martha: We just learnt to communicate our needs better and ask for what we wanted. And during this process of negotiating for what we needed out of the relationship's structure and content, we discovered that both of us were not gender conforming… We were both bisexual, we both had an interest in alternative sexual lifestyles. We weren't very jealous of each other's cheating, it was more of an offence that we were lied to rather than that there was some sense of possessiveness or whatever. We didn't feel offended by the actual act, we felt offended by the implicit deception involved. So as we began to identify that, these were common values for both of us.

Indeed, communication as a coping strategy used to enhance polyamorous relationships is one of the important features of the data analysis. Here we learn that lying and cheating constituted a serious violation of the commitment that goes with being involved in these relationships.

Furthermore, the participant below indicates the extent to which these individuals were willing to go in order to optimise communication in their relationships.

> *Par \ white-female \ martha: So yeah… lots of therapy, lots training in good communication and in communicating your needs and being in touch with yourself and understanding yourself so that when you express yourself you speak truthfully and vulnerably, openly about what you need and what you want. So that there's no need to lie, so there's no need to pretend. Whenever there is a situation you can go like, this is what I want, this is what you want, let's negotiate… okay, agreed, we're good. As opposed to passive aggressive you know, shoving each other around and then eventually getting resentful and cheating. So open communication, big thing, that's really the two things that are important to me. The fact that you need to have that kind of trust and that you have to work on the communication side to get there. It's essential.*

Nevertheless, these participants reveal the awareness that most of them had in identifying the negative impact such emotions as jealousy might have on their relationships and the need to address, through constructive dialogue, these undesirable attributes. This issue was also emphasized in many texts on polyamory, where individuals in these relationships were encouraged to put more effort into communicating their feelings to each other (Sheff, 2005). This is illustrated here:

> *Par \ white-female \ marlene: Probably, yeah, but this is the thing, this is what you do, you build up this image in your head, so you actually have to sit down and dissect, does this work? And what works about our relationship? And then tell the other person why you are feeling jealous so that they can have a chance to reassure you. Well no, I'm not going to leave you for Lynn [unclear]...*

In addition, other participants explained that high levels of communication in these relationships had a positive effect to the extent that deviant behavior was foiled because partners were able to disclose their innermost thoughts. This is indicated here:

> *Par \ white-male \ kobus: ...Immensely, it learnt me tools and stuff. I'm learning every day, especially communicating to my partners and saying, sharing feelings and stuff that the in the monogamous dynamic, you're too afraid to tell your wife that you have a desire to have a threesome for instance. And it builds up and it eats away at you, at the end of the day you end up wanting it so much that it causes you to actually cheat on your relationship.*

8.8 Exclusionary Polyamory

The issue of race and social class, especially in still shape many aspects of South Africans lives, including how is able to express his/her sexuality. This was recognised by all of the participants who were involved in this study, who stated:

> *Par \ white-female \ michelle: But we are the minority unfortunately, in terms of demographics, unfortunately we are prohibitively white and middle class.*

As protective factors race and social class chart many prohibitions or possibilities in one's life and this is indicated in the extract below:

> *Par \ white-female \ martha: I'm quite well aware of the fact that what may work for us in za.poly as sort of privileged communities, is very much far removed from experiences of the working class and people who are basically coming from less privileged backgrounds than we are.*

I found these experiences interesting, this awareness that the participants have regarding their privileged positions in South Africa. These insights are important given how culture, income opportunities and gender inequalities manifest themselves in sexual relationships in the country. This is illustrated here:

> *Par \ white-female \ benita: If you're someone who's from a poor background and you're living in Soweto and you want to be poly and let's say you're a woman; how do you do that in that kind of community? Can you be open? Is there not a cultural backlash that you're gonna get because you are now living here? Can you have different lovers come over to your house? Are your neighbours, is there going to be some kind of backlash from your neighbours?*

I also discovered a contradiction in these articulations. While these participants acknowledged their privileged position because of their skin color, at the same time, the fact that they had privilege revealed some ignorance. This had to do with the fact that some of these participants thought that because they practiced polyamory, they were the only ones challenging the dominant framework of monogamy. To this end, attainment of education is described as a significant attribute that helps one to mobilise the attitude of activism. This is indicated here:

> *Par \ white-female \ kobus: I think that white, middle class people have certain inherent privileges and cultural backgrounds [unclear] where often they've had education that encourages them to think in different ways. They have, so they are not rich people, but they're people that have been educated and have comfortable*

lifestyles. And in fact in the context of this country they are white and so they have the freedom that comes with that; to be able to go and live somewhere [unclear].

This is also indicated by another participant in the extract below:

> ***Par \ white-female \ michelle:*** *I think it comes down to, I think it's possibly the other aspects around that sort of white, middle class that make it easier; so I don't know if I necessarily think poly is a white, middle class lifestyle.*

8.9 The construction of sexual rules and agreements

A key finding of this study was the deliberation of many participants in protecting themselves and their loved ones against the epidemic of HIV. All of the participants stated that they devised rules and agreements in their relationships regarding sexual acts. This is shown below:

> ***Par \ white-female \ martha:*** *The most important one for me is the safer sex agreement which is where you very explicitly delineate what your boundaries are regarding sex and if you are somebody who is you know sow your wild oats without a condom kind of person, this needs to declared upfront to whatever partner you have so they can responsibly respond to that in their own way. Likewise if you have limits that you feel are non-negotiable, so I do not do oral sex without protection, those things are negotiated in the sex agreement and you all agree to this.*

This was also expressed by another participant, below:

> ***Res:*** *So did you guys not have rules about those potential situations?*
> ***Par \ white-female \ michelle:*** *We did, but about when we were going home separately with different people, but not when we are in the same space with different people… and my live-in partner saw me when I was going through all of those emotions… I didn't try and hide it….*

This quote underlines one of the critical aspects of sexual behavior, which is that of ownership. By constructing boundaries when commencing a new sexual relationship constitutes a clear sign of not only recognizing the need to assume ownership of one's behaviour, but also the responsibility that goes with partaking in sexual practices. A demonstration of sexual health behaviour (in the context of potential transmission to HIV) that is considerate of other's wellbeing underscore the ethical principles that underpin this partnering. Indeed, this finding shows that infection of STI's is a behaviour which is neither acceptable nor appropriate in these relationships. The female participants

also demonstrated that adhering to rules was not dependent on gender, but was, in most cases, gender neutral as explained here:

> ***Par \ white-female \ benita:*** *The moment I have a play partner I have a bit of a BDSM[13] night as well…*
>
> ***Res:*** *Does that person know that he or she is a play partner?...*
>
> ***Par \ white-female \ benita:*** *Pardon?...*
>
> ***Res:*** *You say that you have a play partner right?...*
>
> ***Par \ white-female \ benita:*** *Uhmhmm, I have a couple…*
>
> ***Res:*** *Do they know that they are play partners?...*
>
> ***Par \ white-female \ benita:*** *Yes….*

8.9.1 The Impact of Ambiguity of Sexual Rules and Agreements

In a complex relationship such as that of polyamory, it is important for all partners to express varying levels of expectations and formulate boundaries. Jamieson (2004) stated that concurrent partnerships were characterised by multifaceted dynamics and therefore rules could, at times, be fluid. These dynamics in polyamorous relationships can cause problems if not properly constituted. An example of this is described below:

> ***Par \ white-female \ martha:*** *I suspect he had some therapy because he mentioned that as being one of the things that kind of helped him realise that what had happened there was that he grew jealous, he wanted me to himself and it hurt that in this context, that was not an appropriate thing. That was outside of our relationship agreement.*

8.9.2 Noncompliance of sexual rules and agreements

Some of the reasons why the participants did not adhere to the established sexual rules and agreements include a couple who lived apart. Therefore, distance was cited as the main reason deviating from the stated rule. In another example, these rules were broken as a result of dishonest behaviour as this quote below shows.

> ***Par \ white-female \ marlene:*** *That was the ultimate punishment for cheating in a polyamorous relationship. If you sow your wild oats without permission, you will not have sex for three months.*

This is also discussed in the following extract.

---

[13] The acronym BDSM stands for Bondage and Discipline (BD), Dominance and Submission (DS), Sadism, and Masochism (SM)

Res: But your primary partner, does he know that you are not using protection with the secondary one?

Par \ white-female \ michelle: I haven't been completely honest… I told him that most of the time we do, but that's not true.

After probing for more clarity regarding the discussion above, this was what the same participant said:

Res: So…what safer sex practices rules do you guys have in place…

Par \ white-female \ michelle: So the rule is obviously using protection and no oral sex rule…. until we know the new part enough to ask him to get tested we are not doing an oral thing or non-protection… and I know its not justifiable and I am under no impression that what I am doing is right… um… the connection with my secondary is something that I cannot explain to this day…

This key piece of knowledge should prompt new perspectives regarding how some forms of non-monogamous relationships are viewed in the society. Moreover, this information indicate that safer sex practices is possible in these relationships.

8.9.3 Safer sex practices in polyamorous relationships

The extracts of the participants in this study proves that there is a difference between risky behavior and sexual diversity. Importantly, the discussion below also shows that polyamorous relationships can, in many respects, protect against HIV. The participant below echoed the preceding sentiments:

Par \ white-female \ marlene: It was, you're always going to use a condom and that's just an agreement that I have with everyone... [unclear] from my primary partner, we've been seeing each other for almost two years now and we've had four screening done…

This attitude is also reflected in the stories of other participants who have a clear understanding of the adverse impact of HIV. These accounts demonstrate that non-monogamy, in and of itself, is not a problem, but certain behavioural attributes prevent people from practicing safer sex. The quote below reveals that discussing safer sex practices, on its own, is not sufficient, but the tangible proof of HIV test results can be insisted upon:

Par \ indian-male \ jay: Well absolutely upfront, because you should be having this intimate conversations with your partner. And very often you will be going to physical intimacy. You could say upfront, non-negotiable, HIV test and show me your result; because that's [a] life threatening. All other diseases are not life

threatening, manageable, but obviously should be looked at as well. So with this
current relationship with Joy, I said do the test and show me the result and I did
my test and I gave her my results. We both tested negative on that one.

Indeed, the use of contraceptives is a serious consideration that has been articulated by all of the participants in this study as evidenced below:

> **Par:** *Condoms, Stan, condoms [laugh].*
> **Par \ white-female \ martha:** *[laugh] Ok so,[laugh] so condoms right with the other partners?*
> **Par:** *Yeah, and you get tested regularly, definitely.*

What I also found interesting was that some participants regardless of the context within which their sexual intercourse occured had an acute awareness of the potential risk of HIV. This did not stop them from exploring their sexuality in ways that they deemed appropriate. In fact, being polyamorous heightened the participants' caution against HIV. In so many ways, these findings corroborated the theorization of social cognitive theory and constructivism by the participants' tacit illustration of how people interact with the environment in ways that suit their needs. This is beautifully explained below:

> **Par \ white-female \ marlene:** *Because he's about seven thousand times more*
> *paranoid about STDs, STIs than I am. So he had, they went for massages with*
> *happy endings, him and Alex as a sort of couple thing right, and then he got the*
> *flu. So then he read on the Internet that it's probably syphilis, we all had to go get*
> *tested again even though the doctor was like, you can't get syphilis like that.*
> *Cause he told the doctor, she was like you can't get syphilis from a hand job and*
> *also your symptoms don't actually match it, but he was like no, we have to get*
> *tested anyway so we all had to get tested anyway. So given that experience I*
> *have absolutely no doubt that if he does get to the casual sex thing, he will be*
> *wearing a condom.*

This strong focus on safer sex practices in the polyamorous community, once more casts a spotlight on other intersecting factors that I have already touched on, such as gender inequality, race, social class and their association with HIV. Once again, it has become increasingly clear that the structure of the sexual relationships, to a large extent, is not necessarily the problem. The issue lies with certain behavioural factors within the relationships that need to be addressed. Nevertheless, another seminal finding that emerged from this study was that some of the participants were also aware of the dichotomy of the responsible versus irresponsible non-monogamy. These participants were able to draw these distinctions not because they had read about these differences in the media but as a result of their lived experiences. This is noted below:

Par \ white-female \ martha: There's a difference between polyamory and polyfuckery because doing the swinging thing or just going oh I'm polyamorous just for fun, it's just not there. It's not how it works, unless that is what you've discussed, what you've agreed upon and one of your partners is following a consensual, uhmm, solo, I don't know whatever where he can hook up with anyone once unless he is doing it according to the agreements that has been discussed in the relationship. That to bring everything together, so safe sexual agreements, using condoms, being safe; doing regular tests, that type of stuff. Sharing that with your future partners, or possible partners, telling them that; listen here man I'm a good stud, I'm not bringing anything down onto you and that's being honest to you about it and the same back to your partners.

This rhetoric is captured in the extract below:

Par \ white-female \ marlene: So it was a closed triad so there were no other outside relationships involved while we were dating there. We got tested before we had sex…
Res: Why?...
Par \ white-female \ marlene: Hmmm?...
Res: Why?...
Par \ white-female \ marlene: Well because you just do, it's smart to be safe about it….

8.9.4 The polyamorous Family Consideration as a protective factor against HIV

One of the chief principles associated with polyamory is its emphasis on the family (Sheff, 2005). However, I caution the over-representation of this particular attribute because it may not necessarily be the exclusive purview of polyamory. Critical observation is required of the studiedly HIV context of concurrency literature in sub-Saharan Africa. In these texts the desire to establish families on the part of those individuals who are partaking in concurrent relationships is not explored. Anyway, in the polyamorous community it is common to find secondary sexual partners becoming involved in the rearing of the primary partners' children. This emphasis may reinforce the concern for the well-being of all sexual partners as explained below:

Par \ white-female \ martha: Yes, that is the most important thing to me; that he's safe, I don't want any other, that's the main thing that he's safe. Not only for me, for me not contracting anything but for himself as well; he has small children; I want them still to have their daddy when they're growing up. I want him to walk

them down the aisle if they choose to get married or whatever. So yeah, it's not
only for me. It's for him as well.

8.9.5 Safer Sex Practices Ambiance within the broader South African polyamorous group

The concern for safer sex practices is not only the preoccupation of a few individuals in polyamorous relationships but appears to be a critical issue within the broader South African polyamory community. For example, the following quote shows that the South African polyamory group organises a range of activities to highlight the importance of practicing concurrency safely. The text below attests to this:

> *Par \ white-female \ marlene: Ok, well we had a whole meeting once at Billie's*
> *house where one of the women from some clinic in Pretoria came and we all had*
> *name badges on that she gave us and then we were talking to people and then*
> *later on she says okay, turn your name badges around, who've you infected with*
> *what? Which was a very interesting experience; she was like imagine you weren't*
> *talking [unclear] and then she showed us all different kinds of [unclear] like the*
> *condoms …… which I've never seen before.*

Technology, specifically the Internet is used by this group to disseminate information on safer sex practices. Indeed, these participants do use the South African polyamory group website as a resource irrespective of where they are located in the country. This is evident from the quote below:

> *Par \ indian-male \ jay: It's encouraged, in the poly community, there's lots of*
> *resources talking about safer sex. It's available on the website and so safe sex is*
> *one of the biggest topics when you talk about polyamory. Cause it's responsible*
> *and you don't do relationships if you['re] not responsible, that's in general anyway.*

8.9.6 Lack of Safer Sex Practices within polyamorous relationships

In my analysis I also discovered a theme from a participant who said that polyamory was not a cure. This participant explained that this sexual lifestyle was full of imperfections as many people who were involved in these relationships were still learning about this partnering. It is true that in at times condoms were not used in some of these relationships. This is a crucial finding, primarily because it revealed the fallibility of these relationships. As a researcher, what preoccupied me was the response of these participants when they failed to protect themselves against HIV. This is discussed below:

> *Par \ white-female \ benita: [laugh] So that particular night when you guys didn't*
> *use a condom, how did you react the following day?*

Par 2: I was incredibly nervous, I was very, very unhappy about it and I told him that, you know, this will never happen again. And I had, you know, HIV tests started after that, it was one of the most terrifying five minutes of my life.

This behaviour is also captured below:

Par \ white-male \ peter: What else? When Sarah was dating someone more seriously at the beginning of this year, she did have unprotected sex with him after a few months of dating and basically she and I talked about that. And we agreed that he had been tested, between the two of them they agreed about safe sex practices with other partners outside of that.

This is what another participant had say about her experience of unsafe sex practices in her polyamorous relationship:

Par \ white-female \ michelle: In terms of the health risk… I had bacterial vaginitis… which is a form of an STD… I ignored it because I was busy at work and started getting abdominal pains and one day at work I just completely collapsed… and the pain was so sore… and I was hospitalised and it turns out I had a miscarriage because of the infection… which means there were mistakes in the relationships of not using condoms… and this was the scariest realisation that we all experienced in the relationship…

Res: But tell me then were you not using a condom with your primary partner?...

Par \ white-female \ michelle: After a long time in the relationship… after about four months… but I can say ninety-nine-poin-nine per cent of the time we used protection…

Res: And with other partners … has there been a time when you didn't use a condom?...

Par \ white-female \ michelle: With my secondary its been almost all the time that we didn't use a condom and that's partly because the first time when it happen we were both drunk…

8.10 Unsuitable support network

It has been shown in this analysis that South African polyamory group, from which the participants of this study were obtained provides psychosocial support. However, the experiences of some of the participants indicated this support network, in many instances, fell short of meeting their needs as described in the conversation below:

Par \ white-female \ benita: Because, it's really far.

Res: It's in Jo'burg hey?

Par \ white-female \ benita: Yeah, sixty kilometers from here and it always feels like the same stuff is being said over and over and you can't really get to issues that bother you because they're new people that have their poly questions and they want answers. Although I do have a lot of friends, I've attended a couple of times, I've made friends with people and I have my quite close emotional support group from that

Other impediments that characterize the inadequacy of this support network are explained here:

Par \ white-female \ martha: And they are really doing a big service for the community and the only thing that I've got against, not the members, is not interactive enough and they don't do their homework as the one moderator would say.

Other experiences are captured here:

Par \ white-female \ marlene: That he's a moderator of the za.poly group; there's been a bit of a, how can I say, not a power struggle but a conflict in it, in za.poly so some of the mods have left and I don't know where za.poly is going, but there are other groups in South Africa as well that are polyamory groups. I usually, I just read what they say, I don't participate really in the discussion.
Res: Why not?
Par \ white-female \ marlene: Maybe because I feel like I don't know enough yet to give an input, but let me tell you Stan, those people are sensitive as hell.

8.11 Concluding Remarks

8.11.1 Ethical non-monogamous practices

I am concluding this chapter with less of my own interpretation and more of what the participants resoundingly articulated. This is polyamory as a form of concurrent partnering is not tantamount to promiscuity. In general, the stories of these participants illustrate a group of people who genuinely care about their own wellbeing. Additionally, these seven men and women care about the welfare of their partners within the context of polyamorous relationships. As exemplified in this chapter that polyamory when practiced ethically and with due cognizance can be protective against HIV. The participant below explains this eloquently:

Par \ white-male \ kobus: Yes, but I would want to add this which is now my definition of poly; yes you can have multiple sexual consensual partners, that's only one part of being poly. But the tricks of being poly for me and that's where the

people don't get it, is one. Small example: being married for ten years, loving my wife unconditionally, building friendships and relationships of how many I can handle, because you can't be in a relationship… It depends on how many times you can give to that person and what type of quality time you can give that person. The main thing or the main definition of poly for me is being able to build an intimate relationship with someone, having what we call New Relationship Energy or NRE or falling in love, anything and the possibility of having sexual relationship then by level of relationship depending on where you want to go with this relationship, that's now exactly where it comes down to.

You can't say, right I like having a lot of sex with a lot of people and now I'm going to be polyamorous That's bullshit because monogamous, solo monogamous people do that anyways. They're having a lot of sex with a lot of people, they're using [unclear] sex whatever and still monogamous. But being polyamorous just gives you the option of having multiple sexual relationships, but agreeing to having safe or having safe sex agreements between your partners. There's a lot of poly relationships where some of the partners don't even have a sexual relationship, they just have a nice romantic, intimate relationship and it's consensual between, with everyone involved. But say it would happen then it would be okay with everyone, because you already stated your intentions within that relationship.

8.11.2 The possible contribution of polyamory towards enhancing HIV programmes in South Africa

Although, polyamory has many limitations the participant quoted below states that the people who are involved in these relationships have a sense of activism in them. This is kind of attitude that is needed in the fight against the HIV epidemic that is responsible for so many deaths in this country. She eloquently explains these sentiments here:

***Par \ white-female \ martha:** Even in our community, this must be said, that there is still predatory behavior, there is still sexism, there is still racism, there is still classism. So polyamory is not a cure all, it doesn't fix anything, it's just… it's like being gay, it's a relationship orientation, it's who you are, but it's not a cure I think, for any of the ills that are society any more than feminism can cure the patriarchy. What cures these kinds of problems is activism. In that respect, I feel people who get involved in polyamory, just like the LGBTI community, develops suddenly a restive [vested – unclear] interest in actually tackling these issues because now these issues are touching them personally.*

Although polyamory may not necessarily a cure; however, it is one of the ways in which people who are involved in non-monogamy can mobilize their efforts and voice their belief in non-monogamy as indicated here:

> ***Par \ white-female \ marlene:*** *Uhmm I think activists who speak out about their polyamorous relationships in public for like media interviews and the like; although at this stage it still tends to drawn down a lot of fire in terms of nasty comments and stuff. I also see the very positive impact it has on the way that other people who relate to non-monogamous relationships in South Africa. I see the comments from the black women who go; Wena, this is bullshit, these guys are screwing with their side chicks, but I don't get to have another guy? This crap must stop. So it's planting a seed of questioning this dominating idea that only men are allowed to have sexual freedom or whatever. If you look at the cultural shifts that are currently taking place…*

CHAPTER 9: THE INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

9.1 Interpretations of Findings

The focus of the findings' section was primarily on presenting, inductively, the personal experiences of the participants in this dissertation. The use of IPA not only dictates this approach but also recommends the deduction of data-sets on the part of the researcher. The latter forms the basis of this section. To illustrate this point, the biographic information of the participants here indicates a group of people who come from middle class background and are educational savvy. As indicated elsewhere in this research, this does not mean the experiences of these individuals are isolated accounts. Furthermore, this does not suggest that concurrent partnering are the exclusive purview of those from higher social class. In fact, some of the literature in South Africa suggest that attainment of education and high income are not necessarily good indictors of involvement in concurrent partnering. For example, the Kenyon, Boulle, Badri, and Asselman (2010) longitudinal study which utilised the Cape Area Panel Survey to explore concurrency among adolescents between the ages of 14 and 25 in Cape Town, found that concurrent partnering was practiced irrespective of educational background. Therefore, this suggest that the findings of this study may reflect the experiences of many people in South Africa who partake in concurrent partnerships including those from lower social class and no access to educational opportunities.

9.1.1 Lessons from participants' polyamorous relationships

The experiences of the participants as described in the preceding chapter prompt a litany of questions such as: Who decides what love is? Why is it important to understand and respect other people's notion of what love is to them? How do diseases, such as cancer, HIV and other terminal illnesses, shape how love is expressed? At the heart of this discussion is the intersection of the meaning of love, subjectivity, disease and policy framework. How does a policy tell a person who is deeply in love with more than one person at the same time that they must confine their love to only one person? How does a policy framework dictate the subjectivities of the meaning of love? How do the policy makers who used the textual production of Kretzschmar and Morris' concurrency mathematical model to formulate the partner reduction policy, respond to the experiences of the participants in this dissertation?

The above questions are important to bear in mind. The reasons for this is simple, in many societies, including the one that we reside in South African often constitute institutions whose agenda is to promote monogamy as the dominant framework of establishing sexual relationships. For example, the participants here have spoken extensively about the role of religion in inculcating monogamous ideals in their lives. However, theories such as social cognitive theory and constructivism indicate

that people are not passive agents to environmental stimuli. In fact, people are said to be co-producers pertaining to the socio-bi-directional relations that occur between them and environment. As illustrated by the participants in this study religion impacted on their cognitive view of how sexual relationships should be constituted. However, their stories also showed that the meaning of sexuality cannot be conferred upon the individual. Indeed, the construct such as sexuality is laden with subjective meaning. The personal accounts of participants here are powerful stories that illustrate how the agentic self is productive in the interaction with its environment.

9.1.2 Familial reaction to polyamorous relationships

What became clear from the stories of the participants is the cost that one often pays when such an individual's ideas of sexuality differs from those that are dominant in the societies. In this case, the participants re-counted the negative responses that they had to face when disclosing to their family members their involvement in polyamory. For most of these participants, backlash and rejection from family relatives was the dominant response. These findings are not unique to this study; in fact, this topic is well documented in the literature regarding same-sex relationships. For example, MacDonald wrote, "[g]ay people may be, in fact, the only minority in [the society as] America whose families consistently reject them" (1983, p. 1). The consequences of this experience include suicidal ideation, substance abuse problems, depression, lack of safer sex practices and alienation, as some of the behavioural patterns that LGBTI people exhibit (Balsam, Rothblum, & Beauchaine, 2005; D'Augelli, Grossman, & Starks, 2005). Although this was not expressed by the participants here, these experiences show how difficult it was for most of their parents to deal with the knowledge of their involvement in concurrency.

One of the most important finding in this dissertation had to do with polyamorous individuals who not only disclosed their sexual lifestyle to their parents but also to their siblings. This may be as a result of siblings appearing to be less critical and more supportive of one's alternative sexual orientation (Sanders, 2004; Stocker, 1994). Indeed, the individual may trust that their sibling is more likely to exercise discretion and keep the information confidential, as well as be less judgmental.

As explained by some of the participants that disclosure to their family relatives regarding their polyamorous relationships ended in the latter getting hurt, these findings have been reported in other studies as well. For instance, D'Augelli and Grossman (2006) showed that, as a result of family relatives having certain expectations of their loved one, disclosure of involvement in alternative sexual orientation (which is in conflict with the former's expectations) can constitute a time of crisis in the family.

This might be the possible reasons why concurrent partnering in sub-Saharan Africa is (mostly) practiced under the veil of secrecy. As shown by the participants here, doing so may be to avoid the negative reaction from families because of the potential distress this may inflict on these relatives. However, some scholars have also stated that the benefits of disclosure of non-monogamy may decrease stress and improve mental health or satisfaction with partnerships and employment (Beals & Peplau, 2001; Morris, Waldo, & Rothblum, 2001; Rosario, Hunter, & Gwadz, 1997). In other settings, however, revealing inclination towards non-monogamy has been found to have no impact on satisfaction with partnerships, and may precipitate verbal or physical abuse and worsen health risk behaviour (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1998; Green, Bettinger, & Zacks, 1996; Rothman, Sullivan, Keyes, & Boehmer, 2012). This situation occurs when there a conflict between the expectations of a person's family and relatives, and their own. For instance, I have shown here that certain participants were called crazy because of their involvement in polyamorous relationships.

These experiences reveal an important point, the idea that (to these participants) concurrency is considered a human sexual experience. Furthermore, polyamorous individuals view this partnering as one of the valid and legitimate ways of establishing a sexual relationship. Therefore, it does not need to be hidden, because it is not tantamount to pathology. As the participants have stated, involvement in concurrency is not a "dirty secret", nor is it immoral or synonymous with adultery. This discourse underscores a pivotal point, the view of which problematizes contextualizing the construction of non-monogamy within the realm of infidelity (Bauer, 2010; Ritchie & Barker, 2006). Indeed, heightening infidelity or immorality as descriptors of non-monogamy poses substantial challenges to concurrent practices, calling into question not only the uniqueness but the validity of this partnering.

9.1.3 The possible impact of the partner reduction policy on polyamorous individuals

The HIV partner reduction policies in South Africa may not have been proven to directly impact negatively on the lives of people who practice concurrent partnerships. However, the question to reflect on is whether the implementation of these policies creates the environment that is supportive of alternative sexualities, including concurrent relationships. How is it possible for a person to come out and say, "I am confused about my sexual orientation" when the HIV partner-reduction policy is clear about the type of relationships that should be established? Furthermore, in situations like those of people who are involved in polyamorous relationships, what sort of appropriate information is available or what resources are provided by the government to address the needs of such individuals. These reflections are particularly crucial when considering that some of the participants in this dissertation have indicated a desire to establish polyamorous families as discussed below.

9.1.4 The desire to establish polyamorous families

One of the chief principles associated with polyamory is its emphasis on the family (Sheff, 2005); however, I caution the over-representation of this particular attribute, because it may not necessarily be the exclusive purview of polyamorous relationships. This is because in the Africa-HIV-concurrency literature the topic of 'establishment of the family' on the people who partake in these relationships is often not explored. Nevertheless, in the polyamorous community it is common to find secondary sexual partners wanting /or becoming involved in the rearing of the primary partners' children.

These findings show that some forms of concurrent partnerships such as polyamory are not fleeting relationships and also not based solely on sexual activities. On the contrary, the desire of these couples to establish a family unit indicate the complexity and diversity of sexual relationships. To this end, how do family planning clinics in South Africa against the backdrop of the country's HIV partner reduction policies promote basic good health for these individuals? Furthermore, what sorts of psychosocial support are available for these couples in South Africa, especially regarding topics such as introduction of secondary partners to the children of primary partners? For example, some of the participants indicated to me the need to introduce their secondary partners to their children but were not sure how to achieve this objective. The intricate nature of polyamorous couples introducing other sexual partners to their children is a topic that is extensively cited in texts on polyamorous relationships. Jamieson's (2004) advice to polyamorous couples is that they should have a plan for disclosing the preceding topic to their children. This is because much thought has to go into how this could impact on the children. In addition, Jamieson (2004) explains that the polyamorous couple needs to consider how the dynamics of introducing another adult in the rearing of their children could play out in the family. On the other hand, Block (2008) says that when the children are still very young, perhaps some details may be omitted.

9.1.5 Disclosure of polyamorous inclinations to potential new partners

The disclosure of involvement in concurrent romance may have to do with creating an environment that is conducive for partners in these relationships to safely and openly discuss safer sex practices. This emphasis may reinforce the concern for the well-being of all sexual partners and thus efforts associated with the prevention of HIV might be prioritized as indicated by some of the participants in this study. This point is highlighted in the study by Conley, Moors, Ziegler, and Karathanasis (2012) which revealed inconsistent condom use, less frequent STI testing, and less frequent discussions about sexual health with partners among a group of sexually unfaithful individuals. However, the same study found that in the openly non-exclusive population safer sex practices were promoted

This suggests a greater awareness of, and commitment to safe sexual health practices in the latter group (Conley et al., 2012).

This last consideration is significant because disclosing one's sexual orientation to potential partners from the onset provides those people with the information that they need in order to make an informed decision regarding whether to proceed with the relationship or not. The issue of informed decision making is highly significant when it comes to safer sex practices. As HIV campaigns such as Botswana's *O Icheke* initiative, or Mozambique's *Andar For a e Maningue Arriscado*! (Stepping out is very risky) illustrate lack of information regarding one's potential or actual extra-dyadic sexual relationships can be very risky. The alternative as pronounced on by the participants of this study is to engage in non-monogamy ethically and provide other partners with the correct information regarding one's sexual activities.

These accounts underline one of the critical aspects of sexual behavior, which is that of ownership. By constructing boundaries when commencing a new sexual relationship, this constitutes a clear sign of not only recognizing the need to assume ownership of one's behavior, but also the responsibility that goes with partaking in sexual practices. Such rhetoric reflects self-efficacy, a process that Bandura (1986), describes as a person's belief in their capacity to successfully exercise control over their own motivation, thought processes, emotional states and patterns of behavior. Furthermore, these experiences debunk the myth and common stereotype of non-monogamous relationships as being tantamount to promiscuity and carelessness. A demonstration of sexual health behavior (in the context of potential transmission to HIV) that is considerate of other's wellbeing, underscore the ethical principles that underpin this partnering. Indeed, the findings of this dissertation show that infection of STI's is a behavior which is neither acceptable nor appropriate in these relationships.

9.1.6 Psychosocial Support to polyamorous individuals

In general, in much of the texts on polyamory, the issue of support for individuals engaged in this partnering is greatly advocated. This is because of the complicated nature of these relationships as well as the psychological, emotional and physical strain which emanates from societal stigma about concurrency. In a geographical setting such as that of sub-Saharan Africa, where HIV is mostly associated with concurrency, the need for a support network is even more acute. The experiences of some of the participants here indicate that the there is a need to start a conversation around the sorts of support structures that is required in this regard.

9.1.7 The role of polyamorous in relation to HIV

It has been described earlier on in this dissertation how South Africa has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in Africa. This form of violence is considered to be one of the prominent risk factors to women contracting the epidemic of HIV. The South Africa's non-profit organizations such as Sonke Gender Justice does advocacy work regarding equal treatment of men and women. The male participants in this study have shown that it is possible to achieve this objective. These group of individuals illustrated this point by showing that relationships are a site where ideas regarding gender, especially those which confer different expectations for women and men can be contested. Indeed, polyamory, at least, as the stories of the men here prove is a type of concurrency that can restore gender parity in matters concerning sexual intimacy. Furthermore, the voices of men in these relationships are testimonies of the shifting meaning of gender norms. This is where some of the victory is, insofar as HIV is concerned – this change of mind-set regarding how men treat women in sexual relationships in South Africa. Indeed, the male participants in this study allow their female counterparts to have the equal opportunity to express their sexual desires. On this basis, polyamorous relationships in this dissertation provide evidence-based accounts where the preceding experiences are lived realities.

Other studies have reached the same conclusion on the topic of polyamorous males and how they treat women in these relationships. One such study is by Zimmerman's (2012) which showed that open or non-monogamous relationships appear to raise the status of women, because of the freedom they provide in order for women to establish sexual relationships in the manner that they deem appropriate. Furthermore, the perception is that these relationships are sites and spaces where women can obtain greater power over their own bodies (Zimmerman, 2012). Many women in polyamorous relationships, especially those who identify with the feminist movement, prefer this sort of non-monogamy "[primarily] to avoid appearing dependent on men or out of political disdain for being submerged into a pair-bonding paradigm" (Jamieson, 2004, p. 15). This point is clearly validated by the women in Elisabeth Scheff's (2005) study, who articulated feeling inhibited and disempowered by their adherence to a traditional patriarchal model of monogamous romance; hence, their preference towards non-monogamy.

In the broad scheme of things, polyamory reinforces the findings of many other research studies on HIV regarding addressing the impediments and factors that drive the prevalence of this virus such as patriarchal norms and gender inequality. In addition, polyamory is the type of concurrency that poses questions with respect to the issue of sexual choice, agency and acceptance of sexual diversity in a country that is situated in a region where heterogeneity of the population is a lived reality. Furthermore, this sexual lifestyle also opens our eyes to the different ways in which behavioral

and sexual public health policies can be conceptualized. Indeed, with its limitations, polyamory shows us what is possible in the way we talk, establish and imagine sexuality within the context of HIV.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

This study involved a small sample of the individuals who are engaged in the romantic relationships of polyamory; therefore, it is not representative of the population of polyamorists in South Africa. Indeed, the focus was on exploring the subjective meaning of polyamorous relationships and not to measure or quantify these partnerings. The richness of the data-set that emanated from the experiences of the participants here does provide food for thought about how sexualities are enacted by different people within the same country. Therefore, a major part of scientific, as well as policy deliberations should always be on how to conceptualise policies that stirve to help everybody in the best way possible.

At this stage of the dissertation it is important to reflect on the implications of the data analysis, as well as presentation of findings, and what these mean in relation to the research question and topic of this study. Furthermore, some of the ancillary objectives that were set out in this study included exploring the potential ways in which partner reduction policy impacted on the meaning of polyamory. To a large degree, there was never an expectation of showing a direct link, but to draw from the participants' experiences the manner in which the preceding policy may be creating an environment which does not make it easy for alternative sexualites to be expressed.

The knowledge gap that emerged from the stories of the participants in this study is that concurrent partnerships, especially polyamory, are poorly understood, and this lack of insight exposes how the construction of partner reduction policy signifies sexual prejudice. This is because: (a) this policy is instructive and coercive, telling the general population of South Africa and the entire region of sub-Saharan Africa how to establish their sexual relationships; (b) the distinction between risk and difference is a key piece of information that is evident from the participants' experiences. In partner reduction policy, however, the heterogeneity of sexual relationships is not considered and in this context all forms of concurrency are situated from a health deficit model. These discourses suggest that all these relationships pose the same risk to HIV. The participants here show that, to a large extent, this is not necessarily the case. In fact, all of these individuals are conscious of, and make concerted efforts to limit their exposure to STDs and HIV. This behaviour is reinforced by the establishment of sexual rules in all of the participants' polyamorous relationships. The cautionary measure of this nature points to forethought, appraisal of the situation, and judgement of a threat

that can impact negatively on one's life. All of these traits, according to Bandura (1986) are the display of agency, the ability of the individuals to interact with the environment in a recursive manner.

Indeed, the participants' experiences validate and legitimise the ethical involvement in non-monogamous relationships. In order to achieve this objective many of the participants were honest with one another, strove to have their partner(s) trust them by communicating their deepest thoughts and feelings. These qualities show the individuals who are committed to their ideals about involvement in polyamorous relationships. Furthermore, this belief in non-monogamous relationships is evidenced by how early in their lives many of the participants started thinking about involvement in such partnering. To some of these participants their earliest memory of being romantically involvement with more than one person at the same began during adolescent years. Tamale's (2011; p, 11) arguement becomes relevant in this regard, she has stated that there are "no uniform or monolithic way of experiencing sexualities within one culture or community, or even among individuals". Therefore, the stories of the participants here prove how important it is to understand this point, particularly when most of their parents have refused to accept non-monogamous relationshps.

However, familial including parental rejection of concurrent partnerships should be understood within the broader context of the hegemonoy of normative monogamy. This framework is rooted in the psyche of many of the people in our societies. In fact, many of the participants in this study spoke about how powerful religion was in instilling the ideology of pair-bonding sexual relationships in their lives. The policies such as partner-reduction whether intentionally or inadvertently sustain this monolithic way of understanding sexual relationships. So far there is no empirical research done in South Africa and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa on how the stated policy may have impacted on alternative sexual relationships. However, certain observations make it is possible for one to draw some important conclusions. These pertain to how as a result of funding, marketing and implementation of partner reduction policies awareness of non-monogamy, especially ethical concurrent partnerships were not prioritised. Therefore, the question that may be posed is to what extent is the stated policy contributing to the normalisation of monogamy and thus familial rejection of non-mongamy.

The answer to this question may only be realised when future research is conducted on how partner reduction policy seek to shape the construction of the meanings and definitions of sexual relationships in the region (Tamale, 2011). Along with this may be an understanding of how this policy frames the idea of sexual fidelity as an enterprise that is only possible in monogamous partnering. This is particularly crucial to explore especially when the participants of this study have showed that sexual exclusivity is also possible in romances that constitute plural love.

178

On the whole, the experiences of the participants argue strongly for formulations of HIV initiatives that are less stigmatising and demonising. In an effort to achieve this, policy practitioners, as well as sexuality researchers would have to think carefully about re-constructing HIV prevention efforts which accommodate the meaning of sexual minorities. Indeed, as shown by the participants that in the event where the prevailing HIV policy is contrary to those people's sexuality, people will always find ways to cope with such a discrepancy. Therefore, the extent of the revised initiatives should also reflect the reality, and most importantly, the needs of people who are in concurrent partnerships. These would, as was identified in Sandfort, Reddy, and Rispel's (2009, p. 234) publication pertaining to the needs of gay couples, include "develop[ing] appropriate narratives about public health issues in relation to understanding the networks, arrangements and organisation of [concurrent partnerships]".

Given what I have discussed above the research question and objectives of the study have been sufficiently addressed. Therefore, the following section is the conversation around how prevalent discrimination and sexual prejudice is in sub-Saharan Africa regarding sexual minorities. What also forms part of this conversation is how public health policy should, ideally be conceptualised by accommodating the perspectives and needs of sexual minorities. As the reader will observe, re-conceptualisation of HIV policies in order to take into account the viewpoints of those people who are in concurrency is actually not a novel initiative. Indeed, South Africa and the rest of sub-Saharan countries can learn good lessons from Australia's campaign such as the Negotiated Safely.

9.2 Macro-level: Public health policy and its impact on sexual relationships

Political and public health policy are powerful instruments used by states in order to govern various aspects of their citizens lives. The law of policies institute, in absolute terms, the legitimacy or criminalisation of certain actions over others. To this end, the LGBTI community in sub-Saharan Africa illuminates the poignancy of discriminatory policies on the lives of these individuals. The countries such as Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe are cases in point where the enactment of demonising policies against the LGBTI population has had negative effects related to the sexual orientation of these people. Sexual harassment and stigma are some of the actions which are sanctioned through policies against the LGBTI community. Indeed, Gautheir (2001) observed the impact of policy, particularly those which are constituted in the area of public health, on the overall health of the citizens a country. For example, public policies play a major role in shaping how alternative sexualities are expressed (Gautheir, 2001). In the case of people who involved in concurrency, this could mean limited access to quality health care (Gautheir, 2001). Furthermore, Gautheir (2001) noted that, generally, changes in policies have broader implications relative to how

the society is able to accept alternative sexualities. He said changes can be effected by simply reducing or eliminating unhealthy conditions such as stigma and discrimination against alternative sexual relationships (Gautheir, 2001). Furthermore, these political constructs can also be encompassing when they are enacted to reflect the meaning of sexualities which are often othered in the society.

The critical appraisal of policy and of public health policy in particular, is not only the preoccupation of this study, but an increasingly topical issue which is covered by studies such as those of Blue, Shove, Carmona, and Kelly (2014). These authors lament the construction of this political tool and how its framework often has deleterious effects on certain forms of sexual relationships. In this respect, the writings of Blue et al. (2014) are especially important in advancing the stories of the participants in this study. This is because these authors advocate that policy be grounded in the "'lives' of social practices, treating social practices as topics of analysis and as sites of intervention in their own right" (Blue et al., 2014, p. 3). The vector of this thinking argues for discontinuity of public health policy, which has an epistemological stance firmly within the realm of positivism in the way it focuses only on the epidemiological determinants of the disease. Here, the endorsement is for the organisation of socially informed public health, a formulation of policy which is distinct in optimising the utility of social science methodologies in matters concerning sexual practices. For example, this latter approach does not assume that monogamy is mutual and lasting or that sexual fidelity a given in pair-bonding sexual relationships. This vein of thought, however, understands sexual relationships as socio-political and cultural practices that are constantly shifting and inherently dynamic. Therefore, the notion of risk is not necessarily appropriated to certain sexual relationships, but understood as a constant (in all of forms of relationships) (Blue et al., 2014). Thus, such a construct has to be continual negotiated by people in their capacity as sexual agents. Indeed, people always strive to appraise their sexuality and modify their sexual behaviour in order to suite their every day needs (Blue et al., 2014).

This kind of socially informed public health which, in so many ways, uses a combination of medical methodologies and social science approaches in order to oppose the idea that scientific practice is an "external and absolutely knowable referent" (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2005). Indeed, the narrow practice of scientific methods is entirely rejected here and efforts related to the generation of knowledge are widened to articulate the context in which science is produced (Blue et al., 2014). In this instance, policy, research and practice are carried out with the sort of cognisance that acknowledges the social implications of such harmful policies as partner reduction and discriminatory concurrency hypothesis in sub-Saharan Africa. Although public health policy and scientific scholarship must be robust, these practices should also be sensitive to the particularities of the populace (Nowotny et al., 2005). Here we are talking about moving away from a culture of scientific

autonomy to a culture of accountability (Nowotny et al., 2005). Indeed, this can only be achieved by acknowledging that objective knowledge, especially in the context of sexuality research in sub-Saharan Africa, is the result of a historical process which inevitably renders it partial and contextual (Nowotny et al., 2005). Therefore, this enterprise of knowledge generation is inherently incomplete and can only be applicable and enhanced through taking into account the particularities of specific locations, instances, and conditions within which it was generated, contested and negotiated (Nowotny et al., 2005).

9.2.2 Re-conceptualising partner reduction policy: Lessons from Australia's Negotiated Safely campaign?

Non-monogamous romance is not a form of sexuality which finds expression only in Africa, but is a global practice. In Australia this sexual lifestyle was recognised as a legitimate way of establishing sexual relationships. The pattern of this sexuality was identified as mostly prominent among the stratum of the gay community – a population that was commonly affected by the epidemic of HIV. The most important observation that Australian Government policy practitioners made was that within the gay community (those couples who were involved in concurrency) there was a pronounced emphasis on the meaning and establishment of sexual rules (Semple, Patterson, & Grant, 2000). These were, fundamentally, coping mechanisms put in place in order to try and foil the infection of HIV among gay couples who were involved in concurrent relationships (Semple et al., 2000). The aim was to engage with non-monogamy ethically and responsibly through the implementation of sexual rules and agreements that could promote safer sex practices. Therefore, the re-formulation of Australia's HIV prevention efforts drew on key insights from the discovery of these sexual rules and agreements (Semple et al., 2000). This change in policy prompted the body of scholarship in Australia which demonstrated the utility of the meaning and establishment of sexual rules and agreements in gay open relationships as an important resource regarding limiting the risk to HIV (Semple et al., 2000). This resulted in the implementation of the HIV initiative called Negotiated Safely.

9.2.3 The formulation of the Negotiated Safely campaign

I do not want to give the impression here that a campaign of this nature was adopted only in Australia, however, this country is regarded as one of the first in the global north to implement such a radical HIV prevention initiative. Indeed, in other parts of the western world such as North America and much of Western Europe similar efforts were observed where gay couples played strategic roles in enhancing prevention initiatives. Nevertheless, in realising that sexual rules and agreements were generally established, albeit, in different contexts, for instance in transactional sexual relationships, the Australian Government expanded the scope of the key population (Semple et al., 2000). For

example, the profession of sex work, where the transaction of money conditions the remit of sex, necessitated the inclusion of sex workers (Semple et al., 2000). Furthermore, drug users, as a population where the trade-off between sustaining a substance abuse lifestyle and drawing up sexual rules and agreements is often common, were included in the Negotiated Safely campaign.

This socially informed way of formulating public health policy is reminiscent of the application of social sciences methods such as constructivism, where the personal of meaning of sexuality is incorporated and used as a key resource in revising these policies. Furthermore, this approach is also indicative of IPA philosophies regarding analysis related to the subject matter. In this regard, the IPA proposes suspending one's presuppositions when investigating a complex phenomenon such as sexuality. In the instance of the Negotiated Safely campaign, this principle simply had to suffice, especially if the conceptualisation of this policy was going to be holistic. Indeed, during the process of formulating this behavioural initiative, policy practitioners had to demonstrate a high degree of openness towards alternative sexualities. At the same, the Australian policy makers had to restrain their pre-understandings of non-monogamous relationships. Indeed, this humanistic orientation of acknowledging other sexual practices may have also enabled greater understanding (on the part of the Australian Government) related to the ways in which sexuality is a site of ideas or discourses which transcend pluralities of subjectivities (Frost et al., 2014).

Therefore, recognising sexual particularities in the formulation of HIV prevention policies is to provide expression to the voices, perspectives and experiences of sexual minorities (Frostet al., 2014). In the broader scheme of things, this participatory and inclusive approach towards marginalised sexualities should be a normative practice in the design of HIV programmes. This is because it forms a larger part of a social ecology of health which includes health behaviours, social and economic factors (Frost et al., 2014). This is particularly crucial in sub-Saharan Africa where, historically and evidently contemporarily, the co-existence of monogamy and non-monogamous partnering has been a lived reality for a long time.

9.2.4 Changing the societal perception of non-monogamy by shifting the social environment
Stengers (1997) stated that the key area that ensured the successful implementation of the Negotiated Safely initiative was the plural and broader understanding of sexual relationships. Thus, some of the seminal findings that emerged from this approach were that the larger community of LGBTIs, sex workers and drug users, all of whom were actively and productively engaged in this HIV prevention effort were an important resource. What also made it possible for the Australian Government to promulgate this encompassing HIV prevention strategy was that the cited population was trusted and supported by the policy practitioners. To this end, gay couples, LGBTI individuals,

and sex workers were provided with training and resources to develop peer education (Kippax, Connell, Dowsett, & Crawford, 1993). Nevertheless, these gay couples, LGBTI individuals, and sex workers took up positions as educators and advocates in non-government organisations, and worked alongside social researchers and public health officials (Kippax & Kinder, 2002). Furthermore, this heterogeneous key population was represented on parliamentary committees and policy-making bodies, essentially acting as representatives of their constituencies (Kippax & Kinder, 2002).

In South Africa, there is no evidence to suggest that similar efforts have been made. Suffice to say, as reported by Rispel and Metcalf (2009), many of the National AIDS Control Committees and other official HIV and AIDS-related bodies are composed of people living with HIV (PLHIV). Therefore, it is important to recognise that in the PLHIV group there may be many individuals who practice concurrent relationships. However, a specific discourse that is aimed at a key population of people who are practicing concurrent partnering in HIV policy formulation in South Africa is not evident. Therefore, in the South Africa's HIV & AIDS and STI National Plan 2007-2011, which was considered successful story for having brought together all stakeholders in the public and private sectors, as well as members of civil society, there should have been a specific call for people who are involved in concurrency to be part of such efforts (Department of Health, 2007).

Nevertheless, in the Negotiated Safely campaign, the inclusion of the aforementioned population was a powerful way of showing the broader society that in the fight against HIV, the structure of the relationship is not necessarily a problem. However, it is certain factors within the context of sexual relationship which prohibit safer sex practices. Indeed, this novel way of thinking is strikingly similar to the prescripts of Bandura's social cognitive theory that speaks about how changing one's social environment in a meaningful way is more likely to strengthen that person's motives for embracing preventive behaviour (Rosenbrock, Dubois-Arber, Moers, Pinell et al., 2000). This psychological theory outlines how role modelling, as a mode of learning, is a crucial aspect of influencing behaviour. Therefore, when the Australian society was exposed to the LGBTI community and sex workers as part of the country's parliamentary committee on policy matters, the public perception about this population may have changed. Indeed, South African authors such as Rispel and Metcalf (2009), have affirmed the preceding rhetoric by suggesting that when policy creates the conditions that make it possible for the community to accept minority sexualities, this influences how people talk, imagine and view different sexual practices.

Although the full extent of the impact of this policy might not be well understood, the positive psychological contribution this conceptualisation of the Negotiated Safely' campaign may have had on the population is not in question. More so, consider how this approach might have provided a sense of belonging to a community of gay couples, LGBTI individuals and sex workers, who for a

long time were blamed for spreading the scourge of HIV and labelled as promiscuous. This approach is entirely different from the kinds of partner reduction policies in sub-Saharan Africa where concurrency is negatively portrayed and people who practice this sexual lifestyle seemingly excluded from any HIV policy developments.

This strand of HIV prevention efforts is an imperative retort to the large-scale politisation of partner reduction policy, as well as Morris and Kretzschmar's mathematical model of concurrency that exemplifies punitive measures of public health policy (Stengers, 1997). This conversation reminds one of the scholarship of such prominent thinkers as Foucault, who addressed similar issues in *Sexuality and Politics*. In this critical publication, Foucalt (1966) illustrated the mutually exclusive but recursive relationship that exist between sexual bodies, sexual practice, institutional power, and knowledge. Accordingly, he postulates that dominant discourses (in this case partner reduction policy and broader concurrency hypothesis) often dictate how sexual partnering should be embodied Foucault, 1966). Thus, regulating imagination of intimate relationships by privileging monogamy (Foucault, 1966).

Indeed, some of the benefits that may have been accrued from the Negotiated Safely prevention policy is the positive affirmation of non-monogamous desire, at least on the part of the population in question. Imagine how this may have repaired damaged self-esteem among these individuals and restored personal beliefs in concurrent romance? This is particularly salient for the present study because HIV partner reduction policies reinforce negative perceptions about concurrent partnering in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the Negotiated Safely campaign may have corrected cognition schemas that act as powerful signifiers in compliance with the hegemonic or dominant discourses, which are rooted in monogamous ideals (Foucault, 1966).

What this policy positioning also revealed was that sexuality, as shown by the participants of this study, is a discursive social practice that is not cast in stone but a productive sexual phenomenon. This means that despite the risk of STI's and HIV infection, at the heart of it, sexual practices are psychological-behavioural processes from which cognitive schemas can be modified through constructive dialogue. Accordingly, health, behaviour and sexuality policies should be constituted on the basis of understanding that our sexual selves are interwoven in social relations. Therefore, such policies should underscore how sexual subjects apprehend the risk of STI's and HIV infection through an interpretative process within the context of social interaction. This can be done without necessarily stigmatising certain forms of relationship structures. Once again, the participants of this study illustrate how necessary it is for the adoption of affirmative policies such as Negotiated Safely in South Africa and certainly in sub-Saharan Africa.

9.2.5 The sexual rules and agreements: distinction between risk and difference

The significance of the promulgation of the Negotiated Safely campaign is the way this policy supports the findings of this study. This pertains to the way in which the participants illustrated that in concurrency there is a difference between risky behaviour and good health practices. This is in clear contrast to the epistemological and epidemiological modelling of concurrency by Morris and Kretzschmar's – the basis of HIV partner reduction policies which hinders in narratives large variations embedded in non-monogamous partnering. Instead, this categorisation considers all forms of concurrency as posing the same risk to the transmission of HIV. This 'concurrent-homogenous-partnerin' approach is evidently discarded in the Negotiated Safely paradigm. Therefore, placing the subjective meaning of concurrency into greater focus as exemplified in the Negotiated Safety campaign underscored the distinction between risk and difference in non-monogamy. This was also demonstrated by the participants of this study. It is generally accepted that irresponsible non-monogamy poses elevated risk to HIV transmission. However, the subjective experiences of those who practice non-monogamy with the conditions of sexual rules and agreements such as the participants in this study underlie this crucial distinction (Kippax & Race, 2003). The fundamental message here is that the computational models of epidemiology are useful in generating knowledge regarding how diseases behave within populations (Kippax & Race, 2003).

As indicated above, classification and behavioural patterns in the field of epidemiology often obscure how within a social context enactment of sexual rules and agreement position the meaning of concurrency in particular ways. To this end, the Negotiated Safely approach is the sort of reflexive strategy that is orientated towards having a conversation about how sexual relationships can be established without the risk of contracting HIV being elevated (Rosengarten, as cited in Kippax & Race, 2003). In this respect, the individuals who practice concurrency are considered subjects who assume an active role in creating meanings about their sexual lifestyle around the modalities of sexual rules and agreements. The agenda here is that it is only through obtaining deeper knowledge of how these sexual rules and agreements are created and modified that safer sex practices can be enacted. Significantly, the Negotiated Safely campaign charts pathways that permit insight related to how a change in policy can translate into a possible shift in sexual behaviour so that the desired outcomes are achieved.

9.3 Intermediate-level: Clinical Intervention meeting the needs of people who are involved in concurrent partnering

The participants in this study demonstrated the significant role of the environment in the subjective understanding of sexual orientation. In many respects these individuals indicate how it should not

be taken for granted that, over time, people may shift their sexual practices. Therefore, there needs to be literacies and other resources around such issues in order to circumvent the potential psychological strain one may go through when such changes in sexual orientation occur. To this end, these participants illustrated how critical the discipline of psychology is in helping people to comprehend these psychological issues. Thus, clinical practitioners have to be armed with the relevant training in order to assist people in these areas of their lives (Kippax & Race, 2003: Sheff, 2006). Although there is an acute shortage of psychologists and psychiatrists in South Africa, coupled with the fact that the majority of Black people tend not to use these services, their role in society is, nevertheless, important (Swartz, 1986).

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognise that the idea of a family is going through significant changes in contemporary South Africa. For example, social parenting among the 'Black' sub-population used to be a form of social capital but recently the situation might be different (Makiwane et al., 2016). Furthermore, the democratisation of the country, women's role in the labour market, and localisation of globalisation in developing countries such as South Africa means that sexual relationships are also experiencing major shifts (Makiwane et al., 2016). With this in mind, the role that psychologists and psychiatrists play in the society is even more pertinent, more so when people have to think carefully about their sexual orientations, establishment of intimate relationships and concerns over such viruses as HIV.

With its emphasis on family formation, polyamorous relationships such as those of the participants who were involved in this study, show that the idea of the family is, indeed, shifting in South Africa. These sentiments call into attention how sexual diversity should not be understood in exclusion to family aspirations, an issue that has been highlighted repeatedly by same-sex couples. This is especially important in plural relationships where the intersections of sexual rules and agreements, thoughts on family formations and concerns over safer sex practices play a big role in these partnerings (as identified by the participants in this study). In the U.S these considerations were factored into clinical interventions, on the basis of which the Couples HIV Testing and Counselling (CHTC) HIV prevention strategy was reworked.

These efforts were, however, limited to only gay couples who were involved in open or non-monogamous relationships. It is quite ironic to note that the implementation of CHTC for a period of over 20 years was mostly conducted in the African continent (Stephenson, Finneran, Goldberg, Counry-Doniger, Senn, Urban et al, 2015). During that time, the CHTC reported considerable success in reducing risky sexual behaviour and of increasing mutual disclosure of HIV status (Allen, Serufiliria, Bogaerts et al. 1992). This was within the context of African heterosexual serodiscordant couples (i.e., couples in which one is HIV negative and the other one is HIV positive) (Allen,

Serufiliria, Bogaerts et al. 1992). For example, in a study which comprised a sample of non-randomised heterosexual couples, the results revealed that HIV-negative women whose partners did not have the opportunity to speak to the counsellors through the CHTC were more likely to have a small reduction in HIV incidence (Allen el at., 1992).

The success of CHTC in sub-Saharan Africa was reflected in the successive grants that were paid out by the U.S President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the availability of this funding meant that the CHTC model was spread out in different contexts across the region. Additionally, the WHO called for CHTC to be part of an integrated testing and biomedical prevention strategy, primarily in African countries (WHO, 2012). It is in this vein that the policy makers in the U.S used the CHTC or a modified version of it as a strategy to read anew HIV prevention among non-monogamous gay couples (Gass, Hoff, Stephenson, & Sullivan, 2012; Gomez, Beougher, Chakravarty, Neilands, Mandic, & Hoff. 2011; Hoff, Chakravarty, Beougher, Neilands, & Darbes. 2012; Mitchell & Petroll, 2013). In view of this, and given the findings of this dissertation, it becomes evident how the needs of people who are thinking about, and are involved in concurrent partnerships can be addressed at a clinical level. This re-conceptualisation of the already existing clinical methods and interventions not only in sub-Saharan Africa, but Africa as a whole, requires a certain level of political leadership. I have previously explained that in the U.S non-monogamy is largely stifled by a hostile political and legal environment. The uptake of CHTC model to address the needs of non-monogamous gay couples shows that policy makers in that country recognised the importance of establishment of sexual rules in concurrency. This is within the context of reducing the infection of HIV among this population. In contrast, in South Africa and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, the use of the CHTC model, as outlined above, in mon-mongamous relationships is altogether ignored in favour of HIV partner reduction policies.

9.4 Micro-level: What can individuals in non-monogamous relationships do to advance belief in concurrency?

The participants in this study also discussed the atmosphere of tolerance that appeared in the environment when certain racial groups expressed orientation towards non-monogamy. This insight highlights the continued legacy of racism with respect to the theorisation of African sexuality in scientific literature. Staples (2012, p. 471) described this as "literate witnessing", a term which refers to the "compassionate empathetic acts of sense-making and assessment of experience". Such narratives also underlie awareness of the politics around the issue of expressing one's sexuality in environments that may be hostile pertaining to certain racial groups (Staples, 2012). Indeed, these sentiments support the views of theorists like Higginbotham (1993), who have long suggested that politics are powerful cognitive markers which confer on the individuals the shape of their being, mode

of knowing and performance of sexuality. This interpretation of the analysis has to be understood within the framework of the HIV partner reduction policy which speaks more to 'Black' South Africans than it does their 'White' counterparts.

Therefore, in order to deal with oppressive structures or policies in the society Hicken, Lee, Ailshire, Burgard, and Williams (2013) in their research paper discusses the coping mechanism which is called *vigilance* or the *vigilant coping style*. Vigilance is largely a coping strategy which highlights behavioural strategies that one can adopt in order to avoid individual prejudice or discrimination (Hicken et al., 2013). Indeed, the idea of vigilance is the performance of two human aspects, namely; appearance and language as coping styles. For example, the people who are involved in concurrency can adopt these philosophies when the HIV partner reduction policy is used to 'other' their sexuality. When talking about vigilance, we are speaking about similar forms of activism that the PLHIV group displayed in making sure that their voices were included in many of South Africa's National AIDS Control Committees as indicated above (Rispel & Metcalf, 2009).

In a different context, this kind of activism attitude was discussed in relation to the sort of discriminatory and symbolic violence that African American females experience in the U.S. The type of vigilance that it was suggested these women adopt, were the African American female literacies. These literacies include acquisition of skills and expressive vernacular arts as proportionate to progressive thinking and protection for women and their loved ones (Hicken et al., 2013). Ensuring that the representation of these literacies obtain a wide reach to the key population requires several steps to be followed. An example of this is to recognize the role of aspects of African American cultural identities, social locations and social practices (Hicken et al., 2013). These include how the stated aspects influence how members of this group confront hostile environments in their societies (Hicken et al., 2013).

In a similar way, polyamorous individuals have re-inventing the language that characterises non-monogamy as promiscuity. Indeed, those individuals who practice concurrent partnering in sub-Saharan Africa can adopt some of the prescripts that are identified in African American literacies. These include notions of sexual diversity and plurality of doing love in oppressive contexts (Richardson, 2008). As indicated both in polyamorous texts and theorisation of social cognitive theory, language and the production of scientific literacy are not, by any stretch of the imagination, neutral vehicles of thought production (Bandura, 2001). These social constructs often used to advance certain ideologies and discourses (Bandura, 2001).

In view of this, approaches such as the New Literacy Studies highlights the power of language and literacy by stating that: (a) people assimilate and connect with images or words from a prolonged

exposure to the social activities which are disseminated in their communities such as representation of the HIV partner reduction policies in sub-Saharan Africa; and (b) meaning-making is a cognitive and psychological process that is ideologically driven (Bandura, 2001). These sentiments cannot be underestimated, as demonstrated by the Queer Nation movement that started in the U.S and swept through many countries, influencing a change in policies. It is such readings which underscore the significance of foregrounding language, literacy and space where the validity of concurrent partnering can be associated with support networks, institutions, and practices that are geared towards promoting safer sex practices (Kynard, 2010; Khan, 2012; Winn, 2010; Wissman, 2011).

Furthermore, the people who practice concurrency in sub-Saharan Africa can augment their relationships by forming advocacy and rights groups. These can be created by learning from the mass establishments of LGBTI organisations around the world. Indeed, such advocacy groups can carry out activities by liaising with the South African Polyamory group as a supporting partner. The latter has done important work in carrying out a range of activities regarding literacies on safer sex practices, the importance of psychosocial support and the dissemination of educational material on such topics as different forms of sexual relationships. Activism of this nature is also vital because it raises awareness about the right to sexual diversity. Furthermore, it provides the tools that the individuals who practice concurrency need in order to assert their sexual orientation.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUDING REMARKS

10. Limitations of the study

The epidemic of HIV is reportedly characterised by many factors, however, poverty and gender inequality are some of the variables that are considered to increase the infection of this virus exponentially (Tladi, 2006). There is a vast scholarship in South Africa that supports the preceding literature on the prevalence of HIV in the country as a result of these factors. For example, in 2016, the unemployment rate figures in South Africa were estimated at around 27.1 percent, while in 2014, 20,2 per cent of the population was living below the food poverty line (Statistics South Africa, 2016). What is generally known about gender inequality is that it manifests itself in the marginalisation of women, making them more susceptible to being infected with this virus (van Donk, 2002). In addition, a regional focus on sub-Saharan Africa also highlights ethnicity, particularly the 'Black' ethnic group as a sub-population that is mostly affected by HIV. Therefore, having overwhelmingly 'White' participants as the core sample of this study creates a major limitation. The reason for this has already been provided elsewhere in this dissertation, and that is, in this country, race is still a determining factor in terms of access to income opportunities. This means that majority of 'White' South Africans by virtue of their ethnicity, and a result of the legacy of apartheid system, are still protected from many of the challenges that their 'Black' counterparts experience. Thus, this backdrop reveals the exclusion of the voices of 'Blacks' who are engaged in concurrency and economically disadvantaged and with low levels of educational qualifications. Furthermore, the present study has a strong urban bias, which means there remains a less understanding of the experiences of those people who are involved in concurrent partnerships and reside in the rural parts of the country. Although this is a limitation; however, it does offer an agenda for future research in this respect.

In addition, although the use of a small sample often raises questions especially for a big empirical research project such as a PhD study; however, these concerns should not be necessarily generalized. Scholarly work is the practice of context - this means a cursory reading of the use of a small sample is not encouraged in scientific research. One has to read carefully into texts and try to understand why this is the case. In the current research efforts to obtain a larger sample was attempted but not successful. This was because, as one moderator of South African Polyamorous group, who was also a participant in the study explained to me that polyamorous individuals in this community have a range of concerns regarding their sexual lifestyle. For example, many of these individuals fear being discriminated against by their families and larger society (see, chapter for more details). Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why I could not get many polyamorous individuals to be involved in my study. Although, I had taken ethical steps to ensure participants confidentiality, many of these individuals may still have felt their identities might be disclosed in the final product of my dissertation. Furthermore, some of these individuals may have had negative experiences regarding

being involved in polyamorous relationships. Therefore, talking about these experiences may have opened up painful memories that are best forgotten.

The discussion of the use of small sample in research studies provides the reason why IPA was suitable for this study. The IPA approach has strong emphasis on the use of small scale data-sets and this addresses the limitation of seven participants who were involved in this study. In fact, as far back as the 1990s Smith et al (1995) reported on the trend of research studies that used samples of one, four, nine, fifteen and more participants. Therefore, the issue of small sample in IPA studies is not new and justification for this is also explained in chapter 7 (this dissertation).

10.1 Recommendations

(a) The manner in which the HIV partner reduction policies in sub-Saharan Africa were singularly influenced by the concurrency mathematical model of Morris and Kretzschmar go a long way in proving the importance of critical policy analysis. Indeed, policy makers have to think carefully about the use of scientific knowledge from which they use to inform any policy. Critically policy makers should try and consider other scientific knowledge which may have an important bearing on the policy under consideration. Policy implementation is a serious enterprise because of its impact in the lives of the citizens of the country. The effects of harmful policies often linger for a long time on the people to whom it affects negatively. Therefore, undoing the damage is often a difficult and painful process.

(b) In the changing world that all of us, Africans, Asians, Europeans, as well as Americans find ourselves plodding along, education remains a key part of our lives. In the context of sexuality, education helps us to understand a range of things such as diversity and difference. Relationships literacies are especially significant in sub-Saharan Africa, in light of how in many countries in the region sexual diversity is not tolerated. As I write here reports of a crackdown against gays are impending in Tanzania (Mamba Writer, 2017). A total of 12 men, including 2 South Africans were arrested in the capital city of Dar es Salaam for promoting homosexuality (Mamba Writer, 2017). The absences of policies that promote sexual diversities in many ways give rise to discrimination, stigma, and persecution against sexual minorities. Political leadership in the form of progressive legislations for sexual minorities can help change societal attitude regarding those whose sexualities are different from the majority world.

(c) The interdisciplinary approach of health, epidemiology, as well as social science methods in order to investigate complex diseases such as HIV and related sexual relationships is increasingly observed as an appropriate scientific endeavour. These disciplines all depend on each other; statistics help us to track the disease and aspects such as clinical trials are important in assisting us to learn the effects of new medication. The social science methods are useful in exploring how people perceive of risk and the subjective meaning that they associate with their sexual relationships. All of these aspects are equally important to understand; therefore, there should be a directive from the governments in sub-Saharan Africa to promote this interdisciplinary approach instead of relying only on one discipline for explanation.

(d) Through anecdotal discussions and debates I had with colleagues and other scholars in the field of sexuality there is a perception that polyamory will not be tolerated in Africa. Of course, these sentiments are aimed at the sub-population of 'Black' men whom the traditional norms of masculinity are understood to be steeped in their psyche. Although, there is substance to these narratives; however, concurrent partnerships exist in the region. What is not known though about these relationships is the extent to which 'Black' men may be accepting of their female partners establishing other sexual relationships. The dominant scholarship in this area is that of concurrent partnerships which are formed on the basis of transactional relationships or because of some other negative reason. These sentiments also feed into the *sexual dominant male vs. passive woman* discourse which is increasingly being rebuffed by theories such as Third-Wave Feminists. The recommendation here is that more research needs to be done in the field of concurrent partnerships in order to understand the personal meaning that both men and women attach to these relationships. 'Black' men in South Africa and sub-Saharan Africa are by far less of a homogenous group than we are led to believe. It is true that in terms of figures a large number of this population may not accept polyamory. Similarly, there may be a percentage, however, small that does not subscribe to masculinity notions of *dominant man vs passive woman* rhetoric. Such is a value and importance of empirical research, more so, qualitative studies which constantly remind us to bracket our pre-conceived ideas about certain population and cultures.

10.3 Conclusion

In many societies the idea of being romantically involved with more than one person at the same time is often frowned upon. Even in the face of noticeable evidence around shifting sexual practices, monogamous ideals continue – stubbornly – to be regarded as the dominant form of establishing sexual relationships. The existing, but empirically untested, grey literature, including incidents such

as the U.S Ashley Madison scandal in 2015 or sexual swinging websites reifies a global pattern of concurrency that is mostly hidden. Thus, people who practice non-monogamy would rather lie about it, mostly out of fear of the societal backlash if such information were to be revealed to the general public. Indicative of this behaviour is the manifestation of sexuality as a contested terrain that is mostly policed and controlled by those who hold the levers of power. Polyamorous people, and many individuals in South Africa and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa who are involved in other forms of non-monogamy, represent a group of the population who refuse to conform to the hegemony of monogamy.

This dissertation has presented the lived experiences of seven individuals involved in polyamorous relationships. The stories of these participants are key analytical insights which show, among other things, that the notion of sexual fidelity is poorly understood not only by policy makers but scientists as well. From these narratives we also learn that people as social agents provide a particularised meaning to the establishment of concurrent partnerships. Some of this relates to the ways the participants handle multiple relationships, the ways they view their commitment to each other and nurture it, to the ways they handle jealousy and the benefits they derive from polyamory. These relationships are custom made, created by each individual to meet their own needs.

Although the invention of polyamory is an import from the global north, nevertheless, concurrency has deep roots in Africa. Large parts of the African continent have, however, erroneously assimilated the colonisers' perceptions of African sexuality where involvement in non-monogamy is discouraged and seen as an aberration in society. The lack of sexual rights and appropriate education are also among the factors which impede literacies and acceptance of sexual diversity. The situation in South Africa is not much better and this is in-spite of the country having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. An example of this is the freedom of sexual orientation in South Africa's Bill of Rights. Therefore, the findings of this dissertation once more casts into the spotlight, the myopic construction of public policy which can only serve particular interests while ignoring the needs of those whose sexualities are in the minority worlds. Indeed, what has to be read, and carefully so, into these discourses, is how access to informed prevention, treatment and care are discursive phenomena that are largely enabled by public health policy. Thus, when such an initiative as the HIV partner reduction campaign is the prevailing thought, the stated three key aspects to health-care may be difficult to obtain on the basis of one's sexual orientation.

In South Africa there are many things that can be done in order to remedy this state of affairs. For example, most of the country's public and private sector institutions are either engaged in, or are the focus of, social science research. Therefore, if sexuality, particularly concurrent romances, were to form part of these research processes, sexual diversity literature could be made visible to many of

the government's social institutions. Indeed, since the onset of the democratic dispensation, the ANC-led government has made research a vehicle for the interaction of government and civil society. In the context of HIV the issue that obtained prominence was how people should adhere to monogamous ideals; hence, HIV the partner reduction policy. This shows that research is neither value-neutral, nor ideological pure. Rather, research tools and methodologies are political and certain agendas are served and reinforced through the use of these scientific principles. Without a doubt, it remains the responsibility of the activists, social scientists and critical policy analysts to investigate these issues. Perhaps the most important of the responsibilities of activists, social scientists and critical policy analysts, is holding government accountable regarding the sorts of scientific methodologies they use to formulate public health policies.

Thus, the findings here support the preceding argument, because they illustrate that personal meaning of sexuality should be the significant analytical knowledge that informs policy making and policy debates. For example, one of the major factors associated with polyamory is that the participants chose to be involved in this kind of partnering. Therefore, the success of their relationships may be attributed to this aspect. What this suggests for relationships in general is that policy makers should focus their attention on what is working well in a relationship not just on what needs to be changed. Also, as indicated by the participants here, in order to reduce the risk of HIV in non-monogamous relationships it may be more important to help these individuals establish sexual rules and agreements than to stress the obliteration of concurrency. Furthermore, forming links and networks for polyamorous individuals, as is the case in this study, may be one of the factors of successful non-monogamous relationships. In this way, the people who are involved in these relationships do not feel isolated and alone. The importance of psychosocial supports (in different contexts) has been shown to be an important aspect of improving people's self-esteem, and enabling disclosure of sensitive information.

At the heart of the findings of this dissertation is a call for social justice and sexual rights for those whose sexuality is 'othered' in the society (Shildrick, 2007). Writing on the very same topic, but focusing on people with disabilities, Shildrick (2007) argued that the honour rests with activists, scholars and policy makers alike to respond to the sexual disenfranchisement that sexual minorities experience.

11. Reference List

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APPENDIX A: Online Recruitment Advertisement

Online recruitment advertisement

Have you been or are you currently in a consensual relationship with more than one partner for a period of one year? Would you describe yourself or your relationship as polyamorous? I am looking to interview people who are 25 years and older about their experiences in polyamorous relationships. I am especially interested in people who live in Gauteng Province from different race/ethnicities, social class backgrounds, and sexual identities. Please note that this is a research study conducted as part of a PhD thesis through the University of Pretoria. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You will be asked questions pertaining to how you conceptualise the role and meaning of polyamory in your life.

Should you be interested and would like to participate in this research study please contact Mr Stanley Molefi at smolefi@gmail.com with a short description about yourself (age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.) and your current or most recent polyamorous relationship. Thank you for your interest.

APPENDIX B: Letter of Ethical Approval

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

13 August 2015

Dear Prof Maree

Project:	**Polyamory as a type of concurrent partnership used to enhance HIV prevention programmes in South Africa: A phenomenological approach**
Researcher:	S Molefi
Supervisor:	Dr L Eskell-Blokland
Department:	Psychology
Reference number:	(GW2015 ...)

Thank you for the application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally approved the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 13 August 2015. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof. Karen Harris
Acting Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: karen.harris@up.ac.za

Kindly note that your original signed approval certificate will be sent to your supervisor via the Head of Department. Please liaise with your supervisor.

224

Appendix C: Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent for Participation in the Research Study:

Polyamory as a type of concurrent partnership used to enhance HIV prevention programmes in South Africa

PURPOSE:

I understand that Mr. Stanley Molefi, a PhD candidate in the Psychology Department at the University of Pretoria, is inviting me to participate in his research on the people's conceptualization of the role and meaning of concurrent relationships within the context of polyamory as a basis for more effective HIV prevention in South Africa

PROCEDURES:

I understand that should I agree to take part in this study the research process will entail the following:

(a). Mr. Stanley Molefi, as the researcher, will conduct one on one interview with myself, the during of which is estimated to take about 2 hours. The purpose of the interview would be to share the role and meaning of the polyamorist relationship that I am involved in.

(b). The interview process as outlined above is going to entail Mr. Stanley Molefi utilizing the digital recorder in order to capture the discussion during the interview session in its entirety. The use of the digital recorder is going to be permissible at my sole discretion as the participant in the study. Mr. Stanley Molefi is going to transcribe the recording and my real name will not appear in any phase of the research process, including the final dissertation.

(c). I am also aware that Mr. Stanley Molefi, as the researcher has the ethical duty to provide me with the feedback regarding the findings of the study once the dissertation has been published

(d). I understand that consent for my participation in this research is absolutely voluntary and should I choose to withdraw my participation in this study at any given point there will be no repercussions for doing so.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

I understand that Mr Stanley Molefi, as the primary researcher in this study will ensure that ethical procedures that entail working with participants will be adhered to and these include the following:

(i). Mr. Stanley Molefi will ensure that any information that potentially reveals the true identity of the participant such as the participant's name, address, and telephone number will be in a password protected database. Furthermore, Mr. Stanley Molefi will take adequate security steps to make sure that confidential information such as the informed consent form, audiotape, transcript, and researcher notes is protected either by the use of locked safe or by any other means which safeguards such data.

(ii). The use of a pseudonym or a code name to hide the real identity of the participant including myself will be evident in the final product of the research.

(iii). When the final dissertation has been published all audio/videotape, transcript, and researcher notes collated during the research process will be destroyed.

RISKS:

I understand that it possible that when sharing my experiences about the role and meaning of concurrent partnerships within the context of polyamory I may feel unpleasant emotions such as sadness, anger, fear, as well as positive emotions such as happiness and enjoy. It has been made very clear to me that should I find myself unable to continue or offended by any question posed to me I am at liberty to either not respond to such a question or withdraw from the study.

BENEFITS:

There are no immediate benefits for your participation in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to the present PhD research. This is because in exploring how people such as you conceptualise the role and meaning of concurrent partnerships within the context polyamory might help inform conceptualization of HIV programmes in South Africa related to relationship partnering such as concurrent partnerships.

WITHDRAWAL:

I understand that as a participant should I choose to withdraw my participation from the research study; I have the right to request for data to be removed from the study. Audiotape of my interview with the researcher will be deleted and all documents related to me will be shredded.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please contact the Head of Department of Psychology, Professor David Maree on (012) 420 2329 or via email; david.maree@up.ac.za or my supervisor Dr. Linda Blokland on (012) 420 4827 or via email; linda.blokland@up.ac.za.

If you have concerns or questions about the research you may contact the primary researcher Mr. Stanley Molefi on 0824725544 or via email; 15051286@tuks.co.za

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CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

I hereby agree to participate in research on **Polyamory as a type of concurrent partnership used to enhance HIV prevention programmes in South Africa.** I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

……………………………..

Signature of participant   **Date**: …………………..

CONSENT FOR TAPE RECORDING

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study.

……………………………..

Signature of participant   **Date**: …………………..

Appendix D: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

a. Demographic profiling of participants

- i. What is your name and age?

- ii. What is your racial and/or ethnic identity?

- iii. How would you describe your class and/or income level?

- iv. Please describe your highest level of education

- v. Please describe what area in Gauteng Province you currently reside in.

- vii. What is your gender identity? What word do you use to describe your sexual orientation, and what does that mean to you?

2. GENERAL EXPERIENCE OF INVOLVEMENT IN POLYAMOROUS RELATIONSHIPS

a. Early experiences:
  - (e) i. When did you first consider yourself to be polyamorous? And would you describe one or more experiences associated with your early polyamorous identity?
  - (f) ii. What did the term 'polyamory' mean for you at this time (if anything)?

b. Formative negative and positive experiences:
  - (g) i. Would you describe your most negative early experience involving polyamory?
  - (h) ii. Would you describe your most positive early experience involving polyamory?

c. Pivotal experiences (moving toward the present):
  - (i) i. Were there any times in your life when your perspective on polyamory changed significantly? And would you describe one or more experiences that happened during each change?
  - (j) ii. What did the term 'polyamory' mean for you at these times (if anything)?

3. DETAILS OF PRESENT EXPERIENCE:

a. Day-to-day experience:
  - (k) i. How does polyamory affect your family life? And would you describe one or more examples of this?

(l) ii. How does polyamory affect your social life? And would you describe one or more examples of this?

(m) iii. How does polyamory affect your professional life or career? And would you describe one or more examples of this?

(n) iv. How else does polyamory affect your life? And would you describe one or more examples of this?

b. Recent negative and positive experiences:

(o) i. Would you describe a recent negative experience involving polyamory?

(p) ii. Would you describe a recent positive experience involving polyamory?

4. REFLECTION ON THE MEANING:

a. Past to present:

(q) i. From your early experiences to the present, how would you describe the overall process of polyamory in your life?

(r) ii. Are there deeper meanings behind this process for you?

i. The big picture:

(s) i. What does the term 'polyamory' mean for you now? And does polyamory hold deeper meanings for you personally?

(t) ii. What role (if any) does 'choice' play for you in being polyamorous?

(u) iii. How do you expect polyamory to influence your future?

(v) iv. How would you want polyamory to influence your future?

5. RELATIONSHIP ARRANGEMENTS:

a. Please describe your current or most recent relationship arrangement (how many partners are involved, what partners' relationships are to each other [primary couples, casual sex partners, etcetera].

6. SUPPORT NETWORKS:

- Do you currently participate in any groups, organizations, or social circles that are polyamory-focused? Please describe them?

- Would you consider yourself a member of the polyamorous community? Why or why not?

- What other communities do you consider yourself a participant in or member of?

7. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING NON-MONOGAMY:

- i. Would you consider your involvement in polyamorous relationship to be political? Do you believe your participation in polyamory to be motivated by any policy framework?

8. POWER DYNAMICS WITHIN POLYAMOROUS RELATIONSHIP:

- i. How does your race/ethnicity, class and gender affect your possibilities of negotiating for safer sex practices
- ii. What types of ground rules/agreements do you have in your polyamorous relationship? who makes those rules/agreements and why?

9. HEALTH RISK RELATED QUESTION:

a. Sexually Transmitted diseases:

- i. How do you deal with the elevated risk of sexually transmitted diseases in your polygamous relationship?